

Private Housing and Adaptations Service

The Private Rented Housing Accreditation Scheme Handbook

Aim of the scheme

The aim of the Accreditation scheme is to work with landlords to provide good quality accommodation in Bristol. This will mean properties will meet the national Decent Home Standard and that landlords are signed up to provide a good standard of management.

Accreditation is not a legal requirement. Landlords or agents can declare that accommodation meets the standards. A random selection of properties will be inspected to ensure compliance with Accreditation standards.

Accreditation lasts for five years. If the property is licensed accreditation will be synchronised with the licence period.

Benefits to the landlord

Discounted House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licence Fee

HMO properties which are Accredited will receive a 10% discount on their HMO licences.

Information on HMO Licensing can be found on the HMO Licensing factsheet and at www.bristol.gov.uk/hmo



Preferential advertising to students

The universities in Bristol actively promote the Accreditation scheme to students.

- Accredited properties are highlighted on the property search web site.
- Information about the benefits of the Accreditation scheme is available on the web site and displayed at the Accommodation office.
- The Universities' Student Housing Guides provide information about the scheme. The Guide is available at the University student office, online and is also circulated at the January Housing Fair.

Tenants prefer accredited properties because it gives them greater confidence in the property. They will know that:

- the gas, electric and fire alarms have been checked
- that the property meets Environmental Health legal requirements and the accreditation standards

- that the landlord or agent has signed up to the Code of Good Management Practice.

Standards

Whilst the standards may look complicated, they simply relate to the legal duties that all landlords have. If you are meeting these then you've almost met the standards.

In addition to the normal legal requirements the Accreditation standards include work and practices that are not covered by legislation, but which are important when providing good quality accommodation. We can help you meet some of these with free assistance (see the Assistance with Meeting Standards section below).

Detailed fact sheets have been provided to explain how the standards can be met.

- Decent Homes Standard factsheet
- Fire Safety Standards factsheet
- House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing factsheet
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System factsheet

Assistance with meeting standards

Assistance is available to improve security and energy efficiency where needed. We will provide your details to our partners, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and Domestic and General Insulation Limited, so that arrangements can be made for the work to be carried out free of charge.

You should make arrangements with tenants and ensure that someone can be in the property when the work is undertaken.

Meeting the standards

The scheme operates by landlords or their agents self-certifying in the application form that the standards have been met. Where needed landlords can request assistance with energy efficiency and security measures. If an agent is submitting the application they need to obtain permission from the landlord for the free works to be carried out. They should also check with the landlord if the property needs an HMO licence or, if it already has a licence, that all licence conditions have been complied with.

Copies of all relevant certificates must be provided along with your completed application form. If these are not provided your application will be returned to you. There is no need to send the originals as checks are made on the validity of the certificates.

Each year a random number of properties will be selected for inspection. A property may also be visited as part of a licensing inspection or at the request of a tenant. If the standards are not being met then the property may be suspended or removed from the scheme. A landlord or agent has a right to appeal against the decision (as explained on page 4 under the *Appeals Procedure* section).

Accreditation certificate

The Accreditation Certificate is to give recognition to good quality, well managed rental accommodation to the landlord. The Certificate is available to display at the property and the landlord has use of the accreditation logo on his / her literature subject to providing a written agreement about its use.

Preventing discrimination

A provision of the Code of Good Management Practice, which is part of the Accreditation scheme, is that no person or group applying to have their properties accredited will be treated less favourably than any other person because of their race, ethnic origin, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Bristol City Council is also keen to make sure that we are reaching all landlords in the city, and the equalities monitoring questionnaire will help us do this. We would appreciate if you could answer the questions. All information provided is confidential and anonymous.

Appeals procedure

If a complaint is lodged about you or the property this will be fully investigated. You have a right to an appeal and a review of any decision made. If you do want to appeal this should be made, in writing to:

The Service Manager,
Private Housing and
Adaptations Service (LIPS),
Bristol City Council,
PO Box 595,
Bristol BS99 2AW.

If you are not happy with the result of your appeal you may wish to make a formal complaint through the council's Fair Comment complaints procedure:

- You can use our online complaints form.
Visit our website
www.bristol.gov.uk/complaints
- By email to:
faircomment@bristol.gov.uk
- By writing to us using our Freepost address:
Fair Comment (TS/BH),
Freepost BS4341,
PO BOX 595,
Bristol BS99 2BR
- By telephone: 0117 922 2000

Feedback

We are always looking to improve how the scheme operates and to look at other ways to encourage more landlords to take part. If you have any feedback or ideas please contact the Private Housing Support Team:

Email:
private.housing@bristol.gov.uk

Post to: PHST(LIPS),
Bristol City Council,
PO Box 595, BS99 2AW.

Phone: 0117 353 3871

Useful Information

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a new way of calculating Housing Benefit for tenants renting accommodation from private landlords. It applies to private sector tenants who make a new claim for benefit and for existing customers on Housing Benefit who change address or move into private sector accommodation.

The main way that this will affect landlords is that the LHA will be paid to the tenant. The tenant will be responsible for paying their rent to the landlord.

More information on the LHA can be found online at www.bristol.gov.uk/benefits

Tenant Deposit Protection

This national scheme is mandatory for all new tenancy agreements.

- Landlords are required to join a statutory tenancy deposit scheme, if they take deposits.
- This means that deposits are protected
- Tenants will get all or part of their deposit back, if they have kept the property in good condition

- The scheme offers alternative ways of resolving disputes, which aim to be faster and cheaper than taking court action.

The only alternative to using one of the National Rental Deposit Schemes is to use the Deposit Bond Scheme (see below).

It is a requirement of the Code of Good Management Practice that deposit schemes are used.

Private Renting Team

The Private Renting Team helps homeless single people and childless couples secure private rented accommodation, by providing landlords with a Deposit Bond on the tenant's behalf.

A Deposit Bond is a written guarantee from Bristol City Council, replacing the traditional cash payment for a deposit. If at the end of the tenancy, the tenant leaves having damaged the property or the fixtures and fittings beyond normal wear and tear, the landlord will be reimbursed the cost of the repair, up to the value of the bond.

The benefits of the Scheme are:

- Help with letting property promptly.
- Fast payment of Housing Benefit.
- A deposit bond for up to one month's rent.

For further information please phone (0117) 914 1200

More information can be found online:

www.bristol.gov.uk/housingadvice

Housing and Council Tax Benefit

The Benefits Service is responsible for calculating, paying and giving advice on Housing and Council Tax Benefit for customers who live in Bristol. Anyone that has a rent or council tax liability can make a claim for Housing and Council Tax benefit by completing an application form.

The Housing Benefit Service aims to process all correctly completed claim forms (with associated evidence) as quickly as possible.

More information can be found online: www.bristol.gov.uk/benefits

You can also speak to a Customer Adviser by telephone on 0117 922 2300. Lines are open 8.00am–8.00pm Monday to Friday.

If you prefer to speak to someone in person, you can visit one of seven Customer service points across Bristol.

The location of your local Customer Service Point can be found online at www.bristol.gov.uk/csp

Enforcement

If, on inspection, a hazard is found in a property that presents a severe threat to health or safety, the council must take appropriate legal action. The action taken will be in accordance with our Enforcement Policy that can be found at:

www.bristol.gov.uk/phep

This policy looks to initially resolve problems on an informal basis.

More information can be found on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) fact sheet and in the West of England Landlord Manual at www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing

It is essential to ensure that all licensable HMOs are licensed. There are heavy penalties for not having a licence and Bristol City Council is actively searching for unlicensed HMOs. More information can be found at www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk

If English is not your first language and you need a translation, we can get one for you.

ALBANIAN

Nëse anglishtja nuk është gjuha juaj amtare dhe keni nevojë për një përkthim, ne mund t'ua sigurojmë atë.

BENGALI

ইংরেজী আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হলে এবং আপনার কোন অনুবাদের প্রয়োজন হলে আমরা তা প্রদান করতে সক্ষম।

CHINESE

如果英文不是您的第一語言，而您需要翻譯的話，我們可以為您安排。

GUJARATI

જો તમારી પહેલી ભાષા અંગ્રેજી ન હોય અને તમને ભાષાંતરની જરૂર હોય તો અમે તમને તે આપી શકીએ છીએ.

HINDI

यदि अंग्रेज़ी आप की पहली भाषा नहीं है और आप को अनुवाद की आवश्यकता है तो यह हम आपको प्रदान कर सकते हैं

KURDISH

Heke Ingilîzî zimanê we yê yekem nîne û pêwîstiya we bi wergêr heye, em dikarin yekî ji we re bibînin

POLISH

Jeżeli język angielski nie jest Twoim językiem ojczystym i wymagasz tłumaczenia, możemy to zapewnić.

PORTUGUESE

Se o Inglês não é a sua língua materna e precisa de uma tradução, nós podemos obtê-la.

PUNJABI

ਜੇਕਰ ਇੰਗਲਿਸ਼ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਅਸੀਂ ਇਸਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

SOMALI

Haddii Ingiriisku aanu ahayn afkaaga kowaad oo aad u baahan tahay turjumaad, annagaa kuu samayn kama.

URDU

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو ترجمہ کی ضرورت ہے تو ہم آپ کے لئے فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔

VIETNAMESE

Nếu quý vị không thạo Anh văn và cần bản dịch, chúng tôi sẽ giúp quý vị một bản.

If you would like this form in another language, Braille, audio tape, large print, easy English, BSL video or computer disk please contact: 0117 353 3871.

