



## **ACCREDITED PROPERTY SCHEME**

### **PROMOTING QUALITY HOUSING**

Thank you for your interest in the Accredited Property Scheme.

The aims of the scheme are to encourage, acknowledge and actively promote good standards of privately rented accommodation, and to assist landlords and tenants to undertake their respective responsibilities to each other.

Please find enclosed a brief question and answer handout, which I hope, will assist in giving you a broad understanding of the scheme.

I trust the information provided will enable you to make a positive decision to join us in the scheme. If you do wish to proceed further please make an appointment to meet us by making contact at :

Private Sector Housing  
Town Hall  
Marine Road East  
Morecambe.

Contact : **Alison Biggam – Tel. No. 01524 582657**

**If you would like to make an application, please complete the following and return to the above address:**

- **Application form**
- **Signed landlord's agreement**
- **Fee of £62.32**

I look forward to a long and beneficial partnership for both of us.

Fiona Macleod  
Housing Standards Manager

Private Sector Housing

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **WHAT IS THE ACCREDITED PROPERTY SCHEME ?**

It is a scheme for private landlords, designed to recognise good quality privately rented accommodation.

### **IS IT RUN BY THE COUNCIL ?**

Yes. It has been set up and will be run by the Council's Private Sector Housing from their office at Morecambe Town Hall, LA4 5AF.

### **IS IT VOLUNTARY ?**

Yes. Like all local authorities the Council has legal powers to deal with sub-standard accommodation. This scheme is concerned to highlight those properties at the other end of the spectrum – privately rented houses of a decent standard, which are well managed and maintained. Membership is by choice and will give the landlords of these accredited properties access to a package of scheme benefits.

### **HOW DOES THE SCHEME FIT IN WITH LICENSING OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMOs)?**

All HMOs with 3 or more storeys and 5 or more occupants must be licensed by the local authority to operate. Accreditation is designed to work alongside licensing to promote high standards in all types of rented accommodation not just HMOs.

Licensed HMOs will still have to make an application for accreditation, but the cost will be included in their licensing fee.

### **HOW DOES THE SCHEME FIT IN WITH THE LANCASTER UNIVERSITY APPROVED HOMES SCHEME?**

Lancaster University operate an approved homes scheme aimed at students and student landlords. The City Council works closely with the university in administration of this scheme, and further details can be found using the following link.

<https://approvedhomes.lancaster-university.uk/Accommodation>

### **HOW DOES THE SCHEME WORK ?**

Interested landlords are sent an information pack, which includes the expected physical and managerial standards for their property type. No property address is taken. Alternatively, if preferred, an informal visit is made at this stage so that the scheme and information pack can be discussed in person. Once the decision is made to join the scheme the application form is filled in and returned. A survey and some management checks are then undertaken, to confirm eligibility, and the whole membership pack is issued.

Accreditation lasts for five years. Within that time, we will visit a sample of properties to ensure standards are being maintained. When the accreditation expires, a reminder will be sent out, and should you want to reaccredit, a visit will be arranged.

### **DOES THE SCHEME APPLY TO ALL TYPES OF RENTED PROPERTY, AND ARE THE STANDARDS STRICT ?**

Yes, the scheme covers all types of property – from single houses, to flats and bed-sits (see Appendix A). The standards are derived from legislation and are thus the ordinary decent standards. The clear majority of property will therefore probably automatically comply with them.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO THE LANDLORD ?**

It is expected that accredited status will bring landlords general benefits, including :-

- an edge over other providers in attracting new tenants
- an enhanced image with potential lenders
- a lower turnover of tenants (and therefore savings on reletting and void costs)
- a decrease in abuse of the property

Scheme benefits from scheme membership include :-

- positive publicity (with certification and logos provided for display, posters, leaflets, and regular adverts to increase scheme awareness)
- entry onto the scheme database, and a referrals service (provided direct to respective tenants or through other organisations looking on their behalf) on notification of vacancies
- advice on tenancy matters
- advice on particular requirements for furnished tenancies
- access to preferential arrangements for property insurance
- members directory (and inclusion if requested)
- membership of and invitation to meetings of the Accredited Property Scheme Landlords' Forum (which informs and updates members on new developments for private renting, provides expert speakers, and offers you a chance to influence Council policy)
- access to benefit-related training where appropriate (via the Landlords' Forum)

### **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO THE COUNCIL OF THE SCHEME ?**

The advantages for the Council are that the scheme provides a mechanism for contacting and canvassing the opinions of landlords, and also helps through the self-certification process to clear some officer time for other activities, such as enforcement. Finally it also enables the Council to provide more definite help to the many individuals and agencies who contact us to request information on and/or direct referrals to the private rented sector.

## **IS THERE A FEE INVOLVED ?**

Yes. This has been kept to a minimum, with both the Council and the Single Regeneration Budget helping to support the scheme financially. However a condition of Regeneration funding is that there must also be a certain contribution from the private sector, although this is to be used *entirely* to support and further the scheme.

Accordingly a one-off fee at **£62.32 per dwelling** is charged (this in effect comes straight back to landlords via the cost of producing the membership packs etc alone).

The £61.10 fee is included in the cost of an HMO licence where applicable.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

If you would like more information, or if you have any queries about the scheme, you can write to us or contact us on :-

**(01524) 582657 - Alison Biggam**

**(01524) 582649 - Fiona Macleod**

Town Hall  
Marine Road East  
Morecambe  
LA4 5AF

## **CATEGORIES AND STANDARDS**

### **FOR THE ACCREDITED PROPERTY SCHEME**

An application for accreditation must be under one of the following five categories and a property must comply with the relevant standard for that category.

#### CATEGORY A (Bedsitters)

Houses occupied as individual rooms, bedsits and flatlets which are considered to have a number of rooms for exclusive occupation, not necessarily behind one door, with some sharing of amenities usually a bathroom and/or toilet and maybe a kitchen. In such a house each occupancy would be separately rented.

#### CATEGORY B (Shared Houses)

Houses occupied on a shared basis. This type is found most commonly amongst students, but is increasingly formed by groups of people coming together in the house who share certain amenities as they wish but can have individual facilities, such as a bedroom.

#### CATEGORY D (Hostels/'Bed and Breakfasts')

Houses generally referred to as 'hostels', 'guesthouses', 'bed and breakfast accommodation'. They will provide accommodation for people with no other permanent place of residence as distinct from a hotel, which provides accommodation for visitors to the area for a short time

#### CATEGORY F (Self contained flats)

Most houses or buildings which by erection or conversion contain dwellings which are self contained and all such dwellings comprising accommodation which is behind one access door off a common area. The dwellings would normally contain all the standard amenities although it would be possible for some to be unimproved self-contained flats lacking one or more standard amenities. There would be no sharing of amenities with occupiers of other dwellings.

#### CATEGORY G ( Houses)

Houses, which are occupied for occupation by a single family.