

Hello to you all. Due to the success of the 10th Landlords' Trade Fair in November 2008, and the positive feedback we received from both landlords and letting agents who attended the event, we have decided to hold another Trade Fair again this year.

This time the Trade Fair will take place at the Friends Meeting Room 12a Queen Parade, Harrogate on Tuesday 8th September 2009, and there will be more stands for you to browse giving you the opportunity to chat and ask any questions. Refreshments will be available. The National Landlords Association (NLA) are partnering with us to help run the event and they will be organising some drop-in workshops for landlords throughout the day.

The NLA will also be publicising the event, however we will still be sending out invitations closer to the event and information will be added to the Landlords' Forum webpage.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY COUNCIL

Following the Electrical Safety Council's investigations last year into the safety of travel adaptors, they have been alerted to a relatively new design of adaptor to reach the UK market which presents more electrical safety hazards to consumers when used in the UK and abroad. To find out more, follow this link to the Electrical Safety Council's website: www.escweb.org.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/More-potentially-dangerous-travel-adaptors-discovered-id-54.html

The Electrical Safety Council have also produced a small leaflet titled "Living together safely". This can be accessed on the web at: www.escweb.org.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/New-leaflet-for-rented-accommodation-id-43.html or you can pick up a leaflet from the Trade Fair.



Gas Safe Register

As many of you will be aware as of the 1 April 2009 Capita took over responsibility for gas safety from CORGI. Contractors should now have transferred their registration to the new Gas Safe Register. Please make sure that the contractors you use are registered with Gas Safe. You can check if your contractor is on the register by following this link www.gassaferegister.co.uk

EXCESS HEAT HAZARD

Members of the public are being advised to contact their council if they are worried that their homes may become dangerously hot this summer, according to the Government's latest heatwave plan.

Another of the 29 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System is Excess Heat. If Environmental Health Officers visit a property and notice that the indoor temperatures are excessively high, they would be required to carry out an assessment under the rating system; the most vulnerable age group for excess heat are persons aged 65 years and over, as high temperatures can increase cardiovascular strain and trauma; where temperatures exceed 25°C, mortality increases and there is an increased risk of strokes.

When we inspect properties in the area we consider:

- Thermal insulation /inadequate provision of thermal insulation particularly in attic flats

- Large areas of south facing glazing
- Faulty, inappropriately designed, or inadequate controls for the heating system
- Inadequate or inappropriate provision for ventilation
- Inadequate means of controlling the ventilation
- Disrepair to ventilation system or devices

Believe it or not we do come across many properties where windows cannot be opened often as a result of them being nailed shut or painted over, so it would be well worth checking that the windows in any of the properties you rent out can be opened properly and safely.

UPDATE ON THE RUGG REPORT

On 13 May 2009, the Housing Minister published the Government's long awaited response to the Rugg review. The document entitled "The private rented sector: professionalism and quality" aims to strengthen consumer protection for tenants living in private rented accommodation. It has been published as a consultation paper and the consultation process runs until 7 August 2009.

Thinking About Renting Out Your Home



As a result of the housing market stalling and mortgages becoming increasingly difficult to come by due to the credit crunch, selling a property is very difficult. To help meet financial commitments many homeowners are looking to rent out their homes. Unfortunately many homeowners fail to appreciate the responsibilities they take on becoming a private landlord. The Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) have produced a leaflet pointing out the

pitfalls of private renting and highlighting the following actions:

- Perform checks on gas/electrical appliances
 - Check risks from fire
 - Ensure property is not a risk to tenants health and safety
 - How to cope when something goes wrong
- Harrogate Citizen's Advice Bureau plan to have leaflets available to the public shortly, or if you attend the Trade Fair in September the Private Sector Housing stand will have the leaflets available.

- Speak to your mortgage lender
- Get references from potential tenants
- Prepare a formal tenancy agreement
- Protect any deposit taken
- Obtain an energy performance certificate
- Enquire if a license is needed

CAVITY WALL INSULATION

As you may be aware one of the 29 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System is Excess Cold, so we thought it appropriate to highlight cavity wall insulation in this newsletter.

The Government strongly recommends cavity wall insulation for all suitable existing houses. 'Up to half of all heat lost in an average house goes straight through the walls. Proper wall insulation can stop up to two thirds of this heat loss' says the Government energy efficiency division (within the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs).

Once installed, cavity wall insulation is a permanent, maintenance-free property improvement, lasting for the life of the building, preventing heat loss in winter and heat gain in the summer.

Cavity wall insulation brings many benefits, and these include:

- Reduced heat loss through walls by up to two-thirds.
- Reduced heating bills by up to one third.
- A warmer, more comfortable home in winter.
- A cooler house in summer.

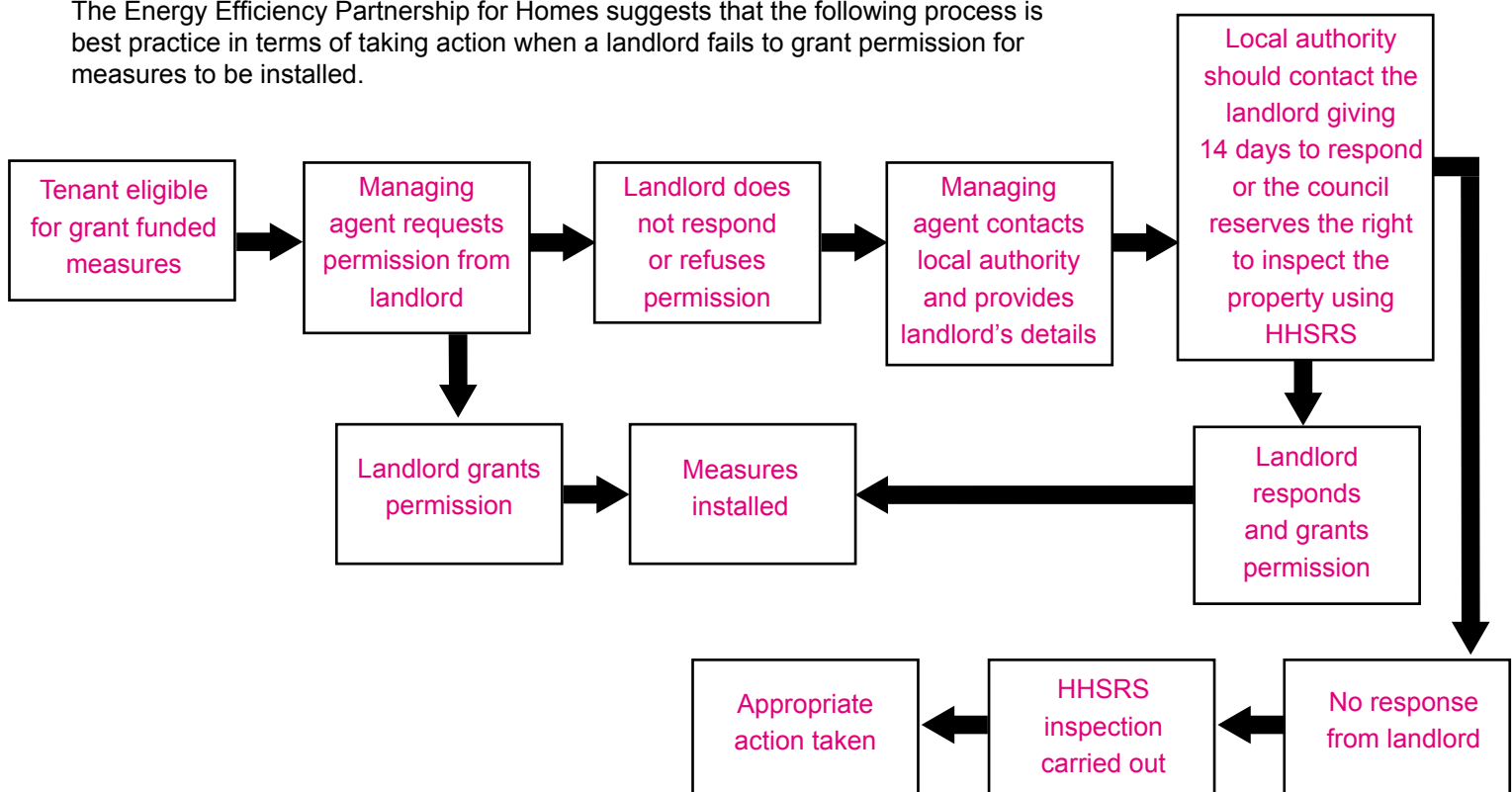
- Increased value of your property.
- Reduced risk of condensation forming on the inside surface of the walls.

A specialist contractor can install cavity wall insulation in your property and it's surprisingly simple and cost effective. In fact, you may be eligible for a Government grant, or in certain circumstances, qualify for free insulation. For further information, call the **Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on 0800 512012**.



What happens if a landlord refuses measures to be installed?

The Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes suggests that the following process is best practice in terms of taking action when a landlord fails to grant permission for measures to be installed.



INTUMESCENT HOODS

We thought it might be timely to introduce those of you who may be wondering what on earth this item is about, to the small but essential bit of kit that is an Intumescent Hood.

Bright halogen downlighters have become extremely popular in recent years and are especially useful in rooms with low ceilings or where a streamlined look is required. However, they can get very hot, so if you have them fitted in a ceiling below your loft space, either the insulation above has to be removed, as it may catch fire, or you need to fit an intumescent hood over the downlighter.



Clearly, in the interests of energy efficiency and cost savings, you don't want to move the insulation, but don't assume that your electrician will fit hoods and replace the insulation as a matter of course – you need to say that this is what you expect.

It is also important to bear in mind that as soon as you punch a hole in a fire-resistant surface to fit a downlighter, the fire resistance has been compromised. One of our grant applicants recently had to fit an extra layer of plasterboard to a basement bedsit ceiling to increase the fire resistance. It was an unpleasant shock both for him and for us when it turned out he'd also had about a dozen downlighters fitted into the ceiling at the same time – none of which incorporated an intumescent hood! Although intumescent hoods are not expensive in themselves (about £10 each), fitting them retrospectively can be. In this particular case, the ground floor floorboards will have to come up in order for the hoods to be fitted from above. This won't be a problem in loft space that hasn't been boarded out.

Source: www.lighting-direct.co.uk/intumescent-150-x-120mm-fire-hood-p-6222.html

Summer Property Repairs



The summer months are a good time to carry out improvements to your property.

The National Landlords Association recommends devising a simple checklist and carrying out a visual inspection of your properties so this can give you the opportunity to prepare and plan ahead, as landlords do have a legal responsibility to keep their properties in a good state of repair. It makes good business sense to protect your investment and ensure small problems don't lead to large repair bills.

Landlords are expected to keep any property they let to tenants in a good state of repair and well maintained. These are legal requirements as well as best practice for the safe and effective letting of a premises.

Source: National Landlords Association Factsheet

Landlords' Forum Webpage



Don't forget to check out the webpage for previous agendas, minutes, action briefs, safety alerts, updates and health alerts on the following link www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-5043

NEXT EVENT

Landlords Trade Fair on the 8th September 2009 at the Friends Meeting Room, 12a Queens Parade, Harrogate HG1 5PP.

Any suggestions for the event please e-mail angela.darlington@harrogate.gov.uk