

Hello to you all from the Private Sector Housing team

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Update on Re-licensing HMOs

At this time we are still awaiting confirmation of the new fees that will be charged for the re-licensing; once we have this information we shall be writing to the landlords of the HMOs that are required to be re-licensed. The good news is that for existing license holders a discount will apply.



The Craven and Harrogate Landlord Trade Fair is due to take place on 16 August, 10:30am – 3:00pm at Skipton Town Hall

The Fair will provide information and advice for Landlords of private rented accommodation, owners of Houses in Multiple Occupation and letting and managing agents.

There will be a range of organisations on hand to offer advice and guidance as well as a number of workshops offering further information on current issues.

Organisations attending include:

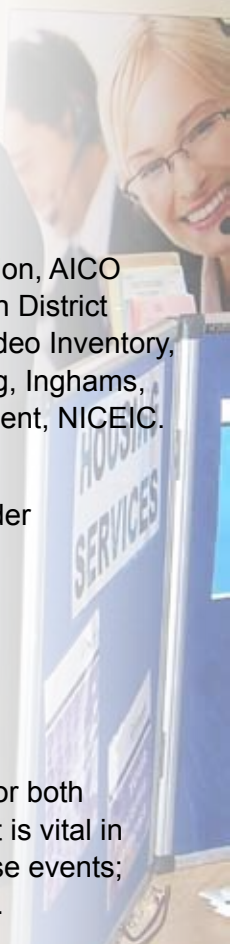
NY Fire & Rescue, Residential Landlords Association, AICO Alarms, ME Property, Revenue & Customs, Craven District Council Private Sector Housing, Energicert Ltd, Video Inventory, Harrogate Borough Council Private Sector Housing, Inghams, Craven District Council Benefits, Park Mill, Envirovent, NICEIC.

Workshops include:

- NY Fire & Rescue - Regulatory Reform Order
- CDC Benefits
- Envirovent
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Residential Landlords Association
- Energicert Ltd

In the past the event has proved a huge success for both stallholders and landlords. Your continued support is vital in order that we can continue to arrange and run these events; we therefore look forward to seeing you in Skipton.

BENEFIT SER
Would you like help
your rent?
Would you like help
your council tax?
WE MAY BE ABLE TO
COME AND TALK TO



HMO Fire Alarm Testing

The Private Sector Renewal team has had an increase in referrals from the fire service notifying us of fires that have occurred in HMOs within the Harrogate district. When investigated further by the fire service in many cases the fire alarm systems already in place have not been working, so as a temporary measure the fire service has had to install battery operated domestic alarms. We need to point out that it is a landlord's duty, under the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006, to ...

ensure that any fire fighting equipment and fire alarms are maintained in good working order. This includes the annual service for fire detection and there should be interim testing, which should be logged separately.

Failure to maintain fire fighting equipment and fire alarms may lead to Harrogate Borough Council taking enforcement action for breaching the above Management Regulations. In the last issue of our Landlords' Newsletter we highlighted where neighbouring local authorities have fined landlords for failing to maintain safe and effective fire alarms.

Fire Risk Assessments for HMOs

Following on from the testing of fire alarm systems, landlords of HMOs are required, under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, to carry out a risk assessment of their premises. Whatever physical fire safety measures are provided in residential accommodation, their effectiveness will only be as good as their management and maintenance. The level of management attention required will be determined as part of the fire risk assessment. To find out how to carry out a risk assessment, visit www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/regulatoryreformfire

Upgrading of fire alarm system

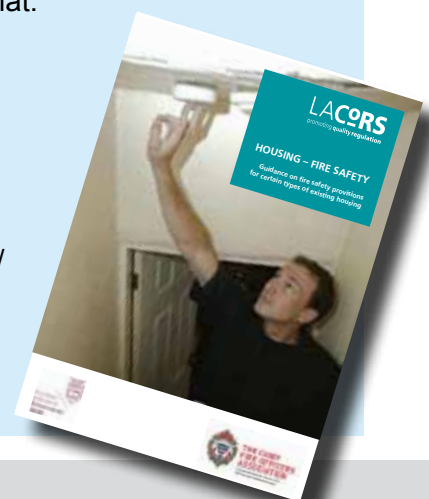


As a result of the recent fires within some HMOs we have also found that some of the three or four storey buildings converted into self-contained flats require their fire alarm systems to be upgraded in line with the LACORS housing fire safety guidance. The LACORS guidance requires a mixed system in place:

- Grade A:LD2 coverage in the common areas and a heat alarm in each flat in the room/lobby opening onto the escape route (interlinked); and
- Grade D:LD3 coverage in each flat (non interlinked smoke alarm in the room/lobby opening onto the escape route) to protect the occupants of the individual flat.

This has the benefit of reducing false alarms throughout the whole property.

If you would like to check out this guidance use this link <http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/ContentDetails.aspx?id=21329>





Gas Safety Week 2011

September 12th sees the launch of the first ever Gas Safety week run by Gas Safe Register. The aim of the week is to raise awareness of gas safety in the home.

The week will focus on encouraging people to take positive steps to making sure their home is Gas Safe. They will highlight to homeowners the importance of taking care of their gas appliances and how they can do this by:

- only using a Gas Safe registered engineer;
- having regular servicing and an annual gas safety check;
- checking the engineer's Gas Safe Register ID card;
- spotting the danger signs of carbon monoxide from gas appliances.

After all by taking care of your gas appliances you are discharging your legal duty and protecting the safety of your tenants.

Source: Gas Safe Register



Tenancy Deposit Schemes

Are you protecting your tenant's deposit?

We have come across a number of cases where landlords have failed to protect a deposit with one of the government approved tenancy deposit schemes, hence we feel that a reminder to all landlords about protecting your tenants' deposits is useful and could save you money in the future.

From 6 April 2007 all new tenancy deposits should have been protected in accordance with an authorised scheme. The rule also applies to a tenant on an assured shorthold tenancy. The Government wanted to make sure that tenants' deposits are protected so that:

- a tenant gets all or part of their deposit back, when they are entitled to it;
- any disputes between tenants and landlords or agents will be easier to resolve;
- tenants are encouraged to look after the property they are renting.

What happens if I do not secure a tenant's deposit?

The tenant can apply to the local County Court. The court can order the landlord or agent to either repay the deposit to the tenant or protect it in a scheme. If the landlord or agent has not protected the deposit, and they fail to do so within 14 days, they will be ordered to pay the tenant three times the amount of the deposit. Please do not let this happen to you. For further information visit www.depositprotection.com.

Green Deal

Some of you may have heard about the Green Deal and be wondering how it might affect rented properties. In May 2011 the Energy and Climate Change Secretary, Chris Huhne, announced plans to introduce regulations to ensure that all landlords would face minimum energy efficiency standards under the Green Deal.

The proposals announced stated that:-

- from April 2016 landlords will not be able to refuse reasonable requests from tenants, or local authorities acting on behalf tenants, to improve energy efficiency in a property;
- from April 2018 the government will make it unlawful to rent out a house or business premise which has less than an "E" energy efficiency rating resulting in the improvement of at least 682,000 properties.



The Green Deal is the coalition's national plan of home improvements to make houses and businesses cheaper to run through better energy efficiency. These proposals will help the most vulnerable as more than a quarter of a million of the worst insulated rented homes are classed as fuel poor. The Green Deal works by delivering energy-efficient improvements at no up front cost to homeowners and businesses with repayments made through savings on energy bills. The loans provided are attached to the property rather than owners.

Source: Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2011

EMPTY PROPERTIES calling all landlords!

Harrogate district is an area where affordable housing is in short supply and providing it has become a council priority. Both public opinion and council policy are against the development of greenfield sites and given the shortage of new building sites it is important to make the best use we can of the existing housing stock. Empty property is one possible source of extra housing.

Records show there are currently over 400 properties that have been empty for over six months in the district. To help reduce that number we are encouraging landlords who have an interest in increasing their property portfolio to get in contact with us. If you provide us with your details and any empty properties you have seen and believe could be a potential let, the Empty Property Officer can contact the owner on your behalf and hopefully get another property back into use.

If you are interested, contact the Empty Property Officer on 01423 551656 or gemma.drake@harrogate.gov.uk

Arrivals/Departures

Chris Frank, who was seconded from Harrogate Borough Council's building control team for 12 months to work as an Empty Property Officer, has now returned to building control. Gemma Drake is our new Empty Property Officer.

Forthcoming events

As mentioned previously in this newsletter, this year we will be joining Craven District Council as part of a shared Trade Fair on 16 August at Skipton. The invitations for this event are attached to this newsletter.

Landlords' Forum Webpage

Don't forget to check out the webpage for updates and health alerts at

www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-5043

