

Private Landlord Update

Building futures, opening doors | **April – June 2019**

Welcome to the latest edition of our quarterly landlord newsletter **Keeping Cheshire West and Chester landlords informed.**

In this edition, we let you know about the mandatory electrical testing as well as the Fit for Human Habitation legislation. That's not all though; we answer your questions on selective licensing as well as update you on the Tenant Fees Bill and the Private Landlords Registration Bill.

Finally, don't forget to book your FREE place at the Landlord Forum on Thursday 16 May at Civic Hall, Ellesmere Port which promises to be as informative as ever. Don't delay, contact us: housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or ring on 0151 356 6410.

Housing Standards and licensing

Making sure you meet the necessary housing standards to demonstrate you are a good landlord/agent.

Electrical safety testing guidance is on the way!

LANDLORDS must ensure that mandatory electrical inspections are carried out by competent and qualified inspectors; under new measures the Government will introduce to tighten safety in the private rented sector.

Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure in their own home," said housing minister Heather Wheeler MP. "While measures are already in place to crack down on the small minority of landlords who rent out unsafe properties, we need to do more to protect tenants.

"These new measures will reduce the risk of faulty electrical equipment, giving people peace of mind and helping to keep them safe in their homes. It will also provide clear guidance to landlords on who they should be hiring to carry out these important electrical safety checks."

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) said that guidance will be

published that sets out the minimum level of competence and qualifications necessary for those hired by landlords to carry out electrical safety inspections.

Landlords who fail to comply will face "tough financial penalties" the ministry added.

The new guidance will provide "clear accountability" at each stage of the inspection process, setting out what is required and whose responsibility it is, but without "placing excessive cost and time burdens on landlords".

Wheeler's announcement comes in the wake of a consultation on electrical safety that closed in April 2018. Following this, the Government announced in July that regulations would be introduced requiring private sector landlords to undertake five-yearly safety checks of electrical installations in their properties. The ministry said the Government intends to introduce new legislation on a "phased basis", starting with new tenancies, as soon as Parliamentary time allows.



Does your let meet the new Homes – Fit for Human Habitation Act?

The new Homes – Fit for Human Habitation Act 2018 came into force on 20 March 2019 to make sure that rented houses and flats are fit for human habitation, which means that they are safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm. If rented houses and flats are not ‘fit for human habitation’, the tenant can take their landlord to court. The court can make the landlord carry out repairs or put right health and safety problems.

The court can also make the landlord pay compensation to the tenant.

The remedies available to the tenant are an order by the court requiring the landlord to take action to reduce or remove the hazard, and / or damages to compensate them for having to live in a property which was not fit for human habitation. For more information about the Homes – Fitness for Human Habitation Act please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-fitness-for-human-habitation-act-2018>

Being accredited makes good business sense

Becoming an accredited landlord with the Cheshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme (CLAS) makes good business sense that’s according to James Griffiths, founder of www.hmoinvest.com, a long standing landlord and property developer who has been accredited with the scheme for a number of years.

James explains, “Landlords often get a bad press so being part of a locally based scheme that tenants and prospective tenants can trust is really important.

I pride myself on providing the highest quality housing for my tenants and other landlords and I am passionate about being recognised as a market leader for HMO accommodation.”

“The living spaces I create are not only safe and compliant with both the national and CLAS standards, but also reflect the market’s desire for sleek, contemporary design. My experience has shown that adding value in this way is vital to gaining a competitive advantage and ensuring maximum return on investment in this competitive industry.

Both tenants and landlords are proven to benefit from this approach.”

James continued, “I would urge any landlord operating in Cheshire West to become part of CLAS as it is high time that good landlords get recognition for the good work that they do. Through my company www.hmoinvest.com, I am keen to play my role in helping the Council and other landlords to improve housing conditions and housing management standards across the borough”.

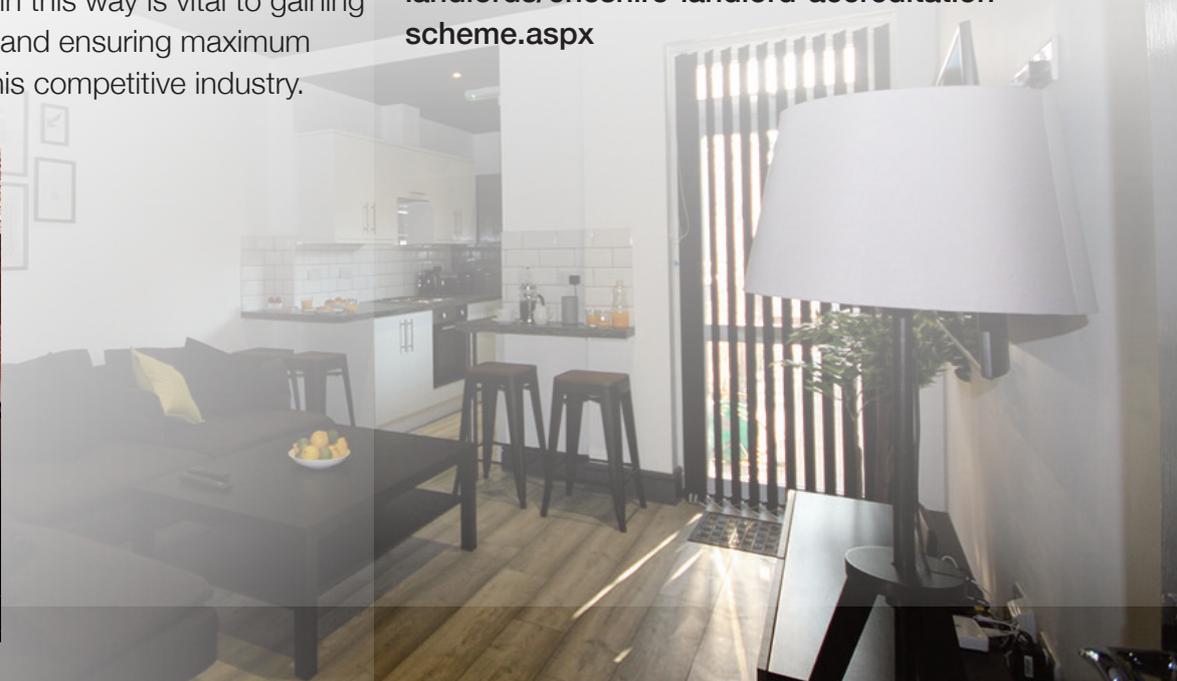
Don’t wait! Why not follow James` lead and show that you are a good landlord/agent and become accredited with the Cheshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme!

For more details email:

housingstandards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

or why not apply online at:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-rented-sector/private-landlords/cheshire-landlord-accreditation-scheme.aspx>



Latest News, Information and Advice

Making sure you have all the latest information and advice you need to help you deliver a good housing management service to your tenants.

Tenant Fees Act 2019 (Commencement No 2) Regulations 2019

These regulations, which came into force on **1 April 2019**, commence sections 21(1), (3) and 23 of the Tenant Fees Act (the Act) on that date. Section 21(1) and (3) of the Act relates to enforcement of client money protection schemes for property agents and amends the Housing and Planning Act 2016 by adjusting the regime for enforcement of client money protection so that they are enforced by the local weights and measures authority. Section 23 of the Act relates to the requirement upon landlords to belong to a client money protection scheme. This section amends the Client Money Protection Schemes for Property Agents (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) Regulations 2019, which also came into force on 1 April 2019.

Private Landlords (Registration) Bill

This Bill was introduced to Parliament on 17 January 2018 under the Ten Minute Rule. The Bill seeks to require all private landlords in England to be registered. A second reading has been postponed to a date to be announced.

Q&A

We answer your questions.

Do you have any plans to introduce selective licensing across the borough?

As a Council we want all tenants living in the private rented sector to live in a safe and fit for human habitation home, we know that the vast majority of landlords and letting agents want the same thing. However, there are some landlords and agents who seem happy to house their tenants in homes that have high levels of disrepair which we find completely unacceptable and will take whatever action is necessary to address this.

At this point in time, there are no plans to introduce a borough wide selective licensing scheme however, we want to actively encourage

all landlords and letting agents across the borough to join the Cheshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme (CLAS). CLAS demonstrates to tenants and prospective tenants that accredited landlords and agents house their tenants in good quality housing. By being part of CLAS accredited landlords and agents are helping to improve housing conditions and housing management standards.

If you have any questions that you would like answering, then please email your question to: allan.batty@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

Are you a Student Accommodation Provider? Win a HoME Award!

Chester Students' Union are launching the first ever housing awards this summer. We are proud to present the inaugural Housing Merit of Excellence Awards on June 4th 2019.

To find out about the event, what awards there are and how you can get involved please contact Chris Lightfoot at (c.lightfoot@chester.ac.uk).

Hope to see you at the event to celebrate excellent student housing in Chester!



Housing Initiatives

Discounted first-time gas central heating system and insulation measures for eligible rented properties.

A new joint project between Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council and Warrington Borough Council will offer a first-time central heating solution and any necessary insulation measures to eligible households across the Cheshire region.

Eligibility

The grant funding is available to both home owners and privately rented properties meeting the eligibility criteria below. For rented properties, the landlord is required to make the application however, it is the tenant's eligibility to the scheme which is taken into account.

All properties supported by the scheme will either have no central heating, existing solid fuel, storage heating or room heaters.

Eligibility of the person(s):

- Receive qualifying benefits for example Warm Home Discount, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support, Universal Credit and more.
- Qualify under the Council's ECO Flex - Statement Of Intent, which includes those who have high energy costs and a low household

income OR a low household income and a vulnerability to the effects of living in a cold home. (A low household income for a home with children is set at £26,000 or less. Low household income for a home with no children is set at £20,000 or less)

- Residents who live in the most deprived areas of the borough including parts of: Winsford, Ellesmere Port, Blacon and Lache.

Eligibility of the home:

- located in an urban area
- mains gas is not used as the primary heating fuel
- current heating source needs to be broken, uneconomical to fix or inefficient
- close to a gas main to qualify for Fuel Poverty Network Extension Scheme (FPNES) funding

Costs

There are no costs for eligible home owners. Landlords of privately rented properties will need to contribute £1,000 towards the costs if they have an eligible tenant. For further information or to express an interest please contact

emma.edwards@qwestservices.co.uk



Talk to us, let us know what's on your mind.

Have you got an idea or a suggestion?

Then why not email our Housing Policy and Strategy Team on housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Housing Policy and Strategy Team
Council Offices
Ground floor
4 Civic Way
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 0BE
0151 356 6410

housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Do you have any questions about HMO licensing or housing standards and conditions?

Then please email our Regulatory Services team on housingstandards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or you can ring 0300 123 7038 and ask to speak to someone from private sector housing.

Regulatory Services Team
HQ, Nicholas Street, Chester, CH1 2NP
Cheshire
CH1 2NP
0300 123 7038
housingstandards@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Do we have your correct contact details?

Don't forget, if your contact details have recently changed, please make sure you let us know by emailing housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk, Don't forget you can't keep up to date with what's going on if the contact details we hold are incorrect! Please be assured that your details will never be given to any external organisations without gaining your written permission first.