

Private Landlord Update

Building futures, opening doors | **Summer 2020**

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

At a time of unprecedented challenges, the Coronavirus is making landlords and tenants rethink how they can liaise with one another whilst also adhering to social distancing rules.

There are many challenges that landlords face and with this in mind we have included within this newsletter the key points of information detailed on both the Council and Gov.uk websites. We will continue to work with you in trying to provide you with the advice and support you need to help get you through this challenging time.

Housing Standards and licensing

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



Gas and Electrical Safety Checks

In terms of safety checks, landlords should make every effort to abide by existing Electrical and Gas Safety Regulations and continue to work towards compliance with the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 and the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

There are provisions to account for situations in which a landlord cannot do this, and they must demonstrate they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with the law.

Further information is available via the link below:

<https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/help-and-advice/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>

Council inspections

During the pandemic, Council officers may decide to inspect a rented property because:

- There is an imminent risk to a tenant's health due to a serious hazard
- A serious hazard was previously identified and may still exist

- The local authority has been made aware that a tenant is vulnerable and it is not clear if they are aware of the presence of hazardous conditions.

Urgent health and safety issues are those which will affect your tenants' ability to live safely and maintain their mental and physical health in the property. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a problem with the fabric of the building, for example the roof is leaking.
- a defective boiler, leaving your tenant without heating or hot water.
- a plumbing issue, meaning your tenant does not have washing or toilet facilities.
- white goods (if included in the tenancy), such as fridges or washing machines which have broken, meaning the tenant is unable to wash clothes or store food safely.
- a security-critical problem, such as a broken external door allowing access to intruders.
- equipment a disabled person relies on requires installation or repair.

Are you an accredited landlord?

Becoming an accredited landlord with the Cheshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme (CLAS) makes good business sense as it shows both tenants and prospective tenants that you are a good landlord who wishes to house your tenants in a good home.

Don't wait! Why not 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>

Empty Homes

How you as a landlord can help us bring 900 long term empty homes back into use by 2021

Conversion Grant Update

This financial year sees significant changes to the amount of grant available to landlords when accessing the Conversion Grant. Landlords can now apply for a grant covering 50% of the cost of the eligible works up to a maximum of £15,000 per self-contained unit of accommodation, with a maximum of £75,000 per overall scheme.

That's an increase of £5,000 per unit and £25,000 per development that's not all though, the grant is non repayable unless a condition is breached.

For more information on how you can access a Conversion Grant contact a member of our Empty Homes Team at: emptyhomes@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

If you think you can help, why not contact the Council's Empty Homes Team by emailing: emptyhomes@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.



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.

Ban on evictions extended by 2 months to further protect renters

The Housing Secretary announced on 5 June 2020 that the Government will be extending the suspension of new evictions until 23 August. This takes the moratorium on evictions to a total of 5 months which the Government says will ensure that renters continue to have certainty and security during the Coronavirus pandemic. The Government has stated that where tenants do experience financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic, that landlords and tenants should work

together and exhaust all possible options – such as flexible payment plans which take into account a tenant's individual circumstances – to ensure cases only end up in court as an absolute last resort. For more information about the extension to the ban on evictions please visit: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ban-on-evictions-extended-by-2-months-to-further-protect-renters?utm_source=7ddbe357-8c11-4311-b527-d32a462f5a09&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

Provisional date for November **Landlord Forum**

Sadly due to the Coronavirus and the lockdown measures we had to cancel the May 2020 Landlord Forum. Please be advised that we have provisionally booked Thursday 26 November 2020 as an alternative date for the Forum however, this will be dependent on the latest Government advice at the time.

Evictions (Universal Credit Claimants) Bill

This private members' bill, sponsored by Chris Stephens, seeks to place a duty on the Secretary of State to prevent the evictions of Universal Credit claimants in rent arrears. The bill is being prepared for publication. It received its first reading in the House of Commons on 10 February 2020 and is now due to receive its second reading on 29 January 2021.

Sublet Property (Offences) Bill

This private members' bill, sponsored by Sir Christopher Chope, would make the breach of certain rules relating to sub-letting rented accommodation a criminal offence and would make provision for criminal sanctions in respect of unauthorised sub-letting. The bill is being prepared for publication. It received its first reading on 10 February 2020 and is now scheduled to receive its second reading on 16 October 2020.

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. The Second reading has been postponed to a date to be announced.

Renters' concerns in coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency

On 13 May 2020 Generation Rent published the result of a survey of over 1,500 private and social renters as to how the coronavirus crisis was affecting them.

The survey found:

- 66 per cent of private renters are worried about paying their rent over the next six months.
- 15 per cent are already behind with rent payments.
- Two in five renters who have lost income have asked their landlord for a lower rent. Just 7 per cent of landlords have offered a rent reduction that did not have to be paid back.
- Over half (58 per cent) of renters are worried about eviction, despite the Government's temporary ban.

For the full report please click on the link below:

https://www.generationrent.org/relying_on_compensation_isn_t_working

Private renters and Covid-19: Joseph Rowntree Foundation research

On 4 June 2020 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published research finding that more than a third of furloughed private renters (37 per cent) – and almost a quarter of all private renters (23 per cent), rising to 31 per cent of households with children – are worried about being able to pay their rent when the coronavirus lockdown ends. The research indicates that if, as JRF considers likely, more workers lose their jobs in the coming months and are not be able to pay their rent, large numbers of people may need to rely on the social security system for support with their housing costs for the first time. The Foundation is calling for an increase in LHA to cover median rents in all areas, as well as the removal of the national cap on the amount of LHA that can be paid, so that it does not limit support in high-cost areas.



Housing Initiatives

New housing management service for landlords with vacant lets

Hello, we're ForHousing and we own and manage over 24,000 homes across the North West and deliver housing management services for Cheshire West and Chester Council. We have extensive experience of property management and work in partnership with the Council, supporting them to deliver their extended duties under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. We're committed to reducing homelessness across the area as well as delivering good quality housing management services.

We're now offering a 'fully managed' service to private landlords.

We will be working with ForFutures to offer homes to people who have a history of sleeping rough, helping them to maintain tenancies and remain independent and off the streets.

We're looking to work with private landlords who are also passionate about tackling homelessness and share our vision of improving people's lives.

Did you know?

- 85% of total homes in the area (157,920) are privately owned
- 4,413 empty homes were reported in October 2018
- Homelessness increased by 15% between 2017 and 2018

Why us?

- 10% management fee
- Guaranteed rent – regular payments will be made to you each month
- Court administration and attendance carried out for you
- Competitive rates for maintenance work through Liberty Services
- All compliance / safety checks can be carried out for you (charges apply) including; Gas Safety, Electrical Safety, Legionella, Fire Safety etc.
- Person centred wrap around support for tenants to help them set up benefits claims / set up bills etc.
- Regular Housing Officer visits to ensure the property is maintained
- Inventory, right to rent checks, arrears management, tenancy agreements generated and signed - all included within the management fee – no additional admin fees.

What type of tenancies and homes are we looking for?

- 1 bed self-contained homes such as flats or bungalows
- 2 bedroom homes either flats or houses

Interested

If you think you have a home suitable or would like to hear more about our management service, contact our team.

Email: laura.rosenberg@forhousing.co.uk

Phone: 0151 3732512 / 07587 668616

We look forward to working with you.

ForHousing

First-time gas central heating system funding

Landlords with an eligible tenant may be able to benefit from Cheshire West and Chester's Warm Homes funding which offers the installation of a first-time gas central heating system, including pipework, radiators, gas connection and boiler, for £1,000.

Cheshire West and Chester Council, in partnership with Cheshire East Council and Warrington Council, has been successful in securing funding for the installation of first-time gas central heating systems to eligible households across the Cheshire region.

To be considered for the scheme, tenants and their homes must meet the following criteria:

1) Eligibility of the person(s):

Receive qualifying benefits such as Warm Home Discount, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support, or Universal Credit.

Or

Have a low household income and high energy costs, or those with a low household income and

are vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home, such as those with long-term health conditions, under 5's and over 65's.

(A low household income for a home with children is set at £26,000 or less after tax, per year. Low household income for a home with no children is set at £20,000 or less after tax, per year: and in both cases, savings of £8,000 or less.)

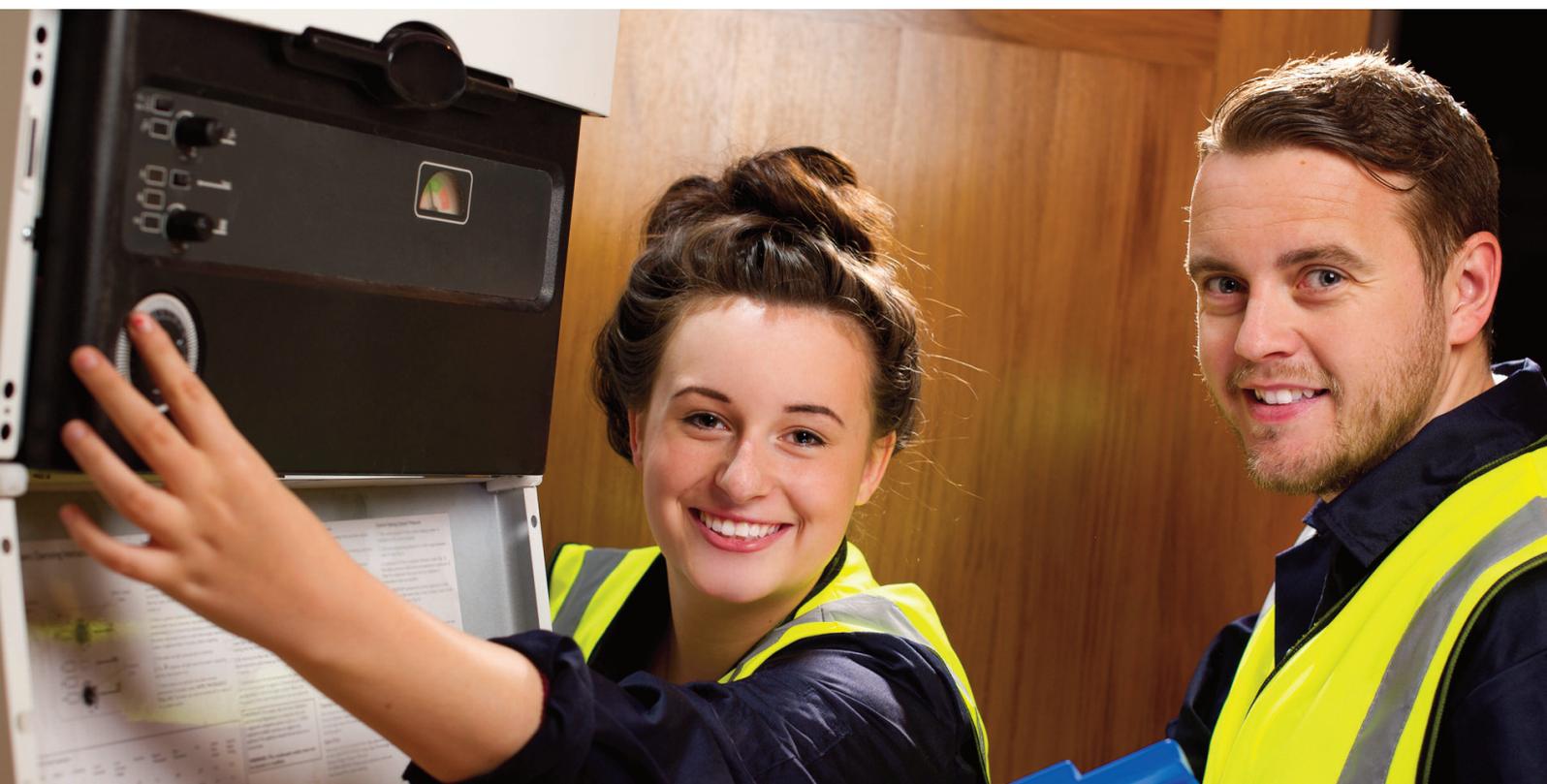
2) Eligibility of the home:

All properties supported by the scheme will have either: no central heating system, existing solid fuel, storage heating or room heaters, and meet the following:

- The property is located in an urban area
- Mains gas is not used as the primary heating fuel
- The current heating source is broken, uneconomical to fix or inefficient
- The property is close to a gas main

The scheme is being administered on the Council's behalf by Broad Oak Properties Ltd.

For further information on the scheme or to check eligibility, please contact Clare at Broad Oak Properties on 01782 983 294 or email clare.t@broadoakproperties.com



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.