

ARTICLE FOR SHEFFIELD PROPERTY GUIDE RENTED FOCUS – 10.12.09

From Taylor&Emmet LLP

By ROB COOKE

In his last column, Rob Cooke touched upon the Sheffield Responsible Landlord Scheme. This month, he is picking up where he left off by looking in more detail at the programme run by the city council, which aims to improve standards of rented accommodation in the private sector...

Why was Sheffield Responsible Landlords Scheme developed?

People become landlords for many different reasons. Some may inherit a property, while others decide to rent out a house they cannot sell. Whatever the reason, it is important that landlords are aware of the specific legislation that affects them and that they understand their rights and responsibilities, as well as those of their tenants.

The quality of rented accommodation varies greatly and, whilst Sheffield City Council knows that most landlords are doing a good job, they introduced the Responsible Landlords Scheme to establish a basic set of physical and management standards for private housing, incorporating a degree of fire safety.

What are the aims of the scheme?

The Responsible Landlords Scheme aims to:

- Encourage landlords to manage their properties to the highest possible standards.
- Allow tenants to make informed choices about accommodation, secure in the knowledge that a property in the scheme will be of a decent standard.
- Recognise good practices and responsible letting by landlords who are providing good quality accommodation.
- Improve the standard of all private sector rented accommodation.
- Improve and promote the image of the private rented sector.

- Offer benefits to landlords to encourage them to provide good quality accommodation and ensure their properties meet the standards set out in the scheme's management code.

What are the benefits for landlords?

Sheffield City Council offers the following benefits to members of the scheme:

- Full advice and information to help landlords meet the scheme's requirements.
- An official certificate, membership card and welcome pack from the council, which confirms participation in the scheme.
- Inclusion in an advertising list displayed in the Property Shop and the universities, if the landlord is registered with them.
- A quarterly newsletter.
- Access to the council's refuse collection sites, free of charge.
- A list of discounts and concessions from various companies.
- Use of the Responsible Landlords Scheme logo.
- An invitation to landlord meetings and the annual Landlord Expo event.
- Free property inspections prior to membership if required.

Does membership of the scheme cost anything?

There is no charge for landlords applying for membership.

What are the conditions of the Responsible Landlords Scheme?

For landlords to be accepted onto the register, they must certify that their property meets minimum physical standards and complete a 'fit and proper' check.

Landlords must:

- Declare the properties they wish to include on the scheme register.
- Meet specified 'fit and proper' qualifying criteria.
- Undertake to manage each property in accordance with the scheme's standards.

- Notify Sheffield City Council in writing if any changes are made to the property, its ownership or management.

How do I apply for membership?

The Responsible Landlords Scheme relies on self-certification by the landlord and membership can be obtained by completing an application form.

Inclusion on the list does not signify that Sheffield City Council approves a landlord or property. They hold no responsibility for the accuracy of the statements made by landlords in respect of physical standards or their management code of compliance.

How can I obtain further information about the scheme?

For further information about the Responsible Landlords Scheme, contact Dennis Tester of the Supporting Landlords Team at Sheffield City Council, Howden House, 1 Union Street, Sheffield S1 2SH. Telephone (0114) 273 5134 or email: rls@sheffield.gov.uk. An application form and details of the scheme can be downloaded from www.sheffield.gov.uk/rls

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