

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Private Rented Sector Accreditation Scheme

January 2010

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Northumberland County Council
Private Rented Sector Accreditation Scheme

1.0 What is the Northumberland County Council Private Rented Sector Accreditation Scheme?

The Accreditation Scheme is an important initiative between the Council and private landlords/agents, to raise standards and recognise good practice in the private rented sector. It is a voluntary scheme that provides recognition to landlords and letting agents who take a responsible approach to property management.

The scheme has been revised following the launch of the pilot South East Northumberland Landlords Accreditation Scheme (2008).

The aims of the scheme are to:

- Recognise landlords who provide good quality rented accommodation within the county of Northumberland,
- Improve liaison and communication between landlords and the County Council and
- Promote good practice in the rented sector.

A landlord who successfully applies to participate in the Scheme will be issued with an Accredited Property Certificate, which they can display in their property. The landlord will be entitled to use the Accreditation Scheme logo on personal letterheads and in publicity material giving a possible marketing advantage for their properties.

Properties within a landlord's portfolio that do not comply with Scheme conditions at the date of application will be given time for works to be carried out, the timescale being determined by negotiation between the landlord and Northumberland County Council (NCC). The property can not be accredited until such time as the work is completed.

The landlord has the right to exclude certain properties from the Accreditation Scheme, but it is expected that all properties held by a landlord will comply with all the basic legal standards and come forward for accreditation within a reasonable timeframe of the first property being accredited.

Compliance with the scheme conditions is based primarily on inspection of properties by an Officer within the Housing Services - Existing Stock Team of NCC, obtaining specialist advice from the NCC Environmental Health Team, when necessary.

Managing and letting agents are encouraged to participate in the scheme, as are Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and charity organisations that provide rented accommodation. Throughout this document any reference to landlords includes managing/letting agents, RSLs and charity organisations.

A record of all accredited landlords shall be maintained by NCC. Data from this record shall only be released to a third party upon request if permission has been given by all parties.

2.0 Objectives of the scheme.

- To improve and promote the condition of private sector rented housing in Northumberland.
- To actively promote good standards of management and best practice by landlords.
- To provide tenants with confidence in the quality and management of the accommodation they are renting.
- To encourage good communication and working partnerships with all interested parties.
- To raise awareness and promote good practices in the private rented sector.
- To assist landlords and tenants to fulfil their responsibilities with regard to rented accommodation.
- To recognise and encourage landlords who are prepared to provide good quality accommodation.
- To enable landlords and tenants to obtain better access to information and advice.
- To help landlords find responsible tenants.
- To improve liaison and communication between landlords and NCC.
- To improve and promote the public image of the private rented sector.
- To reduce disputes and misunderstandings between landlords and tenants.
- To work with landlords, tenants and other partners to reduce crime and disorder.

3.0 Partners in the scheme

The scheme involves a number of partners working together to improve the quality of housing within the county of Northumberland.

These partners include:

- Landlords
- Tenants
- National Landlords Association
- Various sections within NCC
- Housing Providers
- The Rent Service

Each of these partners has different responsibilities. NCC have responsibility for the administration of the scheme, while the landlord has responsibility for providing and maintaining their accommodation at the standards required by the scheme. The NLA are on hand to provide their member landlords with a range of advice, information, support and services where necessary.

4.0 What are the conditions and standards of the scheme?

4.01 Management Standards

To gain accreditation a landlord must comply with the required standards as attached in Appendix 1 of this document. A landlord is expected to ensure that all of their properties are maintained at the required standards in respect of management.

An accredited landlord shall ensure that all properties participating in the scheme, whether it be a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), flat, single dwelling or other such category of property, meets the requirements of the scheme.

Where a property falls outside the required standards the landlord shall ensure that they are working towards compliance in consultation with NCC.

4.02 Property Standards

To gain accreditation status a landlord must ensure that their property complies with the property standards attached in Appendix 2. A landlord shall ensure that any property under their control is maintained at the required standards in respect of freedom from hazards, and repairs.

If a property does not meet the required standards a programme of works will be agreed with the landlord allowing sufficient time for improvements to be made. This time period will in no circumstances exceed two years. A property can not be accredited until it meets the required standard.

5.0 What are the benefits of the Accreditation Scheme to Landlords?

- Access to cost effective NCC approved services such as repairs, installation of appliances, finding a tenant, advertising through Northumberland Homefinder.
- Provision of tenancy information and basic legal advice to parties either through a designated forum or upon direct request.
- A personalised certificate of accreditation which landlords and tenants can display to show compliance with the scheme.
- Accreditation logo can be used by landlords on personal letterheads and in publicity material giving a possible marketing advantage for their properties.
- Positive promotion of the private rented sector by NCC.
- Specialist personal professional advice on housing standards from NCC's Environmental Health / Existing Stock Team.
- Provision of a dedicated accredited landlords email address for use on all Council related issues such as housing benefit/Local Housing Allowance.
- Advertising and promotion of the scheme by NCC recommending prospective tenants to seek out accredited properties.

- Development sessions on matters that are essential for landlords to know and also current topical matters.
- Regular Landlord Forums/ meetings.
- Being a consultee of NCC on matters of policy relating to the interests of the private rented sector.
- Support in dealing with anti-social behaviour/tenants with a dedicated Safer Communities Team for the Private Sector.

Other benefits may be available if you qualify for free membership to the NLA

- Provision of discounts on services including trade, insurance, tax & legal issues.
- Provision of discounts on Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd
- Free tax investigation insurance through NLA membership.
- Access to the bi-monthly journal, “UK Landlord” that offers in-depth analysis on current issues that affect the private-rented sector.
- Access to the website member’s area that includes a comprehensive list of fact sheets and forms.
- Access to development programmes that enable landlords to further their knowledge of the sector through one-day courses, online professional development and a Landlord Development Manual.
- Full access to NLA telephone advice line that offers members expert assistance from a team of experienced landlords on all forms of enquiries.

6.0 Management of the Scheme

NCC’s Housing Services Section has responsibility for the general administration of this scheme. They will however work in partnership with Housing Providers across Northumberland.

NCC’s Housing Services Section:-

- Administer and monitor the accreditation scheme.
- Provide dedicated officers for direct contact with landlords and tenants.
- Assist landlords in achieving accreditation status, by providing advice as necessary, including the supply of documentation in respect of standards, if required.
- Provide information and advice on changes in legislation and best practice.
- Check compliance with scheme standards and gain feedback from all participating bodies.

- Maintain a record/database of accredited properties and landlords. They will gain the permission of relevant parties for the release of this information only in relation to the administration of the scheme.
- Have responsibility for issuing certification of accredited status for landlords.
- Have responsibility for the suspension and revocation of accredited status of landlords. Subject to the agreed procedures of the scheme resolution service.
- Raise awareness and offer signposting to free advice on energy efficiency measures.
- Assist landlords in relation to Housing Benefit matters.
- Monitor the progress and success of the scheme and inform the partners of any findings through the Steering Group with regular meetings and forums and will implement changes, which the Steering Group has agreed.
- Promote and publicise the scheme and its advantages in consultation with its partners.
- Promote the accreditation scheme across its geographical area.

7.0 Administration of the Scheme

- Landlord applications must be made by the landlord on an approved application form. An application form is attached in Appendix 4.
- Landlords applying to join the scheme will be subject a fit and proper persons check where necessary

8.0 Code of Standards

The Scheme contains the Code of Standards for private renting in our area. This is largely based on current accreditation schemes; legislative requirements and good practice.

The Code of Standards aims to help landlords and tenants by promoting good practice and awareness of both landlord and tenant responsibilities.

The Code is divided into two key sections:-

- Management Standards
- Property Standards

Management Standards are divided into 6 broad categories:-

- General Conduct
- Before sign up
- During the Tenancy
- End of Tenancy
- Empty Properties
- Complaints/Non compliance with the Code of Standards

Property standards are divided into specific categories and can be viewed in Appendix 2 below. They also cover standards required by legislation. When a landlord puts a property forward for accreditation an inspection will be carried out based on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to ensure properties are free from any avoidable or unnecessary hazards.

9.0 Compliance with the Code of Standards

To become a member of the Accreditation Scheme landlords must agree to the Code of Standards which sets out the management and property standards expected of landlords and / or their lettings agents. Landlords sign a declaration at application stage to confirm that they will comply with those standards and guidelines.

9.01 Compliance

Compliance with the Code of Standards will be spot checked by the Council. These checks will take the form of selective property inspections, interviews with tenants; spot checking tenancy agreements, safety certificates (gas and electric) and Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and the property will be re-inspected after 3 years.

9.02 Non compliance with Code of Standards

Complaints regarding non-compliance of the Scheme by a landlord must be in writing and clearly state:

- What breach of the Code has been made
- Any steps taken to bring this breach to the landlord / agents notice
- An indication of the timescale involved concerning a particular problem and
- Contact details for the person making the complaint.

Upon receipt of the complaint the Scheme will acknowledge the correspondence and check that it fulfils the above criteria.

The landlord or letting agent of the property will be written to, informing them of the complaint and giving them 7 working days in which to respond.

It is expected that reporting a complaint will lead to the landlord or letting agent taking any necessary remedial action immediately.

Where an alleged breach of the Code has been reported to the Scheme and is being investigated, landlords and letting agents will co operate with the investigation.

Following the investigation, where reasonable recommendations to rectify an apparent breach have been made, the landlord will comply with these recommendations.

Sanctions available to the Scheme include:

- To recommend that the member apologises, in writing, to the appropriate person for the relevant conduct, action or omission
- To recommend to the parties other, more appropriate ways of resolving the complaint or dispute including mediation
- To suspend the member from membership of the Scheme
- To remove the landlord from the Scheme

9.03 Rights of Appeal

Landlords have a right of appeal if they consider any complaints against them to be incorrect. They must write to the Scheme explaining why they feel that the complaint was incorrect and provide any evidence to support this. The appeal will be considered and the landlord has the right to meet with the officer responsible for appeals to discuss their appeal and put their case forward. A decision regarding all evidence received will be considered and the landlord will be notified in writing of the outcome. A letter will also be sent to the complainant.

9.04 Breaches of the Code

The types of breaches of the Code fall into two categories: - Persistent Problems and Serious Management Problems

Persistent Problems

This category covers persistent minor management problems, or minor breaches of the physical standards, for example:-

- Failure to repair a broken door
- Properties not ready at the start of a tenancy

If it is confirmed that the landlord or letting agent has consistently failed to comply with the Code of Standards, the landlord will be given between 7-28 days to correct the problem, depending upon its seriousness.

Serious Management Problems

This category covers serious management problems or serious breaches of the physical standards, for example:-

- Harassment, assault or illegal eviction
- Serious breaches of the physical standards such as failure to deal with or rectify problems within 24 hours where there is imminent risk to health
- Failure to carry out safety inspections (gas, electricity).

Following investigation a response from the landlord or letting agent will be required within 7 days. The Scheme may also decide to pass the complaint over to other authorities including Environmental Health, Community Safety, Police or Fire and Rescue Service.

9.05 Removal from the Scheme

Failure to respond to complaints or to comply with the recommendations in a reasonable and satisfactory manner may constitute grounds for disqualifying a landlord or letting agent from the Scheme, as compliance with the Code of Standards is a condition of the Scheme.

Any unlawful action by a landlord and / or their letting agent may constitute grounds for disqualification from the Scheme.

The landlord will be notified of this in writing within 7 working days of a decision being made. A landlord who is removed from the Scheme will no longer be a participant of, or eligible for, any of the benefits of the Scheme.

The Scheme will consider reinstatement of accreditation status if the landlord is able to demonstrate that following remedial action they are capable of meeting the requirements of the Scheme.

MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

General Conduct	
Equality & Diversity	<p>Northumberland County Council is committed to treating everyone fairly, and strives to achieve equality for the diverse mix of communities that make up the county of Northumberland.</p> <p>The County Council aims to promote an inclusive community in Northumberland and is committed to ensuring all council services are accessible and their provision is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination. We want our services to be sensitive to the needs of everyone who uses them.</p> <p>To make this happen the Council has approved an Equality and Diversity Policy which can be viewed at http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1285 or contact Irene Fisher, Policy Officer on 01670 533082 or 0845 6006400 for a copy.</p> <p>A landlord must act in accordance with Equality & Diversity policy set out by the County Council.</p>
Fit and Proper Person	A landlord must be a fit and proper person or in the case of a company, it shall be managed in a fit and proper manner. Suitable references or checks may be carried out where necessary.
HMO Licensing	A landlord must have made an application for an HMO licence for all of their licensable HMOs, and that those properties meet or will comply with licence conditions within agreed timescales to ensure compliance with the national minimum standards. More information can be obtained from The Public Protection Department of Environmental Health at NCC. Tel. 0845 600 6400 or found at http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=6323
Persons acting for the landlord	A landlord shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that any staff or persons acting on their behalf comply with the requirements of the Scheme. Landlords will be held responsible for the actions of any person acting on their behalf.
Code of Practice	A landlord is bound by the Code of Standards and by completing the application to join the scheme will agree to abide by this.
Buy to Let mortgages	Where a mortgage exists on a property landlords must have a buy to let mortgage or obtain the lenders consent to let (proof may be required)
Leasehold	If there is a leasehold on the property the terms of the lease must be checked and any consent obtained to let. (proof may be required)
Before Sign Up	
Tenancy Agreement	All tenancies shall be issued using a written tenancy

	<p>agreement. Such agreement shall be written in clear legible English and compliant with all legislative requirements and compliant with any code issued by the scheme manager /and landlord association.</p> <p>The name and current business address of the landlord/agent will be stated on the tenancy agreement together with the address and telephone numbers of any managing agent or person/s acting on behalf of the landlord.</p> <p>The landlord shall abide by all requirements of the tenancy agreement.</p> <p>The Tenancy Agreement will be available for inspection by the NCC's Existing Stock Team upon request.</p>
Provision of information: Rent:	<p>Prospective tenants will be issued with a clear statement of the rent due to be paid, including the dates, amounts and method of payment due to be made during the letting contract.</p> <p>Landlords must ensure a receipt is given for all rent payments and clearly outline any arrears.</p>
Deposits	<p>Any deposit taken which is legally required to be protected, must be so protected in a government approved scheme within 14 days of receiving it. The landlord will comply with the legislative requirements and scheme rules of the particular scheme</p> <p>Tenants are issued with clear written guidelines regarding the standard of cleaning and other arrangements for bringing the tenancy to an end so as to avoid misunderstandings regarding the standard of cleanliness and condition of the dwelling expected at the end of the tenancy.</p>
Inventory	<p>If a deposit is taken at the beginning of a new tenancy a landlord should carry out a detailed inventory. If possible this shall be carried out in the presence of the new tenant.</p> <p>(The inventory can be written or other appropriate form of record taken e.g. video/photographic)</p> <p>All parties will acknowledge any inventory as a true record and this shall be recorded.</p> <p>On completion of the tenancy such an inventory shall be checked. If possible in the presence of the tenant.</p> <p>All agreements made on matters within the inventory should be noted and acknowledged by both parties.</p>
Useful Information	<p>Landlords will provide a copy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas/Electrical safety certificate • Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) • Building insurance

	<p>Landlords will ensure that all tenants are provided with adequate advice and guidance about how to use any appliances provided in the property and advise on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refuse collection arrangements • contact details of yourself or a managing agent • emergency contact arrangements
During the Tenancy	
Access and Tenancy Privacy	<p>If access is required by the landlord to tenant's accommodation for the purpose of routine inspection/repairs/ maintenance, the landlord shall notify the tenant/s of the date, time and purpose of the visit.</p> <p>The tenant's privacy and entitlement to no unnecessary intrusion should be respected at all times.</p> <p>Such notification shall not be less than 24 hours in advance of the required date/time, unless otherwise agreed, and except where such notification would render the purpose of the visit impracticable.</p>
Fairness of conduct and exchange of information	<p>A landlord must ensure that all actions taken by them or their representatives are carried out in a fair and reasonable manner.</p> <p>Relevant information shall be given either verbally or in writing as appropriate to tenants to advise them of all actions that are to be taken by the landlord.</p>
Property Compliance	<p>A landlord shall ensure that properties under their control comply with all scheme requirements, as shown in Appendix 2 or agree with NCC a timescale to bring such properties up to the required standards.</p>
Management Plan	<p>A landlord shall ensure that all properties under their control are maintained in a fit and proper state that will ensure the safety of tenants and compliance with the requirements of this scheme.</p> <p>Periodic maintenance tasks which are the responsibility of the landlord, should be carried out in a planned and professional manner and should be carried out with due regard to the convenience of tenants.</p>
Utility Charges and Service Charges	<p>Any charges for utilities must comply with current legislation. The landlord shall ensure that a tenant is clearly informed as to who is responsible for the payment of all utility charges and Council Tax and that this responsibility is stated at the start of the tenancy.</p> <p>Information regarding the payment of utility bills may be shared between landlords and the utilities within the principles of the Data Protection Act.</p>
Prevention of Homelessness	<p>Prior to serving notice to the tenant the Landlords should agree to contact the local housing team to inform them, providing them with the opportunity to offer alternative options. The aim of this it to help prevent homelessness where possible The prevention of homelessness process</p>

	should be followed. (Appendix 3)
End of Tenancy	
Deposits	Once fully receipted invoice accounts have been provided by tenants, all deposits (or balances on deposits) shall be returned to tenants within any timescale agreed in the tenancy or an explanation provided as to why a variation may need to be the case.
Change of occupancy	Advise the local authority (Council Tax/Housing Benefits) and utility companies, where necessary of any change in occupation
Empty Properties	
Rubbish accumulation & Security	Landlords will check the property regularly to ensure it is secure, free from external rubbish and infestation and the fabric of the property is sound. Landlords will promptly respond to re-secure a property if it becomes open to access and/or a danger to public health Failure to do so may result in NCC securing/removing rubbish and billing the landlords accordingly
Complaints/ Non compliance with the Code of Practice	
Complaint Procedure	In the case of complaint/dispute that cannot be resolved between the landlord and tenant, the matter can be referred to NCC for investigation under the Code of Practice as operated by NCC and a landlord will abide by any decision/s that are made.

PROPERTY STANDARDS

<p>Freedom from hazards:</p>	<p>All property will comply with the legislative standards. Properties and boundaries are maintained, as reasonably practicable, free of any avoidable or unnecessary hazards based on the criteria set out in the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (see the Hazard Profile Appendix 5 at the end of this document).</p>
<p>Overcrowding</p>	<p>The property will not be overcrowded and will comply with all current standards Full details of the legal requirements can be obtained from NCC's Public Protection Department of the Environmental Health on Tel 0845 600 6400 or ask@northumberland.gov.uk</p>
<p>Fire Safety Multiple Occupancy</p>	<p><u>For : Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO):</u> HMOs are provided with fire safety measures in accordance with current legislation.</p> <p>The property must meet the minimum standards as set out in legislation and guidance.</p> <p>Full details of the legal requirements can be obtained from NCC's Public Protection Department of Environmental Health on Tel 0845 600 6400 or ask@northumberland.gov.uk</p> <p>All installed equipment must meet the relevant British Standard and be properly maintained in a sound functional condition.</p> <p>Safety certificates (where legally required) are to be obtained by the landlord and will be kept for a minimum period of five years.</p> <p>All safety certificates will be available for audit/inspection by NCC.</p>

<p>Fire Safety Single Occupancy</p>	<p><u>For: Non HMO Accommodation:</u></p> <p>The property must have as a minimum a functional smoke detector in the main hallway. For properties of 2 storeys and above, the accommodation shall be fitted with a functional smoke detector on each landing.</p> <p>It is recommended that a fire blanket and/ or 2 kg dry powder extinguisher must be provided in the kitchen.</p> <p>All installed equipment must meet the relevant British Standard and be properly maintained in a sound functional condition.</p>
<p>Fire Safety Exit Routes</p>	<p>All exit routes within a property such as hallways, landings and staircases, which are under the control of the landlord and as far as reasonably practical, will be maintained in a manner that ensures they are safe, unobstructed and free of fixtures and fittings to enable the evacuation of the property in the event of fire.</p>
<p>Gas safety Installations & equipment</p> <p>Gas Safety Certificates</p>	<p>All installations and equipment must meet current legal requirements for gas safety.</p> <p>Landlord Gas Safety Certificates (CP12) must be obtained annually following inspection by a tradesperson on the Gas Safe Register (formerly CORGI) and are to be kept for a minimum period of two years.</p> <p>All safety certificates will be available for inspection by the NCC's Existing Stock Team upon request.</p> <p>A copy of the certificate will be provided for the tenant or put on display in the property in a suitable communal area.</p> <p>Certificates must cover all the landlords' gas appliance in the premises.</p>
<p>Oil Fired Heating/ Appliances</p>	<p>Oil fired heating systems will be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.</p>
<p>Electrical Safety.</p> <p>Wiring installations and fixed mains appliances</p> <p>Safety Certification</p>	<p>All electrical installations /and landlord's appliances in the property are to comply with current legislative requirements and standards.</p> <p>All fixed mains appliances will be installed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and thereafter maintained.</p> <p>A valid electrical safety certificate/report must be made available upon entering the scheme.</p> <p>The safety certificate/ report should be issued, following inspection of the installation by a competent person.</p>

	<p>The certificate /report shall be valid for a period of 5 years unless otherwise specified by the competent person.</p> <p>All safety certificates will be available for inspection by the NCC's Existing Stock Team upon request.</p>
Safety of portable electrical equipment Portable Appliance Testing (PAT),	<p>Electrical appliances provided by the landlord as part of the tenancy should be safe and function correctly in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.</p> <p>All appliances should be checked visually for signs of wear and tear by the landlord prior to a new tenancy and at regular intervals, at least annually, during a tenancy period and all defects should be remedied.</p> <p>Compliance with this requirement can be achieved by use of Portable Appliance Testing (PAT).</p>
Security Measures	<p>External doors, windows and frames shall be of sound construction and be capable of being effectively secured.</p> <p>Whenever appropriate i.e. when windows and doors are replaced, the opportunity should be taken to improve the security of the property.</p> <p>Properties fitted with burglar alarm systems must have a 20 minute cut out and a key holder nominated. The police and the scheme manger shall be notified of the name and contact details for the key holder.</p> <p>Security lighting where fitted shall be suitably positioned to provide adequate lighting to steps pathway and yard areas. Consideration shall be given to reduce glare to neighbouring properties and passive infra red detectors shall be fitted.</p>
Heating	<p>Heating should be controllable by the occupants and safely and properly installed and maintained. It should be appropriate to the design, layout and construction, such that the whole of the dwelling can be adequately and efficiently heated.</p> <p>In multi-occupier buildings provision for space heating may be centrally controlled. Such systems should be operated to ensure occupants are not exposed to cold indoor temperatures and should be provided with controls to allow the occupants to regulate the temperature within their dwelling.</p> <p>Portable bottled gas or paraffin heaters will not be provided as a heating source.</p>
Energy Efficiency	<p>Structural thermal insulation should be provided to minimize heat loss and properties should be provided with a reasonable level of other energy efficiency</p>

	<p>measures.</p> <p>This is to include <u>as a minimum</u> hot water tank and exposed pipe lagging, loft insulation, (where practicable) draught proofing to doors and windows, these should be compliant with current standards.</p> <p>Energy efficiency improvements should be, where practicable, incorporated into refurbishment schemes. For further advice visit http://www.warmzones.co.uk and http://www.warmfront.co.uk/</p>
Utilities	Any charges for utilities made must comply with current legislation. Information regarding the payment of utility bills may be shared between landlords and the utilities within the principles of the Data Protection Act.
Furniture and furnishings	<p>All furniture and furnishings in the property and provided by the landlord are to be of safe construction and in a satisfactory condition at the commencement of a tenancy.</p> <p>All relevant furniture and furnishings shall comply with current Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations.</p>
Decoration	<p>The property should be of a good standard of decoration at the beginning of the tenancy.</p> <p>Areas for which the landlord has responsibility e.g. external paintwork and common parts should be maintained at a good standard throughout the letting period</p>
Visual Amenity of Area	<p>The visual appearance of properties, outbuildings, gardens and yards and boundaries shall be maintained in a reasonable state so as not to detract from the visual amenity of the area.</p> <p>(As far as this is practicable within the landlord's control)</p>
Building Insurance	<p>All property must have appropriate building insurance upon entering the scheme. This must cover third party liability.</p> <p>Insurance cover must be maintained for the period of letting of the property. Copies of insurance shall be available for inspection upon entering the scheme.</p> <p>Documents must be retained for a minimum period of 5 years and will be available for inspection by the NCC's Existing Stock Team upon request.</p>
Management Plan	All properties accredited under this scheme shall have in place suitable and sufficient systems to maintain the property in a fit and proper state that will ensure the

	<p>safety of tenants and continuing compliance with the requirements of this scheme</p> <p>Periodic maintenance tasks which are the responsibility of the landlord, should be carried out in a planned and cyclical manner and should be carried out with due regard to the convenience of tenants.</p>
Management	<p>Properties will be managed in accordance with the code of practice as issued by the accreditation scheme manager. This must be signed by the landlord on joining the scheme.</p>

PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS PROCESS

This purpose of this process is to prevent legal action being required within the private rented sector. As an accredited landlord you are required to work within the accreditation scheme Code of Standards to prevent the requirement for eviction.

The aim of this referral process is to demonstrate joint working and a joint commitment to prevent homelessness. It also demonstrates our joint commitment to support vulnerable households by working with them to help sustain their tenancies.

The key aims expected from this protocol are:

- Reduction in legal action
- Prevention of evictions
- Private tenant's awareness of how to conduct their tenancy
- Early identification of vulnerable households and their support needs
- Support provision to help with tenancy sustainability
- The delivery of effective partnership working
- Reduction in unplanned moves and repeat homelessness
- Preparation for move on accommodation if legal action is necessary

PROCEDURE

- Before serving a Notice to recover the property you are required to make a referral to the local authority housing team by email, telephone or in person. (It will be necessary for you to retain evidence of this)

**Northumberland County Council
Bedlington Council Offices
Front Street West
Bedlington
NE22 5TU
Tel: 0845 600 6400 or
Email: Kirsty.gilmartin@northumberland.gov.uk**

- Within 5 working days of making contact of the referral, the Homelessness Officer will arrange contact with the tenant to discuss the breach of tenancy with them and advise you regarding the outcome. Any details of the case may only be discussed with consent from the tenant. This may result in:-
 1. Tenant referral for money advice via Citizens Advice Bureau
 2. Tenant referral to other organisations to discuss specific support requirements due to vulnerability
 3. Written agreement from the tenant to modify their behaviour / resolve the breach
 4. Response to landlord that they proceed with legal action due to no contact or failure to engage with advice service.

- If Notice is served and court action is to be taken for eviction, the landlord must advise the Homelessness Officer at the local housing team giving details and estimated end of tenancy date.
- The Homelessness Officer will then contact the tenant to advise them that eviction action is being taken against them and provide them with early advice to enable them to find their own alternative accommodation.



Landlord Accreditation Scheme

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL RELEVANT SECTIONS IN CAPITAL LETTERS AND USING BLACK OR BLUE INK. PLEASE TICK RELEVANT BOX WHEN NECESSARY.

LANDLORD DETAILS:

TITLE:	FIRST NAME:	SURNAME:
DATE OF BIRTH:	BUSINESS NAME:	
ADDRESS:		
POST CODE:	EMAIL:	
TELEPHONE NO.	MOBILE NO.	

AGENT DETAILS: (if appropriate)

NAME:	
TELEPHONE NO:	FAX NO:
ADDRESS:	
POST CODE:	EMAIL:

PLEASE CONTACT

LANDLORD	<input type="checkbox"/>
----------	--------------------------

AGENT	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 TO ARRANGE INSPECTION.

PROPERTY DETAILS:

ADDRESS:

PROPERTY TYPE:	HOUSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	UPPER FLAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	LOWER FLAT	<input type="checkbox"/>
OTHER: <input type="text"/>						

IS THE PROPERTY CURRENTLY TENANTED?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
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NUMBER OF TENANTS	<input type="text"/>
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IF NO. HOW LONG HAS THE PROPERTY BEEN EMPTY?	
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NB - If the property is tenanted, upon arrangement of the inspection appointment, you will need to ensure that your tenant is given the appropriate notice under the terms of their tenancy agreement confirming that access to the property is required.

PLEASE LIST ALL OTHER PROPERTIES YOU MANAGE OR OWN:

(Please use a separate sheet if necessary)

Please enclose the following for the property requiring accreditation:

- ✓ a copy of the current Gas Safety Certificate
- ✓ a copy of the Buildings Insurance Certificate
- ✓ a copy of the Electrical Safety Certificate
- ✓ a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- ✓ Confirmation of buy to let mortgage/permissions from mortgage lender
- ✓ a copy of Permission from freeholder to sublet (where necessary)

DECLARATION:
 I wish to apply to join the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and confirm that I will comply with all of the property and management standards required by the scheme and. act in accordance with the Equality & Diversity policy set out by the County Council.

I confirm that I am a fit and proper person to be accredited. I, nor any person associated or formerly associated with me, have any unspent convictions that are relevant to my application as defined by the Housing Act 2004. By signing I authorise any checks to be undertaken where necessary.

SIGNED: _____ PRINT NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Accredited properties and landlord details may be publicised by Northumberland County Council to assist you in successfully letting the property but if you do **NOT** want your details publicised please tick here.

Please complete and return this form and the necessary enclosures to:
 Victoria Ledger
 Northumberland County Council
 Housing Services
 Front Street West
 Bedlington
 NE22 5TU

Phone: 01670 623053



THE HAZARD PROFILE

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a method of risk assessing hazards that may be found in residential accommodation. Landlords should ensure that their properties and boundaries are maintained, as reasonably practicable, and free of any avoidable or unnecessary hazards as listed in the table below. Inspections to properties will be carried out based on the HHSRS.

PHYSIOLOGICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	INFECTION	ACCIDENTS
Damp & mould growth	Crowding and space	Domestic hygiene, pests & refuse	Falling between levels
Excess cold	Lighting	Personal hygiene sanitation & drainage	Falls associated with baths etc
Excess heat	Noise	Food safety	Falling on level surfaces
Volatile Organic Compounds	Entry by intruders	Water supply	Falling on stairs
Biocides			Electrical hazards
Lead			Flames, hot surfaces
Asbestos & manufactured mineral fibres			Structural collapse and falling elements
Carbon Monoxide & fuel combustion products			Position & operability of amenities
Uncombusted fuel gas			Fire
Radiation			Explosions
			Collision and entrapment

If you require this document in an alternative format (Braille, Large Print, Audiotape, etc), please contact Communications on 01670 533208.