

Private Landlord Newsletter

Central
Bedfordshire

from Central Bedfordshire Council

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New grants for Landlords to make their properties warmer and cheaper to heat.

The Green Deal Home Improvement Fund (GDHIF) is a new incentive scheme open to landlords in England and Wales who want to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. There are different finance options available including up to £1000.00 off a new gas boiler, fan assisted storage heaters, wall/floor/loft insulation, double / triple glazing, insulated external doors or up to £6000.00 off solid wall insulation for older properties.

Landlords will not be tied to the green deal and it's associated complications and can choose to privately finance measures themselves and claim back the cash from the government.

For further details, please click this [factsheet](#)

The Energy Act 2011 - minimum energy standards for Landlords

The Energy Act 2011 contains a number of provisions which will affect owners and occupiers of property. Probably most significant are the proposed minimum energy standards.

From April 2018, the proposed legislative changes would make it unlawful to let residential or commercial properties with an EPC Rating of E or G (i.e. the lowest 2

grades of energy efficiency).

This could have very significant implications for landlords who are encouraged to take advantage of discounted offers such as Green Deal Home Improvement Fund.

Landlords follow carbon monoxide (CO) advice

The Government recently commissioned a survey to find out if landlords usually provide carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in their properties.

At present this is recommended good practice rather than a legal requirement, although the Government is considering bringing in legislation to require CO detectors.

The survey results show that nearly 60% of landlords have installed CO alarms.

Out of the 40% that hadn't many didn't have any gas appliances in their properties, so a CO alarm was not required.

Remember as well as having an annual gas safety check, you should also ensure that your gas appliances are regularly serviced. Poorly serviced gas appliances can cause gas leaks, fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Houses in multiple occupation and fire safety– a plain English recap

A house in multiple occupation (HMO) means a building or part of a building (such as a flat), which is occupied by more than one household. The legal definition is lengthy (see the Housing Act 2004 section 254-260) but it includes:

1. Part-converted buildings that contain one or more self-contained units as well as others which share facilities
2. Buildings converted into self-contained flats and not converted to the standard set by the Building Regulations 1991 and where two thirds or less are owner occupied
3. Houses or flats divided into separate units but with some sharing of facilities
4. Houses and flats that are shared by more than two unrelated people

All HMOs must:-

- Be free from serious hazards (assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.) This includes fire safety and heating
- Meet the requirements of the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006. Managers are under an ongoing duty to ensure that this is the case
- Meet the bedroom floor-space standards set by the Council

HMO licensing applies only to some HMOs. Three storey properties with five or more

licence. The landlord must make an HMO application if one is needed.

For further information, please click on our [landlords guide](#) for landlords, managers and tenants or [email](#) Private Sector Housing

Landlord Fire Safety reminder

In addition to the requirements under the Housing Act 2004, there are duties on landlords under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which requires a responsible person to carry out a "suitable and sufficient" assessment of the risks on the premises within the common parts (i.e. stairwells/kitchens etc).

Bedfordshire & Luton Fire and Rescue Service require landlords of HMOs to complete a fire safety risk assessment and may ask you to provide this type of documentation. If you are not sure about what you need to do you can go to their [website](#)

By clicking onto the 'Business Fire Safety' tab on the front screen, then clicking onto 'Fire Risk Assessment', and then onto the 'how to complete a risk assessment' link you can find a template and a worked example which will help you through the process.



Review and update of Homelessness Strategy

During the summer, the Council will be consulting upon a review of the Homelessness Strategy, with a view to proving a new strategy before the end of 2014. There have been many changes around housing, including Welfare Reform and changes brought about by the Localism Act 2011. Customer demand is growing and the Council needs to consider solutions and options with stakeholders.

Landlords' Forum members will be advised specifically when the consultation period begins so that landlords and letting agents can contribute to the develop of Homelessness Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Policy to discharge Homelessness Duty to a suitable property

The Localism Act 2011 enables the Council to discharge its Homelessness Duty to a "suitable" private rented sector property. The draft Policy to discharge Homelessness Duty to a suitable property outlines what the Council considers to be a suitable property and also contains criteria that will make a property unsuitable. The draft policy includes suitability criteria for both private rented sector and social rented homes (where a Direct Let might be considered). The draft policy is being

presented to Council Members of Overview and Scrutiny on 28th July 2014, and presented to the Council's Executive in August for approval.

Approval of this policy will mean that the Council will need to work more closely with private landlords and letting agents to identify suitable and affordable homes, where homeless applicants could be accommodated.

The draft policy proposes that the Council could discharge duty outside of Central Bedfordshire but only to neighbouring authorities.

Central Bedfordshire Council's new Allocations Policy

On 27th May 2014, the Council's Executive approved a new Allocations Policy, which sets how social housing in Central Bedfordshire will be allocated. It is anticipated that the policy will be implemented in autumn 2014.

The new policy utilises the freedoms of the Localism Act to meet local priorities. Key features of the new policy include the following:

- a) Restricting access to the Housing Register only to households in housing need,
- b) Introduces a priority for households in full time work as part of the Council's approach to incentivising people into employment,
- c) Restricting access to the register to households that have residing in Central Bedfordshire for at least three years, or who have been working in Central Bedfordshire Council for at least six months,
- d) Allowing some working households in the private rented sector, who are struggling paying their rent, to apply to the Housing Register.

As the new policy is significantly different to the existing policy, many changes need to be implemented to ensure that the policy is introduced effectively. This includes clear communication to everyone affected.

Please contact Rupert Brandon, Interim Lead Officer for Housing Needs via email

rupert.brandon@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

or telephone 0300 300 6280 if you would like to discuss

Further reading

[Proposed changes to private rented sector house of commons debates](#)

Date for you diary!

Private Landlords' Forum – Wednesday 25 June 2014 Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ 6.15pm until 8.00pm.

The event speakers include **Nick Costin** Head of Housing Solutions who will be talking about the recent Council Housing Services restructure, **Faye Edwards-Miller** of Climate Energy who will be discussing landlord energy grants and **Brett Warren** Environmental Health Officer who will be talking about s.215 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Contact us

Any questions or comments? Email PSH@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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