

Central Bedfordshire Property Accreditation Scheme

Overview

Central Bedfordshire Property Accreditation Scheme - Overview

Introduction

This scheme has been formulated by Central Bedfordshire Council following consultation with landlords, lettings agents and Members of the Council in 2012. The Council is committed to improving the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector and will work with private landlords and lettings agents to achieve this. This Property Accreditation scheme provides recognition for good quality rented accommodation and provides incentives for property owners to meet accreditation standards. The scheme is based upon one developed in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire following guidelines set out by the Accreditation Network – UK. It is aligned with the Housing Health and Safety Rating Standards contained within the Housing Act 2004, Government guidance, and the Decent Homes standards.

Aim of Scheme

The aim of this scheme is to

- Enable good quality homes for private sector tenants by working with landlords to ensure reasonable standards of accommodation and management are maintained.

This supports Central Bedfordshire Council's priority of;

- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable

Scheme Objectives

The objectives of this Scheme are:-

1. To raise standards in privately rented accommodation.
2. To raise tenant and landlord awareness about the standards required in privately rented accommodation.
3. To enable tenants to gain access to good quality accommodation.
4. To provide guidance for accreditation officers, landlords and tenants

What can the scheme offer landlords and lettings agents?

The Council recognises that there must be a range of benefits for property owners that will encourage applications to accredit rented properties. The following incentives are offered to owners of accredited properties. Landlords do not have to make use of the incentives.

1. Accredited Property Certificate for display within the property (with additional copies for landlords to provide prospective tenants). The certificate will have clear Central Bedfordshire Council branding.
2. A landlord's information pack containing helpful information about the Council and other agencies who might provide advice and assistance.
3. Fast track entry to the Council's Lets Rent scheme.
4. Listing of accredited property on the Council's website and accompanying landlord's contact details.
5. Access to wider range of Home Improvement Loan Assistance packages including the standard version for improving properties beyond the basic legal minimum standard as well as an enhanced version to help non-complying properties reach the required standard. The enhanced version would require the landlord to agree to provide nomination rights (normally through the Lets Rent scheme). *This is subject to availability of Council funding at any particular time further details will be provided through a Home Improvement Assistance factsheet.*

The Council also aims to develop further benefits for owners of accredited properties. These could include provision of a Contractors' list, and provision of useful training/awareness courses.

How does a landlord enquire or apply for property accreditation?

A standard procedure will be followed for all enquires for Property Accreditation to ensure consistency but at any time the landlord can contact the Council to discuss any particular issues. Contact details are provided below. The standard procedure is as follows:

- An application pack will be sent to all landlords who request one.
- The Council will consider all applications from the private landlords with properties in Central Bedfordshire, who are interested in joining the Property Accreditation Scheme.
- The required standards are laid down in the Code of Standards which may be updated from time to time. The code of standards will be provided to the landlord.
- Upon the return of the forms to the Council, the application will be considered along with all the relevant documentation.
- All applicants will be treated with fairness, courtesy and openness.
- Accreditation will require an initial property inspection and thereafter a proportion of properties will be inspected each year so that all properties are inspected at least once every 3 years. All inspections will be by prior arrangement.
- Upon compliance with all the requirements of the code of standards (verified by the property inspection), a Certificate of Accreditation will be issued to the landlord for the property concerned.
- A list of all accredited properties will be published on the Council's website.
- If, during a random inspection the property is found to no longer comply with the code of standards, the certificate will become invalid and the property removed from the scheme.
- Should any tenant complaints be received concerning the accommodation or management standards, the Council will carry out a full investigation and action may be taken against the landlord, including removal from the Property Accreditation Scheme. However, the investigation will include consultation with the landlord concerning the issues reported to the Council.
- Should a landlord disagree with a decision by the local authority, they may appeal to the Appeals Panel.
- The Appeals Panel will be made up of three local authority representatives and three independent representatives.

A Fair and Transparent Procedure

- Members of the scheme will be provided with advice and information on a regular basis and on request.
- The landlords will be regularly consulted through the accreditation scheme regarding future private rented sector housing initiatives.

Contact us...

The scheme will be administered by the Council's Private Sector Housing Service. To contact us...

by telephone: 0300 300 8302

by email: customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk or
psh@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ