

Landlords Newsletter



CHANGES TO HOUSING BENEFITS

From April 2008, residents who rent from private landlords will see changes in the way housing benefit is worked out.

The allowance will be based on the number of bedrooms people in the household are allowed and not how much the rent is.

The Local Housing Allowance will, in most circumstances, be paid directly to the tenant. Housing Benefit will remain a means tested benefit. The new rule will not affect Carlisle Housing Association or other Local Housing Association tenants.

For further information on the changes

please contact Revenues and Benefits on 01228 817201 or e-mail hben@carlisle.gov.uk or



Council Tax Exemption for Students

Student exemption for Council tax is not automatic. Supporting evidence must be provided to enable the Council to award the exemption. Students (or landlords, where the landlord is the liable person for Council Tax) must supply the Council with their student certificates and a completed student discount/exemption claim form (a blue form). The Council have very limited means of confirming student status without a certificate.

Possible liability issues for students

If a student leaves a property prior to their tenancy end date, they are not entitled to a student discount/exemption once they leave the property (this is only applicable whilst resident in a property). If a student moves into a property prior to their course start date, there is no student discount/exemption entitlement (if the student is under 20 they may be able to claim a different type of exemption.) If a student stays in a property after their course ends, there is no student discount/exemption entitlement. If a student takes a tenancy but does not move in straight away, they will not be entitled to a student discount/exemption until they move in.

How to notify us of changes

- Complete and return Landlord change of address forms.
- Complete and return any review forms.
- Complete and return any student claim forms.



Energy Performance Certificates

On and after the 1st October 2008, if you are renting out a property you will be required to provide an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to all prospective tenant.

The EPC is broadly similar to the label now provided with domestic appliances, such as refrigerators, washing machines etc. Its

purpose is to record how energy efficient a property or building is. There is no need

to obtain an EPC for an existing tenancy and once obtained a certificate is valid for 10 years. If a valid EPC still exists when changing tenants, you do not need to provide a new certificate. This applies to both private and social sec-

tor landlords. You can get a report through an EPC provider, estate agents or solicitors. The cost of providing the certificate is estimated to cost around £150 and will be the property owners responsibility. Further information can be obtained from www.communities.gov.uk

The next landlords forum will be held in July/August and EPC will be covered at the forum.



Important Information for HMO Landlords

Following the introduction of the Housing Act 2004 and Mandatory Licensing for all landlords who own properties which are occupied by 5 or more persons and are three or more storeys. In April 2006, the Council passported 63 properties that were previously registered under the control scheme under the transitional licensing arrangements. In Oc-

tober 2008 over 30 landlords will need to make application to the Council for a mandatory licence under the Housing Act 2004. The remaining properties will continue under the additional licensing scheme until April 2009, at which point landlords those landlords that have properties that fall into the scope of mandatory licensing will need to make an application to the

Council. The licence fee which was set in 2006, at £330 based on 5 lettings, every additional let after is £25, up to a maximum of £500. For an application form or further information please contact the Private Sector Housing Team on 01228 817341 or e-mail housing@carlisle.gov.uk

Update in on Fire Safety in HMO's

In January 2008, LACORS produced a draft guidance on fire safety standards in certain existing residential accommodation for consultation. The document had been produced to underpin the Fire Safety Protocol agreed by the Fire Authorities and the Local Authorities and to further promote consistency throughout the country on Fire Safety Standards. The consultation period began on 21st January 2008 and lasted until 29th February 2008.

Carlisle City Council sent out hard copies of the document to over 30 landlords and the information was made available to all on the City Councils website for consultation. A response was produced by the Cumbrian Local Authority HMO group but unfortunately no comments or any feedback was received from local landlords. The final document is set to be finalised by LACORS in April /May 2008.

The final document will be published on the City Councils website and introduced as Fire Safety Guidance as part of any HHSRS assessment.

Carlisle City Council's new refuse and recycling scheme is now one year old. We think it's achieved the objectives that were set. The total amount of household refuse that was collected by the Council in 2007/08 and sent to landfill (including fly tipped waste) was 24% less than that collected in 2006/07. Last year almost 50% of all household waste in Carlisle was recycled (48.81% to be more accurate), a fantastic achievement.

Most properties in urban Carlisle (and the larger rural villages) now receive the full kerbside recycling service (Greenbox for paper, glass and cans plus plastic and cardboard in the re-usable sacks). If your tenants are unable to participate in these services because they don't have a Greenbox or re-usable sacks, please contact Waste Services (Tel 817200) to arrange for replacement receptacles to be delivered.

Now that the scheme has had a chance to 'bed-in', we've made a few adjustments that you need to be aware of. The

most recent, and perhaps most significant change, has been made to those properties that receive a weekly refuse collection using purple sacks. Those properties that have traditionally had their refuse collected from a back lane will have received a letter explaining that from now on their collections will be made from the front of property instead. The reasons for this change are twofold. Firstly, to help reduce fly tipping

(experience elsewhere has shown that when refuse is no longer collected from rear lanes, the amount of litter and fly tipping reduces significantly). Secondly, collecting refuse from rear lanes can be dangerous for our collection crews. Lanes that were designed for a horse and cart are clearly not suitable for 26 tonne refuse collection vehicles!

Please note that the change to 'front of property' collections only applies to those properties who receive a weekly purple sack collection. Properties with wheeled bins are unaffected.

Update on refuse and recycling arrangements