



Discounts to warm your heart!

How would you like to make your home warmer and more comfortable? A new scheme that will help you do just that sounds like heaven after a bitterly cold winter! The Energy Savings on Prescription scheme is open to all residents in the Bradford district. Bradford Council has teamed up with Bradford Health to provide this scheme which offers discounts on the costs of energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall insulation (pictured left), loft insulation, draught proofing, central heating and boiler replacement. This scheme will particularly help those suffering from cold-related illnesses such as asthma, coronary heart disease, or a stroke. For more information ring Jennifer Hails at the Bradford Energy Projects Office on 0800 138 7077.

Have your say on property "star rating"

Plans to introduce an accreditation scheme for landlords in the Bradford district are up for discussion. Council staff want to consult local landlords about the idea, which would help potential tenants identify good housing, and landlords to maintain good standards. The scheme would involve participating landlords allowing Environmental Protection staff to inspect their properties and award the accreditation if the property met certain standards, which would be discussed and agreed with landlords.

Environmental Protection Manager Mary Smith said: "We want to talk and listen to any landlords interested in an accreditation scheme. Working in partnership with landlords on this will be critical to its success. We know similar schemes in other districts have been very successful. Property owners have found that by improving standards, properties are easier to maintain and let. We believe it will also improve co-operation between Council staff,

private landlords and tenants. This will in turn reduce the number of formal enforcements against landlords, and the number of harassment or illegal eviction referrals and other disputes." A similar accreditation scheme, just for student properties in the district, is also being developed by the University of Bradford, Bradford College and Bradford Council's Environmental Protection staff.

scheme, so please come to the next Landlords' Forum meeting on Thursday March 15, 2 pm at the Council Chamber, Shipley Town Hall where there will be a presentation followed by a discussion. Alternatively you can ring Mary Smith on 754726, or Mike Bentley on (01535) 618031.

"Owners have found that ... properties are easier to maintain and let."

WE NEED YOUR VIEWS on the accreditation

News for landlords from Bradford Council's Environmental Protection Division



Forum gets organised

Local landlords are getting organised – and you can join them!

The next Landlords' Forum will be looking at adopting terms of reference, which will formalize the group and allow it to elect officers such as a chair and secretary.

The next meeting on Thursday March 15, 2pm at Shipley Town Hall Council Chamber will also feature a presentation on the idea of a local property accreditation scheme (see front page).

The last Landlords' Forum saw a lively debate about delays in processing housing benefit claims.

David Fraser of Bradford Council's Housing Benefit section said a special team of ten staff has been set up to concentrate on clearing the backlog of claims. The team was now on course to clear them by the end of March, so new claims in the next financial year should be processed without delay. David will give an update at the Forum on March 15.

This checklist could be your key to ensuring every new tenancy is a trouble-free one.



How to do it right !

- A Good Practice Checklist

Before...

- Make sure the property is in good repair and that any disrepair is sorted out before the tenant moves in.
- Ensure the safety of all gas appliances and pipework is checked annually. These checks must be undertaken by a CORGI registered gas installer/contractor who is qualified under the appropriate approved code of practice. A copy of the safety certificate must be given to the tenant at the start of the tenancy and after each subsequent annual check.
- Ensure the electrical installation at the property is checked by a member of a relevant professional body, eg NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) at least every five years, or more

frequently if specified on the electrical certificate.

- Make sure independent battery operated smoke alarms are provided, at a minimum of one in the ground floor hallway and one per landing, all of which should be fixed to the ceiling.

Independent smoke alarms may not be necessary or appropriate in the case of houses let in multiple occupation. If in doubt contact the Housing Department.

- A clause should be included in the tenancy agreement to allow access to the property to carry out maintenance checks and repairs, after giving reasonable notice – normally 24 hours.
- There should be sufficient bathroom and kitchen facilities for the number of tenants.
- If the property is to be



Left, a landlord gets gas appliances checked in his property in time for a new tenant

let "furnished", all furniture and furnishings should meet the requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 (As Amended).

- Show tenants around

the property. Provide and agree a written inventory.

- Provide tenants with a written tenancy agreement, giving details of any bond or deposit, the rent and whether charges for utilities are included.

Provide tenants with details of who to contact in case of emergency.

- Where required, provide details for application for benefit to the tenant or Benefits Office.

During

- Maintaining independent smoke alarms (if applicable)
 - Once a week – Tenant must check the alarm by pressing the test button.
 - Once a year - battery to be replaced by landlord. Vacuum and wipe the smoke alarm casing to ensure dust is not blocking the sensor chamber.
- Carry out repairs promptly.
- Give reasonable prior notice to tenants if access is required to the property for routine maintenance checks or to carry out repairs. (Normally 24 hours).
- Act immediately on urgent repairs, particularly where the health and safety of the tenants may be at risk.
- Provide enough dustbins/refuse containers for the tenants and make sure they are emptied regularly.

After...

- Ensure that the appropriate notice requiring possession is served on the tenant, giving the appropriate period of notice and the grounds for possession (if required). Keep a copy of the notice and wherever possible deliver the notice to the tenant by hand and get the tenant and the person serving the notice to initial and date the notice to confirm when it was served.
- Inspect the property one week before the end of the tenancy, giving the tenants at least two days notice prior to the inspection.
- Check through the original written inventory with the tenant. A reasonable level

of wear and tear should be allowed for.

- At the end of the tenancy, return the bond/deposit to the tenant within 14 days. If any deductions are made, provide a written statement to the tenant of what has been deducted and why.
- On the day of departure, check any meter readings (if appropriate) and notify the appropriate companies.
- Obtain forwarding details for the tenant wherever possible to enable mail and the bond/deposit to be returned at a later date.
- Notify Housing Benefit (if appropriate) of the date that the tenant departs (to prevent later repayment of over-paid rents).



Landlords needed for bond scheme

Landlords are being sought to give young people a helping hand into private rented property, through a bond guarantee scheme.

The scheme is being run by a registered charity, the City Centre Project, who wants to hear from landlords with suitable properties who are willing to house young people aged 16-25.

The City Centre Project's accommodation worker Jane Chatfield explained the scheme involved the project giving a landlord a written guarantee in place of the usual up front cash bond. The project can also help the tenant settle in and manage their money.

If at the end of the tenancy, the tenant leaves owing rent or having damaged fixtures and fittings, or having stolen anything from the property, then the bond scheme will reimburse the landlord up to the value of the bond, having established that the claim is valid. The funding for the bond guarantees comes from Bradford Council. If the City Centre Project has to make a payment because a tenant leaves owing rent, or has stolen or damaged property, the tenant has to pay the money back to the project.

Any landlords interested in being part of the scheme should contact Jane Chatfield on 01274 736507.

