

## Campaign: briefing

# Landlord accreditation

Private renting has grown rapidly over the last decade. Yet problems are rife and standards are often poor. Shelter believes landlord accreditation offers councils a localist, practical and effective tool to improve standards for private renters.

- Over 15% of people now rent privately, an increase of over 40% in the last five years.<sup>2</sup>
- 34% of Shelter advice queries come from private renters.
- Satisfaction is lower and accommodation is more likely to be of a poor standard.<sup>3</sup>
- Evictions and broken tenancies cost landlords, tenants and the state some £120 million a year.<sup>4</sup>

### Why does private renting need improving?

The number of people living in the private rented sector is increasing rapidly. With proposed changes to homelessness legislation, cuts to housing benefit, no new money for social housing and high house prices, private renting will be under increasing pressure, especially at the lower end of the market and for the most vulnerable groups.

While the majority of landlords are professional in their approach, there are some who do not fully understand renting's legal framework and find themselves unwittingly breaking the law. There is also a small but dangerous number of rogues who willfully exploit tenants and make their lives a misery.

High demand for rented accommodation and a lack of information for tenants can make it difficult to differentiate between a good landlord, an amateur or a potential rogue.

A national offer of landlord accreditation with clear minimum standards would improve the choices people make about private renting. This will help people to avoid rogues, whilst at the same time improving the information and support available to amateur landlords to raise standards and help good, professional landlords differentiate themselves in this important, growing sector.

### What is landlord accreditation?

Accreditation is where landlords who meet certain standards apply to be accredited by a recognised scheme, which is administered by a local authority, a group of neighbouring local authorities or a third party.

About 60% of local authorities currently offer accreditation schemes.<sup>1</sup> But there is a great disparity between schemes, with some requiring only the bare legal minimum of an accredited landlord.

<sup>1</sup> Based on Shelter analysis of all local authority websites in England, carried out on 17/01/2011.

<sup>2</sup> DCLG, English Housing Survey Headline Report 2009-10, 2011

<sup>3</sup> 40.8% of private rented dwellings do not meet the decent homes standard. Ibid.

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## Accreditation benefits landlords, tenants and councils

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- Tenants know that they can expect good standards, a responsive landlord and more piece of mind in their home
- Local authorities can use accreditation to deal with problems in their local private rented sector, and save on the costs of enforcement and homelessness by working with landlords and tenants.
- Accredited landlords can access a range of benefits, gain a marketing advantage, and get information and advice to ensure they provide a professional service.

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For more information about Shelter's rogue landlords campaign and our recommendations for better enforcement, read our previous [Campaigns Briefing](#).

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If landlord accreditation is to improve standards in the private rented sector, it will have to be a consistent offer that guarantees credible minimum standards that tenants will always prioritise. Only with strong tenant-led demand will a critical mass of landlords sign up, translating into better standards and a more professional sector.

## What is Shelter calling for?

Shelter is calling for a national requirement that all local authorities should offer landlord accreditation and that accreditation schemes should meet basic minimum standards.

Shelter believes that the minimum standards for landlord accreditation schemes should be as follows:

Local authorities:

- Provide a complaints procedure for tenants.
- Inspect a minimum of 10% of properties in the scheme per year.
- Provide clear guidance on the repairs and response timescales expected of landlords.
- Provide accredited landlords with a logo to use on their marketing.

Accredited landlords:

- Provide written tenancy agreements for every tenancy.
- Complete an online training module.
- Offer deposit protection in an authorised scheme where applicable.
- Ensure accommodation is free of any avoidable or unnecessary hazards.

These minimum standards should not be onerous for good landlords to meet. Neither do they need to constrain local authorities' ability to deal with particular local issues in their private rented sector; they simply have to offer a credible minimum that will lead to tangible improvements for private tenants.

## What can MPs and peers do to support accreditation?

- Take action in parliament to highlight the difficulties faced by private tenants and support Shelter's amendments in the Localism Bill calling for landlord accreditation and national minimum standards for schemes.
- Work with local authorities in your area and encourage them to develop a robust accreditation scheme to improve standards and make savings.
- Promote the benefits of landlord accreditation to your constituents to help drive out the rogues and raise standards for local private renters.

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<sup>4</sup> Impact Assessment of a national register for landlords, Department for Communities and Local Government, June 2009

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