



NORTH WEST

Landlords' Association Ltd

113 Tonge Moor Road, Bolton, BL2 2DL

Telephone: 0845 345 1386

Fax: 01204 383269

Email: admin@nwla.co.uk

Web: www.nwla.co.uk



RENTED ACCOMMODATION ACCREDITATION SCHEME



CONTENTS PAGE

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The need for an Accreditation Scheme**
- 3. Aims and Objectives of the Scheme - "Mission Statement"**
- 4. Benefits of the Scheme**
- 5. Management of the Scheme**
- 6. Costs of the Scheme**
- 7. Promoting the Scheme**
- 8. Future of the Scheme**

Attachments: Letter to Landlord
Application Form & Checklist
Declaration Form
How to Get Your Property Accredited
Compliance Notes

1. Introduction

NWLA has been working with landlords, tenants and other agencies in the private rented sector to provide a reasonable and wholly acceptable standard of rented accommodation.

The aim of implementing such an accreditation scheme is to combat the many problems currently faced by landlords, tenants, local authorities and other regulatory bodies. Local Authorities, whilst having an important role to play, cannot work alone and will look to form partnerships with others to improve the standard of private rented housing in their borough. In return, landlords look to acquiring recognition in the community for providing acceptable levels of accommodation.

It is envisaged that a significant number of private landlords will already meet the requirements for accreditation and be able to join the scheme without delay. Landlords failing to meet the necessary standards at first application, will be advised and encouraged to carry out those repairs necessary to improve their property and management arrangements and gain recognition for their efforts. By excluding non-compliant landlords from the scheme, the Local Authority will be able to target its extensive enforcement powers to ensure tenants' safety and comfort by prosecuting those landlords who fail to comply.

Accreditation will increase tenants' confidence that they get value for money, and potentially ensure that public money is not being spent to support unsafe housing and profiteering landlords. Accredited landlords can look to more viable economic levels of investments and improved levels of social behaviour from tenants.

2. The need for an Accreditation Scheme

It is well known that conditions in privately rented accommodation can often be worse than other tenures. The traditional enforcement of the Local Authority, whilst being effective in taking action against the worst properties and landlords, does little to encourage good landlords, promote private renting as a viable housing choice, or improve the quality of rented housing.

The philosophy of reasonable renting is to change the adversarial relationship between the council and landlords, towards a partnership in which landlords are given advice and encouragement to accept full responsibility for providing safe and decent housing for their tenants.

NWLA anticipate their scheme will provide a simpler and more effective approach, by setting out clear standards for property conditions and good management practice, and alongside Local Authorities formally recognising those landlords who provide quality accommodation and for these landlords who cannot or will not fulfil their responsibilities, introducing new levels of legislation.

The scheme will provide the opportunity for landlords, tenants, local authority and the NWLA to work together further, to learn from practical experience and help inform national policy and future legislation.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Scheme - Mission Statement

"The aims and objectives of the Accreditation Scheme are to provide a minimum set of standards for private rented accommodation, to encourage good landlords, promote private renting as a viable housing choice, and improve the quality of rented housing. These standards will primarily be concerned with the design, safety, contractual and service delivery standards that tenants can expect when they rent accommodation and landlords can promote as part of their letting service."

"The ultimate goal is to provide a safe and decent sector for all tenants whilst acting as a medium for Landlords wishing to promote their properties."

By setting out clear requirements, basic standards can be more easily achieved and the Local Authority/ies: NWLA will be able to work with responsible landlords to improve the quality of accommodation and management skills within the private rented sector. Prospective tenants can check whether or not the landlord is approved and so have greater confidence in choosing private renting as their best housing option. The official endorsement that the accreditation provides should help increase the confidence of lending institutions, insurance companies, etc. and help to put private renting on a more professional footing.

The accreditation scheme would primarily concentrate on two consumer groups, firstly that of potential tenants (including current tenants) looking for suitable accommodation to rent, and secondly landlords looking to provide respectable living accommodation. The ultimate aim will be to minimise the problems created by bad landlords and troubled tenants, controlling the impact that this has on the sector in general.

The scheme is looking to build on the good practices that already exist within the private rented sector and local authorities across the country, which can be shared and used to effect self-regulation.

4. Benefits of the Scheme

The scheme will offer a wide range of benefits to all concerned with the private rented sector; from landlords, tenants to Local Authorities.

Landlords will have simpler guidance about property standards and easier access to support from the council and other organisations. The accreditation will provide formal recognition of a job well done and distinguish responsible landlords from the rest.

Tenants can be assured that their accredited landlord has taken responsibility for the safe condition and ongoing management and maintenance of the property and that there are proper letting arrangements in place, with simple and clear procedures for getting repairs done and responding to complaints. People looking for a home will find safe rented accommodation easier to identify.

Local Authorities and other housing professionals will have better information about the private rented sector and be able to target enforcement and advice more accurately and effectively.

Everyone will benefit from the range of quality housing choices in their community, and the protection of some of its oldest housing stock.

5. Management of the Scheme

The North West Landlords' Association will incorporate the necessary stationery, promotional material and administration required to launch and manage the scheme. The mechanics will provide a simple, yet defined structure for the operation of the scheme. The application form, additional letters and reporting methods will aim to complement the scheme and promote a clear, concise and effective approach to better quality rented accommodation.

The necessary stationery will be made available to complement each step by providing guidance to the landlord, tenant, Local Authorities and other agencies.

The Application will act as a simple means of obtaining the relevant information necessary to maintain the scheme. The basic structure of the form will allow the landlord to answer the required questions with ease, ensuring minimum lead-time for returning them completed. Although it will only contain the basic information relevant to the scheme, it will be complemented by a comprehensive set of guidance notes for the landlord's reference.

The Application will be complemented by a letter introducing the scheme and the necessary steps to be taken to gain accreditation from the Association.

The Guidance Notes will serve as a means of reference when the landlord is unclear of the requirements of the question on the application form. Each landlord will be furnished with a set of Compliance Notes to complement their application to ensure that ignorance does not form any part of a dispute, which may later arise.

The Certificate of Accreditation will act as a means of identifying the property as accredited under the scheme. It is anticipated that the landlord will display the certificate, portraying the property as safe, respectable and well-managed place in which to live. It will also act, as a means of reference for the tenants should there be cause for complaint or dispute.

STEP-BY-STEP OPERATION OF THE SCHEME

The landlord will complete and return the application form to the Association, which in turn will be assessed. If the application is satisfactory then approval for a renewable period of 3 years is given and a certificate issued. If initially the application for approval is rejected, the landlord will have the opportunity to re-submit after carrying out the necessary work under the remit of the scheme.

There will be a need for additional stationery (letters etc), to complement the necessary course of action. (These will be implemented as the scheme is introduced).

There will be a need to introduce specific stationery and promotional material to deal with such issues as;

- Dealing with Application Refusals and Requests for Compliance
- Defining an Appeals Procedure
- Dealing with Complaints from Tenants
- Reporting on Unsatisfactory Accommodation
- Withdrawing Property from the Scheme
- Initiating Inspection/Audits of Properties
- Full Accreditation Certificate

It is anticipated that the basics of the scheme will be able to deal with most situations, however more intricate situations will require the need for one or more of the above.

6. Cost of the Scheme

Landlords require a reasonable financial return on their investment, but not to the detriment of the housing stock, or the health and welfare of tenants, and accreditation should not incur additional costs of responsible landlords.

The costs of administering the scheme will initially be absorbed by the NWLA membership fees, ensuring that existing members do not face additional costs on introduction of the scheme, dictating the need for membership in order to gain approval to the scheme. This will enhance the Association's portfolio and potential for an increasing membership along with maintaining a uniform set of standards. It is anticipated that the benefits of joining the Association, along with the advantages of being part of the Accreditation Scheme will provide a value to the landlord that will outweigh the current membership and joining fee.

7. Promoting the Scheme

In order to become accredited to the scheme, the landlord will be required to become a member of the NWLA, it is therefore essential to market the benefits of the Association as a whole to complement the benefits of the Accreditation Scheme.

Using the various marketing tools available, the scheme will be delivered primarily to the existing association members and potential known landlords in the borough, and then to others. In order to market the project to gain maximum coverage, the following have confirmed their intentions of working with the Association:- Wigan & Leigh and Fylde Borough's.

The stationery will provide a means of monitoring the administration of the project and ensure that the mechanics of the scheme are maintained. It is anticipated that the current NWLA stationery will incorporate respective logos by way of approval for the management of the scheme.

Information Management

A management information system will need to be implemented to store and maintain the workings of the scheme. This may be adapted to work alongside the current system that the NWLA is operating.

Internet

The Internet already provides a means of communication with both landlords and the public. It is anticipated that certain enhancements can be made so as to incorporate the introduction and communication of the accreditation scheme through this medium.

Sponsorship

It is anticipated that the scheme itself may be able to attract major sponsorship e.g. Jewsons, along with a number of smaller contributors looking to promote the ancillary services that they provide. This will assist in the production of the marketing material and enable the association to create a welcome pack to the members of the association and promote the scheme on a greater scale.

8. Future of the Scheme

It is anticipated that the success of the scheme will enable the Association to broaden the market place and offer the Accreditation package to Local Authorities looking to implement the same. It has also been considered to introduce the uniform set of standards into the NWLA's Code of Practice as a desired set of requirements for all its members.

NORTH WEST LANDLORDS' ASSOCIATION LTD

**RENTED ACCOMMODATION
ACCREDITATION SCHEME**

ATTACHMENTS

RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date

Dear Landlord

Rented Accommodation Accreditation Scheme

We have pleasure to bring to your attention a new initiative for the private rented sector developed by the North West Landlords' Association in conjunction with Wigan & Leigh and Fylde Borough Councils. The scheme comprises a set of commonsense practices and standards in relation to both the condition of properties and the services offered to tenants together with mechanics for resolving disagreements that may arise.

The purpose of the scheme is to enhance the marketing advantages of responsible landlords and provide a range of benefits to members of the scheme. The key benefits offered are;

- Market advantage over non-members
- Recognition of responsible renting
- Periodic seminars run by the Council on important topical housing matters
- Advertising properties to let through various outlets including sixth form and higher education colleges, libraries, council offices, CAB offices etc.
- Possible access to some key Council services eg. Housing Benefit Service
- The use of the NWLA accreditation logo on letter headings and other paperwork
- It is our understanding that an approved accreditation scheme may be an acceptable qualification in most areas.

Please read the compliance note carefully before completing the application form. Please note that a separate application form will need to be completed for each property.

North West Landlords' Association Ltd Accreditation Scheme Application Form and Check List

Landlords Name: _____ Membership No: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____ Tel No: _____

Agent: (If Applicable) _____

Address of Rented Property: _____

Property Type: _____ Age _____ Storeys _____ Bedrooms _____

Occupied YES/NO _____ *(Additional property information to be supplied on NWLA Membership Form)*

The following items should be checked to indicate general compliance. The list of items is not exhaustive, and therefore care should be taken during inspection of the premises to identify any items, which may affect the safety or comfort of the occupants. In certain instances it may be necessary to obtain professional advice eg. on matters of structural stability, to determine compliance and/or corrective measures. Please refer to the compliance notes, which complement this application.

Please read carefully and tick the relevant boxes, answer all questions and return to:
North West Landlords' Association Ltd, 113 Tonge Moor Road, Bolton, BL2 2DL

1. Structural Stability

Following inspection by the landlord/agent/surveyor is the property structurally safe? *(Please underline landlord, agent or surveyor)*

YES
NO

NB. If there is evidence of instability, can you provide a report to ensure the necessary work has been carried out, or that the problem is superficial?

YES
NO

2. Repairs and Maintenance

Have all of the following been inspected and passed safe by landlord/agent or specialist?

Unsecured Items	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	Tripping Hazards	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	Condensation	YES <input type="checkbox"/>
	NO <input type="checkbox"/>		NO <input type="checkbox"/>		NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Penetrating Dampness	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	Electrical Wiring	YES <input type="checkbox"/>		
	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	(Time Served Electrician)	NO <input type="checkbox"/>		

Date of last Satisfactory Electrical Safety Inspection/Certification ____/____/____

2. Repairs and Maintenance (Continued)

Heating YES Ventilation YES Gas Installation YES
NO NO NO

Date of last satisfactory Gas Safety Record Certificate ____/____/____
(Please include copy certificate for this property)

Lighting YES Water Supply YES Food Preparation YES
NO NO & Cooking Facilities NO

Bathroom Facilities YES Toilet Facilities YES Drainage YES
NO NO NO

Is the Property free from all Toxic & Hazardous Substances/Bodies? YES
NO

Fire Precautions YES
*Single Household Dwelling/House in Multiple Occupation** NO
*(*Please delete as appropriate)*

3. Overcrowding/Space Standards

Is the space offered by the accommodation reasonable for its use/occupancy? YES

4. Furniture & Furnishings

Do they meet compliance with the Furniture and Furnishings? YES
(Fire Safety) regulations 1988 (Fire & Flame Retarding)? NO
(Copy of Regulations available from the Local Authority)

5. Management of Property

Do you accept the code of conduct specifying service provision YES
and also the appeal/arbitration procedure for tenant/landlord? NO

6. Insurance

Do you hold Public Liability Insurance? YES

Policy Number _____ Insurer _____ Expiry Date ____/____/____
(All details to be provided)

7. Tenancy Agreements

Do you use legitimate written tenancy agreements? YES
NO

8. Energy Efficiency

Do you, wherever possible implement energy efficiency methods?

YES

NO

If you have answered no to any of the above, please state your reason why:-

For Official Use Only

Application Rec'd ____/____/____

Accreditation Refused ____/____/____

Reason _____

Application App'd ____/____/____

Full Acc' Granted ____/____/____

Review Date ____/____/____



NORTH WEST

Landlords' Association Ltd

DECLARATION: I declare that:

I have read and understood the North West Landlords' Association Accreditation Scheme and will endeavour to ensure that all properties in my ownership, which are let to tenants, shall meet the necessary requirements, subject to any transitional arrangements agreed by the Association. I further declare that my conduct will be in accord with the provisions of the Scheme and I will recognise the authority of a review panel in the administration process.

I have read the Compliance Notes and to the best of my knowledge and belief the information in this application is correct.

Signed _____

Printed _____ **Date** ____/____/____

GETTING YOUR PROPERTY ACCREDITED

The North West Landlords' Association Accreditation Scheme aims to provide a benchmark for good practice for Private Rented Accommodation. It has been drawn up by the NWLA in consultation with the various organisations working in the Private Rented Sector. The scheme will provide the basis for a uniform set of standards for private rented accommodation, ensuring that properties are not only fit for human living but in good repair and properly managed. By Accrediting Landlords and their properties, the Association will aim to promote a positive image of its members and differentiate them in the market place.

HOW TO GET YOUR PROPERTY ACCREDITED

- Read and digest the Rented Accommodation Accreditation Scheme Compliance notes accompanying this application. The compliance notes will assist you when answering the questions on the application form.
 - Complete your Application Form and Checklist, by providing your relevant Personal/Business & Property details and answering 1 to 8.
 - If you are unsure as to the nature or explanation of any question, please initially refer to the guidance notes, the relevant regulatory body or the North West Landlords' Association Ltd.
 - Please provide any explanations or additional information that you feel will complement your application.
 - When you have completed your application form please return it to the NWLA in the envelope provided enclosing any additional information required.
 - If your application is satisfactory then accreditation under the scheme will be for a period of 3 years.
 - If initially your application is rejected, you will have the opportunity to re-submit your application, after carrying out the necessary work, requested under the remit of the scheme.
 - The scheme aims to deal with the multitude of situations that may arise throughout the course of accreditation and will look to working closely with you to assist you and your property being accepted.
 - If you have any questions that relate to your application for accreditation, please contact the NWLA on Tel: 0845 345 1386.
-

Rented Accommodation Accreditation Scheme Compliance Notes - to accompany application form

These guidance notes will assist you when completing your application form for approval under the North West Landlords' Association Accommodation Accreditation Scheme.

Questions 1 to 8 on your application form are complemented by a detailed explanation in the compliance notes. If you are unsure as to the nature or explanation of any question on your application, please refer to the relevant regulatory body or the North West Landlords' Association for clarification or further information.

The following items should be checked to indicate general compliance. The list of items is not exhaustive, and therefore care should be taken during inspection of the premises to identify any items, which may affect the safety or comfort of the occupants. In certain instances it may be necessary to obtain professional advice eg. on matters of structural stability, to determine compliance and or corrective measures.

It is your responsibility under the scheme to ensure that you are fully aware of your obligations as a Landlord and that you have completed your application honestly and accept the following standards as part of your letting process.

1. Structural Stability	The property should be structurally stable as to minimise the risk of injury due to collapse or from associated health risks resultant from settlement, cracking (eg. Damp/Wind penetration)
2. Repair	The elements, fabric and fixtures of the building should generally be kept in good repair having regard to the comfort and safety of the occupants.
2(a) Unsecured items	Particular attention should be made to items which are inadequately fixed, and therefore pose a risk.
2(b) Tripping Hazard	Tripping hazards should also be identified and removed.
2(c) Penetrating Dampness	The roof covering, flashings, eaves guttering and any other building elements should be checked to ensure dampness is not penetrating into the accommodation. Plumbing and drainage items should also be checked to ensure they are free from leakage.
2(d) Rising Dampness	The property is free from rising dampness or walls and floors incorporating an effective horizontal damp proof course or membrane to prevent this problem.
2(e) Condensation	The property should be adequately insulated and provided with satisfactory means of heating and ventilation, which when properly utilised, should avoid problems of condensation and associated mould growth. It is strongly recommended that unvented heating and drying appliances, which may contribute to condensation problems, should be avoided.
2(f) Electrical Wiring	The electrical wiring should be in a safe, operational condition. A periodic inspection report carried out by a time-served electrician should be obtained and renewed every 5 years. Annual inspection by landlord/agent/surveyor to identify damaged fittings. A copy of a satisfactory certificate would be required in the event of an NWLA or Local Authority audit.
2(g) Gas Installations	All gas installations should be annually inspected and certificated by a CORGI registered plumber. A satisfactory Landlords Gas Safety Record Certificate would be required in the event of an NWLA or Local Authority audit.
2(h) Ventilation	The property should generally be provided with suitable ventilation. This generally should be an openable window of adequate size (1/20th floor area) within habitable rooms. Where mechanical extract ventilation is provided in kitchen/wc's and bathroom this should be capable of providing between 1-3 air changes per hour.

2(i) Heating	As a <u>minimum</u> standard a fixed heating appliance should be provided in the living room, and a means of providing heating within every other habitable room ie. suitable electricity socket outlet or gas point. (NB see also to Item 8).
2(j) Lighting	Habitable rooms should be provided with adequate natural and artificial lighting. Artificial lighting at a suitable level is satisfactory as the only source within other rooms and areas, although the provision of natural lighting also is preferable. Switches for lighting should also be suitably and conveniently located.
2(k) Water Supply	Suitable supplies of both hot and cold water should be provided to the kitchen and bathroom amenities. Care should be taken to ensure the water supply is free of contaminants, particularly concerning lead (from lead piping), and from uncovered cisterns. Advice should be sought from your local water supplier.
2(l) Facilities for Cooking and Food Preparation	The layout of the kitchen should be such as to provide a safely designed and hygienic place to prepare and cook food. Surface finishes to walls floor and ceiling should also be easily cleanable. The facilities provided should be sufficient for the number of persons accommodated within the premises.
2(m) Bathroom Facilities	The accommodation should be provided with an adequate provision for washing, including a bath/shower and wash hand basin. Generally this provision is adequate for up to 5 persons, additional facilities being required with increased occupancy.
2(n) Toilet Facilities	An internally located, hygienic, water closet should be provided within the accommodation, being in good order and repair. Again wall and floor surfaces in the vicinity should be in good order and cleanable. Additional WC facilities are again normally required if the occupancy exceeds 5 persons.
2(o) Drainage	Drainage provided for foul, waste and surface water should be in good condition, to provide an effective and contained system discharging to an appropriate outlet.
2(p) Toxic and Hazardous Substances/Bodies	The occupant(s) of any premises should not be exposed to any toxic or hazardous substances/bodies within a dwelling. Particular attention should be paid to the presence of substances such as asbestos, fungal/pest infestation, and other potentially harmful chemical/mineral materials which may form part of / arise from the fabric of a dwelling or used in maintenance, cleaning or remedial treatments. Should such problems be detected, suspected or anticipated, professional advice should be sought.
2(p) Fire Precautions	Suitable and adequate provision of fire precautions will vary dependant on the type of accommodation provided. Generally, within self contained premises accommodating a single household (normal house), as minimum standard smoke alarms should be provided within hallways and landings, or if not appropriate (due to layout design) within the living room. Particular consideration should be given to the ability of the alarm to wake occupants while sleeping in the bedroom(s). Within Houses in Multiple Occupation (defined as houses occupied by more than one household) normally taking the form of bedsits, flats or hostels, have varied requirements, defined by the risk associated with the premises. For this type of property the Manchester County Fire Service should be consulted to obtain advice, to ensure suitable provision within the property. Advice may also be obtained from the Environmental Health and Consumer Protection Department of the Local Authority concerned with your property.

3. Overcrowding/Space Standards	<p>Legislation relating to overcrowding is quite antiquated, and therefore although still used as a statutory minimum, guidance standards (Parker Morris, Building Regulation, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and other locally adopted standards) are generally accepted as being more in keeping with modern housing requirements. The following is a <u>basic</u> guide to minimum space provision:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. single bedroom - 6.5m² (<i>Previously 6m²</i>) 2. double bedroom - 11m² 3. kitchen - 6m² 4. living room - 10m² <p>Where rooms are used for a combination of uses, the space standard should be increased to accommodate these functions. Detailed guidance can be obtained from the Environmental Health & Consumer Protection Department of the Local Authority.</p>
4. Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety)	<p>Furniture and furnishings provided in rented accommodation, must comply with the fire and flame retarding requirements specified in the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988. This covers all upholstered furniture, covers and cushions, but does not apply to bedding, curtains and carpets. Compliance is generally indicated by a permanent label indicating the products' fire retarding properties. There are minor exemptions to the regulations (applying to tenancies established before 1993 and antique furniture). Reference should be made to the regulations for further advice on these matters if considered relevant.</p>
5. Management	<p>The premises should be properly managed, ensuring the property is inspected on an annual basis, to ensure a good standard of maintenance. A contact name and telephone number should also be provided for the tenant to notify the landlord or agents should problems arise. Repairs should be scheduled according to urgency. Ideally the tenant should be informed of response times. An appropriate appeal/arbitration operated by a third party, to settle disputes on the request of either party (landlord/tenant). Tenants should be clearly informed of this Landlords Participation Scheme and procedures involved for their assistance and redress. (Refer to NWLA information). In the case of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) regulations have been passed specifying managers obligations. Essentially the regulations require the manager to ensure the lettings and common areas are maintained in good order, dealing with repair problems when they arise, and generally ensuring the premises is in a clean and tidy condition. Managers of HMO's must therefore visit on a regular basis (weekly or fortnightly) to ensure problems arising are resolved. Full details may be found in "The Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations 1990". Members participating in the Accommodation Accreditation Scheme should agree to be bound by the NWLA Code of Practice.</p>
6. Insurance	<p>Public liability insurance should be held. Consideration should be given to the provision of insurance generally to the property (landlord/tenant scheme?).</p>
7. Tenancy Agreements	<p>Tenants should be provided with a legitimate written tenancy agreement, the agreed conditions being properly applied. Landlords and tenants should have access to an independent arbitration scheme to settle disputes arising over tenancy conditions.</p>
8. Energy Efficiency	<p>Wherever possible steps should be taken to improve energy efficiency in rented accommodation. This in the main means the provision of insulating/energy conservation measures within the property. NB. Grant assistance may be available towards or covering the cost of implementing energy efficiency measures and/or providing room and water heating for the elderly. Enquiries should be directed towards Tel: 0800 316 6016 (EAGA Partnership) - Free Call</p>