

# Landlord Matters

News for private sector landlords in Renfrewshire

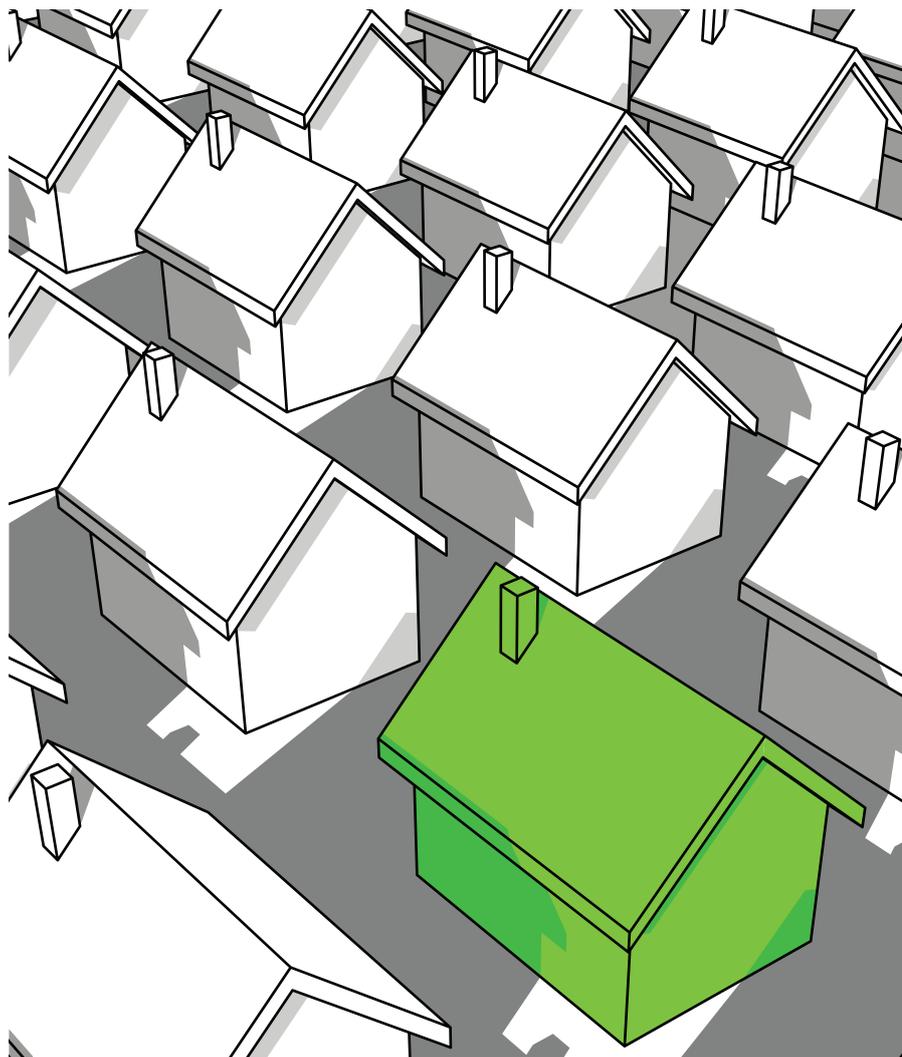
February 2016



## Renfrewshire draft Local Housing Strategy 2016-2021 and consultation

People and communities across Renfrewshire are being asked for their view on plans to enhance and further develop local housing and housing-related services for the next five years.

Comments are being invited on Renfrewshire's draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2016-2021 which is available on the council's website [www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay) for viewing until mid March 2016.



The draft strategy sets out how the Council and partners intend to jointly meet housing need and demand across Renfrewshire. The strategy focuses on key areas for further improving housing and the quality of life of local people. It proposes seven key outcomes that the Council and partners will work towards over the next five years including:

- 1** The supply of homes is increased.
- 2** Renfrewshire will have sustainable, attractive and well-designed mixed communities with well-functioning town centres.
- 3** People live in high-quality, well-managed, homes.
- 4** Homes are energy-efficient and fuel poverty is minimised.
- 5** Homelessness is prevented whenever possible and advice and support is provided to vulnerable households.
- 6** People are supported to live independently for as long as possible in their own homes and communities.
- 7** People can access affordable housing that meets their needs at the right time.



# Improving the management and maintenance of private rented housing



The strategy considers the increasingly important role that the growing private rented sector plays in the Renfrewshire housing market. Almost 7,000 landlords with over 8,500 properties are registered, an increase of over 100% compared to ten years ago. The private rented sector now provides nearly 10% of residences in Renfrewshire, a higher proportion than currently provided by Housing Associations.

The draft LHS recognises the significant contribution of private rented landlords in providing well-managed, good quality accommodation delivered through a wide variety of property types and locations.

In the main, Renfrewshire's private rented sector operates to a high quality standard and provides tenants with well-maintained accommodation. The draft LHS aims to further support the development of the sector and continue to improve accommodation and management standards.

Initiatives like 'Homes again Renfrewshire' and the regeneration of Paisley's West End and Orchard Street / Causeyside Street have been identified in the draft LHS as actions to improve the conditions of housing.

To maintain and expand the positive approach landlords in Renfrewshire take towards their duties, the LHS sets out a strategy for the sector in Outcome 3 – *'People live in high quality, well managed, homes'*. The strategy centres around two key aims:

- to help owners and landlords to invest in and maintain their property, and
- to improve management standards,

The draft strategy sets out Renfrewshire Council's continued commitment to ensure all landlords in Renfrewshire are registered and to encourage landlords to become accredited landlords. Through its Scheme of Assistance, the Council will continue to provide information, advice and support to help owners and landlords meet the responsibilities of repairing and maintaining their properties. Approaches to enforcement of standards are being considered to

help ensure that all privately rented properties meet the required legal standards.

As part of the consultation process for this new strategy, we would welcome views on the strategy's proposed outcomes and actions. A copy of the draft LHS and information on the consultation survey can be found on Renfrewshire Council's website, detailed below:

[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

Renfrewshire Council has organised 3 public consultation 'drop in' events to take place across Renfrewshire in March

for anyone wishing to chat about any of the points raised in the draft LHS with the Housing Strategy and Development team. The details of the events are available at the foot of this page.



If you have any questions about the draft LHS and consultation please contact:

Jane Davis, Housing Strategy Officer on **0141 618 6148** or email: [HousingStrategyQuality.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:HousingStrategyQuality.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk)



## Draft Local Housing Strategy consultation events



Location	Date	Time
Johnstone Town Hall	2 March 2016	13:15 – 16:00
Renfrew Town Hall	9 March 2016	13:15 – 16:00
Paisley Town Hall	16 March 2016	09:45 – 12:30



## New Housing Tribunal for the Private Sector

The Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014 creates a new, simplified framework for tribunals in Scotland. Two tribunals will be created under the reforms, a first-tier tribunal and an upper-tier tribunal.

A specialist Housing Chamber will be created under the new first-tier tribunal into which the powers and members of the Private Rented Housing Panel (PRHP), Private Rented Housing Committee (PRHC), Homeowner Housing Panel (HOHP) and Homeowner Housing Committee (HOHC) will transfer.

Tenant appeals will be made directly to the specialist Housing Chamber within the first-tier tribunal in the first instance under the new provisions. Subsequent appeals from the first tier will be heard at the upper-tier tribunal.

The new tribunals will adopt the powers to impose and enforce a repairing standard enforcement order (RSEO) as is the case in the current set up of the Private Rented Housing Panel and committees in cases where it has been decided that a landlord has failed to meet the repairing standard.

The functions and jurisdiction of the Sheriff Courts in relation to repossession and non-repossession actions, such as recovery of the property due to non-payment of rent or recovery of costs of destroyed or damaged furniture will also transfer to the specialist Housing Chamber.

It is hoped that this change in legislation will provide a more efficient and specialised method of decision making in the private rented sector. The Scottish Government is driving forward the Tribunals (Scotland) Act and it is expected the tribunals will be in effect from 2017.



You can find out more about:

The Tribunals (Scotland) Act at [www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/policies/civil-courts/tribunal-system](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/policies/civil-courts/tribunal-system) and

The Housing (Scotland) Act at [www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing)



## Third Party Applications to the Private Rented Housing Panel

Under the **Housing (Scotland) Act 2014**, there will be the introduction of third party reporting rights which will broaden access to the Private Rented Housing Panel by introducing discretionary powers to enable local authorities to make an application to enforce the Repairing Standard. Local authorities can apply to the panel for a determination on whether the landlords' repairing standard is being met; the introduction of this new third party application provision is being phased in across Scotland. This action may be taken independently of the tenant if they do not wish to make an application in their own right, or do not wish to participate in a third party application.

Renfrewshire is part of the second phase, commencing in April 2016 and intends to make full use of these powers to improve accommodation standards across the sector.





## Private Landlord Registration Renewals

Remember to renew your landlord registration in time. Your registration lasts for three years from its approval date. You can renew your application up to three months in advance of your current registration expiring.

Renfrewshire Council's Licensing Section will issue electronic reminders to you if an email address has been provided. Failure to renew following reminders will automatically result in a late application fee and could also result in a rent penalty notice being served.

If you are no longer acting as a landlord, you need to inform the Licensing Section so that you can be removed from the register.

All private landlords must register with their local authority to ensure that they are a "fit and proper person" to let property. It is an offence to let any house without being registered or having made a valid application. The maximum fine for operating as an unregistered landlord is £50,000.

Further information about registration and renewals is available on the website [www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk) or by contacting the Licensing Section at:

Email: [privatelandlord.licensing.cs@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:privatelandlord.licensing.cs@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

Phone: 0300 300 0300



## Changes to the Repairing Standard

On the 1 December 2015 there were changes to the Repairing Standard in Scotland. The repairing standard now includes a duty to **ensure that carbon monoxide (CO) detectors are fitted in rented homes**. These CO alarms must be placed in every room within the rented home that contains a gas appliance (with the exception of the room where a cooker is located) and in any living room or bedroom that has a flue from a gas appliance running through it.

Further guidance on CO alarms can be found on the repairs downloads page on the Private Rented House Panel website, <https://www.prhpscotland.gov.uk/repairs-downloads-landlords>

Another new duty for landlords that came into effect on the 1 December 2015 was to carry out an **electrical safety inspection at least every 5 years**. This new duty came into effect on 1 December 2015 and requires an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) to be completed by an approved electrician and a Portable Appliance Test (PAT) to be carried out by either an approved electrician or a landlord who has completed the relevant training course.

The new duty applies to new tenancies that began on or after 1 December 2015 and to existing tenancies from 1 December 2016. So landlords will have up to one year to organise inspections of the homes they let.

You will also find guidance at the PRHP Scotland repairs download page on the new duty for landlords to carry out an electrical safety inspection at least every 5 years

Failure to meet any of the new additions to the Repairing Standards will continue to be enforced by the Private Rented Housing Panel and Committees until the transfer of powers to the Housing Chamber First-tier Tribunal forecast to be operational in 2017.



## Universal Credit – Rent Arrears Deductions and Managed Payments

The UK Government has been phasing in a new universal benefit that simplifies the application and payment of several in- and out-of-work benefits to a single application and monthly payment. Introduced across Renfrewshire in June 2015, Universal Credit includes social security benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance and Local Housing Allowance.

Tenants receiving Universal Credit no longer need to make a separate application to the Council for Local Housing Allowance to pay towards their rental charge; instead these costs are included in the monthly Universal Credit payment.

Landlords can still apply for the housing element of Universal Credit to be paid directly to themselves as a managed payment where a tenant has fallen into two months' rent arrears. However an application for managed payment must be made directly to the Department of Works and Pension rather than to the Council as is the process for direct payment of Local Housing Allowance.

Further information about rent arrears deductions and managed payments can be found on the DWP guidance page <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing>





# Information and support from Landlord Accreditation Scotland



Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS) work in partnership with Renfrewshire Council to provide information for private landlords based on Scottish legislation and best practice within the industry. The advantage of accreditation with LAS, along with regular attendance at courses and information events, provides landlords with knowledge on key issues and how to implement change when required, ensuring they have the confidence to conduct their business in a professional manner.

The range of training courses provided by LAS covers both legislation and best practice in the private rented sector. It can be challenging to keep track of the changes to legislation which affect our responsibilities as landlords and agents. The courses that are available to you cover all of these responsibilities and are updated in line with the ever changing legislation.

## Courses held locally in February-March 2016:

### Tenancy Agreements & Notices

11 February 2016

Paisley

1.30pm - 4.30pm

This course looks at what information should be included in a short assured tenancy agreement/ lease document, to ensure that the landlord is providing a relevant document for the tenant whilst protecting their interests as a private landlord. The course also provides guidance on preparing and serving notice documents.

### Health and Safety Requirements

3 March 2016

Paisley

1.30pm - 3.45pm

This course focuses on updating delegates on recent changes to safety legislation, including the new electrical safety and carbon monoxide regulations that came into place in December 2015. This is essential information and should be of interest to all private landlords.

### Managing Common Repairs

24 March 2016

Glasgow

1.30pm - 4.00pm

A landlord who lets flat property, whilst solely responsible for the repairs and maintenance of that property, also takes on joint responsibility for the repairs and maintenance of the common parts of the building.

This course has been designed to provide landlords with a guide to the regulations involved in joint repairing responsibilities that come with the ownership of property with communal obligations.

### How to Book

The courses listed above are available for booking now. All courses run by LAS can be found listed on our website and can be booked on-line at:

[www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com](http://www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com)

For further information on the courses, or to be added to the LAS mailing list to receive notification of any courses or events in your area, please subscribe to the LAS newsletter on the LAS website, or please feel free to call 0131 553 2211.





## Homes Again Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire is offering help to owners of long-term empty properties.

The average empty home owner in Scotland is losing an estimated £7310 per year in lost rent, council tax payments, insurance and security costs.

The council's Empty Homes Officer can offer help in a range of ways from information and advice to discounts and funding options. Whether your property has been empty for six months or for many years, the Empty Homes Officer may be able to help you.

Information and assistance can be provided on:

- Selling
- Renting
- Renovation
- Deciding where to start
- The council's Empty Homes Loan Fund and many other areas



For more information, please contact **Kathryn Kelly** on 0141 618 6262 or email [kathryn.kelly@renfrewshire.go.uk](mailto:kathryn.kelly@renfrewshire.go.uk)



## Renting Scotland

Shelter Scotland and the Scottish Government jointly fund the **Renting Scotland website**, [www.rentingscotland.org](http://www.rentingscotland.org), which provides information to landlords and tenants in the private rented sector.

The website gives landlords clear, neutral and actionable information on renting out a property. If you are a new or well-established private landlord you can access useful downloadable content such as a standard tenancy agreement template or a new tenant information pack on the website's easy-to-navigate landlord pages.

There is also the option to sign up to a regular newsletter – highlighting developments in the private rented sector and examples of good practice. You can also stay updated by simply following the [@rentingscotland](https://twitter.com/rentingscotland) twitter account.



## Useful Telephone Numbers

Private Landlord Registration 0300 300 0300 (option 4)

Housing Benefits (LHA) 0300 300 0204

Anti Social Behaviour team (ASIST) 0300 300 0380 (option 1)

Deposit Guarantee Scheme 0141 618 5807

Owner Services 0300 300 0222 (option 3)

Environmental Services 0300 300 0380

Police Scotland 101

Crimestoppers 0800 555 111



# Deposit Guarantee Scheme

0141 618 5807

**Are you a landlord? Got a property to let?**  
The **Deposit Guarantee Scheme** can help.

## Benefits:

- No fees or charges
- Apply for direct payments of rent to landlord
- We can prepare the lease and all other necessary documents
- We identify tenants (and arrange a meeting in advance if requested)
- Inspection and photographic inventory taken of your property before tenant moves in
- Regular home visits to ensure your property is being looked after
- Advice and support throughout duration of the guarantee period.

The Deposit Guarantee Scheme is designed to support landlords in filling their properties by providing a written bond in place of a cash deposit. Tenants then pay the deposit to the landlord over the course of the initial lease.

To register or find out more call: **0141 618 5807**  
Or email: [preventionteam.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:preventionteam.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk)  
[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk)

