
London Landlord Accreditation Scheme Newsletter

Edition 2
November 2003



Welcome Note

Welcome to the second edition of the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

In case you may be wondering where Edition 1 is, the Newsletter was originally designed for distribution just amongst the main partners in the Scheme. However, the Steering Group felt that it would be an appropriate method of communicating with all interested parties, and so this issue is aimed at a more general audience. Please feel free to feed back any comments on how it may be improved, suggestions for articles, etc.

The new logo has been reproduced above, following a vote on a total of 9 design options. Our thanks go to Mari Larsson and Steve Scott who voluntarily gave their time to produce the original nine designs, and have since made subtle improvements to the winning design as shown. A smaller version is also available, where 'LLAS' is substituted for words.

Background

Stemming from an idea amongst Officers in one or two London Boroughs, preparatory work has taken place to consult all London Boroughs and allied organisations on the feasibility of



introducing the London-wide Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

The consultations resulted in the formation of a Steering Group comprising representatives from most of the London Boroughs together with key landlord associations and educational organisations.



The London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) is one which will be based on delivering managerial development for participating landlords. Integral to it will be the 'fit and proper person' concept.

Whilst an important element of the information to be delivered will relate to the physical state of their properties, accreditation under the scheme will not be directly related to the actual condition of the properties. It is therefore a scheme which looks to accredit landlords rather than their properties.



It should be noted that the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme will not affect in any way property standards or other accreditation schemes operated by individual Boroughs, in fact it is intended to be entirely complementary to them.

The Proposed Scheme

The LLAS recognises the utmost importance of landlords having a wide and detailed knowledge of the many issues, some of them quite complex, surrounding the letting of residential property.

Educational development of participating landlords will therefore form the king-pin of this scheme to ensure that they fully understand their obligations not only in a legal sense, but also the more general responsibility they have to the communities in which their properties are situated.



Issues such as current legislation, basic structural requirements, tenancy agreements, inventory control, gas/electrical

safety, harassment and illegal eviction will be covered, as well as the delivery of comprehensive advice on Housing Benefit procedures, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and other relevant matters.

It will be important to define what is meant by a 'fit and proper person', firstly in respect of a landlord applying to participate in the scheme and

subsequently to remain part of it, and this is being debated currently.

It is envisaged that a basic level of competence will be possible to communicate within a day, or its equivalent, but further 'training modules' may be developed to take interested landlords to a higher level of attainment in particular areas as identified above (ie HMOs, Housing Benefit, etc).

Funding

Initially, LB Camden is financing the scheme but successful bids have been made to the GLA (Greater London Authority) and the ALG (Association of London Government) of £10,000 and £15,000

respectively, which will greatly assist in covering early set-up costs.



Other funding opportunities may be available, eg from ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and DWP (Department of Work & Pensions) Performance Standards Fund, and these are being explored. It is likely, however, that participating authorities will need to be prepared to make a contribution to the scheme to secure its medium term goals.

London Boroughs currently 'signed up' to Scheme

All London Boroughs have been given the opportunity to join the scheme, of these 26 Boroughs have provided a written commitment:



These are Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lambeth, Redbridge, Richmond-upon-Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Westminster

Housing Benefit Teams

So far, five HB Teams have also signed up to the scheme, agreeing in principle with the inclusion of training on Housing Benefit issues which may be of value to landlords.

Their interest in the scheme is directly related to the requirement for local authorities to demonstrate an improvement in the DWP Performance Standards for the delivery of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

These Boroughs are: Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Greenwich and Richmond-upon-Tames.

The Next Steps

The Steering Group meeting on 13th November 2003 agreed to form 5 sub-groups to look in detail at the priority issues identified at the meeting:-

1. Funding/Sponsorship
2. Training/Cert. Of Competence
3. Publicity/Leaflets/Pre-Launch
4. Incentives
5. Admin & Procedure/Code of Conduct

It is hoped that these themes will be progressed fairly swiftly by the

respective sub-groups, as the next Steering Group meeting is scheduled for 15th December 2003 and each will need to report back on their initial discussions.

Landlords' Reference Group

Another suggestion coming out of the Steering Group meeting was the setting up of a Landlords' Reference Group comprising a number of private landlords who can be asked for ideas and opinions relating to the scheme.

This information can then be used to inform the Steering Group on the practicalities of the scheme's introduction and administration from a landlord's perspective.

We will try to make this Reference Group representative of landlord portfolio types, eg. to include landlords with multiple property ownership as well as those with single or low ownership.

If any landlord is interested in contributing to this Group, or just wishes to be kept informed of progress of the LLAS, please contact the Project Officer as detailed overleaf.

Scheme Launch

It is hoped that the LLAS will be formally announced at the London Landlords Day in June 2004, which is organised by the London Private Sector Housing Partnership.

Indications are that the Mayor of London may be in attendance, and as the GLA has contributed to the scheme, it should be an appropriately high-profile occasion.



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Aims & Objectives of Scheme

Aims

To provide landlords across London with information and professional development opportunities to:-

- *allow them to operate a successful business*
- *provide their tenants with safe, high quality accommodation*
- *reduce the need for intervention from Local Authorities*

and to accredit those landlords who attain the required standards

Objectives

- Promote good practice and improve standards of management in the private rented sector.
- Provide advice and support to landlords on providing good quality well managed accommodation.
- Provide a channel for consultation between London Boroughs and landlords on strategic issues through an Accredited Landlords' Forum and newsletter.
- Provide opportunities to inform landlords about legislative proposals, policy or administrative changes, and other matters that might affect them.
- Enable landlords to obtain better access to information from local authority staff and other sources.
- Reduce the number of landlord/tenant disputes needing intervention by local authority officers both in relation to property condition and tenancy issues.
- Improve relations between the private rented sector and London Boroughs.
- Improve the quality of accommodation available in the private rented sector.

