



DASH Research Report:

Landlord Accreditation Schemes in the East Midlands

**Report for inaugural meeting of the Accreditation
Network East Midlands Steering Group: Thursday
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Introduction

The following pages present summarised information collected from local authorities, landlords and agents regarding existing scheme details, and views on requirements for new schemes from councils and landlords with no involvement in current schemes.

1. Councils with existing schemes, (11 in total)

Table 1:

Criteria	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Does the Council manage the scheme?	27%	73%	0%
2. Does the scheme cover the council's whole area?	100%	0%	0%
3. Is the scheme limited to student accommodation alone?	82%	18%	0%
4. What is accredited? - Properties - Landlord (Fit and Proper person etc) - Tenants (References etc)	100% 9% 0%	0% 91% 100%	0% 0% 0%
5. Is the property scheme limited? E.g. HMO's only.	73%	27%	0%
6. Is any fee charged for accreditation?	73%	27%	0%
7. Does the scheme have any sustainability/"green" requirements?	55%	45%	0%
8. Does the scheme have any home security requirements?	91%	9%	0%
9. Does the scheme have any incentives for landlords? Other than improved marketability.	27%	73%	0%

2. Councils without Schemes, (12 responses)

Table 2:

Criteria	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Would your authority be interested in using an accreditation scheme template?	92%	8%	0%
2. Would you wish to manage an accreditation scheme yourselves?	84%	8%	8%
3. Would you want your scheme to cover the whole local authority area?	84%	0%	16%
4. What would you want your scheme to cover? - Properties - Landlords (Fit and Proper Person) - Tenants (Good Tenant Scheme)	92% 92% 33%	0% 0% 59%	8% 8% 8%

5. Should property accreditation standards be higher than minimum statutory standards?	76%	16%	8%
6. Should HMO's be included in an accreditation scheme?	84%	8%	8%
7. "An accreditation scheme should educate landlords as well as assess their properties" Do you agree with this statement?	92%	0%	8%
8. Should accreditation schemes include energy efficiency and possibly other environmental / sustainability criteria in their standards?	92%	8%	0%
9. Should property be judged to a single standard? i.e. Not standard/premium	68%	16%	16%

3. Landlord/ Agent Returns, (17 and 3 responses)

Table 3

Criteria	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Are you a member of a landlord/property accreditation scheme?	55%	45%	0%
1b. If not, would you want to become a member under the right circumstances? (% result is of those answering No to Q1 above)	89%	11%	0%
2. Would you be prepared to pay annually for membership?	60%	35%	5%
3. Should accreditation schemes set standards above the legal minimum?	75%	25%	0%
4. Should accreditation schemes assess the landlord in terms of being a fit and proper person as well as property condition?	70%	30%	0%
5. Would you be prepared to contribute to the assessment of tenants in a Good Tenant scheme?	75%	25%	0%
6. Do you operate any Houses in Multiple Occupation within your business?	70%	25%	5%
7. Would you expect to see benefits to landlords from an accreditation scheme? over and above marketability.	95%	0%	5%
8. Would you prefer your local authority to manage accreditation schemes? as opposed to a third party agent such as a Landlords Association.	45%	40%	15%
9. Should accreditation schemes have environmentally friendly/ green standards? E.g. low energy light bulbs.	50%	50%	0%
10. Should accreditation schemes require landlords to attend a days training course as part of the assessment process?	45%	55%	0%
11. Should property be assessed to a single standard? (As opposed to standard/premium etc)	50%	30%	20%
12. Do you agree that a landlord's whole portfolio of properties should be included in a scheme?	50%	40%	10%

4. Summary of Comments on Questionnaire Returns and from Interviews.

4.1 Local Authority Returns

4.1.1. Issues relating to Standards

- Scheme standards should be set above the minimum statutory standards.
- We want to use the decent home standard in any new scheme.
- Current standards in the scheme need updating to reflect the new Hazard Rating system.
- Need to have decorative and quality standards including front gardens and elevations.
- Will accreditation scheme require a written tenancy agreement, details of emergency repair provisions and submission of gas safety certificates etc?
- Involve landlords in setting standards, experience shows they will set higher standards than local authorities alone would.
- The current scheme asks for a reasonable degree of thermal comfort as per decent home standard and adequate security measures, e.g. quality of doors, locks and windows.
- Landlords will need a period of time to make any changes as a result of amended/new standards.
- The scheme has also raised standards in properties that are not accredited.
- Any educational requirements should also satisfy a licensing scheme.
- Unlikely to adopt a tenant scheme.

4.1.2. Issues relating to Landlords

- Want to move away from self accreditation by landlords.
- Landlords would be interested if they received discounts for being in an accreditation scheme.
- To encourage membership good benefits are necessary.
- Each property should be accredited as a stand alone case.
- All of a landlord's property should be accredited together.
- Any new scheme must have a landlord fit and proper person assessment.
- We do not want to confuse landlords.
- Ownership of the scheme is mainly with landlords, which is essential.

4.2. Landlord and Agent Returns

4.2.1. Issues relating to Standards

- The minimum legal standard for conditions etc should be sufficient for an accreditation scheme.
- The scheme should be to legal standards but then suggest additional items to enable good practice and allow tenants to make comparisons.
- Each of landlord's properties should be able to be accredited individually, to do otherwise will exclude many landlords.
- All properties should be included in a single accreditation.
- In existing schemes for student lets the standards set are not even close to being met in the University Halls of Residence, there must be equality between private landlords and the university sector.
- A training day prior to accreditation is necessary to weed out unsuitable landlords.
- An accreditation scheme must have the facility for an independent dispute procedure.
- Benefits must follow from any voluntary scheme, otherwise it is wasted money and the scheme will fail.
- It would be useful to require that when marketing a property its Council Tax banding and annual energy consumption is shown.
- Correct insulation and efficient heating systems should be encouraged.
- Any new scheme must be aligned with existing schemes to avoid duplication or worse.
- Light bulbs are a tenant responsibility.

4.2.2. Issues relating to Landlords

- Environmental concerns are of interest, however costs to the landlord should be kept to a minimum, or subsidised, e.g. provision of low energy light bulbs for first time use.
- Landlords who use letting agents (ARLA?) should not need to attend training days.
- Some landlords know all info already and they should be able to self assess whether they need to attend training.
- If an applicant to a scheme is deemed not to be fit and proper how far will this extend around them to relatives and colleagues etc?
- Landlord benefit in a student let scheme is the improved marketability and attraction to students and parents alike.
- Financial benefits would encourage landlord membership, e.g. for gas safety certification and fire escape provision.
- Resident parking permit availability is a problem for some landlords when working on properties.

4.2.3. Issues – Miscellaneous

- Greater bureaucracy will increase costs, rents will go up and access to reasonably priced accommodation will reduce.
- Schemes should be set up and maintained by local landlord associations.
- Any fee needs to reflect the work involved and be for a five year period during which annual declarations can be made by the landlord.
- Fees will be passed on to the tenant.
- An accreditation scheme for tenants would be a good idea.
- The easy targets may be monitored with the real problems being brushed under the carpet.

5. Benefits to Landlords

5.1 Benefits available in very limited cases in existing East Midland schemes.

- Access to discounted buildings and contents insurance.
- Purchase of discounted fire safety equipment, security items and building materials.
- Free security measures up to value of £100 on advice of police.
- One week advert paid for in local paper on marketing a property to let,
- together with other free advertising on council website and appropriate locations in council control.
- A bond guarantee scheme where tenants are taken from homeless list, no long term nomination rights involved.
- Annual gas safety inspection and certification paid for.
- Free smoke alarm/s on joining scheme.
- Energy efficiency advice and 4 free low energy light bulbs on joining scheme.
- Access to an empty property grant to raise standard to those of accreditation where house has been empty for 3 years or more.
- Maximum £1 000 accreditation grant to raise standards where required.

5.2 Additional Benefits suggested as desirable

- Provision of temporary residents parking permit for landlords when needing to work on a property.
- Pay for electrical safety testing.
- Pay additional grant for installation of solar panels which would be to benefit of tenants in the main and contribute to L.A targets re fuel poverty, HECA etc.
- A good tenant scheme would help landlords when letting.

- Accreditation scheme members should be able to retain tenant deposits as currently is the case.
- Accredited properties requiring a licence should have a reduced licence fee.
- Membership of an accreditation scheme should enable free use of the local tip for waste coming from the tenant's home.
- Free landlord training day to cover enforcement legislation and other areas of interest to landlords, e.g. tax position etc.
- Improved access to Housing Benefit Teams
- Preferential treatment as regards Councils Housing Grants.
- Use of approved scheme logo on landlords own letters etc.