

Bolton Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The Bolton Landlord Accreditation Scheme (hereafter known as ‘the Scheme’) has been developed by Bolton Council from the AGMA A&List Code of Standards and Management Practice (2011), consultation with a number of national and regional landlord associations and professional landlords to assist the Scheme in achieving its goals of improving standards in the Private Rented Sector and fostering a collaborative working relationship between the Local Authority and the Borough’s landlord community.

If you would like to discuss this document or have any comments or complaints about the Scheme please contact:

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About the Scheme

The Scheme is an important partnership between the Council and local businesspeople. It was developed in 2005 and has been recently reviewed to incorporate the changes that have been introduced by Government from the Immigration Act 2014 and the Deregulation Act 2015.

The Scheme seeks to encourage good practice and has three key aims:

- 1) To improve engagement with Landlords, to facilitate communication between local businesspeople and the services that the Council can provide to assist their business and local residents.
- 2) To improve property standards in the borough, actively working with landlords and industry bodies who represent landlords who own property in the Bolton borough to help them meet the standard of property and tenancy management required.
- 3) Increase access to the Private Sector – privately rented property is key to meeting housing need in Bolton and the Scheme encourages landlords to advertise their properties on Homes for Bolton and Pinpoint by offering free advertising.

The Scheme is also an important part of the Bolton Council's overall service to assist landlords with other aspects of their property business such as:

- Matchmaking empty property owners with investors
- Bringing empty homes back into use and up to decent standard
- Helping tenants obtain access to Bonds to secure deposits
- Giving advice to tenants and landlords on tenancy issues and to help with homeless prevention
- Managing community safety with the antisocial behaviour team
- Tacking rogue landlords
- Enabling tenants to access financial advice and assistance
- Giving landlords and residents advice on energy efficiency in the home

However in cases where landlords do not fulfil their legal responsibilities the Council will exercise its duty to enforce these standards.

Benefits of joining the Scheme

Membership of a Local Authority accreditation scheme has a great many rewards for your business. Benefits include:

- Membership is free – you can secure Accreditation for 5 years without any cost
- Your tenants and peers will know that you are a reputable landlord
- You can advertise your property for free on the Pinpoint and Homes for Bolton websites which have a combined membership of over 100,000 homeseekers – you can even have a free reference check if the successful tenant has held a tenancy previously with a Bolton Community Homes landlord
- You will receive priority notice of any grants or property related funding available in the Borough
- The Council can give advice on any tenancy issues you are having
- You can get advice on dealing with any empty properties you have in your portfolio
- You will get support and signposting to relevant Council departments
- Receiving regular updates on changes to the law which affect your business
- Invitations to landlord meetings and other business forums

Joining the Bolton Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The Bolton LAS is free to join and is on a voluntary basis. The term of the membership is five years.

Landlords who wish to have their good tenancy practices and properties verified by the Council can contact the team to complete a form or complete an online form – which can be accessed on the Bolton Council website.

The membership is on the basis of self-certification, that you declare your good practice, other professional memberships and provide Bolton Council with copies of documentation for each of your properties which should already be part of your introductory tenant pack:

- Gas Safety Certificate (if there is gas in the property)
- Energy Performance Certificate

The Scheme will also ask for a copy of the template Tenancy Agreement that you use and for you to provide a copy of the Electrical Installation Condition Report for each property during the five year term.

Verifying Your Properties

Bolton Landlord Accreditation Membership is reliant on landlords' self-regulation. Landlords declare on their application that their portfolio meet the lettable standard expected by the Scheme and provide the documentation listed (see p. 3) as evidence of their good management practices.

The Scheme is unable to check every property and therefore cannot guarantee that every property satisfies the *Code of Property Standards*. However at any time during the membership the Scheme may carry out a sample property compliance check to ensure that a landlord's property and tenancy management skills are suitable to be a member of the Scheme.

Advertising Your Property

Accredited landlords can take advantage of free advertising on the Greater Manchester Lettings Website, www.pinpoint.org.uk.

All applicants who have joined the Bolton housing register Homes for Bolton will also be able to view these adverts when applying for social housing.

The Pinpoint Support Team will manage the advert on your behalf but will ask for basic information about the property and the details you would like on the advert. The advert will stay live on the site until you inform us that it is let.

To advertise a property on Pinpoint/Homes for Bolton landlords must agree to such an inspection of their nominated property prior to the advert going online. These inspections will consist of a visual check of the property by a non-technical officer to ensure there are no severe safety hazards in contravention of the HHSRS standards and to ensure that the accommodation meets the Scheme's expectations.

Should any major hazards be identified the landlord will have their membership suspended until any remedial works are completed but the Scheme will work with you to assist in the rectification of any hazards. Should works not be completed to the satisfaction of the Scheme the matter will be escalated to Bolton Council's Housing Standards Team.

Fit & Proper Person checks

Please note that landlords applying for the Scheme may have standard checks made by the Council with Trading Standards, Housing Benefit, Council Tax or Housing Standards as defined in the application's Declaration. If any evidence is found to show unsatisfactory conduct the application may be rejected.