



Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme

Lichfield District Council is a member of the Homestamp consortium, which is a partnership of 17 Midlands Local Authorities (from Stoke in the north to Gloucester in the south), the private sector including 3 national landlords' associations, and West Midlands Fire and Police Services. Homestamp's aims are to:

- Encourage the supply of good quality private rented homes.
- Provide and facilitate information and training for landlords.
- Consider and respond to regional and national issues affecting the private sector.
- Encourage joint working between all interested parties.

Membership of Homestamp gives the council access to the Midland Landlords Accreditation Scheme (MLAS), which is administered for the consortium by the University of Birmingham. MLAS is an offshoot of the hugely successful London Landlords Accreditation Scheme, which is also being adopted in many other areas of the country.

The London scheme was established in response to the legislative Green Paper *Quality and Choice: A Decent Home For All*, published in 2000, which aimed to promote a healthy private rented sector and retain good and well intentioned landlords. The aims were to:

- Raise standards in accommodation.
- Recognise the contribution that reputable landlords make.
- Provide tenants with more assurance that they are dealing with a competent landlord who is recognised as accredited.
- Improve and maintain safety standards.
- Give landlords greater access to information and advice
- Create increased opportunities for landlords to communicate directly with the local authority, Fire and Police.
- Enable Landlords to keep abreast of policy and legislative changes which may affect them and their business
- Receive preferential treatment from Universities where student accommodation is offered.
- Ensure properties are maintained to a consistently high standard.

Accreditation, and particularly the London model, is fast becoming recognised as the "kite mark" that sets responsible landlords apart from those who offer a lower quality service. There are obvious business advantages to being seen as a good, professional landlord, and the scheme also aims to offer improved access to council officers and services and develop a joint approach to tackling problems. From the council's point of view, accreditation helps improve housing standards and excludes and discredits unscrupulous landlords.

To date over 600 landlords have joined the Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Accreditation is voluntary, although given the government review of the private sector and the focus of legislative changes it is always possible some sort of registration will be required in the future. It would therefore seem prudent for responsible landlords to get engage with the scheme at this early stage.

How it works

- Complete an application.
- Complete a declaration that you are a “fit and proper” person, i.e. no offences committed such as harassment, discrimination, or action taken under housing legislation.
- Attend a one day development seminar.
- Agree to adhere to the scheme Code of Conduct (attached).

Councils may also wish to inspect random properties against the minimum Housing Health and Safety Rating System guidance. There are no membership fees, but there is a charge for the development course, (standard charge about £100) but the council may be able to offer a subsidy to keep costs to a minimum. Once accredited, landlords will be presented with a certificate and will be free to use the MLAS logo in adverts, stationary etc, offering a distinct marketing advantage. Accreditation via MLAS would be recognised throughout the Midlands, not just in Lichfield District.

Lettings Agents can also join the scheme. For agents, partnerships and limited companies, at least two thirds of the staff would need to attend the development course and agree to the Code of Conduct as above. There is also a National Approved Lettings Scheme (NALS) for agents: see www.nalscheme.co.uk

For the future, accredited landlords will enjoy benefits such as access to cost effective advertising on the South Staffs & North Warks internet lettings service, direct “hotline” to Housing Benefit staff and fast-tracking of benefit claims, advice from our technical staff, and consultation on local housing strategy. Accreditation may also become an advantage when seeking services such as insurance.

Should sufficient numbers of local landlords be interested in achieving accredited status simultaneously, the Council can host a one day development seminar for up to 20 people at the Council House, inclusive of a buffet lunch. Otherwise, places can be allocated on seminars organised by the University of Birmingham.