

Selective Licensing Landlord Newsletter No. 2



"Working towards decent homes for all"

2011 issue 2

Housing Needs Reception – Red Lion Street

The opening hours have changed; the reception is now open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am to 1pm and Wednesday 10am to 1pm. If you wish to contact a member of the licensing team or deliver application forms after 1pm please go across to the Contact Centre, which is directly opposite the Housing Needs Reception and is open until 5pm. A member of staff at the meet and greet reception will ensure all paperwork is delivered to the team and help Landlords to contact the team directly.

Prosecutions

Nine landlords have been prosecuted for failing to apply for a licence.

Licenses issued to date

- 235 landlords licensed = 415 licensed properties
- 36 landlords facing potential prosecution action
- 61 landlords with on going applications

Cases pending prosecution: 5

Good Landlord & Agent Scheme (GLAS)

Joining the scheme for licensed landlords could not be simpler. To join the many landlords already on the scheme, and enjoying the benefits, just contact Michelle Hall on ext 2699.

Selective Licensing

Burnley Council
Housing & Neighbourhoods
Red Lion Street, Burnley BB11 2AE
Tel: 01282 425011
Ext: 2443/2446/2492/2699
Fax: 01282 477266
Email: landlords@burnley.gov.uk

Issuing a tenancy

As part of the procedure for issuing a tenancy, it is a condition of the licence that the licence holder must provide all new tenants with a copy of the licence and licence conditions. It is a good opportunity for landlords and agents to ensure that all new tenants are informed about the licensing conditions at the start of their tenancy.

Landlords should also make tenants aware of the correct waste collection arrangements, these can be found on the website under Bin Day.

Where streets are alley gated Landlords should be issuing tenants with keys for the gates, replacement keys can be obtained from the Contact Centre.

It is a condition of licence that landlords and agents keep the licensing team up to date of any changes of management or any changes in the ownership or tenancy of the property. The team needs to ensure that all persons who are involved with the management of a property meet the fit and proper criteria. Also Licence Holders must inform the team if they have recently sold their property.

Drop in surgeries & work carried out within the area

A member of the Licensing team is available on Tuesdays at 2pm at Howard Street Health Centre and Wednesdays at 10 am at Tay Street Surestart Centre. Advice is being given to both residents and landlords. Problems which are causing concern in the neighbourhood are often reported at the drop in. This enables the licensing team to investigate and ensure the problem is resolved. A member of the licensing team is in the area twice a week, working in partnership with Street scene Officers to ensure that any incidents of anti social behaviour, fly tipping and dirty back yards are addressed. Landlords may find the license conditions a useful tool to ensure that the tenant of problem properties are fully aware of the consequences of causing anti social behaviour, not keeping their yard clean, or not presenting bins for collection.

Case Study

One family who persistently caused anti social behaviour prevented other residents having the right to peace and quiet. The family would not engage with the landlord, agent, Police or Council officers and would not stop causing a nuisance. The licensing team offered help and advice to the agent and ensured that seeking possession of the property went smoothly. The family was unable to secure another property within the area due to not being able to obtain suitable references from their current landlord and had to move to another area, where they now live quietly.

Referencing Form

All Licensed landlords have now received the tenants referencing form which will help Landlords to reference a prospective tenant. Landlords who have used the form for referencing prospective tenants have found it to be really useful and lots of positive feedback has been received. If any landlords have any queries or require any further help with referencing a tenant, please contact a member of the licensing team.

Smartwater

SmartWater is a forensic liquid that marks valuables such as radiators and boilers with their own unique forensic code, allowing the equipment marked to be traced back if stolen. By displaying SmartWater deterrent stickers on your windows and doors you are sending out a powerful warning to any would-be thieves. Smartwater kits are available for landlords in the Selective Licensing area.

If you would like to have your boiler marked with Smartwater please contact Michellehall@burnley.gov.uk or DMcLachlan@burnley.gov.uk.



Burnley.gov.uk

Burnley Council...creating better communities

Housing Benefits are changing

The Government is making changes to the way Housing Benefit is calculated, for private rented sector tenants who fall under the LHA scheme, from 1st April 2011. For more details go to www.direct.gov.uk search for 2011 April changes.

Here are some of the changes, which are likely to affect landlords:

- Removal of the up to £15 weekly excess;
- LHA rates will be set at the 30th percentile of rents rather than the median;
- LHA weekly rates cannot exceed £250 for a one bedroom property; £290 for a two bedroom property; £340 for a three bedroom property; £400 for a four bedroom property
- Removal of the five bedroom Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate;
- An additional bedroom within the size criteria can be used to assess HB claims in the private rented sector when a disabled person, or someone with a long term health condition, has a proven need for overnight care and this is provided by a non-resident carer;
- Increase in the rate of non-dependant deductions;
- Councils can now consider making payments to landlords when it would help customers secure or retain a tenancy.

People making new claims from 1st April 2011 will be affected straight away. Existing claimants will normally be affected from the anniversary of their claim. However, they may be affected sooner, if there is a change in the size of their household that affects the size of dwelling they are entitled to, or if they move.

Accidental dwelling fires in Lancashire, facts and figures

Thanks to the fire prevention work undertaken by Lancashire Fire and Rescue staff, a consistent and substantial decrease in accidental fires in the home in Lancashire has been achieved year-on-year for almost ten years now.

The partnership between landlords and the licensing team has continued. Since licensing commenced 198 tenants have been referred to Lancashire Fire & Rescue for Home Fire safety checks.

During Home Fire Safety Check visits, fire service staff advise the public on how to prevent fires and how to escape injury if one occurs, which together with the free provision of smoke detectors, is a key element of our fire safety work.

Causes of fires

Cooking mishaps are still the most common cause of fires, typically when food (often chips in a pan of oil) is set to cook and forgotten about.

Smoking too is still a major cause of fires, with 21% of all fires starting in the living room of a property being due to careless disposal of cigarettes. However, the biggest cause of fires in the living room (42%) is that of combustible materials being left too close to a heat source or fire, such as clothing too near to a fire, or candles too near to curtains.

Properties inspected

562 Properties within the area are required to be inspected during the designation. We have inspected 144 to date.

The properties within the area are going to be inspected over the next couple of years. We want to ensure that all properties are safe and free from category 1 hazards. After completing the inspection, the landlord will be issued with a schedule of works, so that they have the opportunity to remedy the hazards. If the landlord fails to comply then the case will be forward to the enforcement team. Other issues identified to the landlord which are less dangerous will be listed as a recommendation for the landlord to consider.



How landlords can help address domestic violence

Domestic violence accounts for up to 25% of all reported violent crime in Burnley, and is treated very seriously by the police and the courts. Tackling domestic violence is one of the priorities of Burnley Borough Council and the Community Safety Partnership.

How you could help

A Calico worker was called out to a property to repair an internal door. On examining the door the worker thought that the damage may have been caused by a punch. After inquiring about how the damage happened it was revealed that the women and her two children, had been suffering from violence from her partner for some time. She was scared but didn't know what to do.

The worker rang Burnley SafeNet DV Helpline, and a domestic violence worker met the tenant later the same day. The SafeNet worker helped the tenant obtain an emergency Injunction, improved security by having the locks changed, and the perpetrator was excluded from the property.

If you suspect a tenant is experiencing domestic violence, ring the Burnley Safenet DV Helpline for information on what help is available. Burnley SafeNet: 07866 510 728, Mon – Fri 10am – 5pm.

If you would like to attend the domestic abuse training provided for Burnley agencies, contact Burnley Council DV Co-ordinator:
lhoworth@burnley.gov.uk