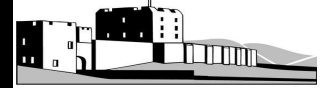


Landlords Newsletter

CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL



www.carlisle.gov.uk

Are you ready for the Digital Switch over?

Your countdown to the TV digital switchover has begun. Any TV that is not converted before switchover will no longer be able to receive TV programmes.

In the Border region, the TV signal is provided by several TV transmitters. The date on which you switch will depend on which transmitter your property is served by. In the Carlisle area if, your signal comes from either the Calbeck or Douglas transmitter, or one of their related local transmitters, then the switch will be early **Summer 2009.**

To find out when you switch, use the online postcode checker at digitaluk.co.uk or call one of the digital UK advisors on 08456 50 50 50



Fire Safety Guidance Document

In July 2008, Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) produced guidance on fire safety standards in certain existing residential accommodation. The document was produced to underpin the Fire Safety Protocol agreed by the Fire Authorities and the Local Authorities and to further promote consistency throughout the country on Fire Safety Standards.

The document is now being used by Council officers throughout the country as guidance for the Fire Safety requirements in all residential properties, including Houses in Multiple Occupation. If you currently let out property in the Carlisle area, then you need to be aware of this guidance. Council officers looking for compliance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) will look toward the LACORS document. Outlined below is a case study example of what Council officers would be looking for in a typical two storey shared house type HMO.

Grade D, LD3 Fire Detection and Alarm System, to include mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in the hallway, landing and lounge and a heat alarm in the kitchen. No protected route will generally be required in most properties, however if construction standards are poor or travel distances are excessive or if other risk factors are present then a 30 minutes protected route will be required.

A full copy of the document can be viewed at www.carlisle.gov.uk

Changes to Gas Safety in the UK

There will be a new gas safety registration scheme from 1 April 2009 in England, Scotland and Wales. The new scheme Gas Safety Register is delivered under an agreement with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and replaces the CORGI gas register which ends on 31 March 2009.

In relation to domestic gas under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regula-

tions 1998, landlords legal duties apply to a wide range of accommodation, including residential premises provided for rent by private landlord.

It remains a legal requirement for all landlords to have an annual safety check on gas appliances and flues provided in rental property. However from the 1st April 2009 a Gas Safe registered engineer, not a CORGI registered engineer,

must carry out the gas safety checks.

From the 1st April 2009, anyone can find out or check a Gas Safe registered engineer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week online at www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk or call 0800 408 5500. You can even view a photo of the engineer with details that tells you they are qualified to do the job

Fire Safety Risk Assessment Form

In March 2009, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Services published a Fire Safety Risk Assessment form for use by landlords of small premises, typically Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

If you are a licensed HMO landlord then you are required to have a written risk assessment in place. Completion of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Services risk assessment form should assist landlords in

complying with the requirements of both the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The risk assessment form has been developed as part of the partnership approach between the relevant licensing authorities within the County of Cumbria and can be accessed on Cumbria Fire and Rescue Services webpage at www.cumbriafire.gov.uk/services/Enforcement.asp

The form should be used in conjunction with the LACORS Fire Safety Guidance document downloadable at www.lacors.gov.uk or www.carlisle.gov.uk



New Refuse Arrangements

From 1st April, Carlisle City Council is introducing charges for the collection of some bulky household wastes. Landlords who would like the Council to collect bulky waste items should consult the leaflet enclosed with this newsletter to see if charges apply. The collection of bulky household wastes can be arranged by telephoning the Council on 01228 817200. Where appropriate, payments can be made by either credit card, cheque or cash.

Alternatively, landlords wishing to dispose of bulky waste items that are clean and reusable can contact Impact Furniture Services on 01228 633655 or take items to the County Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres (at Rome Street, Carlisle & Townfoot Industrial Estate, Brampton). Please note that a permit will be required where a van or a twin axle trailer is used. For details of how to obtain a permit telephone 0845 055 1118.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) was introduced in England and Wales in April 2006 and replaced the Housing Fitness Standard.

When a Local Authority identifies a serious health and safety hazard under the **HHSRS** it can order a landlord to make immediate improvements to remove the hazard.

Excess Cold is the most common hazard found by Local Authorities when carrying out an inspection under **HHSRS**.

A landlord has a responsibility to ensure that their property is free from risks to health and safety identified under the **HHSRS**. In the case of **Excess Cold**, a landlord should ensure that tenants are provided with adequate insulation and an adequate and efficient source of controllable heating throughout the property.

As a base line under **HHSRS** officers will be looking for a Gas or Oil central heating system, SEDBUK Rated A or B. Central Heating systems should be fitted with good programmable controls and thermostatic radiator valves.

In addition good thermal insulation, draught proofing of doors and windows, double glazed windows, loft insulation reaching a minimum of 250mm and cavity wall insulation should be provided where possible. Electric storage heaters are not an acceptable means of space heating in a property as they are not capable of providing an efficient source of controllable heating through the day.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System - Excess Cold

If any of the above are identified as deficiencies in a property then it is more than likely that a Category 1 hazard will have been identified which requires action by the Local Authority.

Around 90% of the complaints received by Council officers, from private sector tenants, resulted in the identification of a Category 1 hazard for **Excess Cold**. The landlord is therefore required to improve or provide heating, top up loft insulation or provide double glazed windows.

The best way to prevent your properties from being identified as a risk to your tenants is to improve the insulation and heating system in the property.