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INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Core Standards for Accredited Landlords (the Standards) provides a framework for setting and monitoring the achievement of good management practice by private landlords. The Standards reflect a combination of current legislation, good practice and common sense. They are designed to be reasonable, realistic and easy to implement. Landlords who already carry out good management practices will find themselves well on their way to achieving the Standards.

These standards follow the Scottish National Core Standards and Good Practice Guidance for Private Landlords developed by Communities Scotland in 2006 and subsequently endorsed by the Scottish Government following widespread consultation.

The Standards have been adopted as the framework for the accreditation of landlords by Landlord Accreditation Scotland and were updated in 2014 to reflect recent changes in legislation.

The Types of Standard

The Standards themselves are organised around eight categories:

1. Communication with the tenant;
2. Equality issues, complaints and disputes;
3. Management of the tenancy;
4. Repairing Standard;
5. Repairs and maintenance;
6. Facilities and fittings;
7. Heating, insulation and energy efficiency; and
8. Health, safety and home security features.

Guidance on the Standards

Most of the Standards are straightforward; relatively short statements of good practice. Generally, they have been framed as broad statements rather than described in great detail, although for some Standards, precision has been necessary and unavoidable.

Changes to Legislation

LAS will inform accredited landlords of new and revised legislation or guidance as it is published. Accredited landlords will be required to bring their management practices into line with legislation as part of compliance with the Standards

SCOTTISH CORE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITED LANDLORDS

1 Communication with the Tenant

- 1.1 The landlord shall communicate clearly, promptly and informatively with the tenant on any matter that affects the property, its management and the tenant's safe and peaceful occupation of the accommodation.
- 1.2 The landlord must provide the tenant with the prescribed standard tenancy documents no later than the date on which the tenancy starts.
Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 as amended by Part 4 of the Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Act 2011
- 1.3 All information provided by the landlord, including tenancy agreements, shall be written in plain English.
- 1.4 Where requested, the landlord shall provide summary translations of written information in relevant minority languages, Braille or large print.

2 Equality Issues, Complaints and Disputes

Equality Issues

- 2.1 In letting and managing accommodation, a landlord must ensure that no person or group of persons is treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, disability or sexual orientation.
Sources: Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- 2.2 A landlord must not unreasonably withhold consent to tenants to adapt rented accommodation to meet the needs of disabled occupants.
Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006: Section 52 (3)
- 2.3 The landlord shall not discriminate against a tenant or prospective tenant because of their entitlement to Local Housing Allowance or other Benefit and shall not advertise vacant properties in a manner that could be described as discriminatory.

Complaints

- 2.4 At the outset of the tenancy, the landlord shall advise the tenant in writing of the way or ways that any complaints should be registered.
- 2.5 A record shall be kept by the landlord of complaints made by the tenant or a third party and the outcome of the complaint shall be recorded.

Disputes

- 2.6 The landlord shall seek to resolve any dispute linked to the tenancy or property, involving their tenant, including a dispute with neighbours, promptly and lawfully.

3 Management of the Tenancy

'Fit and Proper' to Let

- 3.1 The landlord and the property being let must be registered with the local authority's Private Landlord Registration Scheme in which the property is located. Where a landlord operates from a company limited by guarantee, the fit and proper person test should relate to the Director(s) and Secretary of the company.

Source: Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended by Part 1 of the Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Act 2011

- 3.2 The landlord shall not have a conviction within the last three years for a criminal offence, or offences that are relevant to carrying out residential letting.
- 3.3 A landlord letting a property to three or more unrelated individuals shall provide evidence of their HMO license.

Pre-Letting Procedures

- 3.4 Permission for the property to be used for letting shall be obtained from the mortgage lender, where appropriate.
- 3.5 A landlord shall have adequate buildings insurance and must have third party insurance.
- 3.6 It is a legal requirement of the landlord to ensure that the property let is not overcrowded to the extent that the overcrowding leads to an adverse effect on either the health or wellbeing of any of the occupiers of the property or on the amenity of the property or its locality, and the landlord shall have in place ways of monitoring the occupancy of the property.

Source: Part 3 Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Act 2011

- 3.7 Prospective tenants shall be given clear and accurate details of:
- the accommodation-to-let particulars;
 - the important rights and responsibilities of the tenant and landlord as defined in the Tenant Information Pack;
- Source: Section 30A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988*
- the rent, service charges, utility and council tax liabilities of both parties;
 - any other charges for which they are responsible;
 - the potential of property inspections to be undertaken including those associated with the compliance procedures of the accreditation scheme.

- 3.8 No payment may be taken from a prospective tenant to have their name placed on an accommodation list.

Source: Accommodations Agencies Act 1953

- 3.9 The first rent payment and any deposit should only be taken at the point the tenancy agreement is signed. A reasonable exception is where both parties agree that a holding deposit which is fully refundable should the tenancy not proceed, is taken and for which a receipt is issued in full.

The landlord shall not make any charge to a tenant in relation to the grant, renewal or continuance of a tenancy (apart from rent, a refundable deposit (not exceeding two months' rent) or charges relating to the UK Government's 'Green Deal').

Source: The Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 (Premiums) Regulations 2012

The Tenancy Agreement

- 3.10 Where the let is on an Assured or Short Assured Tenancy basis, the tenant must be given a written document (the tenancy agreement) setting out the terms of the let and any relevant Notices (for example AT5).

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 1988

- 3.11 The name and current address of the landlord and, or, agent must be stated in the tenancy agreement.

These details are required in the AT5 form, which is signed prior to the tenancy formation to confirm it is a Short Assured Tenancy.

- 3.12 An AT5 Form must be issued prior to the tenancy agreement confirming the creation of a short assured tenancy.

- 3.13 The tenancy agreement shall set out, in clear, fair and lawful terms, the rights and responsibilities of both landlord and tenant and in particular, should include:

- the term of rent and rent payment;
- a statement of the repair and maintenance duties of both parties;
- a statement of the standard of cleaning and of the condition in which the property should be kept, wear and tear excepted, by the tenant, throughout the tenancy; and
- a statement that the tenant must not engage in any anti-social behaviour and that any such behaviour will constitute a breach of the agreement.

Source: Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999

- 3.14 The tenancy agreement must be properly executed by the signatures of the landlord (or agent) and tenant, and one witness, who must include their address.

Source: Requirements of Writing (Scotland) Act 1995 for post July 31 1995 leases.

Rent and Other Charges

3.15 The tenancy agreement shall set out:

- the rent due;
- the period of payment;
- the method of payment; and
- any review period for changing the rent.

and the responsibility of the tenant for:

- any service charges;
- council tax;
- utility costs; and
- any other charges.

3.16 The landlord should hold occupancy records relating to each property the names, dates of arrival/departure, and forwarding address of all tenants, and make this information available to authorised users under data protection legislation.

3.17 Where rent is paid weekly, a rent book must be issued and receipted for each weekly payment made.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 1988

Deposit

3.18 Where a deposit is required, it must be no more than the equivalent of two months' rent and the tenant should receive a written statement of what the deposit (or guarantee) covers and a statement of what is required to be done, or doing, or putting in place, for the full deposit to be returned at the end of the tenancy.

Source: Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 and Housing (Scotland) Act 1988

3.19 The landlord must pay the deposit to an approved scheme administrator and ensure that the deposit is held by an approved scheme for the duration of the tenancy. In addition, the landlord must provide the tenant with specific information about the tenancy, the deposit and the scheme that will be protecting it.

Source: Tenancy Deposit Schemes (Scotland) Regulations 2011

3.20 The tenant should be provided with a receipt for a deposit. Following the final inspection of a property if the landlord considers there to be deductions to be made from the deposit, the tenant should receive a written statement identifying the reason(s) for the deduction(s).

Inventory

- 3.21 At the start of the tenancy, the tenant shall be provided with an inventory. The tenant shall be given up to seven working days to check and agree the inventory.
- 3.22 A revised inventory shall be given to the tenant when there is an agreed change to the contents of the original inventory.
- 3.23 At the end of the tenancy, the landlord should check the inventory. The tenant shall be invited to attend the inventory check and, if they wish to, a mutually suitable time should be arranged.

At the End of the Tenancy

- 3.24 Possession

A landlord must use the correct legal procedures for seeking possession of the accommodation.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 and Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 and Housing (Scotland) Act 2011 as amended by Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and Private Rented Housing (Scotland) Act 2011

- 3.25 Action on Homelessness

The landlord shall, before taking any action to recover possession of the property, inform the local authority and, if the outcome of the landlord's taking possession is to render the tenant homeless, discuss with the local authority ways in which the tenant could remain in the property.

- 3.26 Action on Anti-Social Behaviour

It is a legal requirement of the landlord to take lawful forms of action to resolve any issues regarding anti-social behaviour of occupants and visitors to the property in question.

Source: Anti-Social Behaviour Etc. (Scotland) Act 2004: Section 68

4 Repairing Standard

- 4.1 A private rented property must meet the repairing standard as follows:
 - the house is wind and water tight and in all other respects reasonably fit for human habitation;
 - the structure and exterior of the house (including drains, gutters and external pipes) are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order;
 - the installations in the house for the supply of water, gas and electricity and for sanitation, space heating and heating water are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order;

- any fixtures, fittings and appliances provided by the landlord under the tenancy are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order;
- any furnishings provided by the landlord under the tenancy are capable of being used safely for the purpose for which they are designed; and
- the house has satisfactory provision for detecting fires and for giving warning in the event of fire or suspected fire.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s13 (1)

- 4.2 The landlord must inspect the property before the tenancy starts for the purpose of identifying any work necessary to comply with the Repairing Standard and notify the tenant of any such work.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s19

- 4.3 The landlord must, on or before the start of a tenancy, provide the tenant with written information about the effect of the Repairing Standard in relation to the tenancy.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s20: 1-4

- 4.4 The tenant must be provided with information on how to approach the Private Rented Housing Panel and in what circumstances.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s22: 1-6

- 4.5 The landlord shall undertake a risk assessment of each property detailing potential risks, measures to mitigate against risks and any tenant responsibilities to prevent such risks manifesting. This risk assessment shall be available to the tenant at the start of a tenancy.

- 4.6 A landlord has a duty to repair and maintain the property at the start of the tenancy, and at all times during the tenancy, including a duty to make good any damage caused by carrying out this work.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s14: 1-2

- 4.7 Upon notification or awareness of a defect the landlord must complete the work within a reasonable time.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 s14: 4

- 4.8 The landlord shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the maintenance of the common elements of the building, which are a shared responsibility with other co-owners.

Source: Tenement (Scotland) Act (2004)

5 Repairs and Maintenance

5.1 A. Access to the property by the landlord (or anyone acting on their behalf) for a repair inspection or for carrying out a repair should be the subject of mutual agreement between the landlord and tenant.

B. The tenant must give the landlord reasonable access to the property but failing mutual agreement, the landlord must give 24 hours advance notice in writing of their intention to enter the property - except where an emergency repair is required.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 and Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Schedule 10

5.2 The landlord shall provide the tenant with a contact name and phone number for emergency and non-urgent repair requests to be made. If appropriate, emergency numbers for tradesmen shall be made available to the tenant.

5.3 The tenant shall be informed what types of repairs constitute emergencies and that such repairs will be carried out within 24 hours of being reported.

5.4 Where the landlord carries out major repairs or improvements to the property during the tenancy that restrict the occupancy of a room(s) or the use of facilities for a period of time, an appropriate rent restriction should be applied for the period of disruption.

5.5 The landlord shall provide the tenant with clear, written instructions on how to operate the central heating system safely and what action to take with a suspected gas leak or faulty gas appliance.

6 Facilities and Fittings

6.1 Sinks, baths, showers, wash hand basins (with hot and cold water) and water closets must:

- meet the requirements of the Tolerable Standard;
- be in a good working condition; and
- be sufficient for the number of occupants required to use them within the house.

Source: Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 section 86 as amended

6.2 Where cookers are part of the let, they shall be in good working order and sufficient for the number of occupants required to use them.

7 Energy Efficiency, Insulation and Heating

7.1 The property should provide a satisfactory level of thermal insulation and incorporate, where necessary and practical:

- draught insulation of doors and windows (or secondary or double glazing);

- lagging of immersion heaters and hot water pipes;
 - cavity wall insulation;
 - loft insulation to a depth of 250mm;
 - the landlord shall ensure that all conventional light bulbs are replaced with low energy bulbs; and
 - where appropriate, the landlord must provide tenants with an EPC rating.
- 7.2 The landlord shall provide an efficient, safely designed central heating system *or* an open fire with back boiler feeding room radiators *or* a space-heating appliance in each apartment in the accommodation and in the bath or shower room(s).
- 7.3 The accommodation shall be provided with an efficient hot water supply.

8 Health, Safety and Home Security

Water and Gas & Oil

- 8.1 There shall be no lead pipes within the property supplying drinking water.
- 8.2 The landlord must comply with current Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (which cover Liquid Propane Gas installations) by:
- arranging for annual gas safety checks to be completed by a Gas Safe registered contractor and a gas safety certificate obtained;
 - ensuring all servicing, repairs and replacements to be completed by a Gas Safe registered contractor;
 - providing tenants with a copy of the safety certificate; and
 - retaining records of safety checks for at least 2 years.

Source: Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1998

- 8.3 Where gas, including liquid propane gas, is supplied to the accommodation, the landlord must provide suitably located, carbon monoxide alarm(s).

Where oil fuelled systems are in place, the landlord must ensure regular servicing of the system and have a maintenance programme in place.

- 8.4 Before the start of the tenancy, and at regular intervals thereafter, the landlord should test that the carbon monoxide alarm(s) is operating properly.

Electricity

- 8.5 The landlord must provide the tenant with an electrical installation in good condition and repair and maintain that installation in a condition suitable for the use intended.

- 8.6 The landlord shall undertake a routine check of the property at every change of occupancy and no less frequently than annually. An inspection of the installation in the property, together with appropriate tests, should be carried out by a competent person who will issue an Electrical Installation Certificate comprising a schedule of the inspection and test results together with a recommendation of when the next test should be carried out. The interval between inspections will depend on the condition of the installation. The first inspection of a new installation should be within ten years. Subsequent inspections are likely to be at least at five yearly intervals.

Source: IEE Wiring Regulations BS 7671:2001 as amended

- 8.7 A copy of the most recent Electrical Installation Certificate should be given to the tenant.
- 8.8 The landlord must arrange annually for a competent person to undertake a portable electrical appliance safety test (PAT) on all appliances supplied to the tenant with the property.

Source: Electrical equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994

- 8.9 In the case of properties with an HMO licence in place, the landlord must comply with all safety certification conditions as stipulated by the relevant local authority HMO licencing team.
- 8.10 A copy of the PAT test report should be given to the tenant.

Furnishings and Furniture Safety

- 8.11 All furnishings and furniture supplied as part of the let must comply with relevant parts of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations.

Source: The Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988

Fire Safety

- 8.12 The accommodation shall have installed a mains-wired (with battery back-up) smoke detection system.
- 8.13 A fire blanket shall be provided in the kitchen, or kitchens.
- 8.14 The landlord should provide the tenant with published guidance on fire safety issues.

Home Security

- 8.15 The accommodation should have secure window locks and secure front and rear access doors (where appropriate) that do not prejudice means from escape in the case of fire.

Landlord Accreditation Scotland provides a series of training courses to ensure that landlords have the ability to comply with the Standards. The series of courses is called Core Standards Training Levels 1 & 2.

Landlords do not have to attend these sessions prior to becoming accredited. However, once accredited landlords are required to attend at least one Core Standards Training session in every year of accreditation.

For further information:

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Landlord Accreditation Scotland is a scheme run by landlords for landlords.

It is a partnership between the Scottish Association of Landlords, Scottish Land & Estates and the Scottish Government.

