

Inside

A Date for
your Diary
Page 2

The Housing
Options
Service
Page 3

National Empty
Homes Week
Page 4

Building
Regulations
and Rented
Properties
Page 5

Local Housing
Allowance
Update
Page 6

Energy
Efficiency in
the Private
Rented Sector
Page 7

Who to
contact
Page 8

A Invitation to You....

Welcome to Issue 4 !

landlords@stockton is a newsletter from Stockton Council specifically for landlords. If you have information you would like to share with other landlords why not contact us and we can put it in the next newsletter – our contact email address is landlords@stockton.gov.uk or telephone 01642 526544.

Once again we are offering some free training/information sharing for landlords. It's a morning session on 17th November 2008 – I hope you will be able to attend.

The first session will be from Julian Corbidge of eaga about Energy Performance Certificates. This will be particularly relevant due to the requirement for Energy Performance Certificates in the Private Rented Sector from the 1st October 2008.

Ann Marshall of Stockton Council will also be giving a presentation about the

Landlord Liaison Service. Landlords who are members of the landlord liaison scheme can obtain free references for tenants. Reference checks can include information such as housing history, involvement in anti-social behaviour, rent arrears, breach or abandonment of tenancies and damage to property.

The final session of the morning will be from Gary Collins of Stockton Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team. Gary will explain the services provided by the Council to help prevent and deal with anti-social behaviour. This session will focus on issues relevant to private landlords.

All of the sessions will be in the format of a presentation followed by a question and answer session. Places are limited so first come, first served!

A booking form is included on page 2. We look forward to seeing you on 17th November!

If you would like this information in any other language or format for example large print or audio please contact the Senior Urban Renewal Officer on 01642 526544

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیپ وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا
Urdu 01642 526544 Senior Urban Renewal Officer

欲要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它版式例
如大字體印刷/錄音帶，請致電

01642 526544 接洽 Senior Urban Renewal Officer
Mandarin

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans
d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par
exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez
contacter Senior Urban Renewal Officer au n° 01642 526544
French

نہ گہر حضرت لئ یہ ہم زانیارہ بہدہستت بکہوئت بہ
زمانہ کانی تر یان بہ شیوہ یہ کی تر یو نمونہ چاپی گہورہ/یان
بہ تنہی تو مارکراو نکایہ پہیوہندی بکہ بہ

01642 526544 تہلہ فون Senior Urban Renewal Officer
Kurdish

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ
ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ
Senior Urban Renewal Officer ਨੂੰ 01642 526544 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Punjabi

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو
بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو
بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال

01642 526544 على هاتف رقم Senior Urban Renewal Officer
Arabic

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ
بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تیم دایورسیتی
Senior Urban Renewal Officer با شما ره 01642 526544 به تماس شوید
Farsi



A Date for your Diary An Information and Training Session

Date	Monday 17th November 2008
Time	9:30am for 10am start, 12 noon close
Venue	Education Centre, Junction Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 1PR

We have arranged a second free information and training session for landlords – details are on the front cover of this newsletter.

There was very positive feedback from landlords to the first session that we held and if the feedback is as good for this next session we will consider holding regular information and training events.

Places are limited and therefore must be booked using the form below.

Please return the form by **7th November** or email the details requested on the form to **landlords@stockton.gov.uk** by the same date.

I would like to attend the Information and Training Session on 17 November 2008.

Please return to: Private Sector Housing, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council,
16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TX, by 7th November 2008

Name:	
Contact Address:	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Telephone number:	
E-mail Address:	

The Housing Options Service



The Housing Options Service provides a housing advice and homelessness service free of charge. We are part of Housing Services at Stockton Borough Council and are based at 16 Church Road, Stockton.

We offer advice and information about a wide range of housing issues. We aim to intervene at an early stage to prevent people from losing their accommodation and will make every effort to prevent homelessness.

We try to resolve any housing issues or help clients find alternative accommodation. We offer advice on available housing options, including the private sector and help with housing related problems such as landlord and tenant problems, harassment, domestic violence, tenancy agreements and rent arrears.

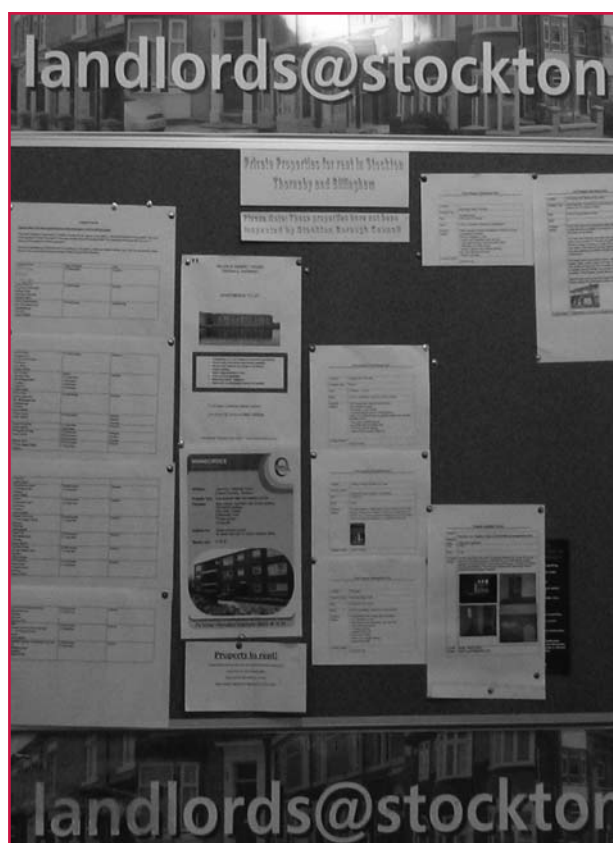
If we can't prevent homelessness, we may need to take a homeless application and look into the client's circumstances to see what they are entitled to. The level of

advice and assistance offered can vary depending on the circumstances.

If landlords have properties they wish to let we can advertise them free of charge in our reception at 16 Church Road, Stockton. This means that people who call in can see the properties available to let and contact the landlord direct.

As well as delivering a front line housing advice service, we also look at ways to improve our service and develop new initiatives. We are currently developing a Bond Guarantee Scheme to help our customers access properties in the private rented sector.

If you are interested in working with us, would like to advertise a property or would like more information about the Bond Guarantee Scheme, please contact us on 01642 528389 or email: housing.options@stockton.gov.uk





National Empty Homes Week of Action 24th - 28th November 2008

As part of the National Week of Action, Stockton Council's Empty Property Team, part of the Private Sector Housing Division, are encouraging owners of empty properties to get in touch with them for advice on bringing the properties that they own back into use.

The Empty Property Team is committed to returning these properties back to use - this includes working with owners of empty property to provide advice on selling and renting, providing information on Registered Social Landlords who may be able to help, local contractors and builders and developers looking to invest in empty properties. Where is it clear that an

owner is unable, or not willing to take action then the Council has a range of enforcement measures available to ensure that the properties are brought back into occupation. Although these actions are seen as a last resort enforcement powers have recently been used in relation to several long term empty properties.

If you have an empty property, please contact the Private Sector Housing, Empty Property Team. Log on to

<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/emptypropertyteam>

telephone **01642 526577/526687** or email

smemptyproperties@stockton.gov.uk

Are you considering joining a landlords association?

Teesside Landlords Association is a regional branch of the National Landlords Association and they welcome landlords to attend up to three of their meetings without obligation. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every other month at 7.30pm in the Blue Bell Hotel, Acklam, Middlesbrough. For further details please contact Sue Thompson on 01642 591373 or email philandsuethompson@ntlworld.com

The Building Regulations and Rented Properties



The Building Control Department is situated in Gloucester House (shown above), 72 Church Road, Stockton.

Building Regulations apply to many aspects of building work carried out to all types of properties. The main purpose of the Building Regulations are to:

- Secure the health and safety of people in and around buildings.
- Promote conservation of energy.
- Provide access to buildings and facilities.

They apply to minor works such as replacing windows and doors, removing an internal load-bearing wall, installing an additional toilet or converting the roof space to a room, as well as erecting new buildings and extending property. The regulations control the following items:

- Structural Stability.
- Fire Safety.
- Site Preparation & Resistance to Moisture.
- Toxic Substances.
- Resistance to the Passage of Sound.
- Ventilation.
- Hygiene.
- Drainage and Waste Disposal.
- Combustion Appliances and Fuel Storage Systems.

- Stairs, Ladders and Ramps.
- Conservation of Energy.
- Access and Facilities for People of all Abilities.
- Glazing.
- Electrical Safety

From 1st July 2005 the design, installation, inspection and testing of electrical installations become controlled under the Building Regulations. Whilst this means that some minor works can still be undertaken by individuals certain works have to be carried out by a qualified electrician or a person who is a member of a "Competent Person Scheme". A guide to "Electrical Safety" in relation to Building Regulations can be obtained from the Building Control Department.

Landlords also need to be aware that Building Regulations may also apply when a property changes its use, for example when a house is changed into flats or bed-sits and therefore if you are considering such works you should seek advice from the Building Control Department at your earliest convenience.

As well as enforcing the Building Regulations the Building Control Department produce a range of useful information guides on subjects such as "Avoiding Problem Builders". The guides can be found on the Stockton Council website at http://www.stockton.gov.uk/citizenservices/build_ctrl/

If you are thinking of carrying out building works please check with the Building Control Department to establish if the work is subject to control under the Building Regulations. They can be contacted by email at building.control@stockton.gov.uk or by telephone on **01642 526040**.



Local Housing Allowance Update

As many of you know the new housing benefit rules for tenants of privately rented accommodation - Local Housing Allowance - were introduced in April this year.

The rules apply only to new tenants, those who move home or have a break in their claim. The allowance is a flat rate calculated by reference to a set of rules relating to the size of property a household needs.

The rates are published in advance. Of course, one of the major changes has been that the Allowance is usually paid direct to the tenant, and he/she cannot choose to have it paid direct to the landlord. We do have a safeguarding policy to ensure that payments can be made direct when a tenant is unable to manage their financial affairs or unlikely to pay their rent.

In the first 3 months of the scheme we had 354 people claim under the new housing benefit rules – only 8% of those cases have been paid direct to the landlord under our safeguarding policy. The majority of those are tenants who have difficulty managing their financial affairs rather than because of rent arrears.

Of course its early days for the new scheme, but so far, feedback has been very positive. Prospective tenants and advice workers like the new rules because they can see in advance the kind of rent level that will be met by

housing benefit. This means people are less likely to take on a tenancy that they cannot afford. Landlords have reported that, in the main, tenants are paying their rent.

We will pay rent direct to the landlord after the tenant is 8 weeks in arrears. Following a number of enquiries we have taken advice from DWP and “arrears” is taken as rent due for a past period- any rent in advance will not be classed as arrears for this purpose. However, if a tenant has missed a number of rent payments, please get in touch with us before the 8 weeks has elapsed and we will start to investigate. Also, don’t forget that if your tenant signs the information sharing request in the claim form we can give you certain limited information about the progress of the claim.

If you want more information about Local Housing Allowance you can look on our website –

www.stockton.gov.uk/hsgben or call into reception at **16 Church Road, Stockton**

You can also telephone our helpline on **01642 393829** Our calls are now answered in the Council’s new Telephone Contact Centre, with extended opening hours – 8am to 6pm Monday to Wednesday, 8am to 7pm Thursdays, 8am to 5.30 pm Friday and 10am to 1pm on Saturdays.

Energy Efficiency in the Private Rented Sector

The introduction of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) on 1st October 2008 means that landlords should be considering ways of making their properties more efficient to improve the ratings that properties receive.

If a prospective tenant is viewing several properties they are more likely to choose the property with the most efficient rating and resulting lower fuel bills.

The Government offers a tax allowance to landlords who let residential properties and carry out works designed to save energy, provided they pay tax. This is called the Landlords Energy Saving Allowance (LESA). Your Local HM Revenue

and Customs Enquiry Centre can offer you further advice regarding this. The Tees Valley Tax Office can be contacted on **0845 366 7865**.

Tenants who receive a disability or income related benefit can apply for heating and insulation improvements under the Government's Warm Front Scheme. The maximum grant is £2,700 or £4,000 if the property needs oil central heating. Further information about Warm Front can be found at www.warmfront.co.uk or by telephoning **0800 316 2805**.

The Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre can also offer free impartial advice on energy saving by telephoning **0800 512 012**.

Do you own or manage houses in multiple occupation?

Legislation introduced in April 2006 requires that houses in multiple occupation (HMO) comprising of three or more storeys and occupied by five or more people (who form more than one household) must be licensed.

The Council believes that there are still properties within the Borough that require a HMO Licence. Landlords and

Agents are encouraged to seek assistance from the Private Sector Housing Division if they are unsure as to whether or not a property requires a licence.

To apply for a licence or for further information please contact the Private Sector Housing Division on **01642 526545** or e-mail privatesectorhousing@stockton.gov.uk



Not sure who to contact?

You can now e-mail your queries to landlords@stockton.gov.uk and we will forward your e-mail to the correct department or you can use the key contact list below.

You can also access the private landlords homepage on Stockton Councils web site, which gives up to date information and contact details for useful departments, at www.stockton.gov.uk/privatelandlords

Anti Social Behaviour	Anti Social Behaviour Team providing advice, support and enforcement action where necessary	(01642) 527615 ASBTeam@stockton.gov.uk
Benefits - Housing & Council Tax	National benefits administered by Stockton Council to help people on low income pay their rent and Council Tax	(01642) 393829 benefits.section@stockton.gov.uk
Care for Your Area	Street based services including household and business rubbish, litter/street cleaning, needles and syringes, recycling	(01642) 391959 careforyourarea@stockton.gov.uk
Debt and Money Advice - Stockton District Advice & Information Service	Independent citizens advice on a wide range of issues	(01642) 607445
Energy Advice	Free energy and environmental advice about cutting fuel cost & advice on eligibility for grants or discounts e.g. draught proofing cavity wall/loft insulation	(01642) 391959 careforyourarea@stockton.gov.uk
Housing Advice and Homelessness	Advice and services for temporary housing and homelessness	(01642) 528389 housing.options@stockton.gov.uk
Housing - Private Sector	Housing disrepair; unsafe gas or electrical installations; licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation; financial assistance for home improvements	(01642) 527797 privatesectorhousing@stockton.gov.uk
Landlord Liaison	Advice and support services for landlords	(01642) 527620
Pest Control	Advice and treatment of rats, mice, cockroaches, bed bugs, fleas, wasps and beetles	(01642) 526575 pest.control@stockton.gov.uk
Street Lighting	Report faulty lights	(01642) 526769 street.lighting@stockton.gov.uk
Supporting People	A programme funding providers of supported housing services to ensure vulnerable people receive appropriate support	(01642) 528450 supporting.people@stockton.gov.uk
UNITE	Free service to resolve neighbour disputes and or conflict in a community	(01642) 311633 www.unite-mediation.org