

**Homes for**  
**Bolton**



# **Accreditation Scheme Operation**

**Reviewed March 2009**



# Accreditation Scheme Operation

## Foreword

BARLO Housing Ltd [Bolton Accredited Residential Landlord Organisation] represents a partnership between private landlords, the Council, Bolton at Home, and other housing associations operating in Bolton. Together we have developed and adopted a Code of Standards based on approved models of good practice at a regional and national level to which it has contributed. This Code of Standards does not replace or remove any other landlord legal obligations or responsibilities

## Introduction

BARLO recognises the value and importance of a well managed private rented sector for being quick and easy to access, offering a range of property types, with rents and facilities that help meet the needs of specific tenants Private landlords and their agents who contact BARLO and its partners are offered information, advice, and access to services, which can lead to longer and more successful tenancies

With many new investors and experienced private landlords expanding into specific neighbourhoods, property types, and tenant groups, standards can vary considerably. In certain circumstances weak property and tenancy management standards can result in problem tenancies, adversely affecting residents, other housing providers, leading to a decline in neighbourhoods.

This Code of Standards will be used by BARLO and its partners to help assess, and if necessary request improvement in housing management standards in the private rented sector. In particular, but not exclusively, private landlords and their agents who own or manage properties linked to Bolton's

- **Accreditation Scheme**
- **Town Centre Accommodation**
- **Private Sector Housing Renewal Areas**
- **Lease Management Scheme**
- **The Bond Board Ltd**
- **Mandatory & Additional Licensing Schemes**

may be asked to achieve and maintain this Code of Standards. Landlords and Agents who do so, are eligible to become members of BARLO which offers coordinated access a range of members benefits designed specifically for the private rented sector.

## **Code of Standards**

BARLO operates a voluntary Accreditation Scheme. The main aim of the Accreditation Scheme is to encourage and support improvement in property and tenancy management standards in the private rented sector. The Accreditation Scheme Code of Standards is used to help assess whether a property / landlord / agent meets the accreditation requirements before awarding 'accredited' status to individual properties.

## **Members Benefits**

BARLO members who achieve accredited status are more easily recognised as reputable landlords who aim to deliver good tenancy and property management standards. BARLO will support these landlords by offering coordinated access to a range of benefits and incentives that can give them a market advantage over other housing providers.

### **Financial incentives include**

- Housing Renewal grants and loans, Gas & Electrical safety certificates from £39, Property Insurance discounts, and Contractors preferential rates ask for details

### **Free Products include**

- Smoke Detectors fitted, Energy efficient light bulbs, Draught proofing, loft and cavity wall insulation installed, Landlord newsletters, booklets, and guides available

### **Advice & Support includes**

- Accreditation Officers, Landlord Support Workers, Tenant Support Workers, Housing Advisors, Anti Social Behaviour Officers, Housing Benefits Officers and many more services

### **Information Sharing and Learning Events**

- Creating, Managing & Ending a Tenancy, Understanding the Housing Act 2004, Tackling Anti Social Behaviour, Licensing, and frequent landlord meetings and networking opportunities

### **Services and tools include**

- 'Property to Let' web and newspaper adverts, tenant referencing, letter templates and forms relating to tenancy agreements, rent, arrears, complaints, checking Notices and much more

## **A Target Approach**

The accreditation scheme is a targeted housing initiative aimed primarily at improving property and tenancy management standards in specific geographical areas. It is also an approach used to support other housing and regeneration initiatives and services that that are mutually beneficial to private landlords, their tenants, and wider communities.

## **Membership Application**

BARLO Housing Ltd operates the Accreditation Scheme on behalf of Bolton Council. membership application forms and supporting documents are available on request by contacting the Accreditation Team on Tel 01204 335486, Web [www.barlo.org.uk](http://www.barlo.org.uk) or Email [barlo@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:barlo@bolton.gov.uk)

## **Self Assessment**

Accreditation Schemes are voluntary and rely on the honesty and goodwill of its members. Landlords will be initially required to self assess and sign a Declaration every 3 years that states they are actually achieving and maintaining the Code of Standards.

## **Achieving and Maintaining Standards**

BARLO Housing Ltd can provide members on request with a wide range of property and tenancy management documents and forms, leaflets and guides that will assist landlords in achieving and maintaining the Code of Standards. Professionally trained and qualified staff can also offer additional information, advice and practical assistance.

## **Verification Checks**

An accreditation officer will in agreement with each landlord and their tenants visit a target group of properties. A target approach means 10% - 100% of properties let within housing renewal areas, licensing schemes, town centre developments, lease management and bond board schemes and linked to other housing related initiatives will be prioritised for these checks.

Verification checks enable BARLO to confirm property standards have been met and award 'accredited property' status. In some cases we may need to produce a property improvement plan giving details of any necessary work and agree a reasonable timescale for completion. Property improvement plans which contain serious hazards that are not removed within a reasonable timescale will be referred to the appropriate body, which may result in enforcement measures being taken.

## **Accredited Property Status**

A property will receive accredited status following receipt of a membership application form, appropriate gas and electric certificates, and on confirmation that property standards have been met.

## **Membership Type**

Landlords will be allocated membership status based on their level of engagement with the accreditation scheme as follows

- A Full Member has achieved accredited status on at least one property and is working towards accreditation on the rest of their portfolio
- An Associate Member is working towards achieving accreditation status on their first property

Private landlords in contact with BARLO will be invited to apply for membership, and registered with 'affiliate landlord' status to receive additional information including invitations to landlord events, details of new benefits and services updates

## **Members Register**

A public list of accreditation scheme members with accredited properties will appear on the BARLO website [www.barlo.org.uk](http://www.barlo.org.uk) If you would like prospective tenants to be able to enquire about any your properties to let, we can add your contact details on request.

## **Refusal, Suspension and Revocation of Accredited Status**

Landlords of properties which do not meet accreditation requirements will be advised in writing what work is required. Confirmation that work has been completed may be accepted in writing which includes certificates, invoices or receipts. A verification check may still be required however where this is not practical or possible.

Depending on the nature and severity of any complaints regards a landlords management standards and practices, which includes failure to maintain standards or comply with Notices, accredited status can be either refused, suspended or revoked.

Accredited status may be reinstated where the scheme operator is satisfied that a landlord has sufficiently demonstrated they are now meeting the requirements of the scheme.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

Landlords wishing to make a formal complaint about the operation of the accreditation scheme must do so, initially, in writing, to BARLO. If the complaint is not resolved the landlord may request a copy of the Bolton Council Corporate Complaints Procedure

If the complaint is still not resolved, the landlord may appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman and/or ALIST the regional steering group representing accreditation schemes run by private landlord associations and local authorities across the North West.

## **Disclaimer**

Accreditation status should be used as an indicator that a landlord and or property is expected to meet certain standards and their legal requirements. BARLO does not have control of the landlords or properties registered with the accreditation scheme and therefore cannot be held responsible or liable for any decisions or action they may take..

Accreditation status does not prove compliance with the law, it does not protect landlords or tenants from enforcement action resulting from non-compliance with the law, nor does it affect the statutory rights of *tenants or prospective tenants*.

Members of BARLO agree to comply with and accept that subject to consultation and notification of relevant parties, BARLO can withdraw or make amendments to the content and operation of the accreditation scheme.

### **Data Protection Act 1998**

I understand that Bolton Council and Bolton at Home will use the information provided on this form to verify any details provided in the application. They may also share this information within Bolton Council and Bolton at Home for the prevention and detection of fraud, prevention and detection of crime, to administer grants, and to carry out public duties. They will only share this information if this is necessary and is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

### **Contact Us**

Write BARLO Housing Ltd, 2 Silverwell Lane, Bolton, BL1 1QN.. Tel 01204 335486, Fax 01204 335643, Email [barlo@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:barlo@bolton.gov.uk) Website [www.barlo.org.uk](http://www.barlo.org.uk)