

EMPTY PROPERTY GRANTS

Information Sheet

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames are currently promoting a vacant property strategy in the Borough, encouraging owners of empty properties to bring them back into residential use. As part of this strategy, grants are available for renovation works.

Who can apply for a grant?

Any freeholder or leaseholder (with over five years of their lease to run) of a property which has been vacant for a period of 6 months.

Limited to: One property per owner per address or maximum 5 cases where one building comprises of five units.

The applicant must not have been successfully prosecuted by Richmond Council in respect of any offence relating to Housing Benefit, Council Tax, Tenancy Relations or Private Housing legislation within five years prior to the date of the application. For offences of serious fraud, this period will be extended to ten years. There must also be no significant arrears of Council Tax or, in the case of ex-Council dwellings, Service Charges.

For a property to qualify the owner should agree to rent it out in the future for at least 5 years.

Vacant Property Grant

The Council will grant aid eligible costs for 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings up to a maximum of **£25,000** in exchange for a 5-year letting. The grant can only be approved where the owner agrees to the following on completion of the works:

- If the owner allows the council **5 years** nomination rights at a rent which does not exceed the maximum level supported by the local housing allowance.

Further information on current local housing allowance rates can be found through the following link:

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/housing/help_with_paying_your_rent_and_council_tax/housing_benefit/local_housing_allowance

Important application information

Estimates from **two separate contractors** are required to be submitted as part of the full application. The estimates should be written on headed paper, signed and dated. VAT registration numbers should be provided.

It is strongly recommended that you employ a surveyor/architect to draw up a detailed itemised schedule of works (including material quantities) to which your contractors can base their estimates on. Costings must be provided for each item on the schedule of works. It is not acceptable to provide an estimate with a single sum total of all items of work.

For further details on the schemes available, please send your enquiry to Richmond Empty Property Officer, Private Sector Housing Team – Email: privatehousing@merton.gov.uk

ADVICE AND SCHEMES

We operate a free private letting service for landlords who own properties both in and out of London. There are two different schemes currently available to landlords. We can offer you guaranteed rent through our Private Sector Leasing Scheme or we can find you a tenant and pay an upfront cost through our Rent Deposit Scheme as well as many other benefits.

Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSL) - We can offer:

- Guaranteed rent, paid to landlord monthly, for the period of the lease regardless of any void periods (rent assessed subject to inspection).
- A lease agreement (between you and the council) for 3 1/2 years.
- Full management and repairs service (including weekends/evenings).
- Regular inspections.
- Property is returned at end of lease in its original condition (excepting fair wear and tear).

All we need from you is:

- Gas safety certificate
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- Electrical Safety Certificate (NICEIC)
- British Gas Homecare 300 agreement (or equivalent)
- Three sets of keys
- Approved Redress Scheme

Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS)

We will find you a tenant through our Rent Deposit Scheme. We can also offer:

- A free professional service.
- Property inspection.
- Upfront incentive payment.
- Rent in advance payment.
- We request direct-to-landlord Housing Benefit payments in all cases.
- A dedicated team of experienced officers.
- Tenancy advice and support if required.
- Free tenancy agreement.

All we need from you is:

- Agreement to use the council's Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) agreement.
- Reasonable access for viewings.
- Confirmation that the landlord has not been convicted of any relevant offences.
- Gas safety certificate.
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

When we find you a tenant through the Rent Deposit Scheme, the rent we can offer for each property must be within the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. These rates are reviewed each financial year. View Local Housing Allowance rates on the Direct Gov web page: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx> for confirmation of the LHA level in your area.

Contact our temporary accommodation team who manage these schemes regarding temporary accommodation and settled offers of housing. Email: landlordlettings@richmond.gov.uk

Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) is a partnership of landlord organisations and London councils. Completing an accreditation can give landlords information, skills and confidence to improve an existing portfolio or begin a new one.

What are the benefits? - Accreditation lasts for five years and some of the benefits include:

- Recognition across London that you are a good landlord or agent.
- Possible access to grants to improve your premises.
- Further training and seminars.
- Regularly updated reference material.
- Regular news updates.

How it works - To become accredited, a landlord or someone considering becoming a landlord must:

- Complete a one day development course.
- Agree to comply with the UKLAP Code of Conduct.
- Be a Fit and Proper Person.

There is a cost for the accreditation.

How to book - Visit UK Landlord Accreditation Partnership to find out more and book a course online.

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Our Rent Deposit Scheme aims to help prevent residents from becoming homeless by offering a guaranteed deposit to landlords, in the event of damage or disrepair to a property.

Who it is for? - To qualify for the scheme, you must have a local connection and be:

- Homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Over 18.
- Likely to be in priority need.
- Able to live independently or with only minimal support.
- Able to demonstrate you can maintain a private sector tenancy.
- Able to demonstrate you can afford the rent for a private sector property, whether through Housing Benefit, Income Support or some other income.

Benefits of the Scheme - If you are a Landlord who is interested in letting to tenants claiming housing benefit, this scheme provides a number of benefits:

- A deposit guarantee to cover any reasonable disrepair which may occur to your property as a result of non-malicious damage by tenants.
- Access to a supply of tenants who have been assessed as homeless by the Council and as such qualify for housing benefit.
- Avoidance of Letting Agents' fees and worry about where your next tenant will come from.

How it works:

The Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme can help those who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, to find housing in the private rented sector.

It guarantees the deposit required against any reasonable disrepair which may occur during the period of rental, up to the equivalent of six week's rent. We will carry out an assessment to see if you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to qualify.

To find out more and/or to join the scheme, contact us using the contact details below:

If you are a resident, e-mail housingadvice@richmond.gov.uk

If you are a landlord, e-mail landlordlettings@richmond.gov.uk

Short Term Leasing Scheme

For landlords who want a short-term and hassle free tenancy in their property.

Benefits of the scheme - The scheme offers a number of benefits to landlords including:

- Monthly payments in arrears;
- The property returned with vacant possession;
- All legal documents prepared (lease and tenancy agreements);
- Quarterly inspection of your property;
- A professional management service; and
- Landlord Forum membership.

How it works:

If you offer us a short lease property we will enter into an agreement with you for a minimum period of one year. We can offer three years and occasionally ten years for the right properties.

During the agreement we will:

- Make payments in full directly to you
- Manage the property for you
- Return the vacated property to you at the end of the agreed time

We will first need to speak to you to give you further details about the scheme and answer any questions you may have. If you decide the scheme is right for you, we will carry out an inspection of your property to make sure it is suitable.

We will also need to see some safety certificates before the lease can start.

Join the Scheme

**To find out more and how to join the scheme contact us by e-mail:
landlordlettings@richmond.gov.uk**