

## LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

From the 7th April 2008 the way that new Housing Benefit (HB) claims are calculated for the private rented sector will be changing, when the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is introduced.

LHA will replace the current Housing Benefit system and will provide financial support for tenants to help them maintain a tenancy. LHA is the cornerstone of the Government's Housing Benefit reform programme that aims to simplify HB and ensure it supports the wider objectives for Welfare Reform.

The fundamental aims of the LHA scheme are to promote:-

- Fairness – basing the maximum LHA paid to tenants on the size, composition and location of the accommodation they rent
- Choice – tenants may take on more responsibility and choose how to spend their income
- Transparency – LHA rates will help everyone know how much help is available
- Responsibility – empowering people to budget for and to pay their rent themselves directly

The LHA rates will be published by Herefordshire Council, through our Info Shops and our web page, on a monthly basis, helping landlords and prospective tenants understand the amount of rent LHA will cover.

For further information please contact the Benefit section on 01432 260333 or log onto [http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/health/social\\_policy/32800.asp](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/health/social_policy/32800.asp)

## ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES (EPC's)

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) will be required whenever a building is constructed, rented or sold. They are broadly similar to the labels now provided with domestic appliances and record how energy efficient a property is as a building. The certificate will provide a rating of the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of a building from A to G, where A is very efficient and G is very inefficient.

From 1st October 2008, if you are renting out your property, you will need to provide a certificate to any prospective tenant. There will be no need to obtain an EPC for an existing tenancy, but once a new tenancy is created an EPC will need to be provided. Once obtained, a certificate remains valid for up to 10 years. If a valid EPC still exists when changing tenants, no new certificate is required. This applies to both private and social sector landlords and tenants.

For more information go to:

[www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/theenvironment/energyperformance/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/theenvironment/energyperformance/)

## CAPITAL GAINS TAX

Capital Gains Tax (CGT) applies to any gain made upon the disposal of assets such as rental properties. The Government have proposed simplification of CGT through the removal of the indexation allowance and taper relief, to be replaced by the introduction of a single rate of 18% from April 2008. For many landlords this means that the rate at which their gains are taxed will be reduced. It is advisable that any landlord wishing to dispose of assets should seek expert advice.

For more information go to:

[www.hmrc.gov.uk/cgt/](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/cgt/)

## SLIM DOWN ON ENERGY USE

### ENERGY GRANTS FOR LANDLORDS/TENANTS

We all need to make a vital contribution to **reduce our own carbon footprint** to lessen the impact of the potentially devastating consequences of the greenhouse effect.

Apart from the environmental reasons, an energy efficient home means happy tenants who are more able to pay rent on time. In addition, a warm home is less likely to suffer from condensation and eventually damp and mould. If neglected, this can lead to structural damage to the fabric of the property.

Landlords, being multiple property owners, are in a strong position to make a big difference in Herefordshire.

There are a number of sources of assistance to help landlords or tenants:

The Landlords Energy Savings Allowance (L.E.S.A) gives you the opportunity to invest in your property by installing cavity, loft or solid wall insulation which at the same time provides a deduction for income tax purposes up to a maximum of £1500 spent per building. L.E.S.A is available to all landlords of domestic properties and buildings of multiple occupation.

The Warm Front grant helps private tenants on income and/or disability related benefits with heating and insulation measures. To find out more telephone **0800 316 2814**.

It is also worth contacting the main energy suppliers who may offer generous discounts on loft and cavity wall insulation.

For those interested in renewable energy measures, the central government grant, Low Carbon buildings Programme has been offering discounts off solar thermal, wind energy, bio energy and hydro electric power. Telephone **0800 915 0990** for more information.

If you need any guidance with regards to sustainable energy issues, the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre give expert, free and impartial advice **on 0800 512 012** or telephone the Home Energy Conservation Officer on **(01432) 261887**.

## DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

Between 2008 and 2012, television services in the UK will go completely digital, TV region by TV region. The proposed date for Herefordshire is 2011. The old analogue television signal will be switched off and viewers will need to convert or upgrade their TV equipment to receive digital signals, whether through their aerial, by satellite, cable or broadband.



Landlords letting properties in blocks of flats that share a communal television system have a legal responsibility to provide digital television capacity as part of the basic service provision.

For more information go to:  
[www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk](http://www.digitaltelevision.gov.uk)

## HMO LICENSING

HMO Licensing has been in force since July 2006. All HMO's in Herefordshire, with few exceptions, need to be licensed. The Private Sector Housing Team are now proactively pursuing the owners of unlicensed HMO's, and will prosecute. Any landlord who does not have an HMO licence, or thinks they may need an HMO licence, is advised to contact the HMO Administrator without delay on (01432) 260746 for an application pack or further advice.

The next Landlords' event will take place at:

**Council Chambers,  
Brockington,  
Hafod Road,  
HEREFORD  
on Wednesday  
2nd April 2008**

Refreshments and a small buffet will be available from 7.00pm, with the first speaker commencing at 7.30pm.

Subjects to be covered include:

- New Housing Benefit Legislation
- Energy Performance Certificates

Other speakers to be confirmed.

There will also be a variety of information stands directed towards Private Sector Landlords.



For more information, please contact Claire Kyle or Nick Griffiths on 01432 260269

## WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY EASTER

