

SmartMove News 2010

SmartMove has had another very successful year – in total we have supported over 278 people to access private rented accommodation and we are confident that there will be a continued need for our service in the future. Over the last year SmartMove has expanded, and now delivers services across Exeter, East Devon, South Hams, Mid Devon and North Devon. SmartMove are very keen to recruit landlords in the above areas to enable us to continue our work and offer good housing solutions. We believe that we offer a good service to both landlords and tenants; with the overall aim of facilitating sustainable, long-term tenancies.

We would like to express our thanks to all those who have supported us and made a massive difference to our service. We are in the process of developing a landlord survey as we want to understand your needs and concerns and always look to improve what we do. I would be very happy to receive any feedback by email in the meantime: carrie.eavis@communityha.org.uk

Not just a deposit scheme...

The SmartMove team have extensive knowledge of benefits, and also enjoy a close working relationship with local housing benefit departments. This enables us to resolve problems for our landlords efficiently. Some examples of wider support we can offer include:

- Requesting to pay the landlord direct for claimants that are deemed vulnerable
- Support Landlords with non payment of housing benefit and arrange direct payments to prevent further arrears accruing
- Mediation/liasing with landlord and tenant to improve working relationships.
- Education for landlords and tenants on 4 weekly payment runs versus monthly payments.
- Enabling benefit claims to be fast tracked so the landlord does not run at a loss.
- Increase opportunity to access Discretionary Housing Payments.

For existing tenants, the risk of redundancy and general effects of the recession could mean their previously affordable accommodation is no longer. We have been supporting tenants in such a situation to access Discretionary Housing Payments;



which can be awarded to those who circumstances have changed through no fault of their own.

In short, if you feel that you or a fellow landlord would benefit from some of these types of support, or would like to talk to us about how the SmartMove bond scheme works, please contact us. We can be contacted for further information on 01392 430228, or visit www.communityha.org.uk

Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance

Housing Benefits has posed a greater challenge for many landlords since the introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The LHA system introduced significant changes to the way Housing Benefit (HB) levels are restricted and how benefit is paid. It does not replace Housing Benefit - it is just a different way of calculating entitlement under the existing Housing Benefit scheme. Housing benefit/Local Housing Allowance is going through a period of significant change from April 2011. In simple terms, for Tenants and Landlords this will mean:

1. Removal of the £15.00 excess from April 2011.
2. The valuation for Local Housing Allowance will be set at the 30th percentile not the 50th percentile (see example sheet). This will impact on new claimants and claimants who have a change of circumstances e.g. change from employment support allowance to job seekers allowance.
3. Direct payments will be widened following April 2011 in certain circumstances in retaining or securing a tenancy in the private rented sector.
4. Discretionary Housing Payment may be used in exceptional hardship and this budget has been increased nationally in April 2011.

The most proactive step local landlords can take is to influence how LHA rates are set by completing your valuation forms (see attached). This will evidence the true private rental levels in your town/community. Smartmove staff are very happy to discuss these changes in further detail on an individual basis.

Thank you!

SmartMove would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. Thank you again for supporting SmartMove and may we continue to develop and move forward changing many peoples lives and allowing them the opportunity to move forward.



SmartMove

T: 01392 430228

For more information: www.communityha.org.uk