

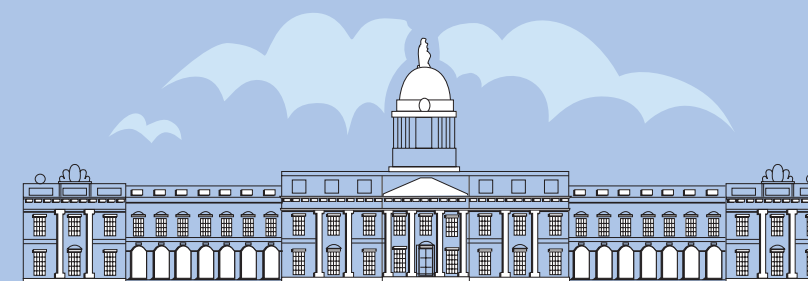
- A scheme of tax relief for refurbishment of private rented accommodation, which has been in operation since 2001, will continue in full throughout 2006 and on a reducing basis up to the end of July 2008. The cost of repairs to private rented accommodation will continue to be fully tax-deductible on an ongoing basis. Local authorities and the PRTB are being asked to promote awareness of these reliefs.

## Research, Information and Promotion

- The Centre for Housing Research will undertake a study of measures to promote improvement in private rented accommodation standards and develop good practice guidelines to assist housing authorities in their functions relating to the private rented sector with a view to achieving increased effectiveness, including more strategic and proactive approaches to enforcement.
- PRTB registration data will continue to be provided to local authorities to help in enforcing the standards regulations. Local authorities are encouraged to use proactively the additional data that are now available as a result of the large increase in tenancy registration with the PRTB.
- The PRTB, in conjunction with other relevant agencies, will provide increased public information on legal and other relevant aspects of private rented accommodation standards.

## Co-ordination

- Opportunities to promote improvement in the quality and standards of private rented accommodation will continue to be pursued in the course of implementing the new Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).
- Regard will be had to compliance with the private rented accommodation standards regulations in the context of new applications for rent supplement under the Department of Social and Family Affairs Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) Scheme. Local authorities are being asked to notify the community welfare service where they encounter seriously sub-standard accommodation. Similarly, local authorities will be notified where it is considered, in the context of procedures relating to the DSFA rent supplement scheme, that accommodation may not be suitable in terms of standards.
- In addition to co-operation with relevant agencies such as the PRTB and the community welfare service, local authorities will co-ordinate, as appropriate, enforcement of the standards regulations and other local authority functions that may have a bearing on the standard or condition of accommodation or involve inspection of properties, either in the context of housing functions such as needs assessment and RAS, or other services.
- Any information regarding sub-standard accommodation obtained by the PRTB will be conveyed to the relevant housing authority.



**AN ROINN COMHSHAOIL, OIÐHREACHTA AGUS RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL**  
**DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE  
 AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

# Action on Private Rented Accommodation Standards

September 2006



## Foreword by Mr Noel Ahern, T.D., Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal

Great progress has been made in developing the private rented sector in recent years. Major reform of landlord and tenant legislation was introduced in 2004 and the quality and choice of accommodation has generally improved in line with the huge investment in new accommodation. However, there is need for a concerted effort to tackle remaining deficiencies in standards.

The partnership agreement *Towards 2016* includes a commitment that minimum standards regulations in the private rented sector will be updated and effectively enforced. In order to provide a coherent framework for achieving these objectives and to get work underway as quickly as possible, an Action Programme is being undertaken, involving a range of measures to promote further improvement in private rented accommodation standards, including review of the regulations and more effective enforcement.

Action will be pursued in a strategic manner through a positive partnership approach in conjunction with local authorities and other relevant parties. This will entail a balanced programme of promotion, information, appropriate regulation and strategic enforcement. A key objective of the programme is to achieve a more effective approach to tackling sub-standard accommodation through a combination of improved resourcing, co-ordination, planning and, prioritisation.

Continuation of policies to ensure an adequate level of new housing output and achieve supply/demand balance will also help to promote further improvement in standards both directly, through the addition of new stock to the sector and indirectly, by making it more difficult to let and retain tenants in sub-standard accommodation.

Details of the main measures that are being taken are summarised in this leaflet. I am confident that, through effective action on the part of the various agencies involved, remaining problems with standards of rented accommodation can be largely eliminated in a relatively short time.

Noel Ahern, T.D.,  
Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal

## Action on Private Rented Standards Main Features

### Regulation

- A general review of the content of the standards regulations with a view to updating them will start later in 2006. This will be carried out in consultation with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), local authorities and other relevant interests.
- The operation of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 will, increasingly, help in addressing problems relating to accommodation standards in a number of ways, including:
  - major increase in tenancy registration (currently around 115,000) which identifies rented premises for enforcement;
  - increased penalties for breach of the regulations (up to €3,000 or 6 months imprisonment, or both, and €250 per day for continuing offences);
  - clarification of legal responsibilities of landlords (repairs to the structure and maintenance of the interior of the dwelling) and tenants (to avoid causing or make good any damage beyond normal wear and tear); disputes relating to landlord or tenant obligations can be referred to the PRTB;
  - landlords prohibited from penalising tenants making complaints and greater security of tenure under the Act also makes tenants less vulnerable regarding complaints.

### Resources and Enforcement

- Increased funding is being provided to local authorities from the proceeds of tenancy registration fees for enforcement of the regulations. €1.6m was allocated in 2005 for this purpose in accordance with the number of registered tenancies in each area and it is intended to provide increased funding in 2006 and 2007. Interim payments totalling €1m will be made shortly.
- Housing authorities are being asked to prioritise action to improve enforcement of the regulations through a planned and strategic approach, focussing particularly on the accommodation most likely to be deficient, while avoiding, as far as possible, adverse impact on tenants in enforcement of the regulations. As a first step in a more planned approach, housing authorities will set targets for inspection of accommodation over the period to the end of 2007. Returns on inspection activity will, in future, be made on a quarterly basis. Future funding will be related to these returns.
- The inclusion of inspection of private rented dwellings among local authority service indicators is being considered.