



London Borough
of Hounslow

December 2009

LETSTART

Help to rent privately



The Letstart scheme

Having problems with your housing and being faced with homelessness is a very worrying time.

Not knowing where you and your family are going to live next and having to seek help from the council can make things feel out of control.

Unfortunately, when arranging emergency accommodation, we cannot offer a choice of properties. We will make sure it is suitable for you but it could be anywhere and not where you would like to live.

You can take back some control of where you live by using our Letstart Scheme. Letstart means you can choose your new home.

The biggest problem with arranging to move to your next home is often that it is very difficult to afford the deposit to rent privately, that's where Letstart can help. We provide the bond or a deposit worth one months rent to help you move into your new home.

Renting privately may seem expensive in Hounslow, however, you may be entitled to claim Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit) if you have a low income, to help you pay your rent. This could cover part, or all of your rental liability, depending on your circumstances.

We also provide incentives and a range of services to landlords to encourage them to join the scheme and have already helped lots of people move into some great properties.

We support you and your landlord throughout the letting process and tenancy to make sure everything is going well and your new home is a success.

How does it work?

It's easy really because we will be there to help you. Your Prevention and Housing Advice Officer will need to recommend you for a Letstart property.

They will consider you, if you:

- are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- are in receipt of welfare benefits or employed on a low income;
- have a local connection to Hounslow, which means you:
 - have been resident in the borough for six out of the last twelve months or three out of the last five years;
 - have a contract of employment in the borough;
or
 - have a family member who has resided in the borough for at least 5 years;
- are not guilty of antisocial behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable of being a tenant at the time of being considered for the scheme; and
- have a bank account to pay your rent from.

What you will need to do:

- tell us that you are interested renting a Letstart property;
- complete an application form and provide proof that you are eligible for the scheme;
- when accepted, you can consider a property we have available through the scheme or find a property with a landlord who would like to join Letstart;
- you can then visit the property to see if you like it;
- when we have agreed everything with you and the landlord, you will both need to sign a Letstart agreement and a tenancy agreement;
- you can apply for Local Housing Allowance (housing benefit), if you need to; and
- you will need to arrange a monthly standing order with your bank to pay your rent or you might like to open a separate account just for your rent to help you manage your money. We can help if you find it difficult to manage your money by arranging to pay your landlord direct (if you receive Local Housing Allowance) or by arranging extra support for you.

Why choose Letstart?

We all want to live in a lovely home and feel settled with our family.

Unfortunately, because there is a shortage of social housing, if we help you with accommodation because you are homeless you are likely to have to move a number of times and initially may have to stay in a hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation with shared facilities.

Letstart gives you the choice of more properties which are available to rent privately. There are houses or apartments, some are furnished, some have gardens, there are new properties, period homes and there might be one that's just right for you.

What are my responsibilities as a private sector tenant?

All of your responsibilities as a tenant will be in your tenancy agreement which you and your landlord sign. It is very important that you read your tenancy agreement and understand it fully because the contract does not involve the Council; it is between you and your landlord.

We want things in your new home to go well, so when you move into a new property you will need to:

- look after your new home;
- make sure you pay your rent on time every month;

- pay all the bills you are responsible for; and
- let us and your landlord know if you are moving out.

Your tenancy agreement will tell you what notice you need to give your landlord. When you move out your deposit will be returned to us by your landlord.

For more information about Letstart, please contact us on **0208 583 3842** or speak to your Prevention and Housing Advice Officer who will explain how Letstart can prevent you from being homeless and consider you for the scheme.

This leaflet can be supplied in community languages, large print, audio tape/CD or Braille.

Contact the Communications Team:

 **020 8583 3535**

 **hcscommunications@hounslow.gov.uk**

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Prevention & Housing Advice Team

Civic Centre
Lampton Road
Hounslow TW3 4DN

Telephone: 020 8583 3842

Lines are open weekdays between 9am and 5pm, or come to the Civic Centre and ask to see an adviser, Monday to Friday, 9am - 4.15pm.

The service is 'first-come first-served'. You may have to wait to be seen at busy times.

www.hounslow.gov.uk

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