

Code of Conduct for SEAL Members

- 1a) Members of SEAL whom apply as managing agents must ***either*** be affiliated to a recognised association such as ARLA (Association of Residential Letting Agents), NAEA (National Association of Estate Agents) or NALS (National Approved Letting Scheme) ***OR*** have been trading as a letting and managing agent for a minimum period of 24 consecutive months.
- 1b) Members of SEAL whom apply as landlords and manage their own properties must be registered with the National or Eastern Landlords Association (NLA / ELA), Thames Gateway South Essex Landlord Accreditation or other accreditation scheme as agreed by SEAL and the Council.
- 1c) The decision regarding acceptance of an applicant member or rescinding of membership rests with the Steering Group. SEAL will provide membership lists to the Council on a monthly basis.
- 2) SEAL in conjunction with the Council will actively promote and market membership. SEAL will have a regular slot at the Private Sector Housing Landlords' Forum and an exhibition stand. SEAL Members in joint partnership working with the Council will arrange a promotional programme to attract and increase its membership. This will include the organisation of meetings designated to offer help and advice to SEAL members, vocational training, and development of standard documentation and high standards for working practices within the Borough.
- 3) All properties managed under membership of SEAL will carry identification in order that the Council will be able to signpost services and refer back to SEAL to take appropriate action when complaints/issues occur.
- 4) Prior to completing a tenancy, Members of SEAL will obtain relevant, up to date written references on all applicants and guarantors, or other appropriate documentation. This documentation is to be made available to the Council on request.
- 5) Members of SEAL will arrange for check in inventories and schedules of condition at the beginning and end of all tenancies. Such documentation to include photographic records where relevant as well as entry and exit meter readings. Inventories and schedules of condition will be signed by the tenant and agent/landlord.
- 6) Members of SEAL will include the agreed Anti Social Behaviour 'Tenant Declaration' appendix clause in all future tenancies. The wording of this document has been collectively approved by SEAL & the Council bearing in mind legal and practical implications.
- 7) At the commencement of a tenancy, Members of SEAL will provide tenants with written information to assist the tenants with the smooth running of their tenancy. Such information to include:
 - (a) Refuse collection dates;
 - (b) Useful contact numbers; and
 - (c) Advice on dealing with problems and maintenance issues.

The Council has worked in conjunction with SEAL in compiling Tenant Information Packs and SEAL members shall distribute a minimum of one pack to each property, preferably in hard copy.

- 8) SEAL members will change all relevant locks where previous tenants have not returned the keys. When relevant, members of SEAL will ensure that appropriate Council Departments (such as the Homelessness Team – Housing Options) are aware when a new tenant takes up occupation or vacates a property.
- 9) Members of SEAL will inform the Council when issuing a S21 Notice to Quit to tenants. SEAL Members will work with the Council to ensure that when a tenant is at risk of eviction they approach the Council for advice and ensure that every effort is made to work together for the benefit of both organisations to prevent unnecessary expense and prolonged occupation at the residential premises, taking into consideration the Council's statutory duties and legislation.

An agreed diagram for how to progress when considering issuing a S21 Notice is provided within the SEAL Members Pack.

- 10) SEAL will use its best efforts to ensure tenancies instituted and managed by its Members comply with all current legislation in respect of gas and electrical safety at rented properties and will initiate a programme to install smoke alarms in all SEAL managed properties. Programme of installation to be agreed with the Council.
- 11) Members of SEAL will be expected to carry out property condition visits at their properties on a regular basis. It is recommended such inspections should be carried out at a minimum every 6 months and more frequently if the property is an HMO or accommodates vulnerable tenants. SEAL & the Council have produced a template 'Property Condition' periodic inspection report form which is available within the SEAL Member Pack.
- 12) SEAL members will ensure all of their properties are in a good condition and will use their best efforts to carry out all repairs in a reasonable time frame. The Council will advise SEAL of any complaint received about a known member in respect of property condition and SEAL members shall encourage a Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspection from the Council where they cannot resolve disrepair matters with the tenant. Where there are doubts regarding the condition of the property, SEAL's administration will also actively encourage members to undertake repairs and improvements and advocate contacting the Council for an independent HHSRS inspection should the Landlord fail to carry out essential repairs.
- 13) SEAL members shall provide all tenants with written details of their complaints procedures.
- 14) The SEAL administration shall discourage members from issuing eviction proceedings in retaliation for making a formal complaint to the Private Sector Housing Team.
- 15) SEAL will work together with the Council and other relevant organisations to take all reasonable measures to ensure:
 - (a) Proper refuse facilities are in place at all member's properties; and
 - (b) Property frontages are kept clean and tidy and bulky rubbish items are removed quickly and efficiently.
- 16) Guidance on Streetscene and refuse/recycling management has been documented jointly by SEAL and the Council and forms a separate document within the SEAL Member Pack. It is expected that all SEAL members ensure, including through the education of tenants, that property frontages are kept clean and tidy and that no rubbish or bulky rubbish items are left on property frontages unless in proper storage facilities. Failure to adhere to this will result in action being taken against the tenant and a warning to the SEAL Member.

- 17) Members of SEAL shall provide written receipts for rental payments made in cash.
- 18) SEAL will continue to work with the Council and other relevant agencies, including Essex Police and Anti Social Behaviour Teams such as SMAART to develop practical and legal procedures to effectively deal with anti-social behaviour occurring at SEAL managed properties.
- 19) On receipt of a written request from the Council or from relevant individuals, SEAL will provide the following to specified officers of the Council:
- (a) Energy Performance Certificates (available online);
 - (b) Landlord Gas Safety Certificates;
 - (c) Contact details for members of SEAL;
 - (d) Copies of written references supporting tenancy applications;
 - (e) Copies of documentation from SEAL members relating to monitoring such as copies of members' property inspection forms & Tenant Declarations.

Definitions:

- (a) SEAL: The South East Alliance of Landlords, Agents & Residents.
- (b) The Council: Southend-on Sea-Borough Council including its Officers and Councillors.
- (c) The Borough: The Borough of Southend-on-Sea.
- (d) SEAL Managed Properties: Properties with tenancies instituted and managed by Members of SEAL including properties where a member agent manages properties on behalf of a landlord but where that landlord is not a direct member themselves.

