

Over 1200 Student Properties Accredited Through AFS/UNIPOL Scheme

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Since its launch one year ago, 1221 student properties across 26 UK cities have signed up to the accreditation AFS/Unipol Code

The Code, created by Accommodation for Students (AFS)

(www.accommodationforstudents.com), the UK's No 1 student accommodation website, and Unipol, the charity working to improve training, standards and professionalism in student housing, is a voluntary scheme where landlords commit to maintaining professional standards when managing shared student properties. It sets out a number of specific standards which rented student properties and their management must adhere to, covering key areas such as comfort, facilities, safety, security and service. So far the code has seen greatest take up in Leeds, Nottingham, Manchester, Durham and Birmingham with plenty more to come in Canterbury, Middlesbrough and Sheffield

As rents continue to rise in many university towns, students and parents are looking for reassurance that they are getting value for money. A recent survey conducted by AFS suggested that the introduction of the accreditation scheme has been well received throughout the industry with over 90 percent of students saying they would prefer to rent a property that has been physically inspected and accredited. Similarly, with growing competition in the student accommodation market. wild glowing competition in the student accommodation market, professional landlords are keen for their properties to stand out and are benefiting from quality tenants and quicker lettings. One landlord Mr Karl Kuhwald, who has 30 student properties in Manchester, commented "I signed up to the accreditation scheme thinking it would be a good way for me to publicly state that I manage my properties well. What I didn't realise was how many more enquiries I would receive from AFS as a result of becoming accredited. Highly recommend."

As part of the accreditation process, standards are physically checked during visits from professional verifiers who are extremely thorough in ensuring the properties are safe and suitable to let. Dick Scott, one of the property verifiers working with AFS, says "Perhaps the two most important things about the verification process are that someone completely independent checks the property - and that it does really get checked - unlike many other accreditation schemes." One unique feature about the verification process which is proving very popular is that student tenants are also interviewed and they too learn a lot that helps the landlord/tenant relationship.

According to Amy Royle, Accreditation Officer at Unipol,

"An interesting and exciting development" has been the interest shown by Educational Institutions. "Universities and Colleges are increasingly looking for robust accreditation schemes to ensure a good standard of housing for their students, so we are excited that a growing number are now actively promoting the AFS/Unipol Code to the student landlords in

This is particularly true of The University of Exeter which was the first university to officially adopt it and now actively promote it to all student landlords in the City. University Accommodation Manager, Helen Whyte, comments "When looking for a nationally recognised code, we found that AFS/Unipol met our requirements for landlords and properties as well as covering specific issues in students housing such as upkeep of gardens and rubbish removal. Most importantly, the verification of the Code is through property inspections which we felt was an important part of the

Rob Hunter, founder of Place Group UK and The London Student Group. was one of the first landlords in London to sign up for the code.

He comments

"Put simply, the code is definitely working for us and I can't speak highly enough of the accreditation, the outstanding quality of the assessor the results we have seen. Compliance with a recognised published



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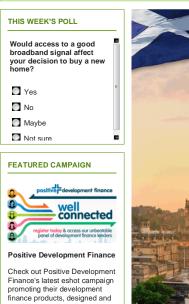
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