



Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

Landlord Information Sheet

Background.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent Supplement was introduced to be a short-term income support measure for people with accommodation emergencies.

Over recent years it has evolved, by default, into a medium to long-term housing support catering for in excess of 50,000 cases nationwide at a cost of 352 million euro to the Exchequer in 2004. It is estimated that approximately 30,000 of these recipients have a long-term housing need that they cannot afford to meet from their own resources.

RAS is an attempt by the Government and the local authorities to provide for the long term housing needs of these recipients.

What Will Change?

At present the rent supplement applicant sources a private rented property and applies to the local Community Welfare Officer for Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) Rent Supplement. If the application is successful, the Community Welfare Officer makes a monthly payment towards the rent. The Tenant adds a rent contribution and pays the landlord directly.

RAS will be administered by the Local Housing Authority – Fingal County Council - which will negotiate an "availability contract" with the landlord under which the local authority will guarantee a monthly electronic payment, payable in advance, to the landlord for the period of the contract. In return the local authority will have exclusive nomination rights to the property.

The rent paid by the local authority will be the full, agreed rent for the property. The landlord will not have to collect rent or fill vacancies for the duration of the agreement. The local authority will collect the tenant's rent contribution and will pay the full rent even if the property is vacant. ***Please note landlords are exempt from the €200 Non Principal Private Residence Charge (NPPR) if your property is contracted on RAS.***

Landlord & Tenant Relationship and Responsibilities of Landlord

Legally the landlord and tenant relationship will remain between those parties. The local authority will act as broker or agent on behalf of the tenant.

The landlord will retain responsibility for:

1. Insurances - property, contents and public liability;
2. Routine Maintenance/Repair and replacement of equipment; and
3. Dealing with anti-social behaviour should it arise.

Anti Social Behaviour.

Why should landlords be responsible for dealing with anti-social-behaviour while the local authority has exclusive nomination rights to their property?

The rationale for this is five fold:

1. The incidence of anti-social-behaviour in the existing SWA rent supplement regime is extremely low;
2. The majority of RAS agreements are likely to be "package deals" where existing properties, tenants and landlords will move as a package from the SWA rent supplement regime to RAS. In these cases the landlord will have selected the tenant.
3. The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 applies to all tenancies under RAS. Accordingly, the Landlord and the Tenant have recourse to the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB). Tenants who engage in anti-social behaviour will be in breach of their tenancy obligations under the Tenancy Agreement giving the landlord grounds to terminate the Tenancy.
4. Housing Authorities have formal vetting arrangements in place with the Gardai, the Area Health Service Executive and the local estate management committees to check the background of prospective RAS tenants. This process is considered more

thorough than the normal, short, introductory meeting between the landlord and the prospective tenant.

5. The Government and Housing Authorities want to ensure the effective implementation of RAS and Housing Authorities will make every effort to ensure that RAS tenants do not engage in anti-social behaviour. Housing Authorities will have formal agreements with tenants in this regard and RAS tenants will be made aware that engaging in such behaviour could put their future entitlement to *all* State housing supports at risk.

Rent Levels.

Rents will reflect local market rents. However, housing authorities are charged with making savings on current rent supplement rent levels. The rent payable will be the subject of negotiation but rents may not exceed the current SWA rent supplement rent level and a reduction in that rent will be sought in return for:

1. The landlord not having to collect rents for the duration of the RAS contract;
2. The landlord not having to fill vacancies (advertise and interview prospective tenants) for the duration of the RAS contract;
3. The fact that the average yield across the private rented sector is 11 months rent per annum due to vacancies/tenant turnover;
4. The very bankable asset that a guaranteed RAS rent payment represents;
5. Guaranteed prompt payment, in advance, by a State agency.
6. The fact that many landlords pay a letting agent the equivalent of one months rent per annum as a fee.

Commencement & Rollout.

RAS will commence in Fingal in February, 2006. There are approximately 4,000 SWA rent supplement tenants living in private rented accommodation in Fingal who are deemed to have a long term housing need and are eligible for RAS . These will all be transferred on a phased basis to RAS or local authority housing.

Eligibility.

To participate in RAS landlords must:

1. Be Tax compliant (Tax Clearance Certificate will be required annually)
2. Agree to register the Tenancy with the Private Residential Tenancies Board
3. Submit a BER Certificate & Report for their property (see www.sei.ie for further information)
4. The property must meet minimum standards.

Tenants must have been in receipt of SWA rent supplement for a minimum of 18 months and be deemed by the relevant local authority to have a long term housing need. Non-nationals must have a "right to remain" in the State.

How to become involved in RAS.

If you are interested in participating in the Scheme contact The RAS Unit, Housing Department, Fingal County Council, Grove Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, send a completed Landlord Application form, along with the BER Certificate & Report and Tax Clearance Certificate to the above address. (Application forms available on our Website, www.fingalcoco.ie.)

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