



Highland Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Questions and Answers for Private Landlords and Applicants

What is the Deposit Guarantee Scheme?

The Highland Deposit Guarantee Scheme (here after referred to as the scheme) provides the 'Guarantee' of a deposit instead of a tenant providing cash deposit immediately.

The Guarantee is to assist people having difficulty raising a cash deposit at the initial stage of the tenancy.

A Guarantee can help those who are eligible to access rented accommodation in the private sector.

The scheme is managed by The Highland Council.

Who can access the Deposit Guarantee Scheme?

The HDGS has been developed to assist people who:-

- Have a housing need in Highland.
- Who are on a low income and are.
- Unable to raise a rent deposit by their own means and, are able to sustain a tenancy with minimal support if required.
- Are aged 25 or over; however, consideration can be given on an individual basis depending on circumstances.
- Who have a local connection to the Highlands

How do you apply for the Scheme?

All applicants will initially be interviewed by The Highland Council's Housing & Property Service. They will be asked to provide references, one of which should be the previous landlord. The landlord would, however, have final say on whether to offer applicants a tenancy or not.

How much is the Deposit Guarantee?

The Deposit Guarantee is equal in value to a maximum of one month's rent.

How long is the Deposit Guarantee in place for?

A Deposit Guarantee will be in place initially for 6 months, with the possibility of review at the end of this period, depending on the tenant's individual circumstances and the duration of the tenancy agreement.

What is covered by the Deposit Guarantee?

The Deposit Guarantee covers any damage to the property up to the agreed value.

What is not covered by the Deposit Guarantee?

The Deposit Guarantee will not cover:-

- Unpaid bills and personal debts to the landlord, or damage to communal areas.
- Rent arrears arising from the difference between the Local Housing Allowance (formerly Housing Benefit) award and the full rent charge.
- Rent arrears from the tenant absconding.

What happens when the Deposit Guarantee period comes to an end?

During the life of the Deposit Guarantee, the scheme will support the tenant to put in place arrangements to pay the deposit to the landlord. Once the deposit has been paid to the landlord the Guarantee will be withdrawn.

Are all landlords able to access the Deposit Guarantee Scheme?

Landlords are expected to meet good practice criteria, including:

- Being registered with the Landlords Registration Scheme.
- Providing a legally binding, written tenancy agreement and inventory.
- Providing a record of rent paid.
- Ensuring that all legal requirements of the tenancy are met
- Ensuring the property is in good repair and condition.
- Ensuring that gas, electric, energy performance and furniture safety requirements are met.
- Providing the appropriate gas safety certificates (if applicable).
- Displaying an Energy Performance Certificate in the property.

Can I find my own tenancy and still be eligible for the Deposit Guarantee Scheme?

If you find a property that you would like to rent, you can contact the landlord direct and mention the Scheme.

Alternatively, you can contact the Scheme and we will speak to the landlord on your behalf, to tell them about the Deposit Guarantee Scheme and to find out if they are willing to use the Scheme.

What type of support will tenants be offered?

All prospective tenants will be given assistance with their tenancy and completing the Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance forms as required. They can also be offered a needs assessment, and if appropriate housing support can be sought in the tenant's area.

Housing support includes assistance with a range of tasks such as form filling, accessing benefits and budgeting and referral to other support options.

The Scheme will also monitor tenancies on a regular basis, and is able to provide mediation between a landlord and tenant(s) if any difficulties arise.

What happens at the beginning of a tenancy?

In a case where a landlord contacts the Scheme directly about a property a member of staff will view the property with the landlord. Once a suitable tenant has been identified, we will arrange for them to view the property with the landlord.

We will then carry out an eligibility and financial assessment, and a decision will be taken on eligibility for the Scheme following its outcome.

Arrangements will then be made between the tenant and the landlord to sign the tenancy agreement and inventory.

What happens at the end of a tenancy?

At the end of the tenancy, the member of staff, tenant and landlord will jointly inspect the property and agree, if necessary, on any amount of the Deposit Guarantee to be claimed. This inspection would be based on the jointly agreed inventory prepared by the landlord at the beginning of the tenancy.

Any claim, eligible under the Scheme, would be paid direct to the landlord, either from the Deposit Guarantee or from funds paid by the tenant towards the guarantee.

What conditions do tenants using the Deposit Guarantee Scheme need to meet?

There are a number of conditions in place that tenants have to meet in order to access the Scheme. Tenants should:-

- Have a housing need in Highland
- Have a local connection to the Highlands
- Adhere to all conditions of their tenancy agreement.
- Keep the Scheme informed of any change in circumstances.
- Make regular payments towards their deposit,

What are the benefits to tenants?

The potential benefits to tenants from the HDGS include:-

- No need to raise a deposit at the initial stage of a tenancy.
- Assistance with all aspects of setting up and managing a tenancy.
- Help to access benefits including Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance
- Access to mediation between the tenant and landlord if any difficulties arise.
- We can arrange you housing support if you need it.
- Access to a wider range of good quality and affordable housing.

What are the benefits to Landlords

- We can find you a tenant for your property.
- We will ensure that the rent is affordable for your tenant.
- We will make sure that the tenant has the assistance they need to access benefits and money advice.
- We can provide mediation service if you have a dispute with the tenant.
- We can provide you with a template Scottish Short Assured Tenancy agreement.
- We can offer you advice on tenancy management.

How can I find out more about the Highland Deposit Guarantee Scheme?

If you are a private landlord and are interested in working with the Scheme please contact the Homeless Prevention Team, Housing and Property Service, The Highland Council, Town House, Inverness IV1 1 JJ tel 01463 785104, email homeless.prevention@highland.gov.uk

If you are a prospective tenant looking for a private sector tenancy, please contact an Accommodation Officer in your local Housing and Property Office or email homeless.prevention@highland.gov.uk