

Leeds Code Review Summary - 2024

Review Process

The current Unipol Code for shared student houses in Leeds expires on 31st August 2024. To ensure it remains in step with changes to legislation, local authority standards and best practice, the Code is reviewed every 3 years and then landlords are asked to re-join to affirm commitment to the new standards.

The review process included an open consultation of stakeholders and a review panel established to consider any proposed changes. Although Unipol will produce a reviewed set of standards based on its knowledge of changes in these areas, it places some reliance on the expertise of the Review Panel to raise any pertinent points for inclusion.

The review panel consisted of representatives of landlords, students, universities, the local authority, Code Verifiers and community groups.

In this particular review, Unipol sought to simplify the wording of some clauses to improve clarity and to change the format of the document. It is not the intention to alter the meaning or requirement, but to improve the legibility of the document for both students and landlords.

Principles of this Review

Standards may exceed legal minimums and should reflect members going above and beyond what is required under the law.

The standards must be consistent with, but can exceed, those set by the local authority.

The standards must be simple and secondary references, although unavoidable, should not proliferate - although web links can be added.

The standards should not reflect very detailed operational procedures or refer to costs that will become outdated across the three year life of the Code.

Wherever possible the Code should be clear about what standards it requires or, if this is not possible, clear guidance can be issued (as part of the Code's secondary documentation) that says what needs to be done.

The Code must meet the four ANUK principles of Declaration, Verification, Continual Improvement and be able to respond to Complaints.

It is important to maintain a focus on management standards (the main cause of complaints from students) as well as initial physical standards.

This is a specific Code for off street student houses and must relate to the needs and risks inherent in this part of the housing market.

Compromise and Consultation

Putting together a new Code is a complex and difficult matter. It is easy for a "wish list" of standards to accumulate from those who do not have to meet them. It is also easy for disagreeing parties within a review process to negotiate between themselves to find a solution that can be difficult to achieve from those being asked to meet the standards.

It is essential to remember that accreditation is voluntary and that whatever standards are set, members have to be willing to meet those standards voluntarily. This sets boundaries about what can and cannot be achieved. It is important to be conscious of the current market context too.

As new standards come in, it is normal to have "feed-in" times that allow owners periods of time to meet specific standards where works or changes are likely to be required. These feed in periods are usually based on an assessment of the practicalities of doing works and an assessment of where risks are highest.

Summary of changes to the Code document

- New design.
- Inclusion of 'Code Manual' which will provide more detail on the operations of the Code, Audit Panel, Tribunal etc. and gives background to its conception.
- Improved wording/formatting throughout.
- Updated references to British Standards and legislation, to ensure that most recent documents are referred to.
- Reference to "Material Information in Property Listings guidance" included:
"All property details are reported accurately without misrepresentation to prospective tenants. Landlords will abide by the UK Advertising Codes¹ as set by the Advertising Standards Authority, and by all its regulatory mechanisms. Members should refer to the Material Information in Property Listings guidance, set out by the National Trading Standards;"
- New clause effective from September 2025 under the Code:
"At the start of the tenancy, the landlord must provide tenants with the following information as a minimum (From 2025 onwards):
 - *Emergency contact details*
 - *Response times for repairs – (see 3.08)*
 - *Appliance operation guides (e.g. boiler, heating, alarms)*
 - *Instructions on proper management of rubbish and recycling*
 - *Correct use of the fire equipment and safe means of escape in the event of fire*
 - *Location of the stop tap and gas shut off valve*
 - *A copy of the Unipol Code (this can be provided via a weblink);*
 - *Crime prevention information"*
- Damp to be included as a stand-alone clause (rather than part of HHSRS):
"Reasonable steps are taken to comply with the government's guidance on 'Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home"
- Any rooms containing fuel burning appliances must now be fitted with a carbon monoxide (CO) detection conforming to BSEN50291 (previously requirement only applied if in bedrooms).
- Changing of wording on TRVs required to all rooms, to allow for bypass radiators (which will be accepted in non-habitable rooms and hallways):
"All wet central heating systems will include thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) on radiators in habitable rooms"
- Requirement for members to provide information at the commencement of the tenancy.
- Clarity provided on clause relating to rent not being payable in properties "not ready at the commencement of the tenancy":
"If rooms are not ready for occupation ("not ready" to be interpreted as where the property room/s cannot be used for their intended purpose) on the date that the tenancy begins, then suitable alternative accommodation will be provided by the member if required by the tenant or no rent will be payable for the room/s that are unusable during that period. A kitchen that is unusable would count as a 50% rent reduction. No rent should be payable if a sole bathroom is unusable for any period over 24 hours;"
- Complaints/dispute section to be updated for clarity and better readability.
- Review of Code fees/package for members.

Code Fees

Membership of the Codes provides significant benefits and cash savings. Unipol fully supports the

student landlord community and remains committed to providing a voice for the sector and championing good practice.

For the new Code cycle Code Members will no longer have to become members of the hub on an annual basis and all those additional benefits will now be merged with Code membership. Benefits of joining the Code include:

- Discounts on HMO licences (currently £150 per property)
- Free online training which meets HMO licensing criteria
- Free training events to boost your skills
- Discounted advertising fees on the Unipol website. For the 2025-2026 letting year Unipol will only be advertising properties from accredited landlords and managing agents. Significant discounts will be available and no additional membership fee will be levied.
- Member briefings, so you can understand the market and network with other landlords
- Special briefings on proposed new legislation and have your say
- Free advice from our accreditation team and the benefit of inspections, where our experts give a view on your property
- Access to the Landlord Clinic and specialist help to resolve tenancy issues and use our mediation services
- Code Membership promotion via the Universities and the Leeds Rental Standard
- Waste disposal concession at Kirkstall and Seacroft Recycling sites
- “Lighter touch” approach from the local authority, with complaints first directed to Unipol for resolution
- Ability to apply for a parking permit (usually only available for residents)
- Discounted deposit protection from TDS
- Access to the free online tenancy agreement generator
- Join the Owners Consultative Group to feed into the development of the Code and network with other landlords

The review focused on ensuring that the ‘Code package’ continues to provide members with a package of support, market intelligence and networking opportunities.

The fees for the new Code cycle have been set as follows:

Number of properties	Fee (excluding VAT)	Fee (including VAT)
1	£84.00	£101.00
2	£168.00	£202.00
3-5	£212.80	£256.00
6-10	£340.66	£409.00
11-15	£459.75	£552.00
16-20	£636.35	£764.00
21-40	£794.84	£920.00
41-60	£966.67	£1,210.00
61-120	£1,268.75	£1,523.00
Unlimited	£1,996.50	£2,396.00

Code renewal process

The new Leeds Unipol Code cycle will begin on 1st September 2024. Members will be given a ‘grace period’ until the end of September 2024 to renew accreditation, after which the online Directory of Code members will be updated and continuous membership/Golden Owner Status removed.

Details on how to renew membership will be circulated to existing Code members, as soon as the new Code publication is available.