

SPEAKING NOTE - LAUNCH OF ANUK CODE

I am sorry the minister was not able to be here today. However, on behalf of Keith Hill and the ODPM I am pleased to be able to help launch The National Code of Standards for Larger Developments that are Tenanted by Students.

The Code has been developed by the Accreditation Network UK who have had the assistance of both Unipol Student Homes and the National Union of Students. It will provide a voluntary accreditation standard that is applicable to all the larger student developments provided by both the private sector and University providers.

As I said in speaking the UUK Conference accreditation is very much at the alternative voluntary end of regulation to the statutory regulation that the licensing provisions in the Housing Bill provide. Statutory regulation is about eliminating the worst conditions - in terms of the physical state of properties and their management. Accreditation is about raising standards and setting objectives, the achievement of which can be recognised.

The new ANUK code covers Halls of Residence and other larger developments for students involve in excess of 25 students living in one building in rooms off a central corridor, in cluster flats, or in self contained flats.

This new Code has strong support from the Association for Student Residential Accommodation (ASRA), the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE), the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers (CIEH), the Conference of University Business Officers (CUBO), and the National Union of Students (NUS).

It is also supported by Universities UK, and large commercial accommodation providers like the University Partnerships Programme (UPP) Opal Limited, Prime Living Group plc, and Unite plc.

The larger developments the code covers have particular needs and procedures relating to their ongoing management which do not apply to smaller developments and this Code reflects their specialist status as an important part of the student accommodation supply.

The Code provides the basis on which Owners and Tenants can agree a set of undertakings about how they wish to do business with one another. It deals with the marketing of the property and rights and obligations with regard to rent, repairs and the range of facilities provided.

Safety and security issues are very well covered. References and the responsibilities of tenants are covered and there is provision for complaints procedures in which neighbours of the property can participate.

In the light of my speech to the UUK Conference earlier, the launch of this code is an important event. I explained in that speech how the provisions in the Housing Bill will be very relevant to the conditions of student accommodation and the management of that accommodation, particularly houses in multiple occupation in the private rented sector.

But the Housing Bill also provides for the government to approve codes of management not only for privately managed HMOs but for university managed accommodation as well. So this new code is very timely.

Voluntary accreditation is an essential counterpart to the licensing provisions in the Housing Bill. Licensing is about tackling the worst conditions, the worst managers. Accreditation is about supporting the good landlords and raising standards above the minimum.

Besides providing an alternative to licensing, accreditation also offers a tool for universities and local authorities in tackling some of the concerns about the 'studentification' of areas.

So I wish those who support this code every success in placing it at the heart of developing accreditation arrangements for student accommodation. I hope that all providers of this type of student accommodation will want to associate themselves with these standards and will lend the scheme their support by joining it.