

HMRC Review of Powers: Compliance Checks
Room 1/72
100 Parliament Street
London.SW1A 2BQ.
And by email: powers.review-of-hmrc@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

1 October 2009

Dear Sir or Madam

Modernising Powers, Deterrents and Safeguards Bulk and Specialist Information Powers

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation. Our detailed responses to the questions posed by your consultation are attached as an Annex.

The following is an introduction to the Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA) ARLA is a combined trade body and self regulatory organisation with approximately 4000 individual members.

About ARLA

ARLA was formed in 1981 as the professional and regulatory body for letting agents in the UK. ARLA was the first body in the letting and property management industry to introduce a licensing scheme for all members in May 2009 to promote the highest standards of practice in this important and growing sector of the property market.

- **Financial Protection**

All members are required to have professional indemnity insurance cover. In addition they are covered by a bonding scheme which provides financial protection for client monies which have been misappropriated.

- **Professional Standards**

ARLA members are governed by a Code of Practice which provides a framework of ethical and professional standards at a level far higher than the law demands. The Association runs a series of meetings, training courses and seminars at local and national levels to ensure that members are kept fully up to date with the latest best practice.

ARLA members are also required to undertake 12 hours of continuing professional development training a year.

Examinations are held regularly and membership rules require all member offices to have professionally qualified staff. Members' client bank accounts are required to be audited annually ensuring that they conform to a stringent accounting practice.

- **Complaints/Discipline**

The Association has its own complaints and disciplinary procedures so that any dispute is dealt with efficiently and fairly. Where necessary, suitable sanctions are imposed on the member.

Members are also required to sign up to an independent adjudication and redress scheme through the Property Ombudsman.

- **Marketing Advantage**

With its policy of developing and maintaining the highest possible standards within its membership, ARLA is seen as a benchmark for professionalism that both landlords and tenants can have confidence in. This provides its members with a unique marketing advantage in an industry where standards vary significantly and where clients should choose who to use with great care.

- **Influence**

ARLA is recognised by government, local authorities, consumer interest groups and the media as the leading professional body in the private rented sector. It produces policy papers on key issues affecting the lettings market and lobbies government and other bodies within the industry to develop the appropriate legislative framework and initiatives.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Richards
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