

Landlords - Guide to Letting

Thinking of letting?

Becoming a landlord can be an extremely rewarding experience both for your bank balance and your lifestyle. However, there is much to consider before taking the plunge. Deciding what sort of landlord you might be will depend on how much time you have, your understanding of the rental market and your competency in managing your tenants. You might ask yourself do you have the time and resources to adequately manage your property for the duration of a tenancy?

Managing your tenants

If you have decided to manage your property and tenants for the duration of the tenancy you need to be aware of what is required in order to manage the tenancy effectively. Whilst you need to allow your tenants to have quiet enjoyment of the property without bothering them too much it is a good idea to inspect the property every 3-6 months and to ensure that it is being well maintained and is not in need of any repairs. You will also need to have suitable contractors on hand to attend to any emergency repairs on short notice or attend to routine maintenance that may be needed. If you manage the tenancy in this way and look after your tenants correctly you will keep them happy. Happy tenants pay your rent and look after your property.

Getting your property ready

Understand your market and the sort of tenant that you are looking for. There is no use spending over the odds for lavish fixtures and fittings if your local tenant market does not require it. An experienced landlord will prepare a property in a presentable way without spending too much money, but also not compromising on quality. You want your fittings, fixtures, appliances to endure long tenancy periods before having to replace them.

Who's responsible for the up keep of the garden?

Provided that you supply the tools needed, your tenant will be obliged to manage the garden during the tenancy which is enforced by the covenants within the agreement. The garden should also be returned to the same condition as it was received.

No smoking or pets

Our standard tenancy agreement does not allow for smoking in the property or any keeping pets. It is recommended never to allow smoking inside your property as the smoke will soil soft furnishings, carpets and walls and it can be costly to replace furnishings and to redecorate. If you are not averse to your tenants keeping pets then we recommend adding an additional pet clause which will cover any damage caused by pets and will enforce tenants to have the property professionally cleaned and disinfected after vacating.



Furnished or unfurnished

Knowing what your tenants want or expect is important. The majority of tenants in London are transient, therefore, they do not have basic furnishings and seek only furnished property. When we say furnished property we are only talking about the basic necessities, sofa suites, dining table (if space allows), beds, wardrobes, washing machine and fridge freezer. If you do not wish to provide furniture there is also a requirement for unfurnished property, however the demand for unfurnished property is not as strong. As an absolute minimum tenants will expect that white goods are provided i.e. washing machine, fridge/freezer. In order to maximise your properties market reach, it is best to be flexible as possible within reason, if you can offer both a furnished property or an unfurnished property then you will reach the entire tenant market.



Landlord's Insurances

It will be your responsibility to ensure that there is adequate buildings insurance. If your property is within a block you will need to approach your freeholder to ensure there is cover. It is also the responsibility to ensure any contents provided within the property. The tenant will be responsible for insuring their own contents

What are my legal obligations?

Under common law, landlords must ensure the safety and maintenance of rented property and their contents so that no injury or damage is caused to the occupants, neighbours or the public.

The property needs to be well maintained, as this is crucial to the long term success of your venture. In addition, there are a number of legal responsibilities that are placed upon you as a landlord, some of which need to be addressed even before your property is occupied.

Under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, you have 4 main areas of responsibility when your property is let under an assured shorthold tenancy:

Certificates

Even before you commence marketing your property you are required to have an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) so that we can display this with your property details and offer the properties energy efficiency and environmental impact ratings to prospective tenants.

We must also present the tenants with a gas safety certificate before the tenancy commences.

Repairs

Under the Landlord and Tenant Act, 1985, landlords are obligated to keep the structure and exterior of the property in a good state of repair. You are entitled to incorporate potential cost of repairs into the rent you charge, but you may not charge the tenants separately for repair to any of the things mentioned above. You have final responsibility for ensuring that the following areas are safe and fit for use, as well as effecting repairs when necessary to restore them to a fair condition:

- The structure and exterior of the property.
- Any hot water installations, as well as the supply of water itself.
- Basins, sinks, baths and other sanitary or drainage installations.
- Ensuring an adequate provision of lighting, heating and ventilation.
- Treating of any health-threatening damp that occurs (not to be confused with condensation, a more common but less serious problem caused mostly by poor ventilation).
- In flats and maisonettes you must also repair any other areas or installations which you own or control and whose disrepair would affect the tenant.
- Anything else that you mutually agree with the tenant in the tenancy agreement.



Gas and Electrical

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 place a number of responsibilities on landlords of private residential accommodation, namely:

- Ensuring that all gas appliances are maintained in good order.
- Paying for an annual safety check to be carried out by a tradesman who is registered with Gas Safe
- You must keep a record of all the safety checks and issue a copy of the safety certificate to the tenant within 28 days of each annual check.
- You must also ensure that the electrical system and any electrical appliances that you supply such as cookers, kettles, toasters, washing machines and immersion heater are safe to use. However, you are not responsible for any appliances that the tenant is entitled to take with him or her at the end of the tenancy.

Fire Safety and Furnishings

Legally, you must be able to verify that any furniture and fittings that you supply adhere to the standards set out in the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. These regulations set levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture. All new and second hand furniture must meet the standards, unless it was made before 1950. Most furniture and fittings that are covered by these regulations will have a label on if it meets the standards.

