

Landlords' Guidance

Valuation

We will initially view the property to assess its rental value. At this point we will answer any questions you may have and determine the most suitable service to meet your requirements. We will also be able to make recommendations where necessary that could potentially increase the rental value of your property. Our advice at this point is completely free and aimed at making sure you have a firm understanding of all your obligations before proceeding to let your property.

Marketing your property

Using the services of a professional letting agent takes away the stress and strain of finding a tenant, negotiating rent and dealing with on-going maintenance requirements.

- Promotion of your property through online and offline marketing methods.
- Conducting viewings and negotiating the rental price with tenants on your behalf.
- Checking tenant's identification, references and credit status.
- Collect the rent on your behalf.
- Sort out any maintenance issues that may arise within your property.
- Organising tenancy agreements, inventories and deposit schemes.
- Provide professional guidance and advice.
- Our highly trained and efficient staff will make sure that the best service is delivered to both the landlord and tenant.

Presenting your property

As the lettings market becomes more and more competitive, it is vital that you present your property in the most attractive way possible and you should carefully maintain its condition for each of your viewings. Without this, the property could remain empty for longer as well as affecting its rental value.

Externally

- Ensure gardens are neat and tidy - mow the lawn and weed the flowerbeds
- Give window frames and doors a lick of paint
- Ensure rubbish bins are not visible.

Internally

- De-clutter by removing personal items. Arrange self-storage for any larger items of furniture you do not wish to keep in the rental property.
- Clean the property thoroughly and ensure it smells fresh.
- Repair leaky taps or cracks in the walls.
- Decorate rooms in a neutral colour.

Obtaining the tenants and referencing

Arguably the most important factor when letting the property is the prospective tenant. The whole success of letting depends on finding the right tenant. If an applicant wishes to proceed with a tenancy, we will assess their suitability.

The references aim to check that each tenant is creditworthy by for example checking for CCJ's and arrears and obtaining employer, landlord and character references. Once references have been received, we will contact you to confirm the results of this and advise of the proposed checking in date.

All necessary legal paperwork, including an inventory will be prepared and signed and any outstanding balances settled by the tenant before the tenancy commences.

Legal responsibilities

The law requires landlords to maintain their property and undertake any major repairs that are required.

In addition, there are special rules that apply:

- Energy assessments - Landlords in England and Wales who are letting or re-letting their property for the first time are now required to present an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to tenants.
- Gas - The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 say landlords must ensure that gas appliances, fittings and flues are safe for tenant's use and that installation, maintenance and annual safety checks are carried out by a technician registered with the Gas Safety Register (which superseded CORGI on 1st April 2009).

The landlord must keep a record of the safety check for two years and issue a copy to each existing tenant within 28 days of the check being completed and issue a copy to any new tenants before they move in.

- Fire - In accordance with the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 it is an offence to let a property with any furniture or furnishings that do not comply with safety regulations. Escape routes should be identified and explained to the tenants so that they are fully aware of the quickest way to exit the building should fire break out. Emergency lighting may be needed in larger properties or properties with many storeys.
- Smoke detectors - Properties built after June 1992 must have mains operated smoke detectors fitted on each floor. Landlords should advise their tenants to regularly check that all smoke alarms are working properly. A carbon monoxide detector should also be supplied. These can be purchased for around £5 from most DIY shops.
- Fire safety equipment - Fire extinguishers and fire blankets should be supplied but tenants should be made aware that these are for small fires. This equipment should be regularly checked and safety certificates proving their effectiveness made available.
- Electricity - Landlords are responsible for all wiring and need to obtain safety certificates for all electrical equipment within their rental property to prove it is safe and will not cause danger.

Lettings legislation changes constantly, Maxwell Valentine will be able to provide you with information about all of your legal responsibilities.

The Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme

Under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 every landlord or letting agent that takes a deposit for an Assured Short-hold Tenancy in England and Wales must join a Tenancy Deposit Scheme. The new regulations came into effect from April 6, 2007. The purpose of this regulation is to ensure good practice. The secondary purpose of the new regulations is to try and keep disputes between landlords and tenants out of the courts by encouraging Alternative Dispute Resolution.

In November 2006 three companies were awarded contracts by The Government to run Tenancy Deposit Schemes:

Custodial scheme

- The Deposit Protection Service (The DPS)

Insurance backed schemes

- Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd (TDSL) (now trading as my deposits)
- The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS)