

# Factsheet 2

## Letting your house or flat

### Top tips if you are thinking of letting your property

Being a landlord is a huge responsibility and getting expert advice will help you ensure you are meeting all your responsibilities.

The following information provides some useful tips on becoming a landlord. It provides a snap-shot of some of the things you need to consider when letting a property. More detailed information can be found at [www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk](http://www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk) or at [www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk](http://www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk)

#### Tenancy Agreement

Once you take rent in exchange for providing accommodation, this is a tenancy agreement. It is not a legal requirement to have a written tenancy agreement, however having a signed tenancy agreement will make it easier to deal with any disputes, should they arise. Assured shorthold tenancies are the most common type. You can get tenancy agreements from most stationery suppliers.

#### Check your mortgage agreement

It is essential that you tell your mortgage company if you decide to let your property. Mortgage companies often need to give consent so if you haven't informed them you could be in breach of your agreement. It may also be worth looking around for specific buy-to-let mortgages.

#### Deposits

Any deposit you take from a tenant must be protected through one of the three government approved tenancy deposit protection schemes:

- My deposits  
[www.mydeposits.co.uk](http://www.mydeposits.co.uk)
- The deposit protection service  
[www.depositprotection.com](http://www.depositprotection.com)
- The dispute Service  
[www.thedisputeservice.co.uk](http://www.thedisputeservice.co.uk)

The implications if you don't can result in compensation having to be paid to tenants, sometimes 3 times the value of the deposit.

#### Energy Performance Certificate

You are legally required to get an energy performance certificate (EPC) and show it to prospective tenants. A copy of the certificate should be given to the tenants when they take up their tenancy. EPCs usually cost about £100, but can be cheaper.

#### Check if you need a licence

Contact your local authority as different licensing rules apply in different areas.

#### Gas and Electrical safety

All gas appliances must be checked annually by a registered gas engineer. You must give your tenants a copy of the landlord gas safety certificate before they move into the property and each annual certificate throughout their tenancy. From 1st April 2009, all gas engineers must be registered with the Gas Safe Register.  
[www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

You must ensure that the electrical installation and any electrical appliances you provide are safe, to reduce the risk of electrocution or fire. Electrical installations should be inspected and tested at least every five years and appliances more frequently dependant on their type. For details on how to find an electrician visit: [www.esc.org.uk](http://www.esc.org.uk)

#### Room-sealed appliances

The regulations require that:

- A gas appliance installed in a bathroom or a shower room must be a room-sealed appliance (A room-sealed appliance is an appliance which is sealed from the room in which it is located and obtains the air for combustion from the open air outside the building and the products

of combustion are discharged to the open air.)

- A gas fire, other gas space heater or a gas water heater of 14 kilowatt heat output or less in a room used or intended to be used as sleeping accommodation must either be:
  - A room-sealed appliance or:
  - It must incorporate a safety control designed to shut down the appliance before there is build-up of a dangerous quantity of the products of combustion in the room concerned.

### Property Condition and safety

The property must be in good repair, well-maintained, and capable of being effectively heated. It is essential to deal with any safety hazards promptly. You can find more information at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

From the 1st October 2015 regulations require smoke alarms to be installed in rented residential accommodation and carbon monoxide alarms in rooms with a solid fuel appliance. You must ensure that there is a safe means of escape from the property in the event of a fire and that a suitable fire alarm system has been fitted. To get further information, please contact the Council. LACORS national guidance on fire safety in residential accommodation can also be downloaded free of charge: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### Different ways to let your house or flat

There are various options for letting your property:

#### Private renting - you as self managing landlord

This option is for landlords who are confident that they know their responsibilities and best practice in managing properties. This option saves you the cost of an agent, but can require a considerable investment in time. If problems arise, you may require advice from a professional such as a lawyer or accountant, which may come at a cost. Landlord associations are a good source of advice and assistance and can provide most of the information that a self-managing landlord would require.

#### Renting through a lettings/managing agent

If you want to let your property but don't have the time to do it yourself and would like someone else to deal with the details of letting and managing the property, then you will want a reliable agent.

Organisations such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents [www.arla.co.uk](http://www.arla.co.uk), the National Approved Letting Scheme [www.nalscheme.co.uk](http://www.nalscheme.co.uk) and the UK Association of Letting Agents [www.ukala.org.uk](http://www.ukala.org.uk) will help you choose an agent you can depend on.

#### Renting through council-run, tenant finding or rent deposit schemes

Under these schemes local authorities are able to assist in finding suitable tenants for your property. A deposit guarantee scheme can also involve the Council guaranteeing an agreed level of rent as a deposit (usually one month).

#### Private Sector Leasing Scheme

Under this scheme an experienced registered provider (Housing Association) will manage the property on your behalf. You can lease your property for one year or more to the Registered Provider who will find suitable tenants for you.

#### Useful sources & information

A comprehensive Landlords Handbook is available at [www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk](http://www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk) There is also an annual Landlords Expo held each year – go to [www.landlordexpo.co.uk](http://www.landlordexpo.co.uk) to find out when this is next taking place.

Wanting to sell instead? – add your property details to our website catalogue

It's free to use and simply opens up another opportunity to tell people about your property. Go to [www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk](http://www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk) to list your property.

We also maintain a list of interested purchasers/ developers that we can send to owners who wish to sell their empty property.

Find out more by visiting [www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk](http://www.no-use-emptywest.co.uk) or at [www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk](http://www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk) Or get advice from your local authority:

**Bath and North East Somerset:** 01225 396411

**Bristol:** 0117 352 5010

**North Somerset:** 01934 426885

**South Gloucestershire:** 01454 865565