



A clear, impartial guide to

Renting a property

For use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland



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How an RICS letting agent can help you rent a property

When you rent a property, you can take advantage of expertise from the outset by using an RICS letting agent who follows the standards set out in the RICS UK Residential Property Standards.

Many letting agents throughout the UK are RICS members. Here are the advantages of using an RICS regulated firm:

- they give you clear, impartial and expert advice
- they act in your interest
- they adhere to the law, including ensuring your deposit is protected
- they follow strict rules of conduct – including having insurance to protect you
- RICS members have a specific set of rules and best practice guidance, the RICS UK Residential Property Standards designed to help ensure RICS letting agents provide exceptional service
- RICS members have to update their skills and knowledge throughout their careers, so you can rely on their expertise
- you are protected by a complaints procedure and access to independent redress, for example through an Ombudsman scheme.

Look out for firms that are 'Regulated by RICS' and that follow the standards laid out in the RICS UK Residential Property Standards. Lettings and managing agent firms that are regulated by RICS are easy to spot as they use 'Regulated by RICS' on their stationery and promotional material.



The process

Once you have in mind the type of property you are looking to rent, here is the process you need to follow to secure your property:

Finding a property to rent

There are a number of factors to consider before finding a property to rent. These will largely depend on your personal circumstances, preferred location and personal needs.

You will want to look at what is available and you will find these advertised on the property internet portals. Most agents use these to advertise the property they have available.

Role of the letting agent

Once you are interested in a property, check the letting agent is an RICS member and that the firm is 'Regulated by RICS'. This will ensure that you are treated fairly, can rely on the information you are given and that you and your money are protected. There are a large number of letting agents who are unregulated and extra care should be taken when dealing with these agents.

Agreeing the let

Once you have found a suitable property, you will have to agree the terms of the let which may involve some negotiation. Once the terms are agreed, formal documentation will be drawn up setting out the terms and conditions of the let. This will need to be signed by both you, as the tenant, and the landlord.

Moving in

You will not be able to move in until you have paid your deposit, first month's rent and any fees.



Finding a property to rent

Whether you have rented before or this is your first time, when you rent a home there is a lot to think about:

Does the property meet your needs?

Many factors need to be considered including:

- cost – both the cost of setting up the tenancy, as well as how much the rent is and how much you will need to pay extra for bills, such as council tax and utilities?
- location – is it close to shops, doctors, schools etc? Is it a safe neighbourhood?
- infrastructure – are there good transport links e.g. trains, buses etc?
- size – will the property accommodate your needs? For example, are there sufficient bedrooms or number of bedrooms required?

What type and length of tenancy do you need?

If the rent on the property is less than £100 000 per year and you do not live with the landlord, the tenancy automatically becomes an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). An AST usually lasts for six to 12 months but you can agree a longer fixed term tenancy with the landlord. If you choose a longer period the landlord might ask for the rent to be increased part way through the tenancy. Take care not to commit to a longer tenancy unless you can negotiate a surrender of it. There may be a cost and you are likely to be liable for the rent for the full term of the tenancy.

What happens at the end of the tenancy?

When the fixed term of the tenancy has expired, the landlord is able to gain back possession of the property provided they give two months written notice to the tenant. In addition, if you owe at least two months or eight weeks rent, the landlord can apply to the court for possession and an order for payment.

What can you afford?

Before you even look at a property, work out what you can afford by looking at what your basic outgoings are likely to be.

For instance:

The monthly rent	£
The cost of getting your references	£
Inventory and tenancy agreement costs	£
The deposit and any miscellaneous costs	£
Council tax	£
Water rates, gas, electricity and telephone charges	£
TV licence	£
Insurance for your belongings	£
Total	£

Role of the letting agent

You can find property to rent by looking at property internet portals, the individual agents' websites or by going to estate and letting agents in the area you are looking to move to.

Some agents still advertise in the rental property section of local newspapers but this is becoming rare. When you find a place to rent, it will be managed either directly by the landlord or more likely by the letting agent.

Even though the agent is instructed by the landlord, he is required to treat you fairly but check whether the agent is an RICS member as they adhere to the RICS UK Residential Property Standards. It is also advisable to ask whether the agent is a 'sole agent'. If not, other agents may be trying to let the same property.

Agreeing the let

When you find a property, before you sign anything you should:

- look at the property – is it clean, what kind of condition is it in and does anything need repairing?
- find out what furniture, carpets, curtains and other equipment is included in the rent
- find out what your responsibilities are, particularly at the end of the tenancy, such as employing professional cleaners or replacing broken furnishings.

Health and safety requirements

You should check and get assurances or certificates from the landlord that the property complies with these regulations:

- Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Smoke Detectors Act 1991, (if the property doesn't have smoke alarms ask if they can be installed)
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994.

Visit the Department for Communities and Local Government website, or the relevant devolved government departments, for more information.

In addition, you are advised to check whether electrical appliances have been PAT tested (Portable Appliance Testing) by the landlord.

References

Once you have found a property, you will need to agree the terms and conditions with the landlord. For these purposes you will need to supply the landlord with the relevant information and ensure you sign the necessary paperwork required for renting the property.

Becoming the tenant usually takes anywhere from a few days to three or four weeks.

Before you sign anything, the landlord or agent should provide you with a clear statement of rent, tenancy, deposit and any costs of setting up the tenancy. This includes the administration costs of getting your references. The letting agent will get references by contacting either:

- your bank
- credit referencing agencies
- current and previous employer[s]
- current and previous landlords[s].

If you are self-employed you may need to provide copies of trading accounts and an accountant's reference. Even if someone is going to be your guarantor you will still need references.

Tenancy agreement and deposit

Once the letting agent and the landlord have approved your references you can sign the tenancy agreement. Before signing, read and, if necessary, get professional advice on any documents you are asked to sign. Check the paperwork mentions the following important points:

- length of tenancy – most lettings are Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs)
- how often and when to pay rent, as well as any other costs
- what the deposit is – usually either a month's rent or the equivalent of six weeks rent
- how the deposit will be held. Tenancy Deposit Protection requires anyone holding a tenancy deposit (either a landlord or managing agent) to belong to an authorised scheme which protects the deposit during the tenancy and deals quickly and independently with any dispute over its return at the end of the tenancy.

Your landlord or agent must tell you within 14 days of you handing over the deposit which one of the three authorised schemes your deposit is protected by and provide you with details of the scheme. For more details on the authorised schemes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland please visit www.rics.org/tds

You should also agree with your landlord/ letting agent:

- how you will get the deposit back at the end of the tenancy
- how much, and who will pay for, work at the end of the tenancy, such as checking the inventory, renewing the agreement or cleaning the property
- the contact details of the manager responsible for the property
- whether gas, electricity and other services have been connected and that meters have been read.

In addition:

- your landlord must, by law give you an address in England and Wales where notices relating to the property can be served
- legislation prevents you being discriminated against because of sex, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status or disability.

Landlord registration

In some parts of the UK private landlords must apply for registration to ensure they are fit and proper persons to let property. Registration is intended to make sure that all landlords meet minimum standards and will remove the worst landlords from the sector. If registration applies in your area check your landlord is registered.

Moving in

You will not be able to move in until you have paid your deposit, first month's rent and any fees. Once on your way, this can be a very exciting time and it's very easy to forget a few important things:

- agree the inventory, which will set out the current condition of the property, the fixtures and fittings and, where applicable, the landlord's furniture and other contents. This will help to avoid any disputes at the end of your tenancy
- insure your own belongings at the property – the landlord's insurance will not provide cover for them
- make sure you know how all equipment in the property works and you have their manuals
- find out the telephone number for the various emergency maintenance services
- tell your gas, electricity, water and telephone companies the day you move in, making your own note of the meter readings
- if you are responsible for council tax, speak to your local authority
- you may also want to speak to your local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator or the residents' association if the property is in a block of flats.

Looking after your rented property

You will need to pay for fixing or replacing any damage to the property while you are renting it, otherwise it comes out of your deposit. So return the property to the landlord at the end of the tenancy in the same condition as at the start, allowing for fair wear and tear.

Remember, if you are away, for whatever reason:

- you still need to pay rent on the right date
- you are responsible for keeping the property secure
- make sure the property is not damaged by the weather
- let your insurer and your landlord know so that insurance arrangements can be made
- give the landlord emergency contact details.

Energy Performance Certificate

All homes being let will require an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The EPC is broadly similar to the labels now provided with domestic appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines.

Its purpose is to record how energy efficient a property is as a building. The certificate provides a rating of the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of a building from A to G, where A is very efficient and G is very inefficient.

EPCs are produced using standard methods with standard assumptions about energy usage so that the energy efficiency of one building can easily be compared with another building of the same type. This allows prospective tenants to see information on the energy efficiency and carbon emissions so they can consider energy efficiency and fuel costs as part of their investment.

An EPC is always accompanied by a recommendation report that lists cost effective and other measures to improve the energy rating of the home. The certificate is also accompanied by information about the rating that could be achieved if all the recommendations were implemented.

Check whether there is a Green Deal loan on the property. This will have been for the installation of energy efficiency measures which should reduce the running cost of the property. However, the loan repayments will be reflected in slightly higher electricity bills.



Tenant's checklist

Here's a brief summary of the various costs you will have to consider when you rent a property:

Insurance

The landlord is most likely to obtain building insurance for the property although it is up to tenants to insure their personal possessions.

It is advisable to check with the landlord what exactly is covered in the policy. Ensure you inform the landlord or the agent promptly of a potential claim on the policy, as a delay may invalidate the claim.

Letting agent's charges

The letting agent may make an administration charge for processing the application and for completing the relevant paperwork, including the recommended inventory.

Reference costs

There is likely to be a cost made for credit referencing services in order to undertake the necessary credit checks and references.

Removal

The cost of moving will vary depending on how many belongings you have and how far you are moving. If using a removal company make sure they are insured for any loss or damage to your possessions.

Services

You should not need to pay to have gas, electricity and water reconnected or transferred into your name but there may be a charge for connecting or reconnecting the phone.

Useful links

Here are some useful website addresses for advice when you're renting a property:

RICS

www.rics.org

Department for Communities and Local Government

www.gov.uk/dclg

Northern Ireland Executive

www.northernireland.gov.uk

HM Revenue & Customs

www.hmrc.gov.uk

Local councils

www.gov.uk

National Approved Letting Scheme

www.nalscheme.co.uk

Residential Property Tribunal Service

www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/residential-property

Tenancy Deposit Schemes

England and Wales

The Dispute Service
www.thedisputeservice.co.uk

My Deposits
www.mydeposits.co.uk

The Deposit Protection Scheme
www.depositprotection.com

Northern Ireland

Letting Property Services
www.lettingprotection.com

My Deposits
www.mydeposits.co.uk

TDS Northern Ireland
www.tdsnorthernireland.com



Free RICS guides

RICS has a range of free guides available for the property issues listed here.

Development issues

- Compulsory purchase
- Home extensions

Home hazards

- Dilapidations
- Flooding
- Japanese knotweed
- Subsidence

Neighbour issues

- Boundary disputes
- Party walls
- Right to light

Residential

- Buying a home
- Buying and selling art and antiques at auction
- Home surveys
- Letting a property
- Property auctions
- Renting a property
- Selling a home

Further information

We hope this guide is useful to you. If you'd like to know more about renting a property, or how RICS can help, please contact us.

Visit our website

[rics.org/consumerguides](https://www.rics.org/consumerguides)

alternatively email

contactrics@rics.org or call the RICS Contact Centre **02476 868 555**

Consumer helplines

RICS offers telephone helplines giving you 30 minutes of free advice on:

- Boundary disputes
- Party walls
- Compulsory purchase.

Just call **02476 868 555** and you will be put in touch with an RICS member local to you, willing to provide a free 30 minute initial consultation. Lines are open

0830 –1730 [GMT], Monday to Friday.

Find a Surveyor

Contact us if you want to find independent, impartial advice from a qualified professional with good local knowledge.

Look out for firms that are 'Regulated by RICS'. Estate agents and surveying firms that are regulated by RICS are easy to spot as they use 'Regulated by RICS' on their stationery and promotional material.

To find an RICS firm in your area visit

www.ricsfirms.com

alternatively email

contactrics@rics.org or call the RICS Contact Centre **02476 868 555**



Advancing standards in land, property and construction.

RICS is the **world's leading qualification** when it comes to professional standards in land, property and construction.

In a world where more and more people, governments, banks and commercial organisations demand greater certainty of **professional standards and ethics**, attaining RICS status is the recognised **mark of property professionalism**.

Over **100 000 property professionals** working in the major established and emerging economies of the world have already recognised the importance of securing RICS status by becoming members.

RICS is an **independent** professional body originally established in the UK by Royal Charter. Since 1868, RICS has been committed to setting and upholding the **highest standards of excellence and integrity** – providing **impartial, authoritative advice** on key issues affecting businesses and society.

RICS is a **regulator** of both its individual members and firms enabling it to **maintain the highest standards** and providing the basis for **unparalleled client confidence** in the sector.

RICS has a worldwide network. For further information simply contact the relevant RICS office or our Contact Centre.

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