

Landlords - Are you up to date?

Landlords Newsletter - March 2019

Symonds
& Sampson

ESTABLISHED 1858

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Welcome to our Landlords Newsletter

With the ever changing laws surrounding lettings it is important to keep your finger on the pulse to protect yourself and your tenants. Stay in the know with our quarterly newsletters.

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The secret to finding the right Tenant

A combination of thorough checks and gut instinct is the secret to our success, explains Lettings Manager, Karen Mitchell.

Luckily, we rarely get a 'tenant from hell'. Perhaps most tenants in our region are decent people, but we always check, check and check again and pride ourselves on the knowledge that no stone will have been left unturned.

Referenced in detail

We thoroughly reference prospective tenants, it is the most important thing you can do when weeding out the good from the bad. Tenants should never expect to rent somewhere without providing references from both current employers and landlords, and this enable us to ascertain whether they have a good track record and stability of employment to be suitable to take the tenancy. Even checking on social media accounts to build up a picture of the applicants lifestyle can add clues as to whether our relationship during the tenancy is likely to be easy or difficult.

Our credit checks are carried out by a specialised service, and will show up any county court judgments or adverse credit history.

Potential tenants don't always realise that we speak to them on the phone or meet them either in the office or at a property, they are already being interviewed on behalf of our clients. We aim to ensure the tenant is compatible with the property and our client.



'We aim to ensure the tenant is compatible with the property and our client!'

Visiting the property

There is a clause in the tenancy agreement that allows a Landlord or Managing Agent to visit the property soon after the tenancy starts, and regularly thereafter in order to carry out brief inspections. This allows a greater insight into the tenant's lifestyle, care for and compatability with the property. Of course, good tenants need to be looked after, and this visit to the property is invaluable to ensure all maintenance issues are noted and dealt with.

Receiving rent in advance

For a variety of reasons, we often get tenants who pay several months' rent in advance of the tenancy starting. Each situation would be discussed individually with a Landlord, but we are aware that some do not want us to visit or delve too deeply into their financial

situation. However, we do need to ensure they will be able to pay their rent and are a good match to the property. We are also aware we need to ensure they have sufficient funds to pay their rent after the initial rent and term expires.

Situations may change

Of course, sometimes circumstances may change and someone who was a good tenant when the tenancy started may now be struggling as a result of job loss, family problems or illness. Being aware and spotting the warning signs helps and, as ever, communication is the key. That's where our knowledge and expertise as managing agents is invaluable.

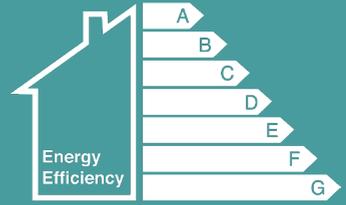
If you are a landlord seeking a tenant, Symonds & Sampson's ARLA qualified experts are ready to help.

Call in to your local office for a chat.



EPC Reminder

How to avoid a row over energy performance certificates. Head of Lettings, Rachael James, offers advice on the updates in EPC legislation.



I have written about this fundamental piece of legislation many times before, however there are seemingly ever-changing updates for landlords and lettings agents, and indeed for the local environmental health officials having to implement the new regulations.

A recap on the dates

- From 1 April 2018. Properties let on new or fixed-term tenancies need an EPC rating of E or above (this includes listed buildings).
- From 1 April 2020. Properties let on any tenancy which commenced after 2008 will also need an EPC rating of E or above.

The exemption register explained

No property is exempt unless it appears on the exemption register. Every Landlord must obtain an EPC for their property. If a property has a rating of F or G, the landlord needs to carry out the improvements recommended on the EPC. These improvements could include loft insulation, energy efficient lighting and heating.

If, after all possible improvements up to a limit of £3500 have been carried out, the EPC is still an F or G rated, the landlord can then apply for an exemption which lasts for five years. Records of works carried out (surveys and invoices) must be retained as evidence.

Please contact our experienced letting agents for advice and a free consultation on your property, or for further information, visit the government's website.

Tenant Fees Bill & Ban

As landlords prepare for the introduction of the Tenant Fee Ban 2019, Rachael James, Head of Lettings, explains what the ban entails and what all Landlords need to know.

It has now been confirmed – a ban on upfront letting agents' tenant fees will come into effect on 1st June 2019. This change in the legislation will certainly have an impact on the private rental sector.

The aim of the bill is threefold

- To reduce the costs that tenants need to find at the beginning of their tenancy
- To rebalance the relationship between tenants and landlords, and
- To provide a more affordable private rented sector.

What are the legal changes?

- Tenancy deposits are to be capped at the equivalent of six weeks' rent
- Holding deposit to be capped at the equivalent of one week's rent.
- A cap on the fees which can be charged to a tenant should they vacate a property before their fixed term tenancy expires
- A restriction on issuing of Section 21 notices (formal notice to gain possession).

When will the ban be implemented?

The Tenant Fee Regulations 2019 come into effect on 1st June 2019

How will it affect me as a landlord?

Currently, the fees paid by a tenant in advance of their tenancy pay for the agent's services in processing thorough and critical reference and background checks and a check-in of a detailed schedule of condition of the property.

Landlords need to recoup the costs elsewhere, invariably through charging higher rents. It is believed therefore that the Government's decision to implement a ban on upfront fees will most likely have a negative impact on the very people the legislation is intended to protect.

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Landlords Newsletter, please email:
pm@symondsandsampson.co.uk

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Landlord's property checklist

Maintenance is a year-round job. Emma Newman, Property Manager from the Central Property Management Department provides some handy reminders.

When it comes to preparing your property for the colder months of the year, it's best to get your maintenance jobs organised well in advance.

Here is a useful checklist so you can stay ahead:

- Repair and redecorate door and window frames.
- Ensure loft insulation is at least 270mm thick.
- Insulate around doors, in loft spaces and in between floorboards to reduce any draughts.
- Insulate any external pipes and any pipes in the loft to prevent freezing.
- Ensure the annual landlord gas safety and/or boiler service is in date.

If you manage the property yourself, please remind your tenant to:

- Have the chimney swept for any open fires, wood-burning stoves, Rayburns or AGAs.
- Ensure the smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are working.
- Ensure the shrubs and trees are cut back prior to the growing season, and protected from frost in cold weather.
- Ensure the gutters are clear from debris.
- Make sure the vents are not obstructed.
- If your property has an oil tank, remind tenants to keep it well stocked.
- Make sure tenants are aware of the risks of legionella bacteria in the pipes and taps if they're away from the property for more than 10 days.



Meet the team



Rachael James
Head of Lettings
01258 452670



Karen Mitchell
Lettings Manager
01935 382903



Lucy Nolan
Lettings Manager
01305 251154



Sam Brown
Lettings Manager
01308 459565



Trudi Gumbrell
Lettings Manager
01935 814488

Axminster Beaminster Blandford Bridport Dorchester Ilminster Poundbury
Salisbury Sherborne Sturminster Newton Wimborne Yeovil

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