

PREPARING YOUR PROPERTY FOR LETTING

Whether letting a property for the first time or re-letting following the end of an existing tenancy, the main objective is to obtain the best rental level within a reasonable period of time, minimising any void losses. It is a matter of judgement as to what, in general terms, attracts a tenant to a property.

Nonetheless, given that the property's location is permanent, generalisations like "first impressions count" and "good quality properties attract good quality tenants" do have a lot of weight with the market. There are a number of key features that we believe should be observed. Many will appear as common sense, but it is useful for landlords to have a general checklist for their property. Here are some of our suggestions below:

1. Decoration

This should be kept simple and neutral. The sight and smell of a freshly decorated property, both inside and out, are very powerful. It shows that the property is well cared for. Ideally, some decorating should be undertaken prior to all lettings in order to keep on top of wear and tear.

2. Repairs

Any damage from wear and tear should be attended to. Bathrooms and kitchens are key rooms in any rental property and should be kept in good repair and decorative condition. Carpets can be notoriously difficult to keep looking fresh, and replacement from time to time goes hand in hand with being a landlord.

3. Cleaning

Very often, cleaning is carried out by either the outgoing tenant or the landlord. Although there is a cost, the use of a professional cleaning company is more suitable. Tenants have high expectations, and falling short of these will lower the appeal of the property.

All unpleasant smells, including those of pets and cooking, must be removed. This can involve the deep cleaning of carpets and curtains. In extreme cases, it may mean replacing them in part or whole.

For information provided to tenants regarding our expectations for vacation, please see our help sheet, Cleaning on Vacation.

4. Safety

It is mandatory to have the appropriate number of smoke detectors fitted in a property, and where there are solid fuel-burning appliances, carbon monoxide detectors must be fitted. We believe it is best practice for CO detectors to be installed in all properties other than those that are heated electrically. For further information, see our help sheet on smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Similarly, up-to-date gas safety certificates for properties with gas appliances are a statutory requirement.

Periodic electrical inspection reports are also a statutory requirement.

For those landlords considering letting to American military members, the property must pass an Adequacy Standards inspection, the requirements for which are set out in our help sheet, Letting to the American Military.

5. Energy Performance Certificates

All properties brought to the market require an EPC. Those looking for rental property are much more discerning now and will take note of the energy assessment. Even with energy costs reasonably stable for those properties that have an assessment of less than band D, thought should be given to upgrading. It should be noted that, with effect from April 1, 2018, all rental properties (there are a few exceptions) should be a minimum of band E, and from April 1, 2016, tenants are statutorily able to request that a landlord carry out measures to improve the energy rating.

6. Exterior

As well as the general importance of maintaining the property in good repair, the landlord should be seeking to achieve an overall well-cared-for impression. It is the exterior of the property that is viewed first. The garden should be tended to, the external decor presented in good condition, rubbish and wheelie bins tidied away, and any patios cleaned.

There is much to be considered when preparing a property for letting. For guidance on the important items that must be considered, call on the many years of experience of either:

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