

These tips are for people who are or who are thinking of becoming an **assured shorthold tenant**.

You are likely to be an assured shorthold tenant if:

- your landlord is a private landlord
- the tenancy began on or after 28 February 1997
- the house or flat is let as separate accommodation and is your main home.

If you are not an assured shorthold tenant or are not sure what sort of tenancy you have, see the further information section at the bottom of this leaflet.

DO:

- **Look for the SAFE kitemark** if you are using an agent – all SAFE agents have client money protection. This means that your money will be protected if the agent goes out of business.
- **Ask whether the agent is a member of a professional body** such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Association of Residential Letting Agents, the National Approved Lettings Scheme or the Property Ombudsman – agents who belong to such organisations have to sign up to certain standards of practice and you will have access to an independent complaints procedure should things go wrong.
- **Check what fees the agent charges** – it is important to be clear up front what you will be charged for and how much.
- **Ask for a written tenancy agreement** as this will help ensure you know what you are responsible for, such as who pays utility bills, how long the tenancy is for and arrangements for paying the rent.

- **Agree an inventory with your landlord** at the start of the tenancy. This will make things easier if there is a dispute over the return of the deposit at the end of the tenancy.
- **Check that your deposit is protected** in one of the three government-authorized Tenancy Deposit Protection schemes. This is a legal requirement if you have an assured shorthold tenancy agreement.
- **Ask to see a gas safety certificate** if there are gas appliances in the property. It is a legal requirement for landlords to have an annual gas safety check carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer and to provide the certificate to you within 28 days of each annual check. For more information see the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) frequently asked questions page:

www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/faqtenant.htm

or contact its Gas Safety Advice Line on: **0800 300 363**

- **Ask to see the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)** – this shows you the energy performance of the property which will have an impact on the gas and electricity bills.
- **Ask the landlord whether there is a record of any electrical inspections.** There is no legal requirement to have an electrical safety certificate but the landlord does have a duty to keep electrical installations in proper working order and to ensure that any electrical equipment supplied with the property is safe.
- **Look after the property** and keep it in a good condition. You have a duty of care to use the property in a responsible way and keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement.
- **Think about your own safety** and ask your landlord to install and maintain a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector (this is not a legal requirement but is regarded as best practice).
- **Seek advice** if your landlord refuses to repair or properly maintain the property. Your local authority has powers to make the landlord take action if the property contains serious health and safety hazards.

- **Pay your rent on time** – your landlord may decide to seek possession of the property if you fail to pay your rent. You may be entitled to help with paying the rent. Contact your local authority for more information about this.

DON'T:

- **Stop paying rent if something goes wrong** – your landlord can seek possession of the property on grounds of non-payment of rent and you could be evicted.
- **Be a nuisance to the neighbours** – your landlord can seek possession of the property on the grounds of anti-social behaviour and you could be evicted.
- **Leave problems to fester** – speak to your landlord at an early stage and if relationships break down contact your local authority who may be able to mediate for you.
- **Do repairs to the property** without permission from your landlord.
- **Sub-let the property** unless you have permission from your landlord.

Further information

Directgov - the Government's website provides further information on private renting at:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/PrivateRenting/index.htm

Citizen's Advice Bureau - provides free, independent advice on housing and other issues through local advice centres and online. You can find your nearest centre online at:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

or by telephone on: **08444 111 444**

Shelter - provides free, independent advice and information on housing issues. Shelter can be contacted via their helpline on: **0808 800 4444**. Their website provides further information at:

<http://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Community Legal Advice – can provide free independent legal advice if you are eligible for legal aid. Their helpline number is: **0845 345 4345**. Their website is at:

www.legalservices.gov.uk

‘Assured and Assured Shorthold Tenancies – A guide for tenants’ - this booklet is available on our website at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/assuredassuredtenants

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ISBN: 978-1-4098- 3100- 6