

Appendix

Sources of references

hastings.gov.uk
tenancyagreementservice.co.uk
money.co.uk/article/1006448-how-to-find-the-best-rental-property-for-you
primelocation.com/guides/renting/a-renters-guide-advise-for-tenants
theprs.co.uk/consumer/how-it-works

propertyhawk.co.uk/index.php?page=bibl&id=85
england.shelter.org.uk
epcregister.co.uk
hsegassafe.gov.uk
firesafe.org.uk
mydeposits.co.uk

Know your rights and responsibilities

Looking for a property in the private sector

- Only sublet a property if the tenancy agreement, or your landlord allows it.
- Always ask your landlord about having pets. This might also be the terms of your tenancy.
- Be neighbourly, minimising noise or other disturbances. For instance, tell your neighbours if you are going to have a gathering or carry out works involving drills etc.
- Dispose of your household rubbish in the appropriate manner, keeping refuse areas clear and clean.
- Inform your agent or landlord if you intend to be away for any length of time from the property (usually more than 14 days), so they don't think you've abandoned the property.
- Properly heat and ventilate your property to prevent the build up of damp and condensation. If you want more advice email the Housing Renewal Team at housingadmin@hastings.gov.uk

Remember you have the right to quiet enjoyment of the property you rent and your landlord should respect this. As a tenant you should also respect the property you are renting and treat it as you would your own home.



Renting in the private sector should be an easy, smooth transaction. To cover yourself, make sure you follow these steps:

- Before you start to look be clear in your mind what you are looking for and how much rent can you afford. If you are likely to be claiming Housing Benefit, check with the council what their Local Housing Allowance is for the area and how many bedrooms you're entitled to for your household. Also, to check you can afford the property, do an income and expenditure form – this will include expenses such as: council tax, gas, electric, water rates, food and travelling.
- Check the location of the property, and the type. Do you want a garden, house or flat?
- If you have small children, are there schools nearby? Good parking in the area or good links to public transport?
- You may be limited on what you are able to view or afford so set priorities and be prepared to compromise if you do not find exactly what is on your wish list.

Begin the search:

There are several ways to begin to look for your property, such as online, local newspapers and visiting estate agents.

Make sure before committing that you are clear on the charges the letting agent will make. These can include finding fees, credit reference, checking fees and holding fees. Also check what service you are likely to receive for your money – are they going to be fully managing the property on behalf of the landlord or are they just finding a tenant on behalf of the landlord? Shop around and sign up with several agents' mailing

lists. Most will send you emails without charge once a suitable property comes up that fits your criteria.

Be prepared for the agent to take up references and credit checks, details of employment and bank details. You may also be asked to provide a guarantor if the agent believes you may be a risk; a guarantor is contractually liable both financially and legally should you fail to pay the rent during your tenancy or in the event of damage to the property. Also, under the Right to Rent law, landlords should check identity documents for all new tenants and take copies.

Before taking up a tenancy:

Once you have found a property and have been offered a tenancy, make sure you carry out the following checks before signing up.

The most common tenancy which is offered to private tenants is a 'Assured Shorthold Tenancy' (AST). It is usually for six months but can be offered for longer.

Before you sign ensure you have the following information and paperwork:

- A full inventory of the property which you have gone through with the agent or landlord and you have both signed and agreed to.
- A current gas safety certificate if applicable.
- An Energy Performance Certificate.
- An agreed deposit which should appear on the tenancy with the Deposit Protection Scheme your agent or landlord is going to use.
- The prescribed booklet 'How to rent; The checklist for renting in England'

- Your name, your landlord's name and the address of the property you will be renting.
 - Contact details of your agent or landlord.
 - The date the tenancy will start.
 - The duration of the tenancy from start to finish.
 - The amount of rent payable, how often it should be paid, when it should be paid and when it can be legally increased.
 - The tenancy should also state what you are responsible to pay for e.g. council tax, utilities etc.
 - The service your landlord or managing agent will provide, such as maintenance.
 - The notice period which you and your landlord need to give each other if the tenancy is terminated.
 - The rights and responsibilities expected from both tenant and landlord.
- Remember a tenancy agreement is a legally binding contract between you and your landlord.

Property Redress Scheme:

All estate/managing agents are required to join a government authorised redress scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to allow a complaint to be looked into on your behalf if you are unhappy with the service provided and the manner in which the agent has dealt with your complaint. The redress scheme will cover areas such as:

- Lack of transparency about fees for tenants.
- Inaccurate property descriptions.
- Disputes about refunds of holding deposits taken to reserve a property.

- Inaccurate accounting and not passing on your rent to your landlord.
- Slow or poor service.

For further information visit www.tpos.co.uk/www.ombudsman-services.org/ www.theprs.co.uk to find which scheme the agent has registered with.

Your responsibilities:

Paying your rent

If you are having problems with paying rent, you should contact your landlord and keep them updated. Your landlord can make enquiries to try and resolve the situation but they must not just turn up at any time demanding money. Wherever possible you should arrange to make a payment even it is at a reduced rate and as soon as possible come to an agreement to set up a payment plan.

If you need advice or assistance in resolving this issue you can seek advice from the Community Contact Centre, Town Hall, Hastings, or call them on **01424 451100**.

You must also:

- Take good care of the property – e.g. by turning off the water at the mains if you're away in cold weather, keeping it clean etc.
- Carry out any maintenance you have agreed to as part of the tenancy e.g. unblocking drains, or clearing gutters.
- Pay the agreed rent, even if repairs are needed or you're in dispute with your landlord.
- Pay other charges as agreed with the landlord – these may include Council Tax or utility bills.
- Repair or pay for any damage caused by you, your family or friends.

