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Ealing Property Lettings

Managing tenants' raised expectations

Tenants are expecting more from their landlords and managing agents these days, says Simran Prasad of Benham & Reeves Residential Lettings, so how far do you go to keep them happy?

RENTING out your London property can be a very handy second income. For professional investors with multiple properties it can even be your main source of revenue. While the benefits of letting your property are obvious, the hassles that can come with it are less so.

Many landlords use a property management service so they don't have to deal with maintenance-related issues directly when they pop up.

Around 95% of companies insist their executives rent a professionally managed property – most private tenants also prefer it.

Put simply, a professional property management company will ensure any maintenance or administrative problems are dealt with quickly and efficiently. It makes life much easier for landlords.

From a landlord's point of view, professionally managed properties usually let more quickly while tenants who live in a well managed property are around three times more likely to renew their tenancy agreement.

So the advantages of good property management go way beyond keeping the property in good shape – and most landlords recognise this – more than 70% of our landlords also use our property management services.

But tenants are raising their expectations – sometimes unreasonably. So how far should you – and we – go to keep your tenant happy?

There are all sorts of property management issues you'd expect to come across during a typical day. A day in the life of one of our property managers might involve arranging plumbers, electricians or builders, but equally it could mean talking to a landlord about the latest lettings regulations or discussing a deposit with a tenant. Or it could involve the delicate issue of discussing rent arrears with a tenant. No day is ever the same.

And yes, fixing a broken washing machine or fixing a patch of damp on a wall are among the most common problems we see.

But the last few years have seen us responding to rather more unusual requests from tenants. Tenants' expectations are soaring!

We have been asked to unblock a sink, to bleed a radiator and to wipe the condensation from some windows. Tenants have asked us to change a light bulb and to clean a washing machine filter.

We've 'unblocked' a sink which in fact wasn't blocked at all – the tenant had just left the plug in (yes really). And we've visited a property to see why the lights had gone off – when all the tenant needed to do was flick up the switch on the consumer unit.

These little issues seem increasingly to be part of a 'typical' day too.

So why do tenants call us to do such simple tasks? I think the rising popularity of residential developments has a lot to do with this.

Tenants who rent a property in a smart new block feel like they are living in a hotel or a serviced apartment. And just as their weekly rental offers the use of a gym and concierge service, they also expect the letting agent to offer 'handyman' services as part of the deal.

Some younger tenants may not even have the skills to carry out these simple tasks themselves. But sometimes it's just a lack of common sense.

Most landlords understand the benefits of using a property management agent but they might not always realise quite how trivial some of the issues we deal with are and how involved we get trying to keep tenants happy.

So when a tenant asks us to help with a problem – one that can easily be dealt with by reading an instruction manual or using common sense – that's exactly what we do. And this ensures that the landlord, perhaps one who could be fast asleep in the middle of the night in Hong Kong – can still get a good night's sleep.

Happy tenant. Even happier landlord!

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