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Press Coverage

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Ealing Property Lettings

Landlords need to get the basics right

Nick Hubbard, manager at Benham & Reeves Residential Lettings, has advice for landlords who are entering the rental market for the first time

IF YOU are thinking of renting out your property in the New Year, it is essential to get to grips with the basics of buy-to-let.

Before you think about finding a tenant, you need to make sure your rental property complies with lettings legislation and regulations – these can be complex and they apply to all landlords, whether you are renting a property as a buy-to-let business or are renting out the home you usually live in, perhaps because you are moving abroad to work.

To get you started, read our checklist of key points to consider.

First, remember that a landlord has basic responsibilities concerning the property itself. You are responsible for ensuring your rental property is 'habitable' – in good condition and regularly maintained and repaired, with adequate heating, ventilation, lighting, sanitation and insulation. Clearly an older property, a house or a period conversion, requires more ongoing maintenance than a new one so it is a good idea to have trusted contractors you can call on to undertake repairs and maintenance.

Gas safety is critical so if you have gas appliances or central heating you must have an annual gas inspection carried out by a registered Gas Safe engineer. A new build property should have a 'Domestic Electrical Installation Periodic Report' stating that the electrical system is safe. Older properties will need a periodic electrical test carried out every five years by a qualified electrician. A Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) check is not compulsory but electrical equipment should be safe and regular testing is the easiest way to do this. You will also need an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property stating which band it falls into, typical energy use and estimated costs.

If you read our articles regularly you will understand the importance of presentation and furnishings. But there are also safety regulations which apply to furnishings, specifically the Furniture and Furnishing Fire Safety Regulations (FFL) which require upholstered furnishings (beds, sofa-beds, futons, children's furniture, cushions, pillows etc) to be fire-resistant with the relevant labels attached.

LETTINGS ADVICE: Nick Hubbard, recommends having trusted contractors at hand when renting out older homes, such as this period property in Ealing (right) because they usually require more maintenance than new-builds.

You may have heard about several changes to legislation in 2015 so remember these when preparing your property to rent and finding a tenant.

Smoke alarms must now be installed on every floor of a rental property. Carbon monoxide alarms must be fitted in high risk rooms, for example, where there is a solid fuel heating system.

Landlords should also be aware that The Immigration Act 2014 now requires them to check whether new tenants have the right to live in the UK. Landlords must check tenants are either British, EEA or Swiss nationals or have been granted leave to remain in the UK by checking the tenant's passport, visa or biometric residency permit.

And don't forget that in April there will be changes to the Wear and Tear allowance. Under the current system landlords can claim an annual allowance of 10% of the rent received for wear and tear regardless of whether any work is done. From April, landlords will have to claim a deduction for the actual capital costs of replacing furnishings and appliances in the property. This doesn't apply to furnishing the property initially though.

So there is a fair amount of red tape to tackle if you are renting out a property for the first time. If you use a property management agent they will take care of this for you, ensuring you don't inadvertently risk a fine for failing to comply with legislation. If you are thinking about renting out your property and need more advice, you can pop into our Ealing branch situated at the Dickens Yard property development or simply call us on 020 8280 0140.

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