



Letting agents are landlord Samaritans

Self-managing properties can be stressful. Clare Sheffield of Batcheller Monkhouse's Battle office looks at how agents can relieve the anxiety for landlords.

Self-management is hard, with around 170 rules and regulations to comply with. So the job of a letting agent is like that of a compliance officer, protecting the landlord from getting fined.

There is a long list of potential worries when you are your own landlord: non-payment of rent; difficult tenants; managing property maintenance and repairs; not finding a suitable tenant; and accounting for tax.

Added to that, there have been huge Government changes increasing regulation in the tenanted sector over the last 10 years. 90% of landlords have just one property, and for those landlords in particular, having to put in the time and effort to follow the legislative changes holds less appeal than ever.

Some landlords have come into the market almost by accident, be it through a change of job, an inheritance or not being able to sell a property. Alternatively it can be part of a financial strategy to provide a regular income or pension plan,

or for a future nest egg. Property owners often come into the rental world from the outside and therefore may not enjoy administration and legislation research; if this is the case, an experienced agent can take on the work.

Potentially those most likely to be caught out by new regulations are those who have had a tenant in a property for over 10 years. "Much has changed in that time about deposits, minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) and electrical safety standards".

It may come as a surprise, but the safety requirements for holiday let owners are the same as those for long-term let landlords. There are various rules and regulations that need to be adhered to, which are also frequently updated, and whilst holiday letting may appear attractive with higher rents available, hefty occupancy rates are needed to make it more profitable over the course of the year. Also, costs are greater including cleaning, decorating, furnishing, repairs and agency fees.

Qualities to look for in your letting agent

- Has knowledge of the area
- Finds quality tenants
- Achieves best possible rent
- High quality and professional service
- Is a member of ARLA Propertymark,
- Experienced and qualified team
- Up to date with changing legislation
- Provides client money protection
- Offers a flexible range of services
- Full management including regular inspections

Electric safety standards are next

On 1 June 2020 the UK Government released guidance on the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020. The rules apply to new tenancies entered into on or after 1 July 2020 and for all existing tenancies from 1 April 2021.

The regulations require landlords to ensure that every fixed electrical

installation is inspected and tested at least every five years by a qualified person. The report of the inspection and test must be given to each tenant within 28 days and a copy retained. If needed by the local housing authority, it must be provided within seven days.

The private landlord must supply a copy of the last report to any new tenant before occupation, or any prospective tenant within 28 days of a request from the prospective tenant.

Local housing authorities must enforce the rules, and they have the power to arrange remedial action. Proven breaches of the regulations can result in the local housing authority imposing a financial penalty of up to £30,000.



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Minimum energy efficiency standards explained

- All new tenancies must have **EPC rating E or above since 1 April 2018**
- All existing tenancies must have **EPC rating E or above from 1 April 2020**
- Tenants must be given the **EPC rating certificate**
- If F and G rated properties cost more than £3,500 to bring up to requirement, an exemption can be requested from the local council
- There are fines of up to **£5,000 for non-compliance**

