

# Housing Advice



## Renting Property from a Private Sector Landlord

## Finding somewhere to live

Privately renting your home from a private landlord or an agent can be very straight forward. Often it is the first accommodation people live in once they leave home and, with many people moving around to find work or family commitments, privately renting is a good solution.

The private rented sector is varied and ranges from bed-sits and bungalows, to flats to houses. The standard of accommodation and management in these properties can vary. The Housing Advice Team or the Environmental Service Team at North West Leicestershire District Council can give you guidance on the legal standards for private rented housing, advice on how to go about renting a property and what to do if you have problems. The council have a range of powers that can be used to ensure people and properties are safe and well managed and tenants are free from harassment and nuisance.

If you're thinking of renting from a private landlord, or looking for somewhere to live, then you may consider looking at the following areas:

- newspapers (the local free papers are useful)
- magazines
- shop windows
- supermarket notice-boards
- estate agents
- internet sites
- North West Leicestershire District Council web site  
[http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/available\\_property](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/available_property)
- Or call 01530 454545 for information about available properties

Whilst some landlords will not accept people on Housing Benefit, landlords with properties on the North West Leicestershire web site have agreed to accept those in receipt of Housing Benefits.

If you are not sure of the best way to find a rented property it would be sensible to go through a reputable letting agent.

## What to do before you rent

Before you agree to rent, or sign anything, take a good look at the property you're thinking of renting. Is it safe and fit for you to live in? Here are some things you should think about:

- **Energy performance certificate:** a requirement from 1/10/2008 for all private rental properties
- **Heating:** what kind is there, and does it work?
- **Damp:** look for tell tale stains or mould on walls and ceilings.
- **Electricity:** are there enough sockets and do they work?
- **Water:** turn on a tap to check that it works.
- **Gas:** does the property have a Gas Safety Certificate from a registered Gas Safe Engineer
- **Kitchen and bathroom:** are they well equipped and big enough? Do they have adequate ventilation?
- **Furniture:** check what comes with the property and what condition it is in. The landlord should give you a list. Make sure you agree with what's on it.
- **Security:** check that all the doors and windows close properly and that there are enough locks and bolts to keep the place secure.
- **Safety:** how would you get out in a fire? Is there a smoke alarm? If you're thinking of moving into a house that's been converted into flats, bed-sits, or a hostel there should be fire safety equipment such as smoke and heat detectors, fire doors and fire blankets.

Make a list of anything that does not work or is missing and talk to the landlord about it. A property check list is enclosed for you to use when viewing a property.

You should also make sure that you:

- Can afford the rent. You may be able to get housing benefit to help pay your rent, so find out first.

- Get a written tenancy agreement, which will state the rent amount the length of tenancy and spells out what you and your landlord are responsible for.
- Get a receipt if you have paid a deposit to the landlord.

## Getting repairs done

If you need a repair, write to your landlord or telephone if it's an emergency. If your landlord won't do the work, contact the Environmental Services Section at the Council Offices they may take legal action to get the work done.

When you sign your tenancy agreement you should find out which repairs your landlord is responsible for, which repairs you should do and how to report a repair.

## Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy you usually have to give 28 days notice in writing to your landlord (make sure you keep a copy of the letter). If you have a fixed term agreement such as an Assured Shorthold Tenancy you may have to pay rent until the end of your agreement, unless it contains a clause allowing you to leave early.

For example, if you leave after three months of a six month tenancy you may have to pay rent for the remaining three months, if your landlord has been unable to re-let the property during the period of your tenancy.

Once the fixed term period is up you need only to give 28 days notice. Remember to keep a copy of the letter.

## If your landlord wants to end your tenancy

If your landlord tells you that he or she wants you to leave, check your tenancy agreement to see what notice you are entitled to. The length and type of notice that your landlord will have to give you depends on which type of tenancy you have.

Unless you share accommodation with your landlord you will usually be entitled to get written notice and a court order before having to leave. It is a criminal offence for your landlord to evict you without following the correct legal procedure and, action through the prevention from eviction legislation can be taken by the Environmental Services Department. The Council is a member of Decent and Safe Homes (DASH), information and advice on the legislation and on renting a property can be checked via their website, <http://www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk/>

If you have found a property that you are thinking of renting, the following check list might help you to spot anything that you think needs sorting out before you sign anything.

If the landlord takes a cash deposit he has to put it into one of the 3 government tenant deposit schemes – details of this are on the Councils web page: [http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/available\\_property-](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/available_property-) select Landlord and Tenant Support button – then select FAQ's (frequently asked questions)

## Property Check List

Have a look at each of the items in the boxes below and if you think there may be a problem – write the details next to the item. You should talk to the landlord about these before agreeing to rent the property and make a note of what is agreed.

Property Checklist - Exterior		Notes
1	Roof – e.g. are any tiles missing	
2	Chimney - condition	
3	Brickwork - condition	
4	Render (if appropriate)	
5	Rainwater goods	
6	Essential services (Gas/Electric/Water)	
7	Windows - condition	
8	Boundary walls & fences	
9	Front & rear external doors & frames	
10	Any exterior security precautions?	
11	Outside lighting?	
12	Dustbins/recycling bins?	

Property Checklist - Interior		Notes
1	Furniture & kitchen equipment included?	
2	Condition of decorating	
3	Any evidence of damp? If so where?	
4	Condition of flooring/carpets	
5	Electrical Sockets - how many/do they work	
6	Light fittings included?	
7	Central heating what kind? does it work?	
8	Gas Fire(s) do they work?	
9	Fire Prevention equipment	

10	Ventilation equipment	
11	Condition of windows	
12	Fire resistant furniture?	
13	Condition of stairs	
14	Stair handrail/banister	
15	Lighting on stairs	
16	Loft & Loft hatch	
<b>Kitchen – Condition of/or N/A</b>		
17	Kitchen layout	
18	Worktops	
19	Flooring	
20	Wall & base units	
21	Silicone seals & splash backs	
22	Kitchen sink	
23	Cooker	
<b>Bathroom – Condition of/or N/A:</b>		
24	Bath &/or shower	
25	Wash hand basin	
26	WC	
27	Splash back and tiling & silicone seals	
28	Bathroom walls (any damp?)	
29	Pipework	

Other Information	Notes
Current gas safety certificate	Yes or No
Current electrical safety certificate	Yes or No
Energy Performance Certificate	Yes or No
Landlord/Agent Tel. Number	
Date property available to move in to	
Minimum length of tenancy	
Distance from Work/School	
Deposit Amount:	
Rent Amount:	
Repairs procedure explained	
Pets allowed	
Tenancy agreement seen and understood	
Inventory checked and signed	
Utility Providers	Contact Numbers
Gas:	
Electric:	
Water:	



## Contact Details

For more information contact North West Leicestershire District Council.

Visit us (Monday to Friday 8.45am-5pm) at:

Housing Advice  
North West Leicestershire District Council  
Council Offices,  
Coalville  
Leicestershire  
LE67 3FJ

Environmental Services  
North West Leicestershire District Council  
Council Offices,  
Coalville  
Leicestershire  
LE67 3FJ



Write to us at:

Housing Advice  
North West Leicestershire District Council  
Council Offices  
Coalville  
Leicestershire  
LE67 3FJ

Environmental Services  
North West Leicestershire District Council  
Council Offices  
Coalville  
Leicestershire  
LE67 3FJ



Telephone:

01530 454545 (Monday to Friday 8.45am-5pm)  
01530 454789 - Out of Hours and weekends 24 hours  
seven days a week **Emergency only**



E-mail:

housing.advice@nwleicestershire.gov.uk  
ehealth@nwleicestershire.gov.uk



Website:

<http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/housing>  
[http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/available\\_property](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/available_property)

This leaflet is available in other formats on request

## **COUNCIL'S VISION**

North West Leicestershire will be a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home

North West Leicestershire District Council,  
Council Offices, Whitwick Road, Coalville,  
Leicestershire, LE67 3FJ.

This document is available in other formats on request