

Checklist for choosing a professional letting agent

Leading agent Northwood has created a FREE checklist to help landlords ensure the protection of both their money and property when selecting a letting agent.

THE LEGALITIES

Are they a member of a professional body?

Agents must adhere to set standards in order to be members. Membership can be checked on the relevant body website

— Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA)



— National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS)



— SAFE agent



— Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)



— National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA)



Do they belong to a redress scheme?

It gives consumers the right to forward complaints to an objective third party. Legal requirement for agents to belong to a redress scheme.

— The Property Ombudsman (TPO)



— The Ombudsman services



— The Property Redress scheme



Do they have tenant deposit protection in place?

This is a legal requirement. Ask for details of who they use and who is responsible for protecting the deposit

— **England & Wales**

- Deposit Protection Service (DPS)
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS)
- MyDeposits

— **Scotland**

- Safe Deposits Scotland
- My Deposits Scotland
- Letting Protection Service (LPS)

Are their fees transparent?

England & Wales Tenant fees - it is a legal requirement to advise of applicable fees before a property is viewed.

Scotland - charging tenant fees is illegal

— Ask how and when they notify tenants of potential fees.

Landlord fees - it is a legal requirement to advertise all fees

— Ask for a full list of landlord fees and be clear on which fees are applicable for the different service options.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Online checks

- Do they have a live website with plenty of properties listed?
- Do they have property listings on Rightmove, Zoopla, OnTheMarket and / or other property portals?
- How are they rated & reviewed on websites such as AllAgents, MeetMyAgent and raterAgent?

Do the due diligence

- How long have they been operating for?
- Are they an independent or part of a larger network?
- Do they have a strong local presence with boards up in the area?
- Do they have Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) to cover if bad advice is given?
- Do they have a computerised admin system?
- Is the company literature well presented and of high quality?
- Do staff attend regular training to keep them up to date with latest legislation?
- Do they have out of hours emergency numbers for tenants?
- Do they have a high street office or are they online only?
- Do they have a specialist lettings team?
- Do they have CMP (client money protection) Legal requirement in Wales

It is vital that you are clear on how much responsibility, time and hassle you are prepared to take on yourself and how much you want to delegate to an agent.

Determine what level of service is provided based on your needs

Finding & installing the tenants

- Arrange an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) - a legal requirement
- Arrange a Gas Safety Certificate (GSC) - a legal requirement
- Arrange for PAT tests to prove electrical appliances are safe for use
- Ensure any soft furnishings comply with Furniture and Fire regulations
- Prepares an inventory
- Advertises the property (online)
- Arranges & conducts viewings
- Completes credit checks & references
- Prepares tenancy agreements
- Accepts & registers the tenant's deposit
- Completes the tenant check in
- Contacts utility companies & takes meter readings

Management of the tenancy

- Contact for tenant queries and complaints
- Collects the rent
- Manages any maintenance issues
- Undertakes regular inspections
- Manages the admin & paperwork for tenancy changes
- Manages the admin & paperwork for contract renewals
- Handles the tenant checkout
- Has responsibility for returning the tenant's deposit