RRA Guidance sheet

Preparing for a New Residential Tenancy (from 1 May 2026)

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#OnYourSide

Preparing the Property Before Letting

Before advertising or agreeing a tenancy, landlords should ensure the property meets required legal and safety standards.
Typical requirements include:

- **Gas Safety Certificate** – an annual inspection carried out by a Gas Safe engineer.
- **Electrical Safety Report (EICR)** – electrical installations must normally be inspected at least every 5 years.
- **Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms** installed where required.
- **Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)** provided to tenants.

Ensuring the property is safe, clean and in good repair and meets the **Decent Homes Standard (as applied to the private rented sector).**

These documents should be provided to tenants before or at the start of the tenancy where required.

Tenancy Agreement

Most private residential lettings are now **periodic tenancies under the Renters' Rights Act 2025, which replaces Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs).**

This contract sets out the rights and responsibilities of both landlord and tenant and includes terms such as rent amount, property rules, and how the tenancy can be ended in line with statutory grounds.

A written tenancy agreement should clearly include:

- Names of landlord and tenant(s)
- Address of the property
- Rent amount and payment schedule
- Responsibilities for maintenance
- Rules on subletting, pets, or property use

It is best practice to ensure tenants **receive and sign the agreement before moving in.**

Documents to Provide to Tenants

At the start of a new tenancy, landlords must provide certain prescribed documents. This ensures tenants understand their rights and responsibilities.

Typically these include:

- **Gas Safety Certificate**
- **Energy Performance Certificate**
- **Electrical Safety Report** (EICR)
- **Deposit protection information** (if a deposit is taken)

Landlords must also comply with any new requirements to register on the **Private Rented Sector Database** and be a member of the **mandatory Ombudsman scheme when these schemes are introduced.**

Deposit Protection

If a deposit is taken, landlords must:

- Protect the deposit in a **government-approved tenancy deposit protection scheme**
- Do this **within 30 days of receiving the deposit**
- Provide tenants with **prescribed information** about the scheme used

Approved schemes include:

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

Failure to protect the deposit properly can lead to financial penalties and may prevent a landlord from recovering possession of the property.

Inventory and Schedule of Condition (Best Practice)

Although not a legal requirement, **a detailed inventory and schedule of condition** is strongly recommended.

An inventory should include:

- A written description of the property
- Condition of fixtures, fittings and furniture
- Photographs or video evidence
- Meter readings at check-in

Both landlord (or agent) and tenant should s**ign the inventory at the start of the tenancy.** This helps avoid disputes when the tenancy ends

Notice Periods and Ending a Tenancy

Under recent housing reforms, landlords should be aware that the system for ending tenancies is changing.

Section 21 notices have now been abolished. Landlords will now use a Section 8 notice.

All tenancies are now periodic, and landlords can only regain possession using **specified statutory grounds** (for example, selling the property, moving in, or tenant breach).

Notice periods and requirements vary depending on the ground used, and landlords must ensure they meet all conditions before serving notice.

Landlords should **familiarise themselves with the updated possession grounds and notice requirements** before serving any notice.

Rent Collection and Payment

Landlords should establish a clear process for rent payments:

- Agree payment method (e.g. bank transfer or standing order)
- Confirm payment dates
- Provide written confirmation in the tenancy agreement

Rent increases are now limited to once per year and must be carried out using the prescribed legal process.

Accepting rent in advance is no longer permitted

Maintaining clear records of payments is recommended.

Guarantors and Professional Guarantor Services

In some circumstances, landlords may request a **guarantor.**

A guarantor agrees to cover rent or damage costs if the tenant cannot meet their obligations.

This can be useful where tenants:

- Are students
- Have limited credit history
- Have insufficient income for affordability checks

Professional guarantor services can also be used where tenants cannot provide a personal guarantor.

Housing Hand is one example of a professional guarantor provider and an EMPO partner. They offer services that can support tenants who would otherwise struggle to meet standard referencing requirements.

View Housing Hand:
https://empo.co.uk/suppliers/housing-hand-2/

Rent Guarantee Insurance

Some landlords choose to protect their rental income with **rent guarantee insurance.**

These policies can provide:

- Cover if a tenant stops paying rent
- Legal expenses cover for eviction proceedings
- Support managing rent arrears

HomeLet is a well-known provider of rent guarantee insurance products.

View HomeLet:
https://empo.co.uk/suppliers/homelet/

Good Practice for Landlords

To help ensure a successful tenancy, landlords are encouraged to:

- Carry out **tenant referencing checks**
- Keep copies of all documents issued to tenants
- Maintain good communication with tenants
- Respond promptly to maintenance issues
- Keep clear records of inspections and correspondence

Professional letting agents or landlord support organisations can also provide additional guidance where needed.

Disclaimer

This guidance is provided for general information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

Legislation and government guidance may change and individual circumstances may vary.

Landlords should seek independent legal or professional advice where required.