

reallettings

TENANT HANBOOK

A GUIDE ON HOW TO MANAGE YOUR
REAL LETTINGS PROPERTY AND YOUR TENANCY



Welcome to Real Lettings

Welcome to your Real Lettings home - we hope you will find it a settled environment and the perfect stepping stone to fully independent living.

Please read on to find out more about who we are at Real Lettings, what we can help you to achieve over the next 12 months and how you can ensure you successfully move on at the end of your tenancy. We're also active on Facebook and Twitter (our addresses are above) so feel free to get in touch there and make the most of your Real Lettings home.

Who we are and what we do

Real Lettings is a social lettings service was set up in 2005 to help formerly homeless people move into the private rented sector. We are part of the homelessness charity, St Mungos.

We offer tenants:

- Quality, affordable accommodation.
- A chance to get into the private rented sector market.
- A 12 month tenancy followed by a rolling monthly contract. We aim for tenants to move on within two years.
- A fridge-freezer, cooker, flooring and curtains or blinds.
- Help to sustain your tenancy (although we will offer advice we are not support workers).

In addition, St Mungo's runs several services into which we can refer our tenants. If you are interested in any of the below please let us know so we can provide you with further details. Services include:



• The Recovery College:

This is an innovative project that offers a variety of free courses ranging from personal wellbeing to the arts to maths and English.

- PAL (Peer Advice Link): This team helps clients make the transition into independent

living. Clients are supported by peer advisors who have experienced moving on from homelessness services

themselves. PAL is offered through home visits, a phone line, and a drop in service.

- Move on training: This is a two-day interactive course for people who are ready to set up a new home
- Skills and employment services: This team can guide and advise on finding jobs or training schemes.

What you can expect from us

We will be contactable.

There are number of ways you can contact us during normal office hours depending on what you need to contact us about. Find our tenant helpline number, website details and social media addresses on the back page.

We will allow tenants to reside in the property without disturbance.

We will always inform you if we need access to the property with plenty of notice and will not enter the property without your permission unless it is an emergency and we are unable to get hold of you.

We will check in regularly with you and offer advice when needed. We will carry out regular tenancy reviews. This is a series of questions that look at how well you are maintaining your tenancy and how you are working towards moving on from Real Lettings.

We will endeavour to make reasonably prompt repairs and undertake maintenance to the property if required. Please bear in mind that we have to source contractors and liaise with landlords to get works done and this can take time. The amount of time will also depend on the urgency of the issue as we manage a large amount of properties and have to prioritise the repairs that are reported to us. As part of our responsibilities, we will also ensure a gas safety check is done each year if your property has gas and that an up to date electrical certificate is in place.



What we expect from you

Look after your home in a tenant like manner

Basically this means that there will be certain things that you as a tenant will need to do as part of your normal occupancy. This covers things like:

- Changing light bulbs, regardless of their height or type. This includes fluorescent strip style lights, removing covers off lights and spot lights.
- Unblocking your own toilet /sinks and drains.
- Keeping your home and garden (if you have one) clean and tidy so as not to attract any pests.
- Dispose of your rubbish correctly.
- Keep the property well heated and ventilated to prevent condensation and mould. If you would like more advice on how to do this please ask for our Looking After Your Home factsheet.
- Please note, we do not provide contents insurance. We advise you get this to cover your possessions in the case of any damage.



Be aware of when to report a repair

- Electrical appliances: If your fridge or cooker isn't working, please check the power source first. If this doesn't work, try changing the fuse in the plug if it has one. It is your responsibility to change it with a fuse of correct ampage. If it still doesn't work, please contact the maintenance team during normal office hours.
- Leaks: If you experience a leak, try to isolate where it is coming from and stop using that item. If this stops the leak, wait until office hours

to report the issue to us. Use our Out Of Hours service for emergencies such as being unable to isolate a severe leak. You will need to locate the stopcock to turn the water off. Remember, if you do not help to protect the property, you may be liable for part of the cost.



Be respectful of your neighbours

Tenants should ensure that nothing that they or their visitors do will interfere with other occupants within the house or the neighbourhood.

Pay your rent.

Although Housing Benefit will be paying this, it is your responsibility to make sure this is happening and it is of the correct amount. If not, you will need to contact the local council to resolve this.

Manage your utilities

You are responsible for the payment of utility bills for the duration of your tenancy, including any period when you may not be occupying the property.

Be contactable

There are many different reasons we may need to contact you. Therefore, it is important you keep us informed of any changes to your contact details. If you fail to do so, you could be in breach of your Tenancy Agreement.

Moving on from Real Lettings



We are unable to rehouse tenants for any reason so we encourage tenants to use their time with us to work towards being able to find another private rented property of their own.

We advise that you:

- Open a Credit Union account and save towards a deposit.
- Engage with us regularly and make use of the services we can offer.
- Stick to your Tenancy Agreement so you can get a good reference from us.

When you find another property to move to or decide to you want leave, it is important you end your tenancy formally with Real Lettings. If you don't, you will still be liable for rent, even if you're no longer living there.

If you choose to leave the property, it is highly unlikely the council will rehouse you due to something they call intentional homelessness. Being intentionally homeless means that you are homeless because you left accommodation that you could have stayed in.

If you are having any problems in your property and want to leave but are unsure whether this would class you as intentionally homeless, seek advice from your local council or the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Getting in touch with us

By phone:

0203 856 6023

If there is no answer, please leave a message and someone will get back to you. Please don't contact staff individually on their mobiles as this will cause a delay in responding to you.

By email:

reallettingslondon@reallettings.com

Online:

www.reallettings.com - You can read more about what we do here and also find out important emergency information and links to report repairs

Other issues:

Maintenance: 0203 856 6023

Your rent account: 0203 856 6030

Get in touch with us at:

 www.facebook.com/reallettings

 www.twitter.com/reallettings

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Health & Safety – A supplementary to the Tenant Handbook

What we expect from you

Look after your home in a tenant like manner

Basically this means that there will be certain things that you as a tenant will need to do as part of your normal occupancy. This covers things like:

- Changing light bulbs, regardless of their height or type. This includes fluorescent strip style lights, removing covers off lights and spot lights.
- Unblocking your own toilet /sinks and drains. You can help in maintaining these by
 - a) Keeping toilets free of wipes, sanitary items and oil and heavy paper towels
 - b) Keeping bathroom and kitchen sinks/drains free of hot or cold fat or oils, rice or food left overs as these tends to cause overflow and blockages to your pipes and may course problems in using your drains

Keeping your home and garden (if you have one) clean and tidy so as not to attract any pests.

Dispose of your rubbish correctly

Your Local Authority may have an existing recycling collection and special bins/caddy containers to separate your paper, glass, cans, food left over from ordinary rubbish. You can contact your local council or check on their website for specific rubbish collection days or check with your local management company (if you are in a block of flats) for their specific rubbish collection. It is your responsibility to dispose of your rubbish frequently as it may attract rodent into your new property.

PAT Testing

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is the examination of electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use.

You will need to check periodically if any work needs doing. How you do this depends on the type of equipment.

Not every electrical item needs a portable appliance test (PAT)

In some cases, a simple user check and visual inspection is enough, eg checking for loose cables or signs of fire damage and, if possible, checking inside the plug for internal damage, bare wires and the correct fuse. Other equipment, eg a floor cleaner, iron or kettle, may need a portable appliance test, but not necessarily every year. Real Lettings will not be responsible for supplying electrical appliances such as microwaves or kettles, however we would advise that you carry out visual inspections for any portable appliance that you may have in your home.

Tenant checks, visual inspection and portable appliance tests

These should be carried out before most electrical equipment is used, with the equipment disconnected. You should look for

- damage to the lead including fraying, cuts or heavy scuffing, eg from floor box covers
- damage to the plug, eg to the cover or bent pins
- tape applied to the lead to join leads together
- coloured wires visible where the lead joins the plug (the cable is not being gripped where it enters the plug)
- damage to the outer cover of the equipment itself, including loose parts or screws
- signs of overheating, such as burn marks or staining on the plug, lead or piece of equipment
- equipment that has been used or stored in unsuitable conditions, such as wet or dusty environments or where water spills are possible
- cables trapped under furniture or in floor boxes
- As part of the visual inspection, you should consider whether
- the electrical equipment is being used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- the equipment is suitable for the job
- there has been any change of circumstances

In the event of defects of electrical appliances that we supply, please inform us as soon as possible. You can contact the Real Lettings team on 020 3856 6023 or email reallettingslondon@reallettings.com or reallettingsnational@reallettings.com

Legionella - Prevention and safety from Legionnaire's disease

What is Legionnaire's disease?

Legionnaire's disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anybody. It is caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water from contaminated sources containing legionella bacteria.

Where is Legionella found?

All hot and cold water systems in residential properties are a potential source of legionella bacteria growth. The main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply and increase to dangerous levels and then be spread, e.g. in spray from showers and taps, even in dishwasher and washing machine pipes.

Conditions are ripe for colonisation are where water of between 20C and 45C stagnates, and where there is sludge, rust and scale present for the bacteria to feed upon and multiply.

Taking the following simple precautions will help keep you safe:

- Flush through showers and taps for a few minutes following a period of non-use (i.e. after you have been on holiday or if a room is not in regular use)
- Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from a build-up of limescale, mould or algae growth (regular bleaching every 3 months will help sterilise and kill any bacteria)
- Keep the hot water on your boiler system at a temperature of 60oC or greater.
- **WARNING: BE AWARE OF SCALDING!**
- Report any deposits such as rust or any unusual matter flowing from your water outlets

What to do if you think you may have contracted Legionnaire's disease

If you suspect that you or someone in your home has contracted Legionnaire's disease, contact your doctor immediately. You should also contact your Landlord or Real Lettings so that appropriate measures can be taken.

Who is at risk?

Legionnaire's disease most commonly affects the elderly, or people with chest or lung problems. Not everyone exposed to legionella bacteria becomes ill. Legionnaire's disease is not contagious and you cannot get it from drinking water. On average, there are approximately 500 reported cases of Legionnaire's disease a year.

The symptoms of Legionnaire's disease are similar to those of flu:

High temperature – Fever or chills – Headache – Tiredness – Muscle pain

Am I at risk?

There is no need for concern. Legionnaire's disease is easily preventable by putting in place some simple control measures as outlined above.

If you have any questions about Legionnaire disease or any concerns, please inform us as soon as possible.

You can contact the Real Lettings team on 020 3856 6023 or email

reallettingslondon@reallettings.com or

reallettingsnational@reallettings.com

Smoke Alarms

Keeping your smoke alarms in good working order protects you and your family against fire. By pressing the test button on your alarm you can check if the battery in your smoke alarm is still charged and find out if your alarm is ready and working.

Maintaining your smoke alarm

To keep your smoke alarm in good working order, you should:

- test it once a week, by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds
- change the battery once a year (unless it's a ten-year alarm)
- clean your smoke alarm once every three months using the soft brush of your vacuum cleaner. This will ensure you remove any excess dust or insects.

Condensation and Mould

Keep the property well heated and ventilated to prevent condensation and mould. The most common repair requests are often to do with growing mould (black and green spots) around bathrooms, kitchen and bedrooms. Condensation can easily be avoided by ensuring that all the dampness from cooking, taking showers and drying clothes inside your home can escape by thorough ventilation such as opening windows until all humidity has evaporated. If in doubt, you can purchase a hygrometer from the local hardware store which will indicate if a room or property is damp and requires ventilation. A hygrometer device only costs a few pounds and will provide a good guideline, if in doubt.

Condensation forms when there is a lack adequate ventilation and lack of sufficient heating. A healthy indoor environment is important.

How Condensation and Mould appears

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a bath or shower, and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls.

Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry. It doesn't always leave a 'tidemark' round its edges on walls. If there is a 'tidemark', this dampness might have another cause, such as water leaking into your home from a plumbing fault, loose roof tiles or rising damp. Look for condensation in your home. It can appear on or near windows, in corners

and, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air.

Condensation problems

Dampness caused by excessive condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden window frames. Also, damp humid conditions provide an environment in which house dust mites can easily multiply.

Reducing condensation

You will need to take proper steps to deal with condensation, but meanwhile there are some simple things you should do straight away.

Dry your windows and windowsills every morning, as well as surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom that have become wet. Wring out the cloth rather than drying it on a radiator.

Causes of condensation:

There are four main factors that cause condensation:

- Too much moisture produced in the home
- Lack of ventilation
- Cold surfaces
- Insufficient temperature control

All of these factors need to be considered to tackle a condensation problem. Our everyday activities add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. Even our breathing adds some moisture (remember breathing on cold windows and mirrors to fog them up?). One person asleep adds half a pint of water to the air overnight and at twice that rate when active during the day. To give you some idea as to how much extra water this could be in a day, here are a few illustrations:

- 2 people at home can produce = 3 pints
- Washing dishes = 2 pints
- A bath or shower = 2 pints
- Bottled gas heater (8 hours use) = 4 pints
- Drying clothes indoors = 9 pints
- Cooking and use of a kettle = 6 pints

Help reduce condensation by:

Hanging your washing outside to dry if at all possible, or hang it in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or extractor fan on. Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a radiant heater.

- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking vegetables.
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot - it will reduce the steam by 90% which leads to condensation.
- If you use a tumble drier, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.
- Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas. (You might notice your windows misting over).
- Try to avoid use of bottled gas heaters; they produce about 8 pints of moisture from an average-sized gas cylinder. (Tenancy Agreements may not allow the use of this type of heater).
- Using a dehumidifier can reduce moisture levels

Increase levels of ventilation by:

Open windows whenever possible and ensure any vents are open to allow air to circulate around your home.

Ventilate your kitchen when cooking, washing up or washing by hand. A window slightly open is as good as one open. If you have one, use your cooker extractor hood or extractor fan.

Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window. Use an extractor fan if possible - they are cheap to run and very effective.

Ventilate your bedroom by leaving a window slightly open at night, or use trickle ventilators if fitted. (But remember your security).

Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house.

To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate round them. Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls, and where possible place wardrobes and furniture against internal walls. Pull shelves away from the backs of wardrobes and cupboards. Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.

Condensation forms more easily on cold surfaces in the home, for example walls and ceilings

When the whole house is warmer, condensation becomes less likely.

Temperature control

Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air which is more likely to deposit droplets of condensation round your home. Air is like a sponge; the warmer it is, the more moisture it will hold. Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms. That means that it is better to have a medium-to-low level of heat throughout the house.

Asbestos Management

Please note that you are not permitted to drill holes or undertake any maintenance in your property that could expose you to asbestos. The tenancy agreement clearly states that you must contact us for permission should you wish to undertake decorative works in your property. Please contact us with any queries related to this at

reallettingslondon@reallettings.com

Real Lettings and Tenant List of Responsibilities

Below is a list of responsibilities for us as your landlord and for you as our tenant. Your tenancy agreement will also reflect how the responsibilities are divided:

- A member of the Real Lettings team will contact you to arrange an annual Health & Safety inspection at your home. For your safety, we ask you to carry out your own Health & Safety check 6 months after our initial visit. Please report any concerns to the Real Lettings team immediately either by phone or email.

Health & Safety checks will comprise of the following:

- For properties with gas appliances only, the Real Lettings team will be responsible for carrying out annual Gas Safety checks as this is a legal requirement. The Gas Safety engineer will leave a copy of the Gas Safety Certificate for you, but should you not have a copy at hand, we will expect you to be in touch to request a copy. We will contact you once the Gas Safety check is due and arrange a suitable time for an appointment. It is important that you provide access to the gas safety engineer once an appointment has been agreed as there may be a charge involved if the appointment is missed.
- If you have a gas cooker, we will expect you to ensure that your gas hob and oven are cleaned at a regular basis to safeguard you from a potential fire risk.
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC): You will receive a copy of an Energy Performance Certificate upon signing your tenancy agreement – it is a legal requirement for a landlord to provide an EPC certificate at the start of the tenancy. It will provide you with an overview of how energy efficient your home is overall. The EPC will form part of your tenancy pack. If for some reason you have not received a copy, please contact us by email or phone to let us know and we will ensure a copy is sent to you.

- **Smoke/Heat Detector:** Your property will be equipped with a smoke detector and heat detector for your safety. All detectors are fully wired and contain a battery as a back-up. It will be your responsibility to test both detectors to ensure these are in working order at all times and to replace the battery as required. The battery will automatic send out occasional beeps indicating that it is time for a replacement to be fitted. You will be responsible for buying and replacing batteries for your own safety. There is a test bottom on each detector.
- **Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** If you have gas appliances within your property we will have fitted a carbon monoxide detector close to the gas boiler for your safety. The detector will either be fitted with a long life lithium battery or will be electrically wired to the mains. Please ensure the battery is replaced every 8-10 years.
- **Light Bulbs:** We are fitting long term energy efficient light bulbs where possible. It will be your responsibility to replace light bulbs of all shapes and sizes when required.
- **PAT Electrical Testing:** You will be responsible for checking the electrical wiring of supplied Fridge/Freezer appliance. We will not be responsible for PAT testing your own electrical appliances.
- **Keeping the garden and lawn in good and tidy condition** including maintaining the lawn where required.

QUICK GUIDE:

What we do as your landlord
Carry out Electrical NICEIC
Carry out Annual Gas Safety
Respond to Maintenance Issues in a Timely Order
Annual Health & Safety visits
Carry out 5 Year PAT Testing of fridge/freezer appliance
What you need to do as our Tenant
Keep Garden in Good Condition Maintaining the Lawn (if any) Maintain Fences in good repair
Change Light Bulbs
Check and Change Batteries in Smoke/Heat/Carbon Monoxide Detectors
Carry out regular visual checks on your property for health and safety Report any Health & Safety concerns immediately
Carry out regular visual inspections of Fridge/Freezers and report any electrical issues immediately Keep in good repair and regularly clean Gas Hob/Oven Appliances
Provide Access for all Maintenance and Health and Safety Inspections