

Landlord News

Keeping Knowsley private landlords in the know



Issue No.21 Summer 2018

Welcome to the summer newsletter

I'm pleased to present the summer edition of Landlord News.

In this edition, we have some important updates on changes to Alternative Payment Arrangements, gas safety certificates and the 'How to rent' guide.

We have summarised each of these changes for you and provided links to where you can find out more.

We have also provided some useful information about your responsibilities around waste and recycling, warning signs of cannabis cultivation in properties and an opportunity to comment on electrical safety reforms.

Best wishes.

Councillor Tony Brennan
Cabinet Member for
Regeneration and Economic Development



UPDATED

'How to rent' guide

Under the Deregulation Act 2015, you are required to give your tenants the latest copy of the Government's 'How to rent' guide at the start of a tenancy.

Along with the prescribed information in relation to the deposit you must provide a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and Gas Safety Certificate (if applicable). The guide needs to be provided to your tenant before a valid Section 21 notice can be served.

However, it's important to remember you must provide their tenants with the most up-to-date version.

This is the first change in almost two years and the current edition is required to be served for any new tenancies, renewed tenancies or those becoming statutory periodic.

The guide may change at any time and it is your responsibility to check the latest issue.

You can find the latest issue here.



SPECIAL EVENT

Landlord forum

June 2018

Following on from last month's Universal Credit Newsletter, the Knowsley Landlord Accreditation team has organised a special private landlord forum focusing solely on Universal Credit.

Speakers from the Department for Work and Pensions will deliver a presentation a month on from full roll out in Knowsley.

The event will take place on **Tuesday 19 June 2018 (5.30-6.30pm)** in the Ambassador Suite at The Venue. Refreshments will be available.

To book your space please contact Neil Walklett on 0151 443 2287 or email neil.walklett@knowsley.gov.uk



SPECIAL EVENT



Avoid being targeted by cannabis growers

If you have your suspicions, report them to the police immediately.

Would you recognise the signs that a tenant is operating a cannabis farm from your property?

This is a serious problem and can have major repercussions for landlords.

If your tenant is cultivating crops in your property, it can leave you with huge utility and repair bills and invalidate your insurance.

Be vigilant and take the following steps:

- Always carry out thorough reference checks with employers, previous landlords and/or character references;
- Don't take six months' rent up front - it could be a sign the tenant wants to be left alone to engage in illegal activity;
- Communicate with your tenants and check on the property often. This should be done quarterly where possible but be sure to give the tenant sufficient notice; and
- Get to know the neighbours around the property and ask them to keep an eye out for anything suspicious and inform you.

There are also a number of signs you should look out for which may indicate that cannabis is being cultivated in your property:

- Strong smell of air fresheners to disguise the smell of drug production;
- Lights being left on all day and night and curtains and blinds drawn;
- A sudden jump or fall in electricity bills;
- Possible rewiring of the property;
- High humidity in the property; and
- People coming and going at the property at odd times of the day.

Remember that you could be criminally liable if you are aware of criminal activity taking place in your property but don't report it to the police.

If you have your suspicions, report them to the police immediately.

Your information has the potential to save a life. Ring Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111** or contact them online.

Gas Safety Certificate changes

From this month, you will have greater flexibility around when you conduct gas checks in your properties.

You can now carry out the annual gas safety check in the two months before the due date but still retain the existing expiry date.

This helps you avoid waiting until the last minute and not gaining access, or having to shorten the annual cycle check to comply with the law.

There is no change to the legal requirement for an annual gas safety check or for maintenance to be carried out.

Find out more about gas safety.

Top Tips to make sure your property is gas safe

You should:

- Make sure you take reasonable steps to gain access to your properties to meet your legal responsibilities
- Conduct regular checks on the property to make sure air vents are not obstructed or blocked by your tenants
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors
- Install and maintain gas detectors
- Have annual gas safety checks carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer
- Have your gas appliances and flues serviced each year.

Your tenants should:

- Make sure they don't block up ventilation points such as air bricks
- Regularly test both carbon monoxide and gas detectors to make sure they are working correctly
- Turn off the gas at the supply valve if they suspect the property is leaking gas and inform you and Transco immediately
- Inform you immediately of any disrepair or damage to a gas appliance, pipework, flue, ventilation system or detector
- Annually service their own gas appliances.

Further guidance

For further advice and guidance, visit www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk/landlords or www.HSE.gov.uk/gas/landlords/index.htm

Remember, whenever you have any gas work carried out, always use a GAS Safe registered engineer holding the relevant qualifications for working on your gas appliance.

To find or check a Gas Safe registered engineer go to www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk or call **0800 408 5500**.

Universal Credit update - Alternative Payment Arrangements

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has introduced a change to Universal Credit which will speed up requests for Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA).

It means a tenant's explicit consent for an APA to be put in place is no longer required.

This will simplify the process and continue to retain a safeguard for the tenant to challenge your request.

In addition, when a claimant is asked to verify their rent the DWP will also ask them if their housing benefit was being paid directly to their landlord prior to their Universal Credit (UC) claim and the reasons for this. This will allow work coaches to have a conversation with the claimant to determine whether a managed payment to landlord APA for the UC claim may need to be applied, if appropriate.

You can find out more about how Universal Credit will affect your tenants in our **special edition newsletter**.



Your duty of care for waste and recycling

As you will be aware, any waste produced from the properties you let is classed as commercial waste, under section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

In order to comply with your duty of care in safely storing and disposing of this waste, you should consider the following:

- Think about how you intend to dispose of waste before undertaking any building improvements. Burning waste, using domestic waste bins belonging to the property or other properties, putting waste in street litter bins, leaving extra bags of rubbish next to domestic waste bins or at any other location is not permitted.
- If you want to take waste to a disposal site yourself you will need to obtain a Waste Carrier's Licence from the Environment Agency. All reputable waste disposal sites will ask to see a copy of this licence before they allow you to dispose of waste at their site.
- Provide new and existing tenants with information on their bin collection service and recycling information. This includes which waste is picked up by us and when, and in which bin it should be disposed of. **This information is available on our website.**
- The council can help you by serving a legal notice to your tenants under s46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which will outline what tenants must do with their waste.
- Consider adding a clause your tenancy agreement requiring the property to be cleared of all waste at the end of the rental period. Failure to comply could result in a charge to the tenants for waste removal which could be taken out of their deposit. Otherwise you are responsible for any waste left behind.

Please note that if you do not comply with your duty of care you could face an unlimited fine.



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