

To the uninitiated, let property can appear to be a safe and relatively simple income stream, however there is a constantly increasing raft of legislation that landlords must adhere to.

Landlords face an increasingly regulated future with regards to their let properties but having a checklist of prescribed documents for you to check off before the start of a new tenancy would be a good start. Before an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) is granted, it is now a requirement that all new tenants are given the following:

- An Energy Performance Certificate, (EPC),
- A current annual Gas Safety Certificate, if applicable,
- The latest version of the Government booklet 'How to rent: the checklist for renting in England'. This is a very comprehensive and well set out document that can easily be accessed from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).
- Confirmation that any deposit paid for a property has been protected in a government approved scheme detailing who the deposit is held with. This must be carried out within 30 days of receipt of the deposit.

Although these are not all new requirements in themselves, it is now imperative that a record is kept that these have been issued to each new tenant in order to preserve the right to regain possession of the property under Section 21.

With regards to EPCs, these are valid for 10 years and can be reused as many times as needed within that time. However, they aren't needed where the landlord can show that the building is of special architectural or his-

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toric value where compliance with certain minimum energy efficiency requirements would unacceptably alter their character or appearance, for example Listed Buildings. This may help a number of landlords who have such properties, but on the whole, few properties will fall into this exemption.

From 1 April 2016, tenants can ask their landlords for consent to carry out energy efficiency improvements and all reasonable requests cannot be refused. Although the government has abolished the 'Green Deal', tenants must show that their request falls within one of the 'Green Deal' approved improvements and that they have a way of funding it at no cost to the landlord.

Looking forward, things are only going to get more onerous for Landlords, as with effect from 1 April 2018, all new leases or lease renewals must have an EPC rating of E or above.

Although this is some time away, it is worth bearing in mind when refurbishing properties between tenancies so that the cost of meeting these requirements can be spread.

More urgently, the Right to Rent Scheme introduced on 1 February 2016 requires anyone who rents out private property in England to see and make a copy of evidence that any new adult tenant has the right, under Immigration Law, to rent in the UK. Typical documents that a landlord can check include a passport, national identity card, residence card etc, a full list of acceptable documents can be found at [www.gov.uk/check-tenant-right-to-rent-documents](http://www.gov.uk/check-tenant-right-to-rent-documents). Landlords who don't make these checks could be fined up to £3000 per tenant if it is found that the tenants are in the UK illegally. Properties on a farm or estate where an employee is housed as part of their job – 'Tied accommodation' – is

excluded from the 'Right to Rent' scheme but employers already have to check the immigration status of their employees.

All tenancies that started on or after 1 October 2015 are now required to fit smoke alarms on each storey of the property and carbon monoxide alarms in each room containing a solid fuel burning appliance, eg a coal fire or a wood burning stove. These alarms should be checked at the beginning of each new tenancy, and recorded as part of the inventory, and it is advisable that tenants are asked to check these alarms on a regular basis. Again, substantial fines of up to £5000 may be imposed on a landlord for non-compliance.

While let property may not be policed as heavily as your Basic Payment Scheme claim it is still important to ensure you and your property are up to speed with the relevant red tape in order to maintain a steady income stream.



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