



Home Lets

BULLETIN

Welcome to the Autumn Edition of the Home Lets Bulletin. In this edition we address the issues of safety in light of the Grenfell Tower Tragedy. We will provide an overview of the key elements landlords need to check to ensure their properties are safe.

Also in this edition we will also encourage landlords to contact us before serving notice to their tenants in an attempt to prevent Homelessness.

FIRE SAFETY

Following the Grenfell Tower Fire in west London it is clear that fire safety standards and best practice need to be reviewed in both social housing and the private rented sector.

Many landlords in the private sector, in particular those operating houses of multiple occupation are no doubt reviewing the safety measures they have in place to make sure they are fully compliant with the law.

Landlords need to be aware that they remain responsible for safety issues even where they delegate the day to day management of the properties to a managing agent. Agents tasked with full management will share the same responsibility if safety measures fall short of the law and something goes wrong.

Landlords in the private sector are required to:

- comply fully with safety regulations
- install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms in line with rules affecting properties in England, Wales Northern Ireland or Scotland
- check there is access and escape routes in the property at all times
- ensure any furniture and furnishings supplied are fire safe
- provide fire alarms and extinguishers if the property is a house of multiple occupation (HMO) and check fire alarm systems regularly
- landlords who let HMO's will also need to comply with additional relevant fire safety

Best practice for fire safety in your property

Make sure you have systems in place to keep abreast of your obligations and as a landlord do everything possible to keep your tenants safe.



The NLA Fire Safety Logbook

Endorsed by the Chief Fire Officers Association the logbook enables landlords to keep a record of risks, fire safety precautions and test records in one place. It includes updated regulations for carbon monoxide and smoke alarms and contains a number of templates and forms to help landlords carry out fire safety risk assessments in their properties, schedule fire equipment safety checks and log any defect. For more information see www.landlords.org.uk/shop/fire-and-gas-safety-equipment/nla-fire-safety-logbook.

Fire doors

Fire doors can stop the spread of heat and smoke and in the event of a fire. It is worth buying a high quality, third party certified fire doors and door sets from a reputable supplier. Fire doors should always have a self-closing mechanism and tenants should be reminded not to keep them wedged open.

Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms

The rules vary across the UK, with England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all requiring different levels of protection. Best practice is to install audible CO alarm in any room that is used partly or wholly as living accommodation which also contains any fuel burning appliance, including those that burn gas, oil, coal and wood.

DO A FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PROPERTY

This will help you to identify any fire hazards within the property, the fire safety provisions that are in the property and decide what precautions and arrangements need to be put in place to reduce the risks of the hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable.

Smoke alarms

Smoke alarms need to be fitted on every storey of the property where there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation, including a bathroom or toilet. If you want to go further, install a smoke alarm in every bedroom for peace of mind and interlink them, so that if one detects smoke all units will alarm. Landlords (or someone acting on behalf of the landlord) have to ensure all alarms are in working order at that start of each new tenancy. It is best practice to check periodically that alarms are in working order and to document these checks. British Standards 5839 part 6 recommends even basic rented properties to have a hard-wired and interlinked alarms with battery backup.



Gas safety checks

Landlords must ensure that any gas appliance (permanent or portable), and gas flues that you provide for use by your tenants are safe.

New installations by your Gas Safe engineer need to be notified through Gas Safe Register. Once complete, a Building Regulations Certificate should arrive via post within 10-15 working days. You are also responsible for ensuring an annual gas safety check is carried out within 12 months of the installation of a new appliance or flue that you have provided and annually thereafter. You must keep a record of the safety check for 2 years and issue a copy to each existing tenant within 28 days of the check being completed and any new tenant moving in.

Electrical Checks

Make sure the electrical installation and all appliances are safe prior to each tenancy. Have your wiring checked professionally to identify any weak points where a fire could start and keep the electricians report. Consider adding some electrical sockets in your property to avoid tenants overloading the system. If the property is a HMO it must have a periodic inspection carried out by a competent person at least once every 5 years.

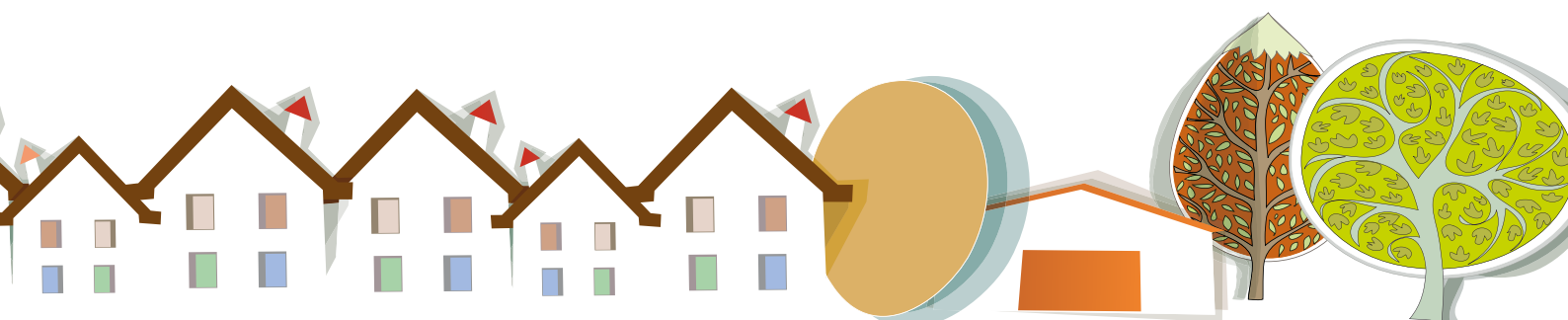
Storage and security

Tenants should be encouraged not to store their belongings in communal areas. In the event of a fire, items in hallways and on stairs can stop people escaping and impede fire fighters. Ensure that all corridors, stairs and cupboards containing electrical and gas meters are not used to store anything close to the meters.



Appliance

In addition to these points, register your appliance with the manufacturer and check the product recall and safety notices published by the NLA at www.landlords.org.uk/support-advice/product-recall-and-safety-notice. New and old (up to 12 years) appliances can be registered via the Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances Portal Register My Appliance so you are informed about safety recall at www.amdea.org.uk/our-purpose/campaigns/register-appliance. Do not position electrical appliances such as fridges and freezers in hallways.



CALLING ALL LANDLORDS

We recognise that eviction is often the last resort and is a costly process.

We are committed to preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity and we urge you to **call us before you serve a notice** so that we can help you and help you and your tenants before it's too late.

Our expert Homelessness Prevention Officers can help to resolve arrears and Housing Benefit problems and we can help your tenants to find alternative accommodation so that you can avoid costly court action.



If you are considering giving notice please call our Homeless Prevention Team who may be able to help. We will address rent arrears, mediate between you and your tenants. Resolve communication issues and assist in rehousing your tenants.

For more information call Jyoti on 0115 917 3412



www.broxtowe.gov.uk

Tel: 0115 917 3412 • email: hmps@broxtowe.gov.uk



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