

# **SECRETS of LETTING in the CREDIT CRUNCH**

**(How to Get Paid Even if Your Property is Empty)**

John Wilson BSc Hons

PUBLISHED BY



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49 Byres Road  
Glasgow  
G11 5RG  
Tel: 0141 334 7030  
info@rentsureletting.com  
www.rentsureletting.com

Edited by Yvonne Fletcher  
Design and layout by Raymond John Rigby, [www.rjrigby.com](http://www.rjrigby.com)

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None of the information in this book is to be construed as financial or mortgage advice. You should consult a qualified IFA or mortgage advisor before considering buy-to-let or letting your own home.

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# About the Author

John is from Bearsden and now lives in the West End of Glasgow. He followed a successful career in IT in London for many years. Eventually he realised that he no longer wanted a 'job': he wanted to pursue financial independence. He chose property as the way to do this and returned to Glasgow at the beginning of the millennium to start building his portfolio. He has been investing in property for nearly 10 years and has been working in lettings for almost as long.

John got his first lettings job almost by accident. The agent whom he had chosen to manage his first few properties asked him to look after the business while he took his first holiday in three years. John then continued working in letting agencies – both independent and a national chain – and he saw the way lettings should be done and he saw the way it definitely shouldn't be done!

Realising that there was a gap in the market for a well-run agency with good customer service, John started his own business nearly three years ago. His agency is now re-branded as RentSure Letting. John has a passion for bringing excellent customer service to an industry where, sadly, it is sometimes lacking.

# Preface

Letting residential property is not as easy as it used to be. Gone are the days when you could chuck a couple of Ikea prints on the walls, put a home-made sign in the window and have tenants queuing up.

Since buy-to-let mortgages came onto the scene in the 1990's, every man and his dog has piled into the letting market. Worse still, in the wake of the credit crunch, the market has been flooded with properties whose owners would previously have sold them.

This is good news for tenants, but perhaps not for landlords, because it's now a renter's market. Tenants now have far more choice and can, to a certain extent, call the shots.

All is not lost.

Owners and investors who have the correct knowledge and resources, or have a good letting agent, can still come out on top.

It is the aim of this book to lift the curtain on some of this knowledge and put you - the owner - back in the driving seat. Here we share the secrets of getting your property ready to let and giving it the absolute best chance of letting in super-fast time and to a quality tenant.

In short, we hope it will give you an unfair advantage over the competition. You'll be watching the rent roll in while others struggle with problem tenants or finding tenants in the first place!

Enjoy reading. We hope you find the book helpful. Use the tips to get your property ready to let so that you can reap the benefits later on.

I wish you all the best in letting your property!

**P.S.** If you have any questions or comments on this book, lettings or property investment, I would love to hear from you by email or phone ([john@rentsureletting.com](mailto:john@rentsureletting.com) or 0141 334 7030).



**“RentSure stepped in and had my flat let to a good tenant within two days...”**

“In preparation to relocate, I was marketing my flat to let with another local agent. After three weeks and with less than one week until I moved, I had had only one viewing. RentSure stepped in and had my flat let to a good tenant within two days of my instruction. Thanks to RentSure, I was able to move with a weight off my mind!”

**Elsbeth Treacy, Queens Park**

# Chapter One

## Can't sell? Then let!

**M**any people in today's market are having trouble finding a buyer for their property, let alone get a price they are happy with. Because of this, more and more people are letting as an alternative.

Many are taking the view that if they sell now, they may have to take a reduced price, but letting for a year or two - until the market picks up – means they won't have to.

Letting your current home and renting or buying a new one allows you to move on to the location and type of property you are looking for. You can then wait until the market recovers.

### **Pensions and investments**

Some people, having let their property are deciding to hold onto their property as a long term investment. They may supplement their pension fund or decide to build a portfolio of properties.

### **The good news for owner-occupiers**

There's some good news for owner-occupiers thinking about letting their property. As their properties will usually be of a much higher standard than the majority of buy-to-let property on the market, they'll get a big head start on much of the competition. They may let faster, attract a better class of tenant and possibly achieve a premium on the rental.

### **How long do I have to let for?**

When you decide to let your property out, the minimum you can normally\* let for is six months. After this, the lease can be renewed for another six months, or longer. But if you need flexibility, you can, with the tenant's agreement, renew with a Periodic Tenancy. This would give you the right to give the tenant two months notice to leave the property.

*\* Short lets are possible but are more appropriate in holiday areas, can be seasonal and require much more intensive management.*

### **Covering your mortgage**

In most cases, the rent you achieve should cover your mortgage. If it doesn't, you may be able to reduce your payments by switching to an interest only mortgage. You should talk to a qualified mortgage advisor if you are considering this option.

### **Let to Buy**

Due to the popularity of people letting out their home in order to buy another, mortgage lenders have introduced specialist products tailored to this way of doing things. A "Let to Buy" (as opposed to buy to let) mortgage works by allowing you to borrow money to buy a new home to move into, while your existing residence is let out to tenants.

Many Let to Buy mortgages require a deposit, although some lenders will allow a deposit to be released from a property through a re-mortgage or secured loan.

Let to Buy mortgages allow you rent out your existing property whilst buying in a completely different area of the country. You can retain your property as an investment and have your mortgage paid by tenants. The rules of let to buy lending are different from buy to let, and can be more flexible and require less equity.

### **Selling**

When you decide it is time to sell, give your tenants as much notice as possible. It is not a good idea to try to find a buyer while the tenants are still living there.



Not only is this a hassle for the tenants but you're unlikely to get the best price. You'll have a much better chance once your tenants have left and you've presented the property well.

### **Conclusion**

Letting can be a good way to enable you to move into more suitable accommodation whilst ensuring you don't make a loss by selling in the current market. There are even mortgage products that can allow you to buy a new property whilst retaining your old one as an investment. But please be sure to take professional advice on this from a qualified mortgage advisor.

**“Attention to detail and ability to offer a gold standard service has made the whole letting process a breeze...”**

“Having taken on the challenge of relocating from Glasgow to Perth, Australia in January 09, I was faced with the sudden headache of dealing with the worries and difficult task of letting out my much loved property. After trying unsuccessfully for some weeks to rent out on a private basis, RentSure immediately took over the situation in a professional and efficient manner securing a reliable tenant within days and with minimal fuss and disruption to daily work schedule and routine. Their interpersonal skills, communication, attention to detail and ability to offer a gold standard service has made the whole letting process a breeze and I will certainly be recommending RentSure to other friends and colleagues. Thanks RentSure!”

**Dr Nicholas Brown MBChB, FCARCSI**

# Chapter Two

## Preparing Your Property

If there is just one thing you learn from this book it should be this: the standard of your property – décor, cleanliness, presentation, furniture, fixtures and fittings – relates **directly** to the standard of tenant that you are going to attract.

It also sets the tone for how you expect your tenant to keep the property and how you wish it to be returned to you.

If you supply your property to a tenant with rickety furniture, unkempt garden and dirty windows, you can't expect the tenant to have respect for the property.

If you want a quality tenant – that is, one that will take care of your property and pay their rent on time, then give them a quality property.

When I say this, I don't mean you should go decking out your ex-council flat with expensive designer furniture: I mean that you need to get your property looking as good as possible to appeal to your target market (ideal tenant).

The other pleasant side-effects of presenting your property well are the potential to achieve a higher rent, and longer tenancies.

### **Preparing for Your Target Market**

Decide right at the beginning who you are going to let to. Single professional, a family? While you are getting your property ready, always have your likely tenant at the forefront of your mind.

For example, if you are going to let a modern city centre apartment, then your target market is most likely to be a single professional person or a professional couple. You would therefore present it with quality – this doesn't have to mean expensive - contemporary furniture.

If you are letting a suburban terraced house, your target market is more likely to be a family and you should present it appropriately.

If your property could appeal to more than one type of tenant, then it is best to keep your options open and don't exclude anyone.

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

Complete any small jobs such as filling and painting any holes or dents in walls. Often it is sufficient to touch up scuffs on walls with the same paint used initially and any nicks in woodwork with gloss. But if markings are extensive, or if you cannot find a match for the original paint, then full redecoration may be required.

#### **Décor**

Neutral décor is always preferred; if any rooms have particularly bright or dark paintwork, it is definitely recommended to repaint in a neutral tone.

Make a note of the paint that you've used and keep some aside if possible. That way you'll easily be able to touch up any marks at the end of a tenancy.

#### **Floor Coverings**

The same principle applies to carpets – bright, patterned or out-dated carpets should be replaced with neutral ones. Choose a slightly darker tone, to better

mask dirt and stains. These should be mid-range carpets – not too cheap and not too dear. If not clean already, you should have your carpets professionally cleaned.

Although more expensive initially, laminate flooring can be more economical in the long run as it is much harder wearing than carpet and is easier to clean.

### **Kitchens**

Fix any broken hinges on cupboard doors and ensure all drawers are running smoothly. If your kitchen needs updated, consider replacing the cupboard doors and drawer fronts as an inexpensive way of doing this.

Clean or re-grout any tiled areas that are discoloured.

If there are no splash-backs behind the cooker and sink, it is recommended to add them as your tenants will not necessarily be as careful as you are.

### **Bathrooms**

Be sure to provide towel rails and hooks as this will help ensure that these are not hung in inappropriate places.

Clean or re-grout any tiled areas that are discoloured.

If replacing the suite, an inexpensive one is usually fine but always pick a white one.

### **Clutter**

Clear away any clutter and remove it from the property.

### **Smells**

Air your property by opening windows and buy a few air fresheners. Remember that some viewers may be allergic to pets, so make sure that all signs of animal smells and hair are removed.

If you smoke, it is a good idea to stop smoking indoors a good while before starting to show your property to potential tenants, as this can be very off-putting to some.

### **Cleaning**

Get your property thoroughly cleaned – professionally if possible. A dirty property is one of the top things that can put a tenant off straight away.

- Clean the windows (inside and out)
- Clean inside cupboards and drawers
- Wipe down woodwork
- Polish tables and surfaces
- Polish any metalwork or door handles
- Clean light fittings
- Clean oven and grill pan
- Clean inside fridge
- De-frost the freezer if necessary
- Remove foodstuffs and toiletries.

### **Gardening**

If there's a garden, mow the lawn and tidy hedges. Just remember that your aim is to maximise "kerb appeal" as many tenants have made the decision whether to rent or not, before they even set foot in the property.

### **Common Areas**

If you live in a flat and there are common areas, make sure they are clean and tidy. If your block is factored then you might consider contacting them to arrange a cleaner at the shared expense of the owners. If this is not possible and the close is a mess then the expense of getting the job done yourself will be entirely worth it in terms of finding a quality tenant.

### **Furnishings**

What to provide in terms of furnishings for a tenant is a matter which an agent is best placed to advise on for your particular area/market but this section gives some general guidelines.

#### **Furnished or Unfurnished?**

Different types of property are easier to let furnished or unfurnished and this can also vary by area and there are always exceptions. Ask your local agent what he/she recommends for your area.

As a rough guide, one and two bedroom flats are easier to let furnished whereas larger flats and houses (with the definite exception of Houses in Multiple Occupation) may be easier to let unfurnished.

There is a common misconception that it is harder to evict a tenant from a furnished flat. This is untrue.

If you decide to take your furniture out, do not be tempted to replace it with poor quality or second hand furniture as this will impact the quality of tenant that you will attract.

#### **What to Provide for a Fully Furnished Let**

These are our general recommendations for furnishings and appliances required for a fully furnished let.

Furnishings should be contemporary and meet fire regulations.

#### **Living Room**

- suite
- bookcases / shelves
- coffee table
- lamp
- mirror
- pictures for walls

### **Kitchen**

- Washing machine
- dish washer (optional but is a great selling point if you have one!)
- fridge freezer
- microwave
- cooker
- tumble drier or clothes ailer
- cutlery and crockery (for a minimum of 4 people)
- matching glasses and mugs
- iron and ironing board
- mop and bucket
- dustpan and brush
- pots and pans
- colander
- kettle
- toaster
- vacuum cleaner
- tin opener
- set of knives
- cooking utensils
- Pyrex oven dishes
- washing up bowl
- waste bin

### **Bedrooms**

- double bed
- wardrobe
- chest of drawers
- bedside tables and lamps
- bed linen and towels are not essential but mattress protectors are recommended

### **Bathroom**

- towel rail
- toilet roll holder
- toilet brush
- shower curtain or screen
- mirror



### **Dining Room / area**

- dining table
- chairs (chair covers recommended)
- table covers and placemats are recommended

### **Misc**

- step ladder (for changing light bulbs etc)
- curtains or blinds on all windows
- vases
- pictures

### **Outside**

- dustbin or council supplied wheelie bin
- garden tools if appropriate

### **Gardening Tools & Equipment**

If you expect your tenant to tend the garden then you must supply adequate equipment to allow them to do so. You can of course elect to employ a gardener during the spring and summer months. This may help attract a tenant if it is a larger garden but will obviously boost your expenses. The rule of thumb is to think what tools you would need if you were doing the garden yourself.

### **Furniture Packs**

It is possible to buy furniture packs for rented property from specialist suppliers. Your agent may be to supply these. This saves time, and all furniture will meet the required regulations.

### **What to Remove**

Remove all personal items, valuable and delicate items and all junk, leaving only the items in the above list.

### **Be Flexible**

You will always have more potential tenants - and therefore let your property faster - if you are able to be flexible with what you do or don't provide. For example, tenants renting furnished accommodation will often have their own bed and request that the one provided be removed.

Of course, it may not always be possible to be completely flexible as you may not have the inclination or facilities to store more than the smallest items.

### **Don't Take Stuff Out!**

Be sure to show the property in the state in which you intend to let it or if you don't, make it very clear to the viewers what will be staying or going. If a tenant views and you remove the big telly and leather sofa in between their viewing and moving in, they will not be happy!

### **Electrical Equipment**

Be aware that although certain items are essential for a furnished let, all electrical items that you leave in the property will need to be maintained by you. It is also a little-known fact that if you leave a television, then you are responsible for paying the licence!

### **Maintenance Contracts**

If you have a maintenance contract for your boiler, electrics or plumbing then leave the contact details and contract number with the tenant. You should also inform your agent if you are using one.

Be aware that these contracts sometimes stipulate that only the landlord may contact them to request a maintenance visit, but in practice, they may not be strict on this point.

The same goes for extended warranties or maintenance contracts for appliances. If you leave the details with the tenant then they will be able to get problems sorted quicker and may not have to inconvenience you.

### **Staging Your Property**

This is a topic more normally associated with selling property and is the subject of entire books; an industry has even sprung up around the subject – especially in the States.

Staging is an area landlords often ignore completely, but there can be no doubt that a well-staged home will let quicker than one that is not. At the end of the day, does Barratt show people an empty shell of a house when they come to view? Of course not, they take them to the fancy show home!

Staging is more easily done when you are showing your property furnished but there are still a few principles that can be used with unfurnished properties.

#### **Show the Purpose of Each Room**

Help your viewers imagine how they would use the property. There should be a bed in each bedroom; if there is an office or office area then set a desk and chair up. Remember though – if you don't intend to leave certain items in the property when it is let, make this perfectly clear to your viewers.

#### **Stage your Kitchen and Dining Area**

Set up your dining or kitchen table as if you were expecting guests round: put out place settings to demonstrate how many diners can be accommodated.

#### **Lighting**

Making sure that the property is lit well and choosing the correct lighting for each space can improve the mood of the whole property.

#### **Nice Smells**

Make sure your property smells nice. Get rid of any smells of smoke or pets by deep cleaning and airing and consider using air fresheners or scented candles. Some people even go to the extremes of baking a cake or apple pie in advance of viewings! Fresh coffee does the same trick.

### **Kerb Appeal**

Kerb appeal refers to the impression people get of your property before they have even gone inside. Its importance cannot be underestimated as many people will make a decision based on it. Make sure your front garden is tidy, your front door is painted or varnished and the door furniture is polished.

### **Conclusion**

The preparation of your property is absolutely key to the letting process. It can make the difference between finding the right tenant quickly and or having an empty property and then being landed with a tenant who does not respect it or even causes damage.

# Chapter Three

## Letting Legislation

**O**K, get ready for the boring bit. Skip it at your peril though – tough fines and even jail awaits anyone who ignores their legal responsibilities.

### **Landlord Gas Safety Certificate**

This is obviously only applicable if you have a gas supply to the property. Note that it is still necessary if you have a supply but no gas appliances.

You need a Landlord Gas Safety Certificate. This must be carried out by a Gas Safe (the new scheme replacing CORGI) registered engineer, before the start of a tenancy. The certificate lasts for a year and must be renewed annually. You need to retain certificates for two years.

It is a good idea to get your boiler and any gas fires serviced at the same time and regularly afterwards; this will reduce the likelihood of any further callouts during the tenancy.

### **Carbon Monoxide**

At the time of writing, there is no legal requirement for landlords to fit a carbon monoxide detector. However, where there is a gas supply to the property, it is best practice to provide a suitably located alarm.

### **Electrical Safety**

There are no specific requirements placed by the law on landlords with regards to electrical safety and this has created some confusion among landlords in deciding how they are affected by legislation.

The law does state that the landlord is responsible for keeping the electrical installation in good working order and that they must have good reason to believe that the installation, fixtures and appliances are safe.

Trading Standards Officers are increasingly bringing landlords and agents to court for not complying with these regulations.

Trading Standards and Landlord associations recommend that electrical inspections be made on an annual basis by a qualified electrician and that records be kept of these.

The standard test for the fixed wiring in a property is called a Periodic Inspection Report (PIR) and Portable Appliance Test (PAT) for appliances. It is recommended that a PIR be carried out every three years and a PAT test annually.

### **Fire Safety**

It is recommended that a fire blanket be provided in the kitchen.

Ensure that all corridors – including common areas – are clear of junk and obstruction, so that escape is not hindered in the event of a fire.

Make sure that all your windows open and keys are available for the locks.

### **Smoke Alarms**

One smoke alarm should be fitted to each floor of the property. If there are multiple alarms, then the alarms should be interconnected. If fitted after 3rd September 2007 then alarms must be wired into the mains power supply. Alarms should be tested at the start and then retested periodically throughout the tenancy.

The regulations for HMO and new build accommodation are different and are not covered here.

**Furniture Regulations**

The Regulations stipulate that furnishings any property let for the first time after 1st March 1993 should be fire-resistant. This applies to all sofas, beds, pillows, mattresses, bean bags etc., but not to carpets, curtains or duvets.

Furniture manufactured prior to 1950 is exempt as flammable materials were not used before that date. As a guide only, furniture manufactured after 1st March 1990 should comply.

To comply with the regulations, furniture must be fire-resistant and in most cases carry a label to this effect.

**Energy Performance Certificates**

From 4th January 2009, an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is required for all let property in Scotland (there are some exceptions, such as some bedsits and holiday lets). A registered assessor will call at the property and give it an energy efficiency rating – much like those you see on new white goods - measuring its carbon efficiency. They will also make recommendations on how to make your property more energy and carbon efficient.

If your property was let out before 4th January 2009, an EPC is not required until it is re-let.

EPCs are valid for 10 years. If you make energy efficiency improvements to the property, you may wish to get a new one but this is not a requirement. The EPC must be supplied to tenants before they sign their lease and the certificate must be displayed in the property. Your agent should be able to arrange an EPC for you or they can be obtained through independent suppliers and firms of surveyors.

Energy Efficiency Rating		
	Current	Potential
Very energy efficient - lower running costs		
(92-100) <b>A</b>		
(81-91) <b>B</b>		
(69-80) <b>C</b>		73
(55-68) <b>D</b>		
(39-54) <b>E</b>	37	
(21-38) <b>F</b>		
(1-20) <b>G</b>		
Not energy efficient - higher running costs		

### **Landlord Registration**

If you are letting property in Scotland you are required to register as a landlord with the local council. (Check local legislation if you are letting in other parts of the UK.)

This is an attempt by the Government to weed out rogue landlords and to allow tenants and neighbours to identify and contact landlords of rented property.

You must have at least submitted an application by the time that your first tenancy begins. Registration lasts for three years from the date of approval. There is a fee for registering but there are some exemptions and discounts available.

You can find out more and register online at [www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk). There is a discount for online registration.

### **HMO Regulations**

HMO's – or Houses in Multiple Occupation – are defined as any household composed of any more than two unrelated people. In order to let to this type of household in Scotland, you need to have an HMO licence.

It can be costly to bring the property up to the specification required for the licence. Then, of course, there is the cost of the licence itself and management fees for this type of property can be higher, but this type of let can be very profitable.

Going the HMO route is not recommended if you are just letting out your own home for a limited period of time.

### **Overseas Landlords**

If you are letting out your home whilst living abroad, your letting agent is required by law to deduct tax, at the basic rate, from any rent received for your property. They must do this until they receive confirmation from the Inland Revenue that you are entitled to receive your rent without tax deducted.



If you complete the appropriate Inland Revenue form in plenty of time, (see link in Appendix Three) you should be able to get approval before you leave the country and your agent will never need to start deducting tax. If your UK tax affairs are up to date then getting approval for this should be quick and easy to do.

### **Conclusion**

There are many legal responsibilities that landlords must be aware of, however, some need only be taken care of once. In order to maintain your tenant's safety and to avoid fines or worse, it is imperative that you have an effective means of reminding yourself to renew your safety certificates.

## **“Being a mortgage adviser, I thought I knew all about letting property...”**

“Recently I have had the opportunity of using John’s services for letting out my own property. Being a mortgage adviser, I thought I knew all about letting property, but it soon became apparent from talking with John that there were many other aspects that I had not thought about.

John marketed my property and within 24 hours I had 2 interested parties. The first person that came to view signed the lease, only after John had fully vetted them, saving me lots of time and money.

I would have no hesitation of using John and RentSure Letting again and also have no hesitation of recommending him to others who might require his services in the future.”

**Danny Cameron, Mortgage Consultant**

# Chapter Four

## Other Responsibilities

**W**e've covered the legalities but there are a few other things you need to think about before you can finally let your home.

### **Talk to Your Lender**

If you have a mortgage on your home and it is not a buy-to-let one, it essential that you call your lender and tell them about your intention to let and obtain from them what's called "Consent to Let". Depending on who your lender is, they may:

- charge a fee
- insist you change to a buy-to-let mortgage
- increase your interest rate
- do nothing (if you're lucky).

Whatever they tell you, remember that it is usually negotiable, so don't necessarily take their first answer as read.

### **Factor Bills**

If you live in a factored block or development, the factor bill will remain your responsibility. Remember to update your factor with your forwarding address.

### **Insurance**

As a landlord, you are responsible for insuring the building and any contents that you supply. You should double-check with your insurer that the policy you have extends to let property. Most will, but some have stipulations against unemployed or student tenants.

### **Instruction Manuals**

Leave instructions and copies of any guarantees for any appliances - boiler, cooker etc. - you are leaving in the property. This will save you from unnecessary calls from the tenant and help prevent damage to your appliances from misuse.

Don't forget to leave details of refuse collection days and any arrangements with neighbours for cleaning communal areas.

### **Stop Cocks and Isolation Switches**

You should label these and leave instructions as to where they can be found; tell your letting agent too. The time saved in finding these when there is a leak or other problem can make the difference between a small repair and a disastrous situation.

### **Mail Forwarding**

Unless you are certain that you've informed absolutely everyone of your change of address, you should set up mail forwarding through Royal Mail. This can be set up online at [www.royalmail.com](http://www.royalmail.com) for less than £10 per month.

### **Telephone Line**

You should disconnect your landline so that your tenant can reconnect it in their name if they wish.

### **Tax**

Landlords are responsible for assessing their own tax. Income tax is payable on letting income whether the landlord lives in the UK or abroad.

You can claim tax relief for repairs, maintenance, management, insurance, legal and accounting fees. You can also offset interest paid on your mortgage against tax. Make sure you keep hold of any invoices, receipts and statements relating to any of these to enable you to complete your tax return at the end of the year.

For furnished lets, you can claim tax relief for insurance, repair of contents and wear and tear; either on a replacements basis or as a concessionary 10% of rental income.

The law requires you to keep records to enable a tax return to be completed or to claim tax relief. You then need to retain these records for at least five years and ten months.

You also need to keep a record of rental income received; this is easy if you use an agent as they will provide monthly statements.

### **Data Protection**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you and your agent have certain responsibilities regarding the protection of the details you hold about your tenant. Have a look at the Information Commissioners Office's frequently asked questions document - a link to which can be found in the Useful Links appendix - for more info on this.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter we've looked at some other ways to prepare for your first tenancy. By taking care of these upfront, you will remove much of the possibility of any trouble or inconvenience in the future.

**“The rent guarantee suits me because I am able to plan my finances for the next 12 months...”**

“The rent guarantee suits me because I am able to plan my finances for the next 12 months. The property is fully managed and all repairs and issues regarding furnishings are run past me instead of just being carried out. If you are unsure about property letting due to potential hassles I would recommend this scheme to anyone.”

**Danny Cameron, Mortgage Consultant**

# Chapter Five

## Marketing Your Property

Landlords frequently come to us and tell us that the agent they instructed weeks ago has still not put a board up or listed the property on the internet. It never ceases to amaze me when this happens.

Every day your property lies empty is money down the drain. A little expense upfront, ensuring your property gets the most exposure possible, is money well spent.

In this section we'll talk about setting your price and then cover some methods you can use to market your property.

### Rent

The norm when letting a flat or house (this often differs for shared accommodation) is for rent not to be inclusive of council tax and utilities. This is because you never know how much gas or electricity a tenant will use or whether they qualify for a council tax discount or exemption.

### Setting Your Price

This is arguably the most important ingredient in getting your property let and it

is worth spending some time thinking about.

There is skill in getting this just right. It can mean the difference between having your property let in a week and seeing it sit on the market for three months.

Start by researching the market – look at how long properties in the area are taking to let and the prices they are marketed at. Agents call this researching comparables. But remember, the advertised price is not necessarily the price that a property was let at; it can often be a bit lower, especially in a tenant's market. So you may need to speak to letting agents to get the full picture.

Look at the competition to see what other choices tenants have – you can even go and view them if you want to be a bit cheeky! Compare theirs to yours – if they are of a higher standard then you will have to adjust your price accordingly.

Apply common sense – if there is another similar property on the market for £50 less than yours, which will let first?

### **Hit the market at the right price level**

Let's take an example; imagine that you are holding out for a rent of £650 – maybe because you need that to cover your mortgage and all your expenses – but that the true market rent is £600.

Let's also imagine that when you start advertising there are seven tenants in the market for a property like yours. Three of them quite like the look of the photos on the internet so they arrange to view. Unfortunately they've others to view (they usually won't tell you that they think it's overpriced) and you don't hear back from them.

Now you're in the position you've missed your chance with everyone in the market right now. You're now relying on the new people entering the market for a property like yours in the future.

If you'd priced it right at the start, there's much more chance that it would have let to one of those original seven tenants.



### **Think in terms of yearly income rather than monthly rent**

Let's take an example: you're marketing at £600 again. If you hold out for three months to get this price and your tenant stays for the rest of the year, then your annual income will be  $9 \times £650 = £5,850$ .

But if you'd hit the market at the more realistic level of £600 and let it in a month, then your annual income would have been  $11 \times £600 = £6,600$ !

That's a £750 saving. And that's before you've even budgeted for the council tax and utility standing charges you may have had to pay while the property was lying empty. You do the maths!

### **Speed Over Price**

It is more important than ever to get your property let quickly as not only will you be losing rent for every day it is empty, you will also be liable for council tax. Unless your property is unfurnished, most councils only offer a small discount on this if the property is unoccupied. If your property is unfurnished then a maximum six month exemption from council tax normally applies.

## **Finding a Tenant**

Next, we'll take a look at some of the marketing methods you can use to find viewers for your property.

### **The Internet**

It is a fact that around 70% of tenants look for properties on the internet first.

Ensure that your property appears on all the major letting portals: S1homes.com, GSPC.co.uk, CityLets.co.uk, LettingWeb.com, FindaProperty.com, PropertyFinder.com etc.

### **Boards, Posters and Cards**

Around 20% of enquiries come from the local area. So make sure that your property is visible to locals and passers-by by putting a to-let sign in the window and erecting a board outside (if appropriate).

The only exception to this tends to be if you are letting a ground floor property in a bad area. Avoid posters and having the board directly outside in this case, otherwise you risk vandalism or break-ins.

Putting a card in a local shop window can work well in some areas.

### **Client Bank**

A good local agent will have a database of people who are looking to rent and they may have a tenant ready and waiting, without even having to resort to advertising. However it can be difficult to find out whether their bank of clients is real or imagined!

### **New Technology**

Some agents will promote your property using email or SMS text message. One or two forward looking agents (RentSure Letting included) are even using Bluetooth mobile technology to reach more potential tenants than ever before.

### **Other Methods**

Each area and demographic is different and some methods will be less or more effective. For example, in general, newspaper advertising is on the decline and is less cost-effective; however there are some areas in which it is still the best way to let a property.

This is where an experienced letting agent can be worth their weight in gold as you will not waste time and money trying ineffective methods.

### Qualification

You will have a fair idea of the type of tenant you are looking for. So, in order to save time, it is a good idea to qualify your prospective tenants over the phone, before they even view your property. Ask them the following sorts of questions to see if they fit with your requirements:

- who will be staying the property – number of adults, children?
- are you working or claiming benefits?
- are there any smokers?
- do you have pets?
- how long are you planning to stay?
- when do you want to move in?
- why are you moving?

If you are looking to let the property to a non-smoker within the month, then you'll not want to waste time showing it to someone on 40-a-day who doesn't want to move until next February!

### Conclusion

Ensure you can justify your rent levels and remember that overpriced properties have shorter tenancies and longer empty periods. Set achievable rent levels - think annual rather than monthly income. Letting speed is always more important than price. You can save yourself a lot of time by qualifying your applicants. This means you will only show your property to tenants meeting your requirements.

If you follow these guidelines you can turn your property into a profitable asset.

**“Very good service combined with reasonable charges...”**

“I have several properties managed by RentSure and find that they provide a very good service combined with reasonable charges. They have always found tenants quickly for me. In addition, they have also arranged Buildings Insurances for me. I would definitely recommend their services.”

**Anne Dean, Cathcart**

# Chapter Six

## Setting Up Your Tenancy

Once you have found some tenants who fit your specification, and who are keen on your property, you need to vet them thoroughly. By doing this, you will be as confident as you can be that they will not only pay the rent but also treat your property with care.

### Vetting & Referencing

This is done slightly differently depending on whether you are letting to working or unemployed tenants but for employed tenants you would:

#### Check Affordability

A good starting point is to check whether your applicant can afford the rent. The rule of thumb to use is that the monthly rent should be no more than 3 to 4% of annual income. See Appendix Three for an online affordability checker.

#### Perform a Credit Check

The purpose of a credit check is to see if your prospective tenant has any financial black marks against their name.

Generally if someone's credit score is good, it means they have a good record in terms of paying credit card bills and loans, so you can be more confident that they will pay your rent. If on the other hand, they happen to have a bad credit rating or even have County Court Judgements (CCJs) showing against them, then there is a significant risk that they will default on your rent.

### **References**

Obtain references for each applicant over the age of 18.

It is always better to go straight to the source for these rather than accepting printed references from the tenant as these could be out of date (and are all too easy to fake!). If you can speak to a referee so much the better.

### **Employer Reference**

A reference should be obtained from the tenant's employer, stating:

- that they are in permanent employment
- their salary.

### **Previous Landlord or Letting Agent**

Get a reference from the applicant's previous letting agent or landlord. If at all possible, contact the agent/landlord they rented with before their current one. The reason for this is that some landlords and agents will give a good reference in order to get rid of a bad tenant.

You want to ask the following:

- did they pay their rent on time?
- did they take care of the property?
- did they pay their bills?
- did they get their full deposit back?

There are some cases where obtaining this type of reference may not be possible, for example they may never have rented before or may have just arrived from overseas. In these cases you may wish to obtain a character reference instead.

### **Guarantor**

A guarantor is someone who agrees to guarantee a tenant's rent. They promise to pay the tenant's rent if they do not or cannot pay it. If you are in any doubt about the tenant's ability to pay, then ask if they can provide a guarantor. The guarantor must be a home-owner and be in permanent employment. They should be vetted in the same way as the tenant. These are the situations where you would expect to ask for a guarantor if the tenant:

- is unable to provide sufficient proof of income
- has adverse credit history
- has income which falls short of the requirements
- is a student
- is in temporary employment
- is unemployed
- has a low credit score
- is in receipt of housing benefit.

### **Acceptance**

Check your references and credit report against the information given by your applicant in their application. If they have given false information or made significant omissions, we would recommend they be rejected.

On the other hand, if they are upfront about bad credit for example and give satisfactory reasons for this, then you may take the view that they have been honest about something which is now in the past. In which case you may wish to give them the benefit of the doubt.

There are many exceptions and special cases – for example self-employed people, retired people and unemployed people. We cannot cover them all here, but a good letting agent will be able to guide you in these cases.

Tenant vetting is something of an art – always be sceptical but never too noseey as this can put a perfectly good tenant off.

### **Online Services**

Many agents outsource their credit and reference checking. Most agents wouldn't tell you this, but many of these services are accessible to independent landlords too. Here are three popular companies you can try:

[www.rentshielddirect.com/landlords.php](http://www.rentshielddirect.com/landlords.php)

[www.leaseguard.co.uk/landlords/referencing.aspx](http://www.leaseguard.co.uk/landlords/referencing.aspx)

[www.letsure.co.uk/landlords/tenantassessment.htm](http://www.letsure.co.uk/landlords/tenantassessment.htm)

### **Lease**

Your tenant will need to sign an AT5 as well as a lease. An AT5 confirms the tenant understands the type of lease entered into (a Short Assured Tenancy).

There are many leases you can download from the internet but be warned that one lease is not necessarily as good as the next. A good source of documents, including leases, is the Letwise section of Edinburgh District Council's website. However, often the best lease is one that has been used for many tenancies and altered over time to cope with the variety of situations which can crop up.

### **Lease Duration**

Although landlords sometimes feel more secure if a tenant signs a lease for longer, we would recommend that the first lease be no longer than six months. The reason for this being that it is easier to end the tenancy if things go wrong.

### **Unemployed Tenants**

If you are letting to unemployed tenants, then get them to sign a mandate which allows you to discuss their Local Housing Allowance (LHA) claim with the local council. If you do not, then the council may refuse to give you updates on the progress of your tenant's application or if their claim suddenly stops refuse to tell you why. You can download a sample mandate from [rentsureletting.com/downloads](http://rentsureletting.com/downloads).



### Repairing Standard

You have a duty to serve the tenant with a letter informing them of their rights under the new “Repairing Standard”. You can find this letter on the prhp website (see Appendix Three). More on the Repairing Standard later in the repairs section.

### Utilities & Council Tax

Once the tenant has moved into the property, these need to be transferred into the name of your new tenant. Your local council will need the names of the people on the lease and the date they moved in; they may also ask for their previous address. Councils often have a backlog of such updates, so be patient if it takes a while for the names to change on the account.

Your utility companies will require the date your tenant moved in and meter readings at that time; they may also ask for their contact number.

Under the Data Protection Act, you are allowed to pass tenants’ names to utility companies but make sure you have their permission should you want to pass any further information about them.

### Bad Tenants

Bad tenants can cause a world of financial and emotional pain: non payment of rent and/or damage to your property. An experienced agent may be able to spot a potential bad tenant more readily than you can. So if they so much as suggest they have doubts, then go with their instinct. It is better to accept a good tenant for slightly less rent than go with a dubious tenant offering more money.

### **Keys**

Each adult named on the lease is entitled to a set of keys for the property, so ensure that these are ready in time for the lease signing. If you are using an agent to manage the property, they will need to hold a set for emergencies and you should, of course, keep a full set for yourself.

### **It's Nice to be Nice**

Anyone who has let a flat before will know that no matter how well you prepare your property, some tenants will come back with a list of grumbles after they move in. Many of these will be valid of course, but you know it's getting silly when you get complaints that the breadbin lid is squeaky!

A great way to "get off on the right foot" with your tenant is to leave a gift for them when they move in. A bottle of wine, flowers or box of chocolates along with a card wishing them a long and happy stay can work wonders. You will find that they will be less inclined to fuss about the small things and we've even had reports of tenants arranging small repairs themselves!

### **Conclusion**

Vetting and referencing are essential to weed out potential bad tenants, giving you the peace of mind that you have selected someone who will look after your property and keep up to date with the rent.

# Chapter Seven

## Managing Your Tenancy

The focus of this book is on letting; property management could fill a book (or several books!) all of its own. That said, I'll include a few points which are especially important for owners to be aware of.

### Repairs

It is very important to see to repairs and maintenance speedily. The obvious reason is to ensure your property is kept in top-notch condition, but another important reason is to make sure that your tenant renews their tenancy.

You would be surprised how many tenants make a decision not to renew their tenancy after bad experiences with landlords not getting repairs done in a timely fashion.

Always budget for repairs that may be required during a tenancy. One way to help mitigate sudden expenses is to get a maintenance contract on your boiler and heating system.

### The Repairing Standard

On 3rd September 2007, a new standard called the "repairing standard" was

introduced. All landlords in the private rented sector now have a duty to adhere to this standard. If they do not then the tenant has the right to apply to the Private Rented Housing Panel (prhp), which has the power to order the landlord to carry out the repairs.

The standard is fairly basic and most properties already meet it. But you have a duty to inform your tenant of it when they sign their lease. See the link to prhp in Appendix Three for more information on this.

### **Decoration**

You will often find that a tenant asks if they can redecorate some or all of the property. This can be a bit annoying especially if you've just had it freshly decorated from top to toe in finest magnolia. You are within your rights to refuse but this request is usually a very good sign as it means that the tenant is keen on making the place their home and wants to stay for a long time.

Just make it clear to them that they need to do it neatly and not use a black and purple colour scheme, or they will need to put right any damage or reinstate it before they leave. You could consider getting the job done professionally and possibly splitting the labour cost with the tenant.

### **Rent Arrears**

If you are in full time employment, it can be hard to keep an eye on the rent coming into your account and to find time to act on it if it doesn't.

Always keep some "slush funds" in your account so that you don't go into overdraft and incur bank charges in the event of a delayed rent payment.

### **Handling Arrears**

As soon as a rent payment is late:

- call the tenant to see if there has been a problem and when you can expect payment

- if you cannot get them on the phone, write to them explaining that they must contact you to arrange payment as soon as possible
- if they do not respond, arrange an inspection of the property (remembering to give at least 24 hours written notice). You may catch them in and be able to discuss rent payment with them. On rare occasions you may find that they have quit the property
- you can also try contacting them at their place of work. This may give an indication as to whether they may have lost their job.

In dealing with rent arrears, our advice is to be understanding but also firm. Agree manageable but strict deadlines by which they must clear arrears and make them aware what will happen if they do not comply.

### **Debt Collection Agents**

If they do not cooperate then consider instructing a debt collection agency to recover the debt. They may be able to come to a repayment arrangement and if not, arrange to arrest the tenant's earnings. They will normally charge an instruction fee and also a percentage of the sum recovered.

Debt collection fees may also be recovered from the tenant, but only if this has been stated in the lease.

### **Eviction**

If your tenant becomes more than three months in arrears, you should start eviction proceedings immediately (you cannot legally do so before this time).

If the tenant has a Short Assured Tenancy, the first step to evict is to serve them with a Notice to Quit, a Section 33 notice and an AT6. Versions of these documents and help with them can be found on the Letwise and Scottish Association of Landlords sites, among others (see Appendix Three). To be valid, these may only be served by recorded delivery or by a Sheriff Officer.

Although serving these documents alone does not oblige the tenant to leave, you will often find that it has this effect. If they do not leave then you are advised to contact a solicitor so that they can initiate court proceedings to evict the tenant.

### **Section 11 of the Homelessness Act**

As of 1st April 2009, all landlords raising court proceedings for possession of a property must notify the relevant Local Authority.

### **Inspections**

Inspections can be done periodically to ensure that the tenant is keeping your property to a satisfactory standard. Do an initial inspection a few weeks after the start of the tenancy. What you see on this occasion will give you a good indication of their standards and will tell you whether you need to conduct more or less frequent inspections in future.

Inspections are a good opportunity to check for maintenance issues. Don't forget that you must give your tenant at least 24 hours written notice when entering the property. However, it is good practice to give more notice than this; treat your tenant as you would wish to be treated yourself.

### **All the other things you need to deal with**

Here are a few other things you'll need to keep an eye on throughout your tenancy:

- Scheduling safety certificates
- Checking and chasing rent
- Dealing with issues with neighbours
- Renewing leases
- Negotiating rent increases
- Updating Utilities and Council Tax before and after each tenancy
- Ending tenancies: checking the inventory, organising repairs and cleaning, returning the deposit

# Chapter Eight

## But I don't have time to do all this!

As we've seen, there's a lot to think about in letting and managing your property. If you're a busy person who just doesn't have time for all of this - or if you'd rather have an experienced professional in your corner - you will probably want to consider using an agent.

Note that many lenders actually stipulate that you use an agent to manage your property, so be sure to check on this if you are considering self managing.

In this chapter, we'll discuss the benefits an agent can bring and also talk about how to choose an effective one.

### Benefits of Using an Agent

The number one reason to use an agent in our opinion is that it is important to have an independent third party as a buffer between you, the landlord, and the tenant.

One of the worst mistakes a landlord can make is becoming too friendly with a tenant. If this happens, it can be harder to take a business-like approach when things go wrong. You may be tempted to let the tenant away with too much and they may even take advantage of your good will.

An agent, on the other hand, is experienced at negotiating with tenants and knows what to say and how to say it. For example, when tenants leave the property, they are far more likely to accept an agent's definition of what constitutes fair wear and tear than they are an owner's. This will save you money in the long run.

### **Agents can get a better price for your property**

A competent agent can often achieve a higher rent for your property than if let privately.

Tenants looking for property to rent in classified ads and free ad websites are looking for a bargain and invariably have less money to spend. Those using agents have more money to spend, are often busy people and are looking for the extra service an agent can provide.

In addition, a good agent will have far more advertising exposure so the demand will be higher and therefore the achievable rent will be too.

### **Using an agent can save you money**

Many people perceive that using an agent is costly. On the contrary, using an agent can save you money. From getting a better rent for your property to negotiating better deals on tradesmen to chasing rent to negotiating with tenants.

An agent can also stop you losing money by ensuring that the proper legal documentation is served at the start of a tenancy, ensuring that – if required - eviction proceedings are initiated promptly and correctly and by keeping an eye on how your tenant is treating the property.

### **Other benefits**

Here some other benefits of using an agent:

- They are experienced at spotting bad tenants
- Their local knowledge means that you let faster



- Greater marketing resources
- Dedicated tradesmen, so jobs get done faster
- Can improve the quality of tenant
- Can achieve higher rents
- Cheaper trades due to bulk buying
- Knowledge of letting legislation
- Experience in dealing with problems.

### Choosing an Agent

It can be tempting to choose an agent based on price alone. This could be dangerous, as standards of service in the industry vary wildly. Even if you wanted to choose on price, this is hard because the headline management rates are usually not the end of the story.

If you see a very low headline rate, you can be sure that there will be other charges, as an agent will barely cover their overheads at this level. If that is not the case then you shouldn't expect much of the service, as they will unavoidably be cutting corners!

And what if you only want the agent to find a tenant? Choosing an agent for a tenant finding service on price alone is also a mistake. Extensive marketing costs money. A cut price service means your property is not getting the market exposure you need.

### Bad Agents

One reason owners will decide to self-let rather than use an agent is not to save money but because they've had a bad experience with an agent. In fact choosing a bad agent can be very damaging, if they provide an unsuitable lease, give bad advice on legislation or do not take action when things go wrong.

So take care in choosing the right agent and you'll significantly reduce the risk of things going wrong in the future.

If a family member or friend can recommend a good agent so much the better.

### **Overvaluing your property**

Beware of agents who will purposefully overestimate the amount of rent you can achieve for your property, or say that they have waiting tenants when they don't. An honest agent will be realistic about the rental potential of your property. A good guide to their track record is to find out what they have let recently, how long it took to let and the rent achieved.

### **What to look for in an agent**

These are some of the things to look for in a good agent:

- Member of a trade body such as the Scottish Association of Landlords
- Advertise on all the major web portals
- Has a continuous staff training programme
- Has a thorough tenant vetting procedure
- Has an accreditation through a body such as Landlord Accreditation Scotland
- Has a landlord registration number; if they do not, then the landlord is liable to pay a fee in order to assess the agent as fit and proper
- Has testimonials or references available from satisfied customers
- Actively manages rent increases
- Performs periodic property inspections
- Will pay your rent out on time. This sounds as if it should be a given but we have heard of agents who take up to six weeks to pay rent to landlords after the tenant pays it to them! A good agent will realise that you most likely have a mortgage to pay and will pay rent out to you as soon as they receive it.
- Has proper office space, in good locations. This will attract better tenants. Some letting agents work from home, and are unable to attract quality tenants.

### **Other agent services**

A good agent should be able to provide a breadth of services to support you in letting your property or building a buy-to-let portfolio:

- Landlord gas safety certificates
- Arrange electrical Periodic Inspection Reports (PIR) and Portable Appliance Tests (PAT)
- Arrange removals
- Supply and deliver furniture (from budget to luxury) and white goods (new or reconditioned)
- Arrange Energy Performance Certificates(EPC)
- Refurbishments and property maintenance
- Advise on suitability of buy-to-let investments
- Provide a tax return preparation service for your let property or portfolio
- Arrange buildings and contents insurances
- Provide a property deal finding/portfolio building service.

### **When things go wrong**

No matter how good or experienced your agent, things can and will go wrong. Roofs will leak, washing machines will break, and boilers will go on the blink. Tenants - being human - are the most unpredictable element in the whole equation and no matter how well vetted, can still pay the rent late, lose their jobs or even just disappear. How an agent deals with these problems when they arise, is the true test of how good they are.

To give an extreme example, one property we manage in a less salubrious area of Glasgow recently experienced a spate of vandalism, following the departure of the previous tenant. The RentSure property managers took control of the situation, liaising with local police, the landlord and the new tenant. By temporarily boarding up the windows, cutting back the hedge at the front of the property and installing security lighting, they successfully stopped the vandalism, enabling the new tenant to move in.

### **Conclusion**

Using an agent can save you money as well as time but choosing the wrong agent is a mistake which has cost many landlords dearly. Look for things like professional accreditation and customer testimonials to give yourself confidence that your agent will live up to their promises.

**“Of the 5 letting agents I contacted, they were the ones that I felt were professional and honest...”**

“The staff at RentSure are friendly and efficient. My flat has been rented out for the last year and I have been very happy with the service. I chose them because I felt out of the 5 letting agents I contacted, they were the ones that I felt were professional and honest, which I felt was what I wanted out of a letting agent. I would highly recommend them.”

**Christine Morrison, Pollokshields**

# Chapter Nine

## How to Get Paid Even if Your Property is Empty

Having read the book thus far you will now be better informed to make the right choice about how you choose to manage the letting of your property. Of course you should always do your own research and choose a letting agent that provides a service to fit your needs.

In this chapter we give an overview of our range of services - from the simplicity of our Tenant Find service to the rock-solid security of our RentSure Pro service. We'll explore the benefits of each, to help you decide which one may be right for you.

### **RentSure Pro: Rent Guarantee Service**

Whenever we talk to landlords, they always tell us their two biggest problems are budgeting for periods when their property is empty and the fear of non-paying tenants. This is why we introduced our new **RentSure Pro Rent Guarantee service**.

### **Will you have enough in your bank account to pay your mortgage if your tenant stops paying rent?**

A good agent will do all she can to find a quality tenant but circumstances change and your tenant may stop paying. You will be left to pay the mortgage with your own means and you may even have to foot solicitor and court bills to have the tenant evicted.

### **Will you have enough to cover the gaps between tenancies?**

RentSure Letting has extensive market coverage that makes sure your property gets let in the quickest possible time. However, voids between tenancies are getting longer due to the current oversupply of properties on the market.

### **You get peace of mind**

Our new RentSure **Pro Rent Guarantee** service solves both of these problems. Based on the location, condition and type of your property, we will agree an amount of rent that will be paid for the year. Your rent then gets paid each month whether the tenant is paying or not and even if the property is empty. **Guaranteed.** Of course, we can only offer a service such as this for selected properties but for those that qualify, the benefits are clear.

### **You can plan your budget with certainty**

You will know exactly how much will be in your account each and every month. If your property is empty, your rent gets paid. If your tenant stops paying, your rent gets paid.

### **Court action is paid for**

Should your tenant break the terms of the lease and need to be evicted, we will foot your solicitor bill.

### **You can relax and let us do the legwork**

We'll do all the accompanied viewings, vet the tenants and prepare all the

paperwork and legal documentation. We are well versed in dealing with problems that arise during tenancies and have all the resources to resolve them.

### No Fees

There are no fees or commission with RentSure Pro, keeping your costs to a minimum.

### RentSure Premium: Full Management Service

If you are looking for a complete, **hands-off management service** for your property then the RentSure Premium service is for you.

You get all the benefits of the RentSure Standard Tenant Find service **plus**, once the tenant has signed their lease, we will do everything for you including:

- Prepare a full inventory and condition report - including digital photographs - **reducing the change of disputes** when your tenant leaves
- Manage all repairs and maintenance, **saving you the headache** of dealing with tradesmen
- Schedule and arrange all safety checks, **saving you the hassle** of remembering when they are due
- Collect rent and pay it into your bank account as soon as we receive it, reducing the chance of incurring charges when your mortgage payment comes out
- Save you time and hassle by pursuing unpaid rent and managing arrears, instructing debt collection agents where necessary
- If a tenant breaks the terms of their lease and needs to be evicted we will Issue Notice to Quit, Section 33 and AT6 documents and instruct a solicitor (solicitor fees will be the landlord's responsibility)
- Schedule and negotiate rent increases, where appropriate
- Perform periodic inspections, so that you are **safe in the knowledge** that your property is being kept a satisfactory standard

- Check the tenant out of the property, check the inventory and manage the return of their deposit.

### RentSure Basic: Tenant Find Service

If you are confident that you have the time and skill to manage your property yourself, then we can find a tenant for you, set up the tenancy and then hand everything over to you. Remember, if you are considering self managing, check with your lender to make sure that they allow this.

- Your property will get the best market exposure in the business, meaning that you'll have the largest **pool of quality tenants to choose from**:
  - o Marketing on up to 50 internet sites including S1homes, GSPC, Gumtree, Citylets, LettingWeb, FindAProperty, PropertyFinder and, of course, rentsureletting.com
  - o To-let board and window posters
  - o Display in our high-profile office window
  - o Marketed to our existing client bank via email, SMS text message and telephone
  - o Promoted by Bluetooth. (What this means is that people passing nearby our office will receive a message on their Bluetooth-enabled mobile phone or PDA.)
- **You won't miss out** on quality professional tenants who cannot view during office hours, with our fully accompanied evening and weekend viewing service. (We do daytime viewings too, of course!)
- You can be **secure in the knowledge** that your tenant has been thoroughly vetted using our stringent credit checking and referencing procedure
- You save time by letting us set up the tenancy and all associated documentation. With our tried and tested lease **you'll be protected** against most eventualities a tenancy can throw at you.
- The lease will not be signed until we collect the first month's rent and the deposit. To make things **easy for you**, we will subtract any fees and



pay these out to you, as soon as they hit our account

- You **avoid the hassle** of additional admin as we will contact the utility companies and local council, on your behalf, to move all the accounts into your tenant's name

Once we've done the initial work, management responsibility passes over to the landlord. You will need to collect future rent and the tenant will contact you directly with any problems, so you need to be sure that you have the time and resources to deal with this.

When the tenant leaves, you will be responsible for checking the inventory and for the return of the tenant's deposit.

### What Next?

We are offering readers of this book a **Free Consultation** with one of our experienced valuers. Our valuer will visit you at your property at a time convenient to you (this can be daytime, evening or even weekend). They will provide the following – all completely without obligation or cost to yourself!

- If you are new to letting, advice on legislation and how to prepare to become a landlord
- Advice on your target market and how best to prepare your property for them
- Your own personal rental valuation, supported by comparables from your local area
- A full explanation of our services and how to choose the best one to suit your needs

**However**, we can only do ten of these per month and it'll be on a first come first served basis. So make sure you don't miss out and call **0141 334 7030** now to book your appointment. Simply quote 'SLCC' when you call.

As an added bonus, we are offering a **free Energy Performance Certificate** to the first 5 customers to sign up to one of our services, so don't waste any time and call **0141 334 7030** now!

## Appendix One: Letting Checklist

Use this handy checklist to help you keep track of all the things you need to do to get your home ready to let. This is available to download and print at [rentsureletting.com/downloads](https://rentsureletting.com/downloads).

Task	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Before Marketing Property</b>	
Arrange an EPC *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain permission to let from your lender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform your insurer of your intention to let	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remove any furnishings not complying with fire and furnishings safety regulations *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean the property *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tidy the garden *	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Before Lease Signing</b>	
Instruct PIR and PAT electrical inspections *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrange mail redirection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fit a smoke alarm to each floor of the property *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disconnect your landline	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare an Inventory and Condition report *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fit a carbon monoxide detector to each floor of the property *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain a Landlords Gas Safety Certificate *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Register as a landlord with you local authority *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cancel newspaper and milk deliveries	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remove all personal items and any of value	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Lease Signing</b>	
Inform local council for Council Tax purposes *	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inform Utility companies of readings etc. *	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* **RentSure Letting** can arrange this for you

## Appendix Two: Agent Checklist

If you are going to use an agent, you can use this checklist when interviewing them. This is available to download and print at [rentsureletting.com/downloads](http://rentsureletting.com/downloads).

	<b>RentSure Letting</b>	<b>Agent B</b>	<b>Agent C</b>
Members of Landlord Accreditation Scotland?	✓		
Can provide at least 10 customer testimonials?	✓		
Accompanied viewings in evenings and weekends?	✓		
Will pay rent out immediately it arrives?	✓		
Advertise on at least 2 networks or 30 websites?	✓		
Will promote your property via email, text message and Bluetooth?	✓		
No hidden charges?	✓		

## **Appendix Three: Useful Links**

These are some links that may be useful when letting your property; they are all available online at [rentsureletting.com/links](http://rentsureletting.com/links).

### **Scottish Association of Landlords**

[www.scottishlandlords.com](http://www.scottishlandlords.com)

### **Landlord Accreditation Scotland**

[www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com](http://www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com)

### **Landlord Registration**

[www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk)

### **The Scotland Property Networking Club**

[www.spnc.co.uk](http://www.spnc.co.uk)

### **Inland Revenue: Overseas landlords section**

[www.hmrc.gov.uk/cnr/nr\\_landlords.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/cnr/nr_landlords.htm)

### **Inland Revenue: form NRL1**

[www.hmrc.gov.uk/cnr/nrl1.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/cnr/nrl1.pdf)

### **EPC legislation (Scottish Building Standards)**

[www.sbsa.gov.uk/epc.htm](http://www.sbsa.gov.uk/epc.htm)

### **Council Tax bandings (Scottish Assessors Association)**

[www.saa.gov.uk/glasgow/](http://www.saa.gov.uk/glasgow/)

### **Local Housing Allowance rates**

<https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/Secure/LHARateSearch.aspx?SearchType=LA>

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47060/0028721.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47060/0028721.pdf)

### **Landlords Data Protection FAQ**

[www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data\\_protection/detailed\\_specialist\\_guides/disclosing\\_information\\_about\\_tenants.pdf](http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/detailed_specialist_guides/disclosing_information_about_tenants.pdf)

### **Rent Affordability Calculator**

[www.rentshielddirect.com/affordability\\_calculator.php](http://www.rentshielddirect.com/affordability_calculator.php)

### **Letwise (Edinburgh City Council)**

[www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/housing/private\\_tenants\\_and\\_home\\_owners/letwise](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/housing/private_tenants_and_home_owners/letwise)

### **Private Rented Housing Panel (prhp)**

<http://www.prhpscotland.gov.uk/prhp/137.26.33.html>

## **Sign up for the FREE RentSure Letting Newsletter!**

Our free monthly newsletter is the best way for you to keep up to date on buy-to-let! Written by our in-house experts, it comes straight to your inbox every month and contains the following:

- Great ideas on how to let your property faster
- Up to the minute news and comment on the buy-to-let market
- All the latest from the world of property
- In-depth articles on different aspects of property and letting
- Exclusive special offers from us and from carefully selected partners.

Just visit [rentsureletting.com/newsletter](https://rentsureletting.com/newsletter), submit the form and we will email you the latest edition straight away!

(You can cancel at any time and we will not share your details with any other company.)

## Contact Us

We'd love to hear from you so choose your office and mode of communication and get in touch!



### Byres Road, West End

Situated near the bottom of Byres Road and close to Partick Cross. From here we cover the whole of the West End and City Centre.

49 Byres Road

G11 5RG

Tel. 0141 334 7030

Fax. 0845 009 71 31

Email. [westend@rentsureletting.com](mailto:westend@rentsureletting.com)

### Queens Park, South Side

Our original office and the hub of our property management operations. This location – just by Pollokshaws Road – lets us pay close attention to our customers in Pollokshields, Queens Park, Shawlands and other South Side locations.

10 Allison Street

G42 8NN

Tel. 0141 423 9740

Fax. 0845 009 5954

Email. [southside@rentsureletting.com](mailto:southside@rentsureletting.com)





