

Top Tips for Tenants

Your guide to renting a warm,
safe and secure house



**Homes can be bad for our health.
Your rented home should be safe,
dry and warm to live in.**

Things to consider when you find the property you want to rent

- How long is the contract? How much notice will you need to give before you move out?
- Work out the rent for the whole contract period to find the best deal.
- Read the contract before you sign it and insist on a copy once it has been agreed. Don't allow yourself to be pressurised to sign the contract, request a blank copy to read through. Remember verbal contracts are still legally binding.
- Three storey properties where 5 or more unrelated people are sharing some of the facilities must be licensed by the council.
- Check there are adequate locks on the doors and windows. If you are renting a room in a house shared with others, there should be a lock on your bedroom door.
- Check there are sufficient smoke/fire detectors in the house for the type of household.
- Check the heating and hot water system works throughout the property.
- Make sure there are no patches of mould in the rooms – this may need action by the landlord.
- Shared properties may require additional facilities or fire protection.
For further information look at the council's website, email or telephone the Strategic Housing Services Team on **01707 357672** or **strategichousing@welhat.gov.uk**.
- All rented properties must have an up to date gas safety certificate. Ask to see the current gas safety certificate, and any current electrical safety certificates for the property.
- Ask about the insulation standards of the property and if there is an Energy Performance Certificate. Is there cavity wall and/or loft insulation? If this work has not been done your fuel bills may be higher than expected.

www.welhat.gov.uk

The paperwork – what you sign

Deposits and Fees

You may be asked for a deposit, returnable at the end of your tenancy. Any deposit must be protected through one of the three government approved tenancy deposit protection schemes:

My Deposits

(www.mydeposits.co.uk)

The Deposit Protection Service

(www.depositprotection.com)

The Dispute Service

(www.thedisputeservice.co.uk)

If this is not done, you may be entitled to compensation of up to three times the original deposit, plus the deposit itself.

Find out if there are any other fees that you may have to pay such as administration or reservation fees. Ask if these are refundable if for any reason you are unable to move in.

Inventory

You will be given an inventory of the house contents and condition to check and sign. Check the condition of decoration and fittings etc and that the list of items supplied by the landlord is accurate before you agree it.

If there are already stains on carpets, or other damage etc. take a photo, and include it with the inventory, otherwise you may lose your deposit when you leave.

Inform your landlord in writing immediately there is a problem.

Insurance

You should consider carefully the need to arrange insurance for your possessions. You need to check if the insurers require locks on bedroom doors.

Renting and the law

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk assessment tool used to assess potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties in England and Wales.

If you think you are living in poor or unhealthy conditions in your privately rented accommodation, complain in writing to the landlord or letting agent first, but if nothing is done, we may be able to help you.

If you are renting a room/flat/house and believe any of the following conditions exist, you may need to contact us (see below) for further advice and/or an inspection of your property:

- Damp
- Inadequate or no heating
- Inadequate or no fire protection
- Safety issues (e.g. low level glazing or dangerous steps)
- Inadequate or no natural light or ventilation
- Dangerous electrics or gas
- Overcrowding
- Poor security
- Inadequate facilities (e.g. kitchen and bathroom)

Contact details

For further information and assistance you can use our Private Sector Housing Telephone Hotline **01707 357618** or alternatively e-mail housingneedsadmin@welhat-cht.org.uk

You can also contact the Council's Private Sector Housing Team

housingneedsadmin@welhat-cht.org.uk

Tel: 01707 357672

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Campus East
Welwyn Garden City AL8 6AE

More information is on our website:
www.welhat.gov.uk

Putting people first.

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HATFIELD**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

