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Dear Landlord

I hope that this email finds you, your family and friends in good state of health and not adversely affected by COVID 19.

The following is a brief update on our service and the recent changes in legislation which affect you as a Landlord.

OUR SERVICE

Office arrangements and contact

We started returning our team to the office mid-May and, as social distancing restrictions were relaxed a little, I am pleased to confirm that we had a full office-based team by early July. In line with Government guidelines, we continue to adhere to our PPE protocols both on outside appointments and in the office. Additionally, we are continuing with our 'closed door' policy to protect everyone. However, we are still here for you. Please see our dedicated contact details above.

Periodic inspections

If you recall, we were forced to put these appointments on hold temporarily immediately before lock down. These were re-instated early June and extra resources were diverted to getting things up-to-date. I am delighted to say that we have substantially caught up although where a tenant was shielding, for example, this has taken a bit longer. If you have a particular concern about your property and/or your tenants at this time, please contact our Property Management team straightaway.

Rent payments & Covid 19

Our Accounts team are working hard to ensure that, as far as practicably possible, tenants are paying their rent on time. We appreciate the support that you have offered by way of deferment and payment plans where your tenant has had a temporary period of financial hardship. I assure you that in cases of reduced/non-payment, our Accounts team rigorously question tenants to satisfy themselves of the validity of their reported circumstances before contacting you. Whilst a very large percentage of tenants continue to pay their rent regularly and on time, nonetheless in the current economic climate, it is essential to consider putting a rent protection/legal expenses cover in place. As at the time of emailing we are awaiting our insurance provider's updated T's and C's. If you are keen to know more, please contact Tenancy team.

Repairs and Gas safety inspections arising during lockdown

I am delighted to report that these matters are up-to-date. Any access issues during lockdown have been resolved. Please can I take this opportunity to remind landlords who have their own dedicated gas contractor that the gas safety certificate (LGSC) must be sent to our Property Management team straight away. There is a legal requirement to provide a copy of the certificate to the Tenant within 28 days of renewal. Failure to serve this certificate within this timescale will compromise your ability to secure possession of your property.

With the colder weather on the horizon in the coming months why not consider protection on the boiler at your property? For as little as £16 a month, our Landlord boiler care also includes the cost of the annual LGSC. For more details please contact our Property Management team.

CHANGES IN LEGISLATION

Electric safety regulations

For many years, to protect your interest and ensure the safety of your tenant, we have insisted that your rental property has an electric safety check before we create a new tenancy. Our decision to insist on this was a reflection of the considerable raft of case law and landlord prosecutions for electric safety breaches. As of 1 July 2020, it is a *statutory* legal requirement to have an electric safety inspection/certificate (EICR) for a rental property carried out every 5 years. This is called a 'Periodic Certificate' and every property needs to have a current certificate by 1 April 2021. As with the LGSC, a copy of the EICR must be provided to a tenant within 28 days. The good news is that we have a number of tried and tested electrical contractors available to support this important requirement. Our Property Management team have a structured programme of landlord contact leading up to the compliance cut-off date. This is based around the tenancy renewal date. However, if you have any concerns about how this affects your property, please contact Property Management.

Energy Performance and Rating

All rental properties must now have a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) bearing a rating of 'E' or above. The EPC lasts for 10 years and is a certification that we can organise for you. Our Property Management team are in touch with landlords whose properties have been affected by this update.

Gaining possession of your property

When I last wrote to you during lockdown, I advised that to reflect the uncertainty arising due to COVID 19, the Government increased the notice period for a landlord to end a tenancy from 2 months' notice to 3 months' notice. At the end of August, the Government increased the notice period to 6 months. These updated rules will apply until the end of March next year. This is a very significant change especially if you were anticipating securing possession of your property in the immediate future.

As you know, we contact both you and your tenant with our 'renewal intentions' email well in advance of the end of the current fixed period of the tenancy. On a practical level, the changes mean that we will appear to be contacting you months ahead of the expiry of the tenancy. Pending that contact from us, if you are thinking you may want your property back and you are unsure of the expiry date of the current one, please contact our Tenancy team and they will guide you.

SUMMARY

It's not all doom and gloom! By far the vast majority of tenants do actually look after your property and pay their rent on time. And, despite the fact that landlords have had to cope with shy of 20 new pieces of legislation over the last 6 years or so, having a rental property remains a sound and secure investment. Without a doubt, private rented sector demand will rise over the coming years.

If you have any queries at all about your property, please contact us. We are here for you.

Thank you for trusting us with your property interests!

Kind regards

Fiona Barbour
General Manager of Residential Lettings

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