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Welcome
to the 9th Edition of
the London Landlord

THE LONDON LANDLORD

It is probably no surprised that the general economic situation continues to have an effect on the private rented sector. The Council of Mortgage Lenders reports that new buy-to-let (BTL) lending has declined by 18% in the first six months of 2008 compared to the second half of 2007. , however, this is less than the 28 % seen in the general market

Buy-to-let (BTL) arrears are also lower than general market, but they are rising faster than in the wider market and despite now being 1.1%, this is a 75% increase in the first six months of this year. Also of concern is that there have been 1800 repossessions of BTL mortgages, a 100% increase, which is twice the rate of increase in the general market

Mortgages are becoming harder to get with the number of products on the market having fallen by over 90%. At the same times as the interest rates have increased, the rental income required by lenders has risen by 16% with average maximum loan-to-values have slipped to 83% from 85%. This means on average you will need a 17% equity stake in the property

On the positive side the income form rents seems to be holding up and increasing in some locations and new mortgage products are beginning to come onto to the market.

Inside this issue

►Forward by Dave Princep
►When Should I Use Section 21?
►Major Tax Changes in 2008
►London Landlords with One Bed & Studio Flats Get Option to Lease
►Bringing Empty Properties Back into use – Now Less Taxing
► A Landlords Guide to Energy Performance Certificates

We are currently revamping the LLAS website and although you will not see any changes at the moment to the site, major development and improvements are taking place. We will be taking this opportunity to contact all members individually to explain in more detail the changes and improvements we have made not only the website, but also the scheme itself. The changes will require you to recommit to the scheme and to confirm your contact details, but we will be in touch shortly with more details. Enjoy this edition and do let us know if you would like to see any topics covered or have any suggests for change.

Hope you enjoy this issue

Dave Princep
Chair of the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme

Let's turn empty houses into homes

For every family who are homeless there are four properties lying neglected and unused.* That's over 15,000 potential homes across Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Islington and Westminster - empty and abandoned.**

We can help owners with the following:
- Grants to develop properties to rent
- Financial help for owners to use a property to live in
- Services of an improvement agency to carry out repairs

Remember, we have powers to make you sell or lease your property to us, if you continue to neglect it. Empty properties don't benefit anyone. Help us put them to good use.

If you see an empty property in north London, or for advice, contact us on **0800 953 6305** or **www.nlep.co.uk**

BARNET LONDON BOROUGH · Camden · ENFIELD Council · Haringey Council · City of Westminster · ISLINGTON

*Data taken across England. Source: Empty Homes Agency, 2001.
**There are 15,634 empty private properties across these six boroughs. Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, April 2005.

Do you feel the cold?

If you own your home or if you rent from a private landlord you could benefit from the Warmth and Comfort Scheme.[1]

British Gas is working in partnership with six boroughs in North London to improve the warmth and comfort of private homes.

This scheme aims to provide people like you with free heating improvements.

These improvements will keep you and your loved ones warmer for years to come and lower your heating bills.

The Warmth and Comfort Scheme offers:
- FREE cavity wall insulation
- FREE loft insulation
- FREE central heating systems/improvements

For a FREE Home Energy Survey which provides advice on how to make your home warmer and how to save money on your heating bills, call 0800 652 0782 Monday to Friday. Lines open 8am to 8pm.

To qualify for this scheme: 1) you must live in one of the six participating boroughs; 2) receive one of the qualifying benefits; and 3) your heating requires improvements as determined by the surveyor at the time of the survey. Lines open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday. Your call may be recorded and/or monitored for quality assurance and compliance purposes. BT customers will be charged a minimum of 4p per minute for this call (or 1p per minute during evenings and weekends). A call set up fee of 3p per call applies from residential lines. Non BT customers should check the cost of the call with their provider. This is a limited scheme, subject to availability. Eligibility is subject to the home failing the Decent Home Standard.

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TM

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www.LandlordZONE.co.uk

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homefinders@brent.gov.uk
www.brent.gov.uk/homefinders

New Scheme Leases Private Homes to Croydon Residents

In May 2008, Croydon Council launched a pilot to provide more homes for Croydon residents by leasing 3-bedroom houses from private landlords.

The Croylease Scheme allows private landlords to lease their properties to Corydon Council for a period of 5 renewable to10 years.

As well as providing a guaranteed income for the period of the lease, the council manage and maintain the property for the landlord, eliminating the risks normally associated with letting on the open market Landlords signing up also have the option of buying property for the scheme using branded mortgage products from Bradford and Bingley, negotiated by the council at preferential rates. Landlords may choose to make their own arrangements to secure a loan, or can lease property which they already own.

Landlords wishing to participate in the scheme are issued with specific criteria for the types of properties needed by the council to ensure that prospective properties meet the 2010 decent homes standards. Renovation and repairs prior to the council entering into a lease are carried out by the landlord. Following the lease, all maintenance and repairs are undertaken by the Council. The lease rents are paid to the landlord regardless of whether there are any void periods or tenant arrears.

Initially up to fifty 3-bedroom houses will be leased across the borough under the Croylease scheme for five years, with the option to expand the scheme.

More information about the scheme is available from the Housing Specialist Team on
Tel: 020 8726 6100.

Residential Landlords Division
Harbour House, 126 Thorpe Road Norwich NR1 1UL Email: landlords@abib.co.uk

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Solicitor Tessa Shepperson answers landlords FAQ. This issue: When should I use Section 21

Contact Tessa with any Landlord queries that you have, headed 'LLAS FAQ'

Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 provides for landlords of assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) to recover possession of their property as of right, provided they follow the correct procedure.

What does it involve?
To use s21 you need to serve a notice first. If your tenant does not leave at the end of the notice period, you then need to issue proceedings for possession in the county court local to the property.

The notice
There is no prescribed format, but you should use a form which is professionally drafted, as the rules are very strict and many landlords have lost their claim for possession due to errors on the form. An ordinary letter asking them to go will **not** be sufficient.

There are slight differences in the requirements for notices served during and after the expiry of the fixed term

- Notices served ***during the fixed term*** must give a notice period of not less than 2 months which must not end before the end of the fixed term.
- Notices served ***after the fixed term has ended***, it must in addition state that possession will be required under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, and give a date after which possession will be required, which date **must** be the last date of a period of the tenancy. The date for possession therefore will be between two and three months time, depending on when in the month the notice is served.

Whichever notice is served, provided it is properly drafted, it will continue to be enforceable (even months or years after the expiry date) until it is ended by a new tenancy agreement/renewal form being signed.

Accelerated possession proceedings
This is a court procedure you can use for s21 claims. Although called 'accelerated' it is not actually particularly quick (about 8-12 weeks). Its advantage is that (provided your paperwork is correct) possession is given by the Judge without any hearing. However as his decision is based on the paperwork, this must be perfect, and you will not be able to use it if you do not have the original (if there is more than one) and the current tenancy agreement. You can still get your possession order using s21, but you will not be able to use this special procedure.

When s21 cannot be used
It cannot be used by landlords who are breaking the law in two circumstances:

- Landlords whose property should be licensed as an HMO but is not, and
- Landlords who have failed to protect the tenancy deposit (this does not apply to deposits paid before 07/04/2007 where the tenancy has never been renewed)

It also cannot be used for non ASTs, e.g. company lets, tenancies with resident landlords, and tenancies where the rent is over £25,000pa.

So when should it be used?
Whenever possible. If you want to recover possession from your tenant the s21 route if by far the best because (provided the paperwork is correct) it is automatic. It is also non confrontational, as you are not accusing your tenant of any wrong doing.

For example if your tenant is behaving badly, using the 'bad tenant' grounds in the Housing Act is possible, but as they are 'discretionary' your tenant can put in a defence, and the Judge may decide to give him a second chance (in fact he normally will). Defended cases can also become very expensive. In contrast the section 21/accelerated procedure route is fairly straight forward. So if you use solicitors it will be less expensive. It is also something many landlords successfully do for themselves (particularly with the help of Landlord-Law do-it-yourself kit 3). You should only use the 'bad tenant' grounds if the tenants behaviour is so serious that you cannot wait to use section 21 – in reality this is very rare.

For rent arrears situations, note that the accelerated procedure cannot be used to claim a money judgement (and you risk the Judge throwing the case out if you try), plus if your tenant falls into arrears at the start of a long fixed term, you will not want to wait until it ends!

However there are many situations where landlords can use s21 for rent arrears situations. If you want a money judgement you can always bring a separate concurrent claim for a CCJ.

Basically if you want possession, check to see if the section 21 route is possible. If so it should be used, as it will be easier, cheaper, and in many cases, quicker.

© *Tessa Shepperson 2008*

Tessa Shepperson is a solicitor and author, and runs the popular Landlord-Law site at www.landlordlaw.co.uk. Do-it-yourself kits for possession can be purchased online.

Accredited Landlords can claim **20% discount** off their first year's membership of Landlord-Law (not to be combined with any other offer). For further info write "LLAS Discount" in the subject box.

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Brent Council · Ealing www.ealing.gov.uk · h&f hammersmith & fulham · Harrow Council London · Hillingdon · Hounslow · The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea · West London Housing Partnership

Major Tax Changes in 2008

This is a further article by David Kibel FCA on tax matters relevant to Landlords.

This year's Budget and Finance Act have brought in some significant changes to taxation. This article examines the main changes as they affect Capital Gains Tax, Inheritance Tax and overseas income

Capital Gains Tax

With effect from 6th April 2008, Capital Gains will be charged at a flat rate of 18%. The benefits of Indexation and Taper Relief have been withdrawn, though the basic exemptions for personal residences still continue. All assets held as at 31st March 1982 are to be revalued as at that date, and Capital Gains will be calculated using that value as the base cost.

Overall this appears to be beneficial to Landlords who let out their residential properties, though there is a potential loss of relief for commercial Landlords. Capital Gains Tax at 18% is less than the 24% which would have been available using full taper relief in cases where indexation was not available, and a lot less than 40% for properties held for less than 2 years.

As mentioned above, Private Residence relief remains, so that a property which was once an individual's home and is now let out, will still benefit from the exemptions available for the time that the property was the private residence of the that person (plus the last 3 years of ownership in any event), and there is also Lettings Relief available. Where properties are held jointly between spouses or civil partners, the Lettings Relief can be effectively doubled and each can benefit from the tax-free annual amount

Inheritance Tax

The major change in Inheritance Tax has been the relaxation whereby an unused nil rate band from a deceased spouse can be transferred to the surviving spouse or civil partner. The effect is that where a surviving spouse dies, the IHT nil rate band available at their death is increased by the proportion of the nil rate band that was not used on the death of their former spouse. Where someone has been married more than once previously, there are provisions to limit the increase in the nil rate band to a maximum of twice the current level

Where the first spouse has died many years ago, it may well be difficult to prove what nil rate band remained available at that time, so that as much evidence as possible should be retained.

This would include the death certificate, marriage or civil partnership certificate, grant of representation or probate, and a copy of the Will and of any Deed of Variation.

This is particularly important in connection with estates for landlords where property values have increased such as to create a potentially large Inheritance Tax liability. This relaxation can save Inheritance Tax of almost £125,000.

Overseas Income

The other significant change affecting landlords relates to those who are resident in the UK but domiciled abroad, and who have used the "remittance basis" of taxation until the end of last tax year.

Under the remittance basis, whilst such taxpayers were taxed like other UK residents on their income and gains arising in the UK, they were only taxed on any income or gains earned overseas that they remitted to this country, and not taxed on income or gains which arose outside of the UK but not sent here.

The changes mean that those who opt to use the remittance basis from 6th April 2008 will lose their entitlement to the UK personal allowance and will have to pay a flat rate remittance basis charge of £30,000 per annum (this would be £60,000 for married couples who each opt for this basis). The alternative is for those taxpayers to be charged to tax in the UK on their worldwide income, subject to normal double tax relief rules.

It is important to note that the new rules only apply to people over 18 years of age at the end of the tax year, who have over £2,000 of unremitted foreign income or gains, and who have been resident in the UK for at least 7 of the previous 9 tax years. Furthermore, taxpayers entitled to claim the remittance basis are able to decide on a year-by-year basis whether they want to do so.
This particular set of rules is extremely complicated and proper professional advice is essential.

This article is written to provide general guidance only. All cases are different, and proper professional advice should be obtained in every instance. No liability is accepted for action taken as a result of this article.

For advice to save tax and improve your investment returns,
email info@lawrencegrantkibel.co.uk

with ***"Free Property Report"*** in the subject header, and your name and address in the body of the email. Alternatively please contact **David Kibel at Lawrence Grant Kibel Limited on 020 8416 3322** to discuss your specific situation.

Get more from Simple

Landlords accredited to the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme already benefit from a generous discount on Simple Landlords Insurance and now we are giving you even more.

To help with those unforeseen mishaps **Simple** Landlords Insurance is now offering **FREE** Accidental Damage on Buildings Insurance to landlord's who have professional or retired tenants. Even the most reliable of tenants can sometimes have that unforeseen accident, burning the kitchen worktop or cracking the bathroom sink.

To ensure you benefit from this additional **FREE** cover simply log on to www.simplelandlordsinsurance.com and key in the promotion code LAS001 and make sure you select Accidental Damage in the Buildings option.

Whether you're looking for a better deal on your current landlords insurance or need to cover your first buy to let property, the answer is **Simple**. Life can be complicated enough when you're a landlord. So when it comes to insuring your property, why not keep things **Simple**?

- **Simple Landlords Insurance** is one of the first complete online services for providing low cost Landlords Insurance with great cover. We can offer you a full end-to-end online process, enabling you to manage your policy online quick and easy. **Simple** offers you:
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- **Cover for a range of tenants** – where other insurers restrict cover to certain tenant types, **Simple** covers professionals, students, holiday homes, asylum seekers and all other tenant types
- **Landlord liability insurance** – **Simple** offer £2,000,000 as standard, upgradeable to £5,000,000 in case of unforeseen accidents on your property
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- **No hidden charges** – the price you see, is the price you pay
- **Free** 24 hour claims line – should you need any assistance
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We know that every landlord has different requirements for their let property insurance, that's why we at **Simple** offer a wide range of options to help the landlord achieve the precise level of cover to suit individual circumstances and budget.

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The **Public Health Training Service** has developed new training courses that are available throughout London. There are currently two courses available:

- Public health in housing

Fire safety in HMO's

The sessions run for an hour and can be conducted in-house if 6 or more people can attend, otherwise a convenient training room will be provided. They are available for £15 per person and are ideally suited for a lunch time session or morning breakfast session. Topics covered in the courses can include HHSRS information, landlord responsibilities, HMO licensing the fire safety protocol, gas safety, grants available and asbestos.

Why attend?

- Avoid enforcement action
- Keep up-to-date with housing issues
- Profit from better practices
- Earn CPD points towards your London Landlord Accreditation Scheme certification

Details and how to book can be found at:www.rbkc.gov.uk/environmentalservices/training

t: 020 7361 3002

e: public.health.training@rbkc.gov.uk

positive initiatives for your business

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

Lewisham Private Sector Landlord Forum

Date: Tuesday 23rd September 2008
Time: 3pm to 7pm
Venue: The Civic Suite. Room 2 Lewisham Town Hall Catford SE6 4RU

Information stalls regarding initiatives engaging with the private rented sector will be staffed during the evening. Officers will be available during the evening should you have any requests for information or advice regarding private sector housing matters.

For further info, please contact Nick Long at nick.long@lewisham.gov.uk

Buy-to-let Landlords link with Leasing Providers in win-win housing schemes

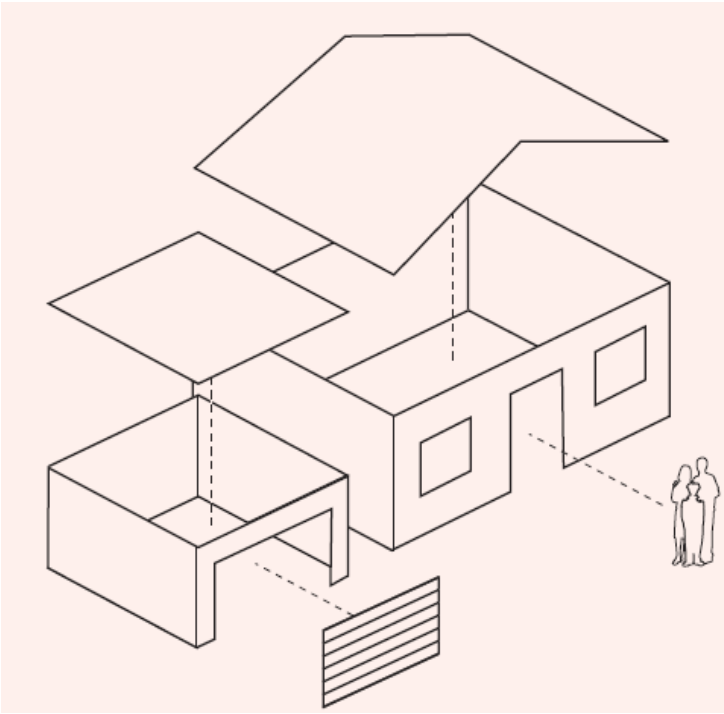
Evidence emerged this week that the credit crunch could be starting to affect buy-to-let landlords. The Royal Institution of Charted Surveyors (RICS) said instructions to let residential properties in the UK fell in the fourth quarter of 2007 – the first decline since its 1998 survey. The fall is thought to be partly a result of less competitive buy-to-let mortgages being available as lenders tighten their criteria.

Given this uncertain environment, landlords are looking for as much security as possible when it comes to letting out their properties. They can find this security through innovative schemes allowing councils – in partnership with leasing providers such as Omega Lettings Ltd (www.omegalettings.com - 020 8988 2838) to provide quality accommodation to people who have lost their homes. It should also provide landlords with long-term tenants as the scheme guarantees rental income for three years.

Private Sector Leasing schemes that are run by Omega Lettings Ltd, a private-sector manager of leased social housing throughout East and North London are now attracting a number of private sector landlords. Landlords are attracted to the schemes as they receive a guaranteed rental income, with no voids, for three years and no agency fees.

For further information on Private Sector Leasing guaranteed rent schemes throughout East and North London, Omega Lettings Ltd can be contacted on 020 8988 2838 or @ www.omegalettings.com.

OMEGA



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Wanna tell you a story,
About the house-man blues
I come home one Friday,
Had to tell the landlady I'd-a lost my job
She said that don't confront me,
Long as I get my money next Friday
Now next Friday come I didn't get the rent,
And out the door I went

And that's the way it used to be. Now days the law is more specific. When Friday came, you would have to wait until several months rent was owed and then you could serve a section 8 notice giving two clear weeks notice until an application to the court could be submitted, you then have around a 3 month process to gain possession whilst rent is not being paid but the mortgage has to be covered and legal expenses rise.

Take the above, mix in with spiraling inflation, more expensive lending, rising unemployment, negative equity and you have quite a bad situation for many of us. Being a landlord, I too am feeling the pinch, my mortgage has gone up several hundred pounds a month, my heating and food costs have risen and the taxman still seems to want most of my pictures of the Queen!

Help is at hand. To combat this, when you rent your property through Homefinders we see you through the credit crunch as we can offer you: -

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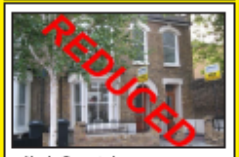

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Why choose us?

- Exclusive Low Cost flat rate of **£75.00** (no vat) for each EPC booked prior to 1st October 2008. After 1st October 2008 the estimated Average Price will be £95.00 – £110.00. **We are able to offer further discounted rates on bulk bookings, contracted volumes & cloning for Social Housing.**
- We are able to conduct cloning for Social Housing allowing large estates of a similar build to receive EPC immediately at a reduced cloning price rate.
- Experienced & dedicated team of qualified Domestic Energy Assessors (DEA).
- Easy & Simple booking system allowing you to easily instruct EPCs.
- Fast & reliable service. Our average turnaround time for an EPC is 3 days.

For further information contact us on 0208 598 1273
or email epc@entirelyhips.co.uk

Entirely HIPs Limited
Tel: 0208 598 1273
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HOME INFORMATION PACK

CONVERT YOUR EMPTY PROPERTY INTO CASH

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- **FREE** help and advice

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Ealing **020 8825 6185**
Hammersmith & Fulham **020 8753 1474**
Harrow **020 8424 1096**
Hillingdon **01895 277438**
Hounslow **020 8583 3865**
Kensington & Chelsea **020 7341 5247**

Brent Council · Ealing www.ealing.gov.uk · h&f hammersmith & fulham · Harrow Council London · Hillingdon · Hounslow · The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

What! Rent Guarantee Insurance for Properties let to Housing Benefits Tenants?

Coversure Kennington has developed a unique Insurance product by working with Brent Council and the Brent Landlord Group for Landlords who accommodate tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance in their rented properties.

Why the need for this type of cover?

Landlords are often unsure of giving their property to tenants in receipt of housing benefit in case the benefit is stopped or under the new Local Housing Allowance rules from 07th April 2008 the tenant does not pass the rent to them. Having Rent Guarantee insurance in place gives the Landlord the security to let in confidence.*

How and why?

Saeed Hussein from London Borough of Brent - Housing & Community Care initially approached Coversure Kennington in 2006. His request – A Rent Guarantee insurance he could offer his landlords where the tenant is in receipt of Housing Benefit. Almost two years later we have launched a truly unique and comprehensive insurance product.

How do I get a quote?

Simple – the premium is fixed dependent on the type of tenant you have in the property e.g. is the tenant in receipt of the housing benefit or is it paid to Landlord.

- If rent is paid direct to Tenant: £247.80 + £25 broker fee = £272.80
- If rent is paid to Landlord: £184.80 + £25 broker fee = £209.80

3 covers in 1

The policy provides peace of mind for Rent Guarantee, Legal Expenses and Home Emergency Cover.

The insurance is underwritten by the top Commercial Legal Expenses provider in the UK (Abbey Legal Protection).

A simple one page Statement of Fact (proposal) to incept cover.

All queries and amendments handled in-house by Coversure Kennington.

What next …..

With the onset of the Local Housing Allowance rules landlords have seen a sharp increase in rents, however, with more rent benefits being paid to the tenant direct the need for vigilance has never been greater.

This new and innovative insurance scheme should give landlords the confidence to let with peace of mind.

Contact

Rajan Amin Cert CII Director at Coversure Kennington can be contacted on 0800 093 9009 or email rajanam@coversure.co.uk

* Subject to the terms and conditions of the Rent Guarantee Insurance Policy. Full details available on request.

Bringing Empty Properties Back into Use – Now Less Taxing

Bringing empty properties back into use can be costly particularly when extensive renovations are required. However, the Government has introduced a number of tax changes, which could potentially reduce costs. Additionally, if you are considering selling your empty property, changes to capital gains tax will mean that less capital gains tax is payable. See below for more information.

VAT – residential properties empty for at least two years.

With effect from 1 January 2008, renovations and alterations to residential properties that have been empty for at least 2 years will be eligible for a reduced VAT rate of 5%. This is a change from the previous position, which provides for a 5% reduced VAT rate on works of renovation and alteration to residential properties that have been empty for at least 3 years.

Contractors who are renovating residential properties that have been empty for at least 2 years as at 1 January 2008 should account for VAT at 5% on those supplies that take place on or after that date. Contractors should ensure they are fully aware of the tax rules when determining the time of their supplies. Further information on this reduced rate can be found in Section 8 of Public Notice 708 – VAT: Buildings and construction, available from the National Advice Service 0845 010 9000 or downloadable from the HMRC website at www.hmrc.gov.uk

VAT - Conversion of non-residential properties empty for ten years or more

A developer or house owner can claim back all VAT charged on the renovation of a building that has been empty for 10 years or more, once the dwelling is sold. If the house owner retains the property for private residential use, they can make a claim for the VAT under the DIY Builders Refund Scheme available from Customs and Excise.

A 'non-residential conversion' is considered to take place when either: - the building (or part) being converted has **never** been used as a dwelling or number of dwellings for a 'relevant residential purpose, or in the 10 years immediately before the sale or long lease the building (or part) has not been used as a dwelling or number of dwellings or for a 'relevant residential purpose.

The building must be converted into a building either 'designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings' or intended for use solely for a 'relevant residential purpose'. Details of what constitutes a "relevant residential purpose" can be found on the HMRC website www.hmrc.gov.uk VAT notice 708 paragraph 14.6

Examples of a 'non-residential conversion' include the conversion of: a commercial building (such as an office, warehouse, shop), an agricultural building (such as a barn), or a redundant school or church, into a building 'designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings'. The conversion of a garage, occupied together with a dwelling, into a building designed as a dwelling is not a non-residential conversion.

You may be required to show that that the building has not been lived in during the 10 years immediately before you start your work. Proof of such can be obtained from Electoral Roll and Council Tax records, utilities companies, Empty Property Officers in local authorities, or any other source that can be considered reliable. If you hold a letter from an Empty Property Officer certifying that the property has not been lived in for 10 years, you do not need any other evidence

Capital Allowances for "Living-Over-The-Shop" Schemes

A scheme has been introduced to enable property owners and occupiers to claim up-front tax relief on the whole of their capital spending on the renovation or conversion of vacant or underused space above shops and other commercial premises to provide flats for rent.

Spending will qualify for the new 100 per cent capital allowances. The scheme will focus on properties in traditional shopping areas and will be open to all property owners and occupiers, provided they have an interest in the property, in which the flats are to be created. It will be targeted as follows.

To qualify the property must: - Have been built before 1980.

The property must not have more than 5 floors in total, including accommodation in the roof (but excluding any basements). The property must have been originally constructed so that the floors above the ground floor were primarily for residential use. The upper floors must have been either unoccupied, or used only for storage, for at least 1 year before the conversion work starts.

The qualifying expenditure will be apportioned if part of the upper floors satisfies this test, and part does not. The ground floor can have been originally either residential, or commercial, or mixed use. However, the whole or the greater part of the ground floor must, at the time the conversion work starts, be rated as follows for England and Wales:

A1 - broadly speaking, retail shops
A2 - financial and professional services
A3 - food and drink
B1 - offices not in A2, R&D and industrial processes which can be carried out in residential areas
D1 (a) - medical and health services, such as doctor's surgeries and dental practices.

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COVERSURE
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Rent Guarantee, Legal Expenses & Home Emergency Cover

Coversure Kennington has developed a unique Insurance product by working with Brent Council and the Brent Landlord Group for Landlords who accommodate tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance in their rented properties.

- Getting a quote? Simple – Fixed premiums
- Rent Guarantee Cover for 12 months
- Council reference check sufficient to validate cover
- Legal Expenses Cover of £50,000 + £25,000 Eviction Cover
- Cover includes Property Disputes, Repairs and Renovation Disputes, Health and Safety Prosecution, Tax Protection
- Home Emergency Cover up to £500 per call out
- NIL Excess on Home Emergency Cover
- Tenant can contact the Insurer direct 24/7, 365 days of the year

EXCLUSIVE AND UNIQUE PROPERTY OWNERS AND RENT GUARANTEE INSURANCE

A Landlord's Guide to Energy Performance Certificates

Landlords - are you ready for EPCs?

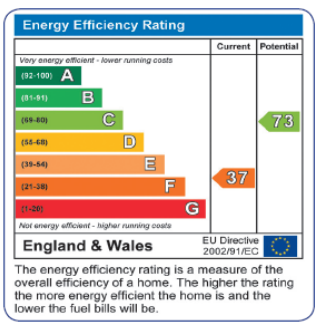
From 1st October 2008, all rental properties with a new tenancy in England and Wales will be required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

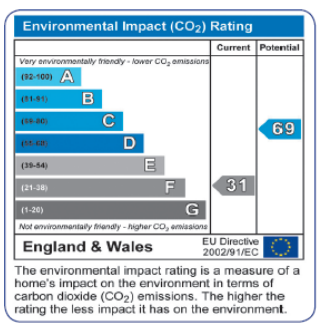
Why should you care?

Because your prospective tenants will be able to see at a glance how energy efficient and environmentally friendly your properties are. If you have invested in energy saving measures your properties will perform well and will really stand out from the crowd. If not you may find them harder to rent out in future.

What is an Energy Performance Certificate?

EPCs look similar to the energy labels found on domestic appliances such as fridges and washing machines. The energy efficiency and environmental impact of your property will be rated on a scale from A-G (where A is the most efficient and G the least efficient) as shown. Current running costs for heating, hot water and lighting will also be shown on the certificate, together with a list of recommended energy saving improvements.





How do I get an Energy Performance Certificate?

Either yourself or your letting agent will have to commission one from an accredited Domestic Energy Assessor (DEA). They will visit your property to assess the age, construction and location of the property as well as its current fittings such as heating systems, insulation, double glazing etc. DEAs can be found in local directories or via www.hcrregister.com/FindAssessorInspector

How much will they cost?

The cost of an EPC will vary. At the moment average costs range between £40 - £120, so it's worth shopping around.

When do I need to get one?

It is recommended, especially if you have a reasonably high turnover of tenants, that you don't wait until you have a vacancy after 1st October 2008 but get an EPC as soon as possible, to ensure that you comply with the law when it comes in. If you don't have one after that date you could be fined £200 for non-compliance. The EPC will remain valid for ten years.

What can I do to make my energy rating as high as possible?

- Insulating your property is the most cost effective measure you can take. In most cases cavity wall insulation is straightforward, inexpensive and hassle-free. Installing new loft insulation in most properties is an easy DIY job and should be done to a depth of 270mm.

- If your boiler is over 15 years old it's probably time to replace it and you'll get a better rating if you combine it with modern heating controls. If you need to save space, buy a combi boiler, which does not store hot water in a tank but heats water directly from the cold water mains as it is used
- Fit a hot water tank jacket
- While double glazing can be fairly expensive, it will reduce noise and lower heating bills
- When purchasing new appliances look out for the Energy Saving Recommended logo, and choose the most energy efficient in their category

For free, impartial advice on energy efficiency improvements call 0800 512 012 or visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Are there grants to help cover installation costs?

There are several grants available that can cut your costs by half or even to zero! Visit www.est.org.uk/myhome/gid to see if you are eligible. If your tenants are in receipt of certain benefits you may be able to get your property insulated at a significant discount or even for free. Visit www.warmfront.co.uk (England) and www.heeswales.co.uk (Wales) for further information.

If you have insulated your properties you can also reduce your income tax by claiming under the Landlords Energy Saving Allowance. Visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/budget2004/revbn31.htm for further information.

Why is the Government introducing EPCs?

Domestic energy use accounts for 27% of the UK's carbon dioxide emissions. The Government is introducing a number of energy saving initiatives, including EPCs, aimed at making all buildings more energy efficient. These measures are being applied across all European Union countries as per the European Directive for the Energy Performance of Buildings.

Where can I find out how energy efficient my properties are now?

The Energy Saving Trust will provide you with a personalised Home Energy Check report on each of your properties for free. Simply complete the questionnaire* today and you should have your report very soon. Alternatively, visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk for more information. *Available online at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/proxy/view/full/165/homeenergycheck

Further information

www.homeinformationpack.gov.ukwww.energysavingtrust.org.ukwww.hipassociation.co.ukwww.communities.gov.uk/epbd

Energy Performance Certificate Helpline: 0845 365 2468

The Energy Efficiency Partnership has produced this factsheet for Homes, an independent voluntary network funded by government and facilitated by the Energy Saving Trust.

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rightmove fish4homes propertyfinder.com FindaProperty.com

Useful links andContacts

DCLG
http://www.communities.co.uk

Direct.gov.uk
Advice for tenants and landlords on various issues
http://www.direct.gov.uk/HomeAndCommunity/fs/en

Residential Landlord
http://www.residentiallandlord.co.uk/

National Landlords Association
Ihttp://www.landlords.org.uk/

LHA (Local Housing Allowance)
https://lha-direct.therentservice.gov.uk/Secure/Default.aspx

Landlord Zone
http://www.landlordzone.co.uk

National Federation of Residential Landlords (NFRL)
http://www.nfrl.org.uk/homepage.htm

Accreditation Network UK (ANUK)
http://www.anuk.org.uk/

Landlords UK
Links, guides, forums and information
http://www.landlords-uk.net/

Fire Protection Centre
http:/www.fireprotectioncentre.com/

Landlords

Croydon Council can help you let your property

We have tenants waiting for all types of properties including studios, bedsits, smaller registered houses of multiple occupancy and all sizes of self-contained property.

We can provide the following services to landlords who are able to manage their own properties:

- Flexible incentive payments to landlords and advice about securing the deposit through one of the Government-backed schemes
- Long-term and medium term lets at market rates
- Maximising income by matching households to properties
- Free provision of legal documentation associated with letting the property, such as tenancy agreements, notices and sample inventory
- A full, free property survey to ensure it is fully compliant with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System as laid down in the Housing Act 2004.

Further information can be obtained from Croydon Council's housing specialist team on 020 8726 6100 or from www.croydon.gov.uk

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www.croydon.gov.uk

Advertising Opportunity with LLAS

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