



Private Renting

Summary guide for people privately
renting in Bristol



Contents

- 3** What do I need to know as a private tenant and who can help?
- 3** Bristol's private rented sector
- 4** Finding a home to rent with a private landlord
- 4** Does your landlord need a property licence?
- 5** Shared housing and lodgers
- 5** Things to be aware of
- 6** Viewings
- 6** Deposits – deposit protection scheme
- 7** Fees
- 7** Reference checks
- 7** Tenancy agreements
- 8** Do you think a landlord is discriminating against you?
- 8** What if the landlord won't accept benefits?
- 9** Documents the landlord should give you when you move in
- 9** Tenant and landlord responsibilities
- 10** Can the amount of rent you pay be increased?
- 10** Problems during your tenancy
- 12** Ending the tenancy
- 12** Further help and advice

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What do I need to know as a private tenant and who can help?



This information aims to help people who are **privately renting**¹ or looking for a private rented home in Bristol.

A more detailed version of this information is available on the Bristol City Council website.

The government provide further advice on how to rent on the **GOV.UK how-to-rent webpage**².

This information is aimed at those who are, or will be, renting under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), either directly from a landlord or through a letting agency.

Find out about ASTs and other types of tenancy agreements at **GOV.UK private renting tenancy agreements**³.

Further advice on privately renting in Bristol is available online. If you need help with using online services or need access to a computer, you can visit the council's **Citizen Service Point**⁴:

Citizens Service Point
100 Temple Street
Bristol
BS1 6AG

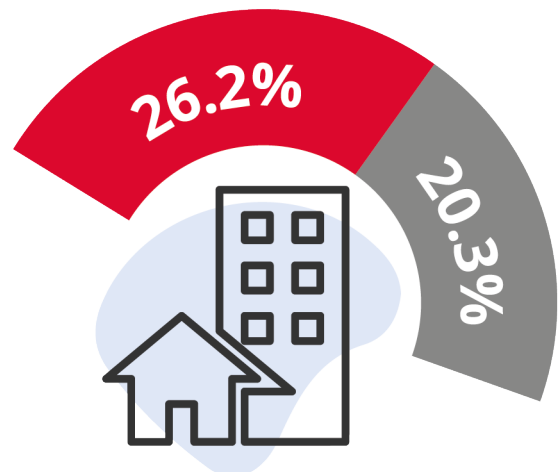
Disclaimer: The information detailed in this summary guide is intended as guidance only and is not a definitive explanation of the law.



Bristol's private rented sector



121,714



121,714 people in Bristol rent privately

26.2% of accommodation is privately rented, compared to the national average of 20.3%

(Source: **Census 2021 Office for National Statistics**)⁵.



Finding a home to rent with a private landlord



You can find properties to rent by:

- searching for local letting agencies online
- checking websites, such as:
 - [Zoopla](#)⁶
 - [Gumtree](#)⁷
 - [Rightmove](#)⁸
 - [Primelocation](#)⁹
 - [Spareroom](#)¹⁰
- checking local newspapers
- speaking to the accommodation officers at UWE or Bristol University, if you're a student

The council can help you find a privately rented home if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

If you would like advice email private.renting@bristol.gov.uk



Does your landlord need a property licence?

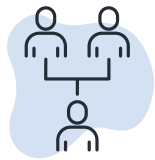


Some rented houses and flats need a property licence before they can be let out by the landlord. This is to make sure they meet the required standards of health, safety and welfare for the people living there. Check the council website to find out if a property has a licence¹¹ or needs a property licence¹².

There are three types of private property licences:

- **Mandatory House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing** - covers most homes shared by five or more people, in two or more households (this means when they are not all part of the same family), where some or all tenants share a toilet, bathroom or kitchen
- **Additional HMO licensing** - generally covers smaller homes shared by three or four people in two or more households, where some or all tenants share a toilet, bathroom or kitchen
- **Selective licensing** - can cover all privately rented properties in a specific area

Let the council know if you think your property needs a licence and does not have one¹³. A tenant living in an unlicensed property may be able to claim some of their rent back¹⁴



Shared housing and lodgers



You might want to consider **sharing a property**¹⁵ with others.

Make sure you understand what type of tenancy agreement you have before you move into a shared house or flat.

Tenants and lodgers have different rights. Seek advice from one of the organisations listed in the 'housing advice' section at the end of this document if you are unsure what type of agreement you have, or are being asked, to sign.



Things to be aware of



- Make sure you know how much you can afford before you agree to move in. You might need to pay for more than just the rent, for example: council tax, utility bills, furniture, insurance, tenancy deposit and removal fees
- Never offer to pay more rent than you can afford. Avoid agents who encourage you and other prospective tenants to bid to rent a property
- Make sure you know that the property exists, and the landlord or agent is legitimate, before you:
 - Pay any money
 - Provide any personal information or documents
 - Move into a property
- Subletting is when you rent from someone who has a tenancy of the property. Your rights will be affected if you sublet a property. Seek advice from one of the organisations listed in the 'housing advice' section at the end of this document if you think you might be subletting
- Are there any specific restrictions to be aware of, such as being allowed to keep pets? If you are allowed to keep pets make sure you regularly use flea and tick treatments to ensure you are not charged for pest control services

The **Action Fraud**¹⁶ website has useful advice on how to avoid rogue landlords and how to report suspected scams.





Viewings



Take someone with you when visiting properties if you can. It is safer and they can help you make a decision.

Take a list of things to check¹⁷ so you don't forget about anything when you're there.



Deposits

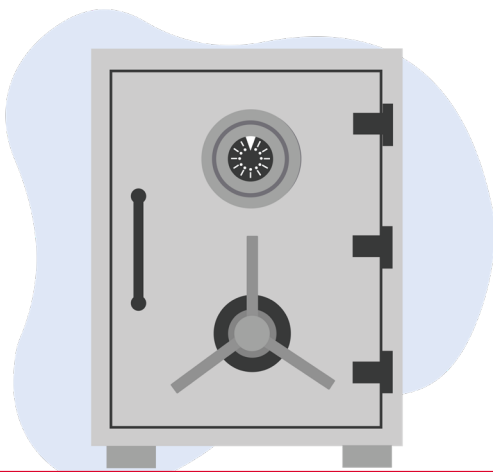


- **Holding deposit:** Your landlord or agent might ask you to pay this to reserve a property before you sign a tenancy agreement. Do not pay any money if you haven't seen the property
- **Tenancy deposit:** Your landlord or agent might ask for this at the beginning of the tenancy. This is usually refundable at the end of the tenancy. Your landlord or agent can only keep money from your deposit if there is a **problem**¹⁸

There are limits to the amount of deposit a landlord or agent can charge:

- **Holding deposit:** the equivalent of one weeks' rent
- **Tenancy deposit:** the equivalent of five weeks' rent

Further information on types of deposits can be found on the [Shelter website](#)¹⁹.



Deposit protection schemes



Your landlord must put your tenancy deposit in a government-approved tenancy deposit scheme if you rent your home on an assured shorthold tenancy that started after 6 April 2007.

Holding deposits do not have to be protected in a deposit protection scheme but letting agents or property managers who handle client money should have Client Money Protection (CMP) in place.

There are three protection schemes your deposit can be registered with:

- **MyDeposits**²⁰ - including deposits that were held by Capita
- **Tenancy Deposit Scheme**²¹
- **Deposit Protection Service**²²

Your landlord must tell you how your deposit has been protected and put it in the scheme within 30 days of receiving it. They must also provide you with a deposit protection certificate.

They must do this even if the deposit is paid by someone other than yourself, such as relatives or a deposit scheme.

You may be asked to pay deposit replacement insurance or guarantee through a private company instead of paying a deposit. This is sometimes known as a **zero deposit company**²³. Make sure you fully understand the terms and conditions and if you're unsure seek advice from one of the organisations listed in the 'housing advice' section at the end of this document.

Seek advice if you believe that your landlord or agent has not protected your deposit. Further information is available on the [GOV.UK website](#)²⁴.



Fees



Landlords and letting agents are **only allowed to charge certain fees**²⁵ when you set up or renew a tenancy.

Landlords and letting agents cannot charge for things like:

- references
- administration
- check out inspections
- credit and immigration checks
- renewing your tenancy when your fixed term contract ends

You might be able to claim back money if you have been **charged fees you shouldn't have**²⁶.



Tenancy agreements



A **tenancy agreement**²⁷ is a contract between you and a landlord. It lets you live in the property as long as you pay rent and follow the rules. It can be written down or oral (a spoken agreement).

A tenancy can either be²⁸:

- Fixed term (running for a set period of time)
- Periodic (running on a week-by-week or month-by-month basis)

Both you and your landlord have certain **rights and responsibilities**²⁹, whether or not you have a tenancy agreement.



Reference checks



The landlord might want to carry out **some checks**³⁰ on you before they agree to rent a property to you. They may ask you to provide personal information or documents so that they can check:

- You have enough income to afford the rent
- If your current employment is going to change and affect your income
- If you have had **issues paying rent or bills in the past**³¹
- If you have been a reliable tenant in the past
- You have the **right to live in the UK and to rent**³²

A landlord might ask for you to provide a **guarantor**³³ if they are not satisfied by your income or reference checks.





Do you think a landlord is discriminating against you?

A landlord must not discriminate against you because of your: disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. These are called 'protected characteristics'.

This means they might be breaking the law if they:

- rent a property to you on worse terms than other tenants, for example if you have children
- treat you differently from other tenants in the way you are allowed to use facilities such as a laundry or a garden
- evict or harass you because of a protected characteristic
- refuse to make reasonable changes to a term in the tenancy agreement which would allow a disabled person to live there

If your landlord has broken the law, you might be able to take action against them. For further advice contact the organisations listed in the 'further advice and help' section at the end of this document.



What if the landlord won't accept benefits?

Landlords cannot refuse to rent to someone just because they are in receipt of benefits. This type of discrimination is often referred to as 'No DSS' discrimination.

Shelter has information on their website on [how to challenge DSS discrimination](#)³⁴. [Housing Matters](#)³⁵ are able to provide advice on this issue, and others relating to housing law, whilst [Bristol Law Centre](#)³⁶ can also help with issues of discrimination in housing and other legal issues.



Ask for a reason why?

Ask for a reason why your application was unsuccessful.



Gather evidence

Check the advert, does it say 'No DSS' or 'No children' or anything else that is discriminatory?

Keep a record of contact with dates and times. This includes face to face and phone conversations, as well as emails.

Take a witness statement. Was someone else there who witnessed the discrimination?



Formal complaint

Make a formal complaint to your landlord, explaining how you have been discriminated against and how you would like to see the issue resolved.



What to do if your formal complaint is unresolved

If you are renting from a letting agent or property manager, you can contact the redress scheme they are a member of, either [The Property Ombudsman \(TPO\)](#)³⁷ or [Property Redress Scheme \(PRS\)](#)³⁸, who will then look to resolve the issue.

If you are renting directly from a private landlord, it is unlikely they would be a member of either the TPO or PRS. In such cases you would need to [seek alternative legal advice](#)³⁹.



Documents the landlord should give you when you move in

- [How to rent guide](#)⁴⁰
- A [valid gas safety certificate](#)⁴¹ (only if property has any gas appliances. Valid for 12 months)
- [Tenancy deposit scheme paperwork](#)⁴²
- [Energy performance certificate \(EPC\)](#)⁴³ (unless you are renting a room in a HMO only. Valid for 10 years)
- [Electrical installation condition report \(EICR\)](#)⁴⁴ (valid for five years)



Tenant and landlord responsibilities

Tenant responsibilities	Landlord responsibilities
Pay rent on time	Maintain the structure and exterior of property
Pay utility bills	Ensure the property is safe
Look after the property	Fit smoke alarms on every floor
Report repairs	Fit carbon monoxide alarms in rooms that contain a fixed combustion appliance
Seek permission before making minor repairs	Deal with water, gas or electricity supply problems
Be considerate to neighbours	Carry out repairs within a reasonable time
Don't take in a lodger or sublet without the permission of your landlord	Carry out an annual Gas Safety check
Allow reasonable access to the property for repairs	Carry out an Electrical Safety check every five years
Keep the property clean and tidy	Consider reasonable adjustments for tenants with disabilities
	Provide tenants with at least 24 hours' notice in writing before any visits to the property
	Obtain a valid property licence for licensable properties
	Ensure the property has minimum band E energy efficiency rating
	Ensure toilets, baths, and other sanitary fittings, including pipes and drains, are repaired urgently
	Maintain any appliances and furniture they have supplied

Disclaimer: The information detailed on this table is intended as guidance only and is not a definitive explanation of the law.



Can the amount of rent you pay be increased?



Your landlord can increase your rent in some circumstances. This can depend on whether you have an **Assured Shorthold Tenancy**⁴⁵ or are living with a **resident landlord**⁴⁶. If you are unsure, seek **further advice**⁴⁷ from one of the organisations listed in the 'further help and advice' section at the end of this document.



Problems during your tenancy



As a tenant you have the right to live in a property that is safe and in a good state of repair.

If your landlord is not dealing with issues within a reasonable time you should **contact the council's Private Housing Service**⁴⁸.

You can also contact **The Property Ombudsman**⁴⁹ or **Property Redress Scheme**⁵⁰ if you rent from a letting agent.

You may be able to claim some, or all, of your rent back if your landlord does not meet their legal obligations to provide safe accommodation, or carries out unlawful activities.

Disrepair

Your landlord is responsible for most repairs in the property. Some examples of their responsibilities include:

- Electrical wiring
- Gas pipes and boilers
- Heating and hot water
- The structure and exterior of the property, such as walls, stairs, roof, external doors and windows

Pests and vermin

There are things you can do to control pests in your property. For more advice on what you can and can't do read the guidance on the **GOV.UK pest control**⁵¹ web page.

Who has responsibility for dealing with pests and vermin depends on the causes and what is outlined in your tenancy agreement. Your landlord is normally responsible for dealing with pests and vermin if it relates to repairs on the property, or if the infestation was already there before you moved in, and the infestation makes your home unsafe to live in.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you do not attract pests and vermin. If you need to deal with pests or vermin yourself, you might be able to get help from the council or private pest control services. Contacts are listed at the end of this document.

Damp and mould

You can take steps to **prevent damp and mould**⁵² in your property. However, sometimes the causes may be due to the condition of the property. If you are concerned, you should contact your landlord.

Do not stop paying your rent because there's damp or mould in your home. This could put you at risk of being served an eviction notice.

You should **report any issues of damp and mould to your landlord**⁵³.



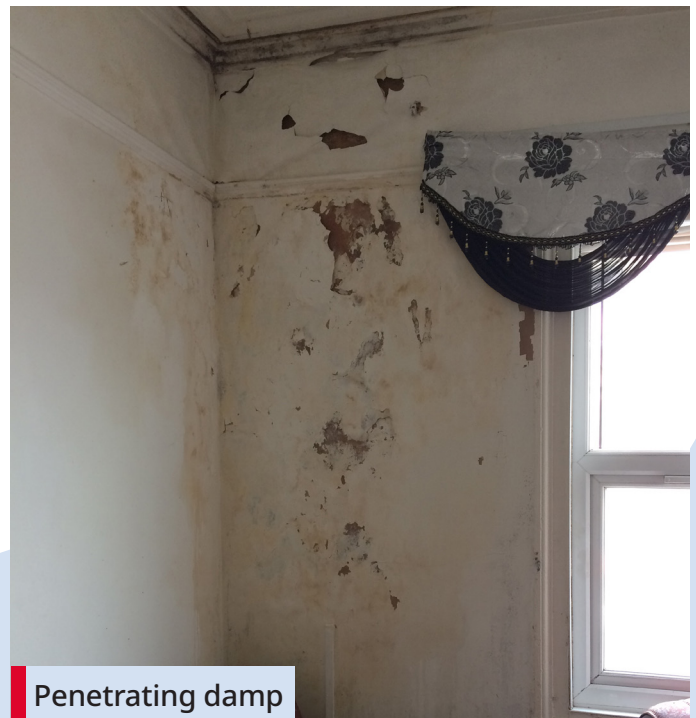
Rising damp



Rising damp



Condensation



Penetrating damp

Are you being harassed or unlawfully evicted?

If your landlord wants you to leave their property, they must **follow strict procedures**⁵⁴. If they don't, they may be guilty of **harassing or unlawfully evicting**⁵⁵ you, which are criminal offences. The council can investigate harassment or unlawful eviction and, if necessary, take legal action.

Harassment

Harassment⁵⁶ is anything your landlord does, or fails to do, that makes you want to leave the property.

It includes:

- cutting off services, like gas and electricity
- visiting the property at unsociable hours
- refusing to carry out repairs
- starting but not finishing disruptive repairs or building work
- trying to take away your legal rights as a tenant
- being violent or threatening violence
- abusive behaviour
- opening your post or removing your belongings

If you think you are being harassed, write down the details of everything that happens, including dates, times and what was said. When you see your landlord, ask them to confirm anything said verbally in writing. Try and have someone with you to give you support and be a witness.

Unlawful eviction

You may have been **unlawfully evicted**⁵⁷ if:

- your landlord doesn't give you the right notice to leave the property
- you find the locks have been changed
- you're evicted without a bailiff's warrant

If the property is repossessed by the landlord's mortgage lender, the lender must still give you a notice period to find somewhere else to live.

Contact the council's Private Housing Service⁵⁸ if you have been harassed or unlawfully evicted.



Ending the tenancy



A tenancy will continue until you or your landlord ends it. If you want to end your tenancy make sure you give the correct notice to the landlord. If you don't do this your landlord may make a deduction from your deposit and claim for loss of rent.

Your landlord needs to follow a legal process if they want to end your tenancy.

When moving out:

- make sure the property is left clean and tidy
- clean fixtures and fittings, such as the cooker and fridge
- remove any rubbish
- remove anything that you own
- take the gas and electricity meter readings and contact your suppliers to cancel your account



Further help and advice



Accessibility and home adaptations



WECIL (Independent Living)

phone: 0117 947 9911

web: www.wecil.org.uk

We Care Home Improvements

phone: 0300 323 0700

email: info@wecr.org.uk

web: www.wecr.org.uk

Bristol City Council



Private Housing Service

phone: 0117 352 5010

email: private.housing@bristol.gov.uk

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-tenants

Private Renting Team

phone: 07785 660 718

email: private.renting@bristol.gov.uk

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/privaterenting

Homelessness Team

phone: 0117 352 6800

email: homelessnessadvice@bristol.gov.uk

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/homeless

Cost of living support

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/costofliving

Energy efficiency

Warmer Homes Advice and Money - Centre for Sustainable Energy

phone: 0800 082 2234

email: info@cse.org.uk

web: www.cse.org.uk/my-home/advice-projects/wham-warmer-homes-advice-and-money/

Food banks

Trussell Trust

phone: 01722 580 180

email: enquiries@trusselltrust.org

web: www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/

General advice and support

We Are Bristol helpline (signposting)

phone: 0800 694 0184

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/people-and-communities/cost-of-living-support

Citizens Advice (general advice)

phone: 0800 144 8848

web: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

1625 Independent People (young people)

phone: 0117 332 7111

email: enquiries@1625ip.co.uk

web: www.1625ip.co.uk/get-help

Age UK (older people)

phone: 0800 678 1602

web: www.ageuk.org.uk

SARI (hate crime)

phone: 0117 942 0060

mail: PO Box 2454, Bristol, BS2 2WX

web: www.saricharity.org.uk/contact-us/

Avon and Somerset Police

phone: 101

web: www.avonandsomerset.police.uk

Action Fraud

phone: 0300 123 2040

web: www.actionfraud.police.uk

Avon Fire & Rescue Service

phone: 0117 926 2061

web: www.avonfire.gov.uk

Bristol Refuge Rights

phone: 07526 352 353

email: advice@bristolrefugeerights.org

web: www.bristolrefugeerights.org

The Law Society (legal advice)

web: www.lawsociety.org.uk

Housing advice

Shelter

phone: 0808 800 4444

web chat: england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/webchat

web: england.shelter.org.uk

Housing Matters

phone: 0117 935 1260

email: advice@housingmatters.org.uk

web: www.housingmatters.org.uk

Bristol Law Centre

phone: 0117 924 8662

web: www.bristollawcentre.org.uk/get-help/

ACORN

web: www.acorntheunion.org.uk/contact

Local advice services

North Bristol Advice Centre

phone: 0117 951 5751

minicom: 0117 952 7681

email: team@northbristoladvice.org.uk

web: <https://northbristoladvice.org.uk/help-and-advice/>

South Bristol Advice Service

phone: 0117 985 1122

web: www.southbristoladvice.org.uk/contact/

Wellspring Settlement

phone: 0117 955 6971

web: www.wellspringsettlement.org.uk

Mental health support

Mind

phone: 0117 980 0370

email: info@bristolmind.org.uk

web: www.bristolmind.org.uk

NHS

web: www.nhs.uk/mental-health

Womankind Bristol

phone: 0117 916 6461

email: helpline@womankindbristol.org.uk

web: www.womankindbristol.org.uk/helpline/

Missing Link Housing

phone: 0117 925 1811

email: enquiries@missinglinkhousing.co.uk

web: www.missinglinkhousing.co.uk

VitaMinds (NHS Talking Therapy Service)

phone: 0333 200 1893

web: www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/nhs-services/nhs-mental-health/bristol-north-somerset-and-south-gloucestershire-mental-health-services/

The Samaritans

Phone: 116 123

web: www.samaritans.org

Money and debt advice

WRAMAS - Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service

phone: 0117 352 1888

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/benefits-and-financial-help/welfare-rights-and-money-advice-service

Talking Money

phone: 0800 121 4511

email: mail@talkingmoney.org.uk

web: www.talkingmoney.org.uk/get-support/help-me/

Entitled to (benefits calculator)

web: bristol.entitledto.co.uk/home/start

Turn2us (benefit advice)

web: www.turn2us.org.uk

Neighbouring local authorities

South Gloucestershire Council

web: www.southglos.gov.uk/housing

Bath and North East Somerset Council

web: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/housing>

North Somerset Council

web: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/housing

Pest control services

Bristol City Council Pest Control Services

phone: 0117 922 2500

email: pest.control@bristol.gov.uk

web: www.bristol.gov.uk/pestcontrol

British Pest Control Association

web: www.bpca.org.uk/find

Refuse and recycling

Bristol Waste

phone: 0117 304 9580

email: hello@bristolwastecompany.co.uk

web: www.bristolwastecompany.co.uk

Student advice services

University of Bristol

web: www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/privately-rented/advice

University of Bristol Law Clinic

phone: 0117 394 0082 (voicemail)

email: bristol-lawclinic-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk

web: www.bristol.ac.uk/law/law-clinic/

University of the West of England

phone: 0117 328 2676

email: advice@uwe.ac.uk

web: www.uwe.ac.uk/life/accommodation/private-accommodation

Documents available in other formats:

You can request alternative formats of this document by contacting:
private.housing@bristol.gov.uk or call 0117 352 5010

Footnotes

Page 3

- ¹ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-tenants/guide-to-renting-privately>
- ² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>
- ³ <https://www.gov.uk/private-renting-tenancy-agreements>
- ⁴ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/contact/citizen-service-point>
- ⁵ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council/statistics-census-information/census-2021>

Page 4

- ⁶ <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/to-rent/>
- ⁷ <https://www.gumtree.com/flats-houses/property-to-rent>
- ⁸ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-to-rent.html>
- ⁹ <https://www.primelocation.com>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.spareroom.co.uk>
- ¹¹ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/business/licences-and-permits/property-licences/register-of-licensed-properties>
- ¹² <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/business/licences-and-permits/property-licences/types-of-licence>
- ¹³ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-tenants/unlicensed-property>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-tenants/help-to-apply-rent-repayment-order>

Page 5

- ¹⁵ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/tenancy_agreements_in_shared_homes
- ¹⁶ <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/a-z-of-fraud/rental-fraud>

Page 6

- ¹⁷ <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/discover/renting/rental-property-viewing-checklist/#VBoMYtZhvcoYMUd5.97>
- ¹⁸ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/tenancy_deposits/what_can_your_landlord_deduct_from_your_deposit
- ¹⁹ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/tenancy_deposits
- ²⁰ <https://www.mydeposits.co.uk>
- ²¹ <https://www.tenancydepositscheme.com>
- ²² <https://www.depositprotection.com>
- ²³ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/tenancy_deposits/zero_deposit_companies
- ²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection/if-your-landlord-doesnt-protect-your-deposit>

Page 7

- ²⁵ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/letting_agent_fees_for_tenants
- ²⁶ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/housing/private-tenants/get-back-unlawful-fees-from-your-landlord>
- ²⁷ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/tenancy-agreements/>
- ²⁸ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/types_of_renting_agreement
- ²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/private-renting>
- ³⁰ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/starting-to-rent-from-a-private-landlord/information-landlords-ask-for-when-you-start-renting/>
- ³¹ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/how_to_rent_with_a_poor_credit_history
- ³² https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/right_to_rent_immigration_checks
- ³³ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/guarantors_for_private_renters

Page 8

- ³⁴ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/how_to_challenge_dss_discrimination
- ³⁵ <https://housingmatters.org.uk>
- ³⁶ <https://www.bristollawcentre.org.uk>
- ³⁷ <https://www.tpos.co.uk>
- ³⁸ <https://www.theprs.co.uk>
- ³⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/find-legal-advice/find-legal-adviser>

Page 9

- ⁴⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>
- ⁴¹ <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/gas-safety/renting-a-property/tenant-gas-safety/>
- ⁴² https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/tenancy_deposits/tenancy_deposit_protection_rules
- ⁴³ <https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>
- ⁴⁴ https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/electrical_safety_in_rented_homes

Page 10

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Page 11

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Page 12

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