

Private Landlord's newsletter

NOV
2017

Fire safety reminder

The Repairing Standard sets a high benchmark for smoke and fire detection, matching the standard required for new buildings. All privately rented homes should meet the standard.

The new building standards have associated technical guidance, issued by the Building Standards Division, called the Domestic Technical Handbook. This states that there should be:

- **One functioning smoke alarm in the room which is frequently used by the occupants for general daytime living purposes**
- **One functioning smoke alarm in every circulation space, such as hallways and landings**
- **One heat alarm in the kitchen**
- **A carbon monoxide alarm.**

Since 2007 all smoke and heat alarms must be interlinked and also mains powered. When installing a system, you are entitled to rely on the advice of a qualified electrician. You should ensure that your property's alarms are maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. It is good practice that you advise tenants to test them on a weekly basis.

It is also good practice to conduct a fire risk assessment for your property. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) offer free fire safety visits comprising an assessment of fire risk within a home and the provision of advice on preventing fires, avoiding fire spread and formulating an escape plan in event of fire.

Visit: www.firescotland.gov.uk

Electrical safety: Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced new rules on mandatory electrical testing, and became statutory regulation from the 1st of December 2015 for new tenancies and from 1st of December 2016 for existing tenancies.

The regulations require properties to have fixed wiring checks, known as an Electrical Installation Condition Report, at least every 5 years. The EICR must also include a PAT test (Portable Appliance Test) on portable electric appliances that you

have included as part of the let. The check is not required on electrical appliances belonging to your tenant. Electricians carrying out this report must be competent and preferably a member of either SELECT or NICEIC. In order for EICRs and PATs to be acceptable under the regulations, they must be documented on specified forms provided in the guidance. Read the full guidance for landlords on the **First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber)** webpage: <https://housingandpropertychamber.scot/repairs>

Tenant information packs

To take account of the changes in legislation, there is an updated Tenant Information Pack now available for use from 2 February 2016. The new style is available from the Scottish Government website:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00510472.pdf>

Regulation of letting agents

From the 31 January 2018, if you undertake letting agency work in Scotland you must deliver your services in a way that complies with the Letting Agent Code of Practice. The Code sets out the standards of practice that you must meet, and includes specific requirements around how clients' money should be handled. It also makes it compulsory for your business to have Client Money Protection and Professional Indemnity Insurance (see section 8 of the Code).

The Code is set out in **The Letting Agent Code of Practice (Scotland) Regulations 2016**. Alongside the Code, letting agents will be required to join a mandatory register of letting agents and key individuals in a letting agency will be required to have met a minimum level of training. **The Letting Agent Registration (Scotland) Regulations 2016** sets out the training requirements those applying to join the register of letting agents must meet, and additional information required for registration. To assist letting agents to understand what their business needs to do to prepare for registration including the minimum level of training they must meet to be admitted, the Scottish Government has published an online guide on the mygov website at the following link: www.mygov.scot/letting-agent-registration

The new Private Residential Tenancy

The Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL) is pleased to offer you information about the new Scottish Private Residential Tenancy (PRT). The PRT will soon be mandatory for private sector letting in Scotland and will be a major change for most landlords.

Containing full information from the Scottish Government and from SAL chief executive and pre-eminent expert on Scottish private sector letting John Blackwood, the briefing will let you know when and how to use the new tenancy and what it means for your current tenants. It is expected to be sent to landlords and letting agents mid-end October, depending on when the Scottish Government publish the information. The PRT information will be sent to you free of charge and you will also be sent information about membership of the Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL).

Please contact SAL now to pre-register for your briefing. You can also call SAL on **0131 564 0100** to register interest.

Condensation dampness advice for landlords and tenants

What is condensation?

All air contains a certain amount of 'invisible' water vapour. The higher the temperature of the air the more water vapour it can hold. Condensation frequently occurs when air carrying vapour comes into contact with a cool surface. At this reduced temperature less water can be held and it is deposited. It is for this reason that the bathroom mirror steams up after a shower or a window when you breathe on it.

Where does condensation dampness occur?

The most vulnerable areas will either be rooms where a large amount of moisture is produced, i.e. bathroom/kitchen, or on cold surfaces in other rooms where this moisture can travel to. The effects of this process may be visible, for example droplets of water on gloss painted window sill's but often the water droplets will soak into the wall and a problem will not be diagnosed until black mould patches start to appear. The following areas are particularly prone to condensation:

- cold surfaces such as mirrors, single glazed windows (above) and metal/wood window frames
- kitchens and bathrooms
- walls of unheated rooms
- cold corners of rooms
- wardrobes/cupboards and behind furniture against an outside wall.

How to tackle condensation dampness

The major difference between condensation and other forms of dampness is that **you and your tenant** have the ability to reduce or solve the problem just through changing behaviour in the home. Try following these steps:

Reduce the moisture

Normal activities such as bathing, washing and cooking all produce moisture which cannot be avoided. Simple changes however can prove effective in tackling condensation dampness. Steps to consider are:

- keep lids on saucepans while cooking
- tumble driers should be vented to the outside
- avoid the use of bottled gas and

paraffin heaters as these produce high levels of vapour

- dry washing outside when possible

However, the most effective course of action you can take is:

- When creating steam in the kitchen/bathroom open windows and close doors to these rooms. This will let moisture escape and prevent it from spreading through the house.

Increase ventilation

This is required so that any moist air produced can escape, simply opening a window will do. A suitable level of ventilation will allow this without making occupants uncomfortable by causing draughts and making the room cold. It may be quite difficult to strike the right balance. It is for this reason many houses have built in ventilation measures such as trickle ventilators and extractor fans. Kitchen and bathrooms with severe condensation problems should not be draught proofed.

Heating

Condensation is most likely to be a problem in homes which are under heated. Try to keep temperatures in all rooms above 15°C as this will reduce condensation forming on external walls.

Insulation

Following these steps should significantly reduce any condensation dampness problems you may have. If a problem still exists, insulating your home will have a three fold value in tackling the problem through:

- warming the surface temperature of wall, ceilings and windows
- generally increase the temperature of the home
- reducing heating costs thus allowing the home to be heated to a higher standard more affordably

The use of thermal paper to insulate external walls is another recommended option. This will increase the surface temperature which will help prevent water moisture condensing on cold surfaces.

Painted surfaces where mould growth occurs can also be re-painted using mould retardant paint to prevent mould growth.

New Empty Homes Officer

Karen Rae is the newly appointed Empty Homes Officer for West Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire Council.

Karen's job focuses on long term empty private homes with the two Local Authorities and trying to engage with the owners who, for many reasons have left their properties empty. One of her main tasks is to offer assistance and guidance to owners wishing to either sell or rent their existing home.

If you are thinking of expanding your property portfolio, you may be interested in the Property Matchmaking service. The Property Matchmaker is a 'dating agency' for empty homes. It aims to match empty property home owners who are trying to sell or who are thinking about selling with people who want to buy an empty property.

If you are interested in joining the Property Matchmaking service please contact Karen on **01389 737347**

or email:

karen.rae@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Alternatively you will find more details and forms at: **<https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/homes-again-west-dunbartonshire/>**

New Private Water Supply Regulations

Under the new 'Water Intended for Human Consumption (Private Water Supplies)(Scotland) Regulations 2017 the definition of a 'private water supply' now includes domestic rented premises as part of a Commercial Activity and as such all the requirements under these regulations apply to these premises.

If you own or are responsible for domestic rented premises which are supplied water from a private water supply, ie not from Scottish Water, then you should contact the Environmental Health Section to discuss the implications of these new regulations on you as a Landlord.

For further information, please contact:

Community Health Protection Group
West Dunbartonshire Council, Council Offices,
Aurora House, 3 Aurora Avenue, Queens Quay,
Clydebank, G81 1BF
Tel: 0141 951 7957
Email: environmental.health@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Other formats

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into different community languages. Please contact: Corporate Communications, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU.
Tel: 01389 737000

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。
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