

STOCKTON RENTAL STANDARD

Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council has a clear vision for the private rented sector – **for all private rented properties to be of a high quality and be consistently well managed.**

We know the majority of landlords are good landlords, but there are some who currently do not (or have no intention) of raising their property and/or management standards. The purpose of the 'Stockton Rental Standard' is to detail what is expected of all private sector landlords (and their agents) operating in the Borough, in terms of property standards and managing properties professionally and in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Property Standards:

See the accompanying Guidance Document for more information

1. Ensure that your properties provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor. This includes, but is not limited to ensuring that the house is:
 - Free from damp and has adequate natural or mechanical ventilation where necessary to control moisture levels.
 - Provided with adequate thermal insulation and a suitable and effective means of space heating so that the dwelling space can be economically maintained at a reasonable temperature.
 - Free from hazards and provides a safe and secure home for your tenants.
2. Ensure that the property has adequate fire detection and where a gas or solid fuel applicant is present, adequate carbon monoxide detection.
3. Ensure the electrical installation is safe and that adequate checks are undertaken on each property.
4. Ensure that any furnished properties comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.
5. Ensure that all properties are provided in a clean decorative condition at the start of each tenancy.
6. Ensure that all gardens are in a clean and tidy state at the start of each tenancy.

**separate regulations apply to Houses in Multiple Occupation*

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Management Standards:

7. Comply with all relevant housing legislation and regulations. Particularly ensuring:
 - An annual gas safety inspection is carried out in properties with gas installations.
 - The property has an Energy Performance Certificate with a rating of “E” or better.
 - Any deposits taken have been protected under a Government approved scheme.
8. Provide their tenant/s with a written tenancy agreement and written inventory at the start of a new tenancy (model forms are available).
9. Respond to any reported repairs in a timely and professional manner.
10. Give at least 24 hours written notice for access in all cases except where access is required in a genuine emergency.
11. Undertake the correct legal procedures for possession.
12. Work to minimise void periods or when this is unavoidable contact the Private Sector Housing’s Empty Homes Team for advice and assistance.
13. Act in a fair, reasonable and professional manner in their dealings with tenants (and do not discriminate because of colour, ethnicity, disability, age, sex, or sexuality).
14. Work in partnership with the Council and its partners (including for example the police, fire brigade and UK Border Agency) on initiatives to ensure that properties, and/or tenants do not cause a nuisance to neighbours and the local community. This includes:
 - Joining our **free** Landlords Accreditation Scheme (LAS).
 - Utilising the Councils **free** Landlord Liaison Scheme (tenant referencing service) before letting a property.
 - Working with us to address incidents of any illegal/criminal and anti-social behaviour, associated with your tenant/s and or property.
 - Working with the Council on future private sector improvement initiatives.
 - Seeking support from the Private Sector Housing Team if you have any queries about your obligations as a private landlord.

Key contact list of Council and its partners to be included in the final draft

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GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Landlords have statutory responsibilities to ensure that their properties provide a safe and healthy environment for all occupants and visitors and any landlord who fails to address any identified defects may be open to enforcement action. Guidance is available through the: **Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS): guidance for landlords and property-related professionals'** booklet, a copy of which can be accessed via this link; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-guidance-for-landlords-and-property-related-professionals>

Fire safety risk assessments: should be conducted on each property taking into consideration the occupants. Further guidance can be found in the LACORS Housing – Fire Safety booklet via this link; <http://www.lacors.gov.uk/LACORS/upload/19175.pdf>

Carbon Monoxide detection: is strongly recommended in private rented properties and is *mandatory* in rooms with solid fuel burning appliances. Further information can be found via the HSE website; <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/co.htm>

Electrical installations: Landlords have a *mandatory* responsibility to ensure that all electrical installations and appliances provided are maintained in a safe condition with an adequate number of sockets to prevent overloading. This can be verified by obtaining an Electrical Safety Certificate from a competent electrician who is a member of a nationally recognised body (i.e. NICEIC). The report may specify how often the installation must be re-inspected which must be followed. To meet the Stockton Rental Standard this must be done at least every five years.

Furniture and furnishings: provided must carry a manufacturers label provided at the point of sale, which must be non-detachable. Landlords should keep all receipts to be able to prove that the furniture is compliant, for example if the non-detachable labels get ripped off/detached. Further information can be found via the following link to the full legislation; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1988/1324/note/made>

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998: deal with landlords' duties to make sure gas appliances, fittings and flues provided for tenants are safe. Gas Safety checks must be completed annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer and any advice notices must be complied with. A copy of the certificate must be provided to the occupants and the landlord must retain their copy for a period of two years. Landlords can find Gas Safe Registered engineer via the **Gas Safe website**; <http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/>.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's): are valid for ten years and must be available to prospective tenants when you are marketing a property. EPC's are transferable and so may already be in place for recently purchased properties. Check the EPC register via this link to see if a current EPC is in place or to find a Domestic Energy assessor; <https://www.epcregister.com/> Landlords can receive a fixed penalty of £200 per dwelling for not having an EPC when required.

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Deposits: received must be protected in a Government approved Tenancy Deposit Protection scheme and the prescribed information given to the tenant within 30 days of receipt. Failure to do so could result in landlords being ordered by the courts to pay up to 3 x the deposit amount to the tenants and being restricted from using a Section 21 notice for possession. Further information and links to the various scheme providers is available via the following link; <https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection/overview>

Repairs: Timescales for repairs will vary dependent on a number of factors but any Emergency repairs, those being repairs required in order to avoid imminent danger to health, risk to safety of the occupants or serious damage to the building or internal contents should be addressed within 24 hours of report of the defect. An example may be an interruption to the supply of water or heating.

Non-emergency repairs, outside of issues to be addressed as part of ongoing maintenance, should be addressed within a reasonable time period, usually between 1 and 4 weeks.

Tenancy Agreements: Tenants must be supplied with a point of contact in case of emergencies as part of a written tenancy agreement. Landlords should also provide a written inventory at the start each new tenancy.

Ending a tenancy: Landlords are advised to act with diligence and caution to protect themselves against accusations of Harassment or Illegal Eviction. In all cases the correct legal procedure to acquire possession must be followed. Landlords are advised to seek legal advice if in any doubt.

Landlord Accreditation Scheme: all landlords operating in the Borough are encouraged to join our free, voluntary scheme. We will actively support landlords gain accreditation status. Accredited landlords can access a range of benefits including advertising their properties for free on COMPASS (the Tees Valley choice based lettings system). Further information, including an online application can be accessed via the following link;

<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/environmentandhousing/privatelandlordinfo/landlordsaccreditation/>

Tenant referencing: should be conducted in all cases to protect yourself, your property and the neighbours of your rental properties. The Council offers a free tenant referencing service under the Landlord Liaison Scheme. Reference information will relate to previous antisocial behaviour, rent arrears, breach or abandonment of tenancy agreements and abandonment of a property. Further information, including an online application can be accessed via the following link;

<http://www.stockton.gov.uk/communitysafety/landlordliaisonscheme/>

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