



Oxford's Guide for Private Tenants

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Oxford's Guide for Private Tenants

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Introduction

This booklet is a general guide for private tenants setting out their rights and some of the legislation governing private renting. Private renting accounts for almost 30% of all living accommodation in Oxford. The Environmental Health Service, which is part of the Council, can give advice about rights and responsibilities. In certain circumstances enforcement action will also be taken to ensure that people are able to live in a safe and secure home.

The guide is divided into four main sections and to the rear of the booklet there is a handy checklist and a list of contacts that you may find useful.

Section 1

Finding Accommodation to Rent in Oxford

If you are looking for accommodation it is not always easy to know where to start. The main places to search are listed in this section.

Section 2

Living Conditions

This section gives you information about living condition standards in rented homes.

Section 3

Renting in the Private Sector

This section gives you information on the types of tenancy agreements you may be offered. It also has details on rents, agency fees and deposits.

Section 4

Harassment and Illegal Eviction

This section explains what to do and where to go for help if you are being harassed or illegally evicted from your home.



Finding Accommodation to Rent: Where to Look

It is well known that there is a huge demand for rented accommodation in Oxford and for this reason it may be tempting to accept the first vacancy that you find. This, however, may not always be the best thing to do as you could find yourself tied into an agreement that could cost you money should you wish to leave. It is important, therefore, that you try and find out as much as possible about the property and the landlord and/or agent before you move in. It would be a good idea, if possible, to speak with the previous or current occupants. They should be able to tell you of any problems.

Letting agencies

Letting agencies are probably the most obvious places to approach when searching for rented accommodation. Over the past years there has been an increase in the number of these establishments operating in the City. All accommodation agencies should now sign up with a letting agents redress scheme such as 'The Property Ombudsman'. You should always ask which redress scheme your letting agent belongs to. You will find more information on letting agencies in section 2 of this guide.

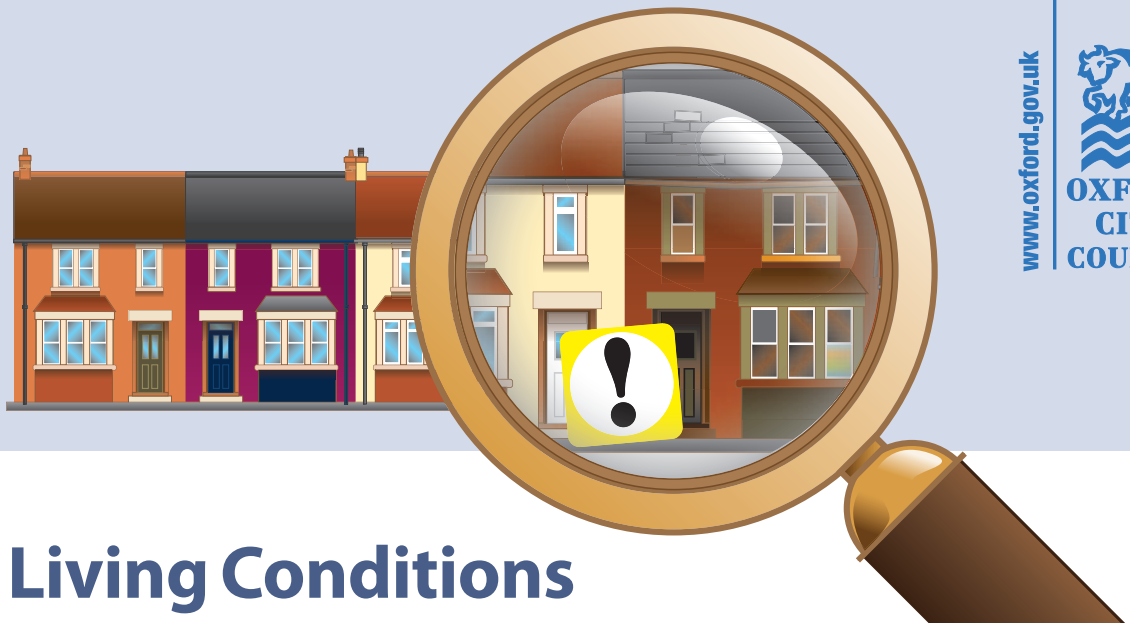
Websites

Sites such as: www.dailyinfo.co.uk, www.oxford.gumtree.com, www.spareroom.co.uk, www.easyroommate.com and Facebook Marketplace are useful resources. These are particularly good if you are looking to rent a single room in a shared house.

Newspapers and notices

The local newspapers, Oxford Mail (daily) and Oxford Times (weekly), carry advertisements for accommodation.

Newsagents and supermarkets often display notices advertising accommodation. If you are a student your college will usually have a noticeboard that may carry advertisements for rooms/houses to let. Similarly larger employers such as the NHS may also have staff noticeboards.



Living Conditions

The Housing Act 2004 introduced a new and comprehensive way for local authorities to assess living conditions.

The risk assessment approach, called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), enables trained officers to identify hazards to health and safety in your home and if necessary require works to remove or minimize these hazards and in the worst cases arrange for these works to be carried out.

Action you can take

If you are concerned about your home, you should inform your landlord first in writing if possible. If they do not undertake repairs you can contact Environmental Health. If officers do visit your home, they will always carry identification that you should ask to see before letting them in.

If any work does need to be carried out it must be done at reasonable times and you should always be given one day's warning. Landlords who do not complete required works can be taken to court and fined.

If you are asked to move out while the work is being done, contact the Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO) or Shelter Oxford before agreeing to move. The contact numbers are listed at the end of this book.

Retaliatory evictions

From 1 October 2015 if your landlord gives you a section 21 notice seeking possession in response to you reporting disrepair to Oxford City Council and the Council serves an improvement notice or a notice requiring emergency remedial action under the Housing Act 2004 the section 21 notice will not be valid or enforceable.

However this only applies to tenancies which began after 1 October 2015 and there are several exceptions to this rule (e.g. when the property is genuinely on the market for sale or the disrepair was caused by the tenant). If you have been given a section 21 notice in response to reporting disrepair to Oxford City Council, please get advice from the TRO, a private solicitor or from Shelter Oxford.



Withholding rent

It is not normally a good idea to withhold rent because of poor conditions. Assured or Assured Short hold tenants who owe 8 weeks rent or more can be taken to court by their landlords. If this happens, there is no defence and the court will order them to leave their home. If you want further advice on the law relating to rent or rent arrears etc., contact Shelter or the Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO) on 01865 252267.

Compensation

In cases of serious disrepair and unsafe conditions, particularly when the landlord has been slow to put things right, you may be entitled to compensation. The Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter, or a private solicitor can help you make a claim.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO)

In most cases an HMO is a house or flat in which two or more households live as their main or only residence and where some of these households share facilities, such as a kitchen, toilet or bathroom. A 'household' could be a single person, or members of the same family living together.

Other types of HMOs include converted buildings that incorporate non self-contained flats.

The Housing Act 2004 requires all HMOs with three or more storeys which are occupied by five or more persons forming two or more households and sharing a facility to be licensed by the local authority.

Oxford City Council now operates an additional licensing scheme which applies to all HMOs within the city which have three or more unrelated tenants. This means that as from January 2012, all HMOs in Oxford must have an HMO licence. Failure to licence an HMO is a criminal offence which could result in a fine of up to £20,000.

If you are uncertain about whether your accommodation requires a licence, telephone the HMO Licensing Team on 01865 252307.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) must meet certain management standards additional to those occupied by a single household. This is because the law recognises that, where there is more than one household sharing accommodation, there are often increased risks of, for example, fire.



Management of HMOs

The property must be well managed. For example:

- The shared and common parts such as the kitchen, bathroom and communal area should be kept clean.
- There should be adequate facilities for storing and disposing of rubbish.
- Toilets, sinks, wash basins and baths should all be in good repair.

Fire safety for all rented houses

There must be adequate protection from the risk of fire for all occupants. The necessary fire precautions vary with each property. There should also be adequate provision of fire detection; this too will vary according to the size and layout of the building.

From the 1 October 2015, all rented houses must have working smoke alarms. For family houses battery powered smoke alarms are acceptable. If your home does not have a working smoke alarm, call Oxford City Council on 01865 252658.

Overcrowding

The law sets down what qualifies as overcrowding to ensure that everyone has enough space to live in. This will depend on the size of the property, the number of rooms and the ages and sexual mix of the occupants. If you are concerned that your home is overcrowded, contact Environmental Health on 01865 249811

Public Health risks

The Environmental Health Service can also help to address any problems you have with your general living conditions, which threaten your health, or cause you inconvenience.

For example:

- Overflowing drains
- Accumulations of refuse
- Excessive dust or smoke
- Dampness or disrepair caused by problems in a neighbouring property
- Loud and continuous noise.

In most cases the law demands that action be taken to put these problems right. If necessary Environmental Health can issue legal notices to the persons responsible for the nuisance requiring that appropriate steps be taken to resolve the problem.



Pests

The Pest Control Team is part of Direct Services. They will offer advice and assistance on controlling, rats, mice, cockroaches and other pests that are considered harmful to your health. If you share a house, it is likely that your landlord would be required to meet the cost of any necessary treatment. The contact number for Pest Control is 01865 249811.

Furniture safety

Any new or second-hand furniture provided by your landlord must be fire resistant. For advice on the regulation regarding furnishings, you should contact the Trading Standards Officer at the County Council on 08450 510845.

Gas safety

If you have any gas appliances such as gas fires, gas cookers, water heaters or gas central heating your landlord must give you a gas safety certificate every year. If you are not sure about the safety of any gas appliance, contact the Environmental Health Service.

Watch out for the following danger signs:

- Staining, soot or discolouration around a gas fire or the top of water heaters.
- Yellow or orange flames in a gas appliance.

Electrical safety

The electrical system in homes must be safe. If you live in a family house there is no legal requirement for an electrical safety certificate although it is a good idea to ask the landlord for one. All HMOs must have an electrical safety certificate.

Energy efficiency

Most rented homes must have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). This tells you how much the energy in your home will cost. All family houses must have an EPC. Some HMOs require an EPC. Ask the landlord to see a copy if they don't give you one.

Tips and advice on energy saving in the home including recommended measures (such as upgrading inefficient boilers and installing solar panels) can be found at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/domestic/

For more information on currently available funding and grants, please check www.oxford.gov.uk/energygrants



Living Conditions

Grants

Disabled Facilities Grant

This grant helps provide equipment and/or adaptations to existing accommodation to meet the needs of a person with a disability. It is a means tested grant available to all tenants, and owner-occupiers.

If you think you may qualify for this grant please call 01865 252788.

Small Repairs Service

Oxford City Council employs a 'handyman' to carry out small repairs or improvements for anyone over the age of 60 at a cost of £18 per hour including VAT. Please call 01865 252788 for this service.



Renting in the Private Sector

When you accept rented accommodation, you are usually given a tenancy agreement. This gives you certain rights as a tenant. It sets down the terms you have agreed with your landlord, including the rent you will pay. Even if you do not have a tenancy agreement, you will still have rights.

Your tenancy agreement

Tenancy agreements are legal documents. Unless you are very sure of your ground, before you sign any new tenancy agreement, it is best to get advice from the Tenancy Relations Officer at Oxford City Council, Shelter or the Citizens Advice Bureau. Contact numbers are listed at the back of this guide.

Your agreement should clearly state the terms and the type of your tenancy with details of the rent payable and any other charges, such as utility bills.

You are legally entitled to the landlord's name and address. If you make a written request for your landlord's details to the person collecting or receiving your rent then you must be given your landlord's name and address within 21 days.

Rent

Unless you are a protected tenant (see section headed 'types of agreement'), the landlord decides what rent to charge. Rents vary depending on the type, locality and condition of the accommodation but they are considered to be comparatively high in Oxford. You should always try to negotiate a rent you can afford before you sign any tenancy agreement. It is a good idea to look at similar properties in the area to compare the rents. This will give you an idea as to whether the rent is reasonable for the area and accommodation offered.

It is important to check if your rent includes Council Tax, water rates, gas or electricity payments. You should also ask what, if any, services are provided by the landlord.



Renting in the Private Sector

Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit)

You may be entitled to some help with your rent, but it is advisable to contact Customer Services at Oxford City Council on 01865 249811 before you enter into any agreement if benefit is a factor. They should be able to tell you what benefit you would be likely to receive.

Types of agreement

All tenancy agreements issued to private tenants since 26 February 1997 will automatically be Assured Shorthold Tenancies, unless the landlord specifies otherwise or if the landlord and tenant share living accommodation. (See 'resident landlord' section of this guide)

If you moved in before 26 February 1997 but after 15 January 1989 you may be either an assured tenant or assured shorthold tenant. If you are uncertain you should contact the Tenancy Relations Officer at the Council or Shelter Oxford who will be able to advise you. If you moved into your home before 15 January 1989, then you may be a protected tenant.

Assured shorthold tenancy

An assured shorthold tenancy is the most common type of agreement used by landlords and accommodation agencies. You are secure for the period of the agreement, which will usually be for at least six months, but you will not have any long-term tenancy rights. If you want a tenancy for a longer period, try and negotiate this with your landlord at the outset before signing the agreement.

Rent

Rent is decided at the beginning of the agreement and is fixed for the period. You will be responsible for paying the rent throughout the whole period of your contract. If you are unhappy with your rent you can apply to the First Tier Property Tribunal (formerly Residential Property Tribunal) who can decide if your rent is in line with the going rate for the area. If it is higher, your landlord will have to reduce it. If, however, the rent is lower than others in the area, the Panel may increase it.

N.B. you can only apply to have a market rent set during the first six months of your tenancy. Contact details are listed at the back of this guide.

Eviction

At the end of the period the landlord can evict you provided s/he has been given a possession order by the court. If your landlord has followed the correct legal procedures a possession order is guaranteed. The landlord does not have to give the courts any reasons for wanting you to leave.



Renting in the Private Sector

You cannot be legally evicted during the period of the agreement (or afterwards) unless the landlord has a court order.

More new rules for assured shorthold tenancies

From 1 October 2015 all new assured shorthold tenants must be provided with:

- A valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- A valid Gas Safety Certificate (where there is gas)
- A current copy of the government's 'How to Rent Guide'

Landlords cannot serve a Section 21 notice to quit unless they have provided all three of these documents and complied with deposit protection rules (see 'deposit section' of this guide).

Assured tenancy

Under an assured tenancy agreement, the length of time you can stay will depend on the agreement with your landlord. It could be weekly, monthly or fixed-term. There is no minimum or maximum period. If your agreement is for a weekly term, your landlord must provide a rent book setting out the rent payable.

Rent

In most cases the landlord can only increase the rent once a year. The landlord must give you written notice of the proposed new rent using the correct form, at least one month before the rise is to take effect. For further advice, contact the Tenancy Relations Officer or Shelter Oxford.

Eviction

Your landlord must have a good reason to evict you and must follow the correct legal procedures. The landlord must first give you a Notice of Intention to Seek Possession (NOSP) using the correct form. After the notice has expired, your landlord must apply to the court for permission to evict you. Depending on the reason (ground) the landlord wants you out; the court can refuse the request. There are 17 grounds for possession and eight of these are 'mandatory'. If your landlord can prove one of these, the court must ask you to leave. For example, if you owe eight weeks or more rent, the court must ask you to leave.

The length of notice required depends on why your landlord wants to evict you. If you owe eight weeks rent, then s/he only has to give two weeks' notice before applying to the court. If s/he wants to return to live in the property, then you must be given two months' notice.



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Resident landlord

If you live in the same house as your landlord and you share living accommodation such as the kitchen, bathroom or toilet, you have far fewer rights.

You are an excluded tenant, unless your agreement was signed before 15 January 1989 (see protected tenants). Your landlord must give you reasonable notice to leave. Although the law does not specify what is 'reasonable' it should normally be the rental period. For example if rent is payable monthly you should get a months notice. It is always best to get this in writing. Once the notice period is over, your landlord has the legal right to order you to leave and to remove your possessions. Your landlord will not require a court order.

Protected tenants

If you moved into your home before 15 January 1989, then you may be a protected tenant. This gives you more rights and security than most other tenants. You can have a fair rent fixed by the Rent Officer; if you want advice on this you can contact the Tenancy Relations Officer. It is also difficult for a landlord to evict a protected tenant. The court will only give the landlord an order allowing him/her to evict if it agrees that the landlord's reasons are both legal and reasonable.

New agreements

If your landlord offers you a new agreement, it is good practice to seek advice from the Tenancy Relations Officer or a private solicitor before you sign it. It could reduce your rights, especially if your original tenancy began before 28 February 1997.

No written agreement

If you have no written agreement and you moved in before 15 January 1989 and you do not have a resident landlord you may be a protected tenant, commonly known as a 'sitting tenant'.

If you have no written agreement and moved in before 28 February 1997 but after 15 January 1989 and do not have a resident landlord, then you have the same rights as an assured tenant. Your landlord cannot obtain a court order until s/he has served a proper 'Notice of Intention to Seek Possession' stating why s/he wants to evict you. The landlord cannot apply for a court order until after the notice has expired.

If you have no written agreement and moved into your home after 28 February 1997 you will automatically be an assured shorthold tenant, as long as you do not have a resident landlord.



Renting in the Private Sector

Deposits

From 6 April 2007, when you pay a deposit, your landlord or agent must protect it using a government authorised tenancy deposit scheme.

This law was introduced to make sure that you get all or part of your deposit back when you are entitled to it. Any disputes between you and your landlord or agent will be easier to resolve.

At the beginning of a new tenancy agreement, pay your deposit to your landlord or agent. Within 30 days, the landlord or agent is required to give you details about how your deposit is protected including:

- The contact details of the deposit scheme.
- The contact details of the landlord or agent
- How to apply for the release of your deposit
- Information explaining the purpose of the deposit
- What to do if there is a dispute about the deposit

If you do not get this information ask your landlord how your deposit is protected.

If your landlord or agent has not protected your deposit, you can apply to your local county court. The court can order the landlord or agent to either repay the deposit to you or protect it in a scheme. If the landlord or agent has not protected your deposit they can be ordered to repay three times the amount of deposit to you. The landlord will also lose the automatic right to regain possession at the end of the tenancy unless they have protected the deposit and given the tenant the required information. For further general advice regarding deposits you can contact Shelter Oxford. For assistance with any court action, you can contact a private solicitor or the Citizens Advice Bureau. (See contact details at the end of this guide)

You have a responsibility to return the property in the same condition that it was let to you, allowing for fair wear and tear. It is a good idea to make sure that when you sign your tenancy agreement, you:

- Keep a detailed list of the contents or furniture and fittings, (this is known as an inventory)
- Record the condition of the property and its contents (dated photographs are a good idea)
- Check the circumstances in which your landlord or agent could have a claim on your deposit.

At the end of the tenancy, check whether you are leaving the property and its contents in the condition in which it was let to you, allowing for fair wear and tear.



Renting in the Private Sector

Check you have paid your rent and any other expenses. Then agree with your landlord or agent how much of the deposit should be returned to you. Within 10 days, you should have received the agreed amount of deposit.

Resolving disputes

When you move out, if your landlord or agent cannot agree with you how much of the deposit should be returned, there will be a free service offered by the scheme protecting your deposit to help resolve your dispute. Check the information your landlord gave you at the beginning of the tenancy for details.

Your landlord cannot give you a section 21 notice that s/he is repossessing the property at the end of the tenancy unless s/he has protected the deposit within 30 days of receipt of the money.

Deposits paid before 6 April 2007 (renewed after that date)

If you moved into the property before 6 April 2007 any deposit paid did not have to be protected. If, however, the tenancy agreement has been renewed (or rolled over) after this date, the landlord or agent is required to protect it and give you the relevant information within 90 days of 23 June 2015. If your landlord fails to protect your deposit within this time, s/he could be fined up to 3 times the amount of your deposit and will not be allowed to serve a section 21 notice to quit on you.

Deposits paid before 6 April 2007 (renewed before that date)

If you moved into the property before 6 April 2007 and your tenancy was renewed (or rolled over) before that date, your landlord cannot be fined for failure to protect your deposit. S/he will not however be permitted to serve a Section 21 notice to quit on you until s/he has protected or returned your deposit.

If your landlord or agent is withholding all or part of a deposit paid before 6 April 2007 which did not need to be protected because the tenancy was not renewed, you can contact Shelter Oxford or the Citizens Advice Bureau for advice on making a claim through the small claims court.

Accommodation agencies and letting agents

If you are renting from an agency you should ask the agency if the agency or the landlord is responsible for repairs and management of the property.

It is unlawful for an accommodation agency to charge you to go on their mailing list for accommodation. They can, however, charge for other services such as a fee for keys when they find you a suitable property, drawing up a tenancy agreement and following up references. If you use an agency, always ask for a written list of



Renting in the Private Sector

charges at the outset so that you know what you will be paying. For example, it is not unusual for agencies to impose a charge for late payment of rent. Always get written receipts for any payments made.

Letting agents are now legally required to be a member of one of the three government-approved letting agent redress schemes. These are:

- The Property Ombudsman (TPO)
- The Property Redress Scheme
- Ombudsman Services Property

Letting agent redress schemes provide a free, independent service for resolving disputes between letting agents and their customers. Landlords and tenants can use the schemes. The decision made by a redress scheme is binding on all parties.

If you have a complaint about your letting agent and you are not happy about the way they have dealt with it, then you should complain to their redress scheme.

You can complain to a letting agent redress scheme about:

- lack of transparency about fees for tenants
- inaccurate property descriptions
- disputes about holding deposits taken to reserve a property
- inaccurate charging
- not passing rent onto the landlord
- slow or poor service

The schemes won't cover complaints about the amount (or reasonableness) of fees charged, tenancy deposits or issues which are the landlord's responsibility.

It's a criminal offence for a letting agent not to be a member of a redress scheme.

Contact the City Council's Private Sector Safety Team on 01865 252658 if an agent isn't registered with a scheme. They can investigate and prosecute agencies who haven't signed up to a scheme.

Gas and electricity cash meters

There is a maximum resale price for gas and electricity which is set by Ofgem. This means that your meters can only be set to recover charges the same or lower than the landlord buys the gas or electricity.

If you are concerned that the meter is set at the wrong rate and you may be paying too much, you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau for further advice.

Information about possible grants and/or help with your energy bills can be found at www.oxford.gov.uk/energygrants.



Renting in the Private Sector

Key or card meters

Sometimes key and card meters can be set at a higher rate in order to recover an old debt. This is acceptable if those tenants who were responsible for it are paying the debt. It is, however, illegal for meters to be set to recover former tenants' debts from new occupants. Please contact the Citizens Advice Bureau or a private solicitor for further advice.

In some properties that are in multiple occupation, there can be problems with access to the meters or disputes over who is responsible for payment. These situations can lead to problems in recharging them when required. If this results in the frequent interruption of supply, it is clearly not acceptable and you should inform your landlord. If s/he fails to address the problem, you can contact the Environmental Health Service for further advice.

Your responsibilities

You should pay your rent promptly and in full. If you are having difficulty paying you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau or any other advice agency. They can advise you on any help you may be able to get.

You should look after the property and not do anything that affects the rights of other residents such as making a lot of noise, being aggressive or behaving in an antisocial manner. You should also make sure that your guests /visitors do not cause a nuisance to others.



Harassment and Illegal Eviction

If you are being bullied, threatened, harassed or illegally forced to leave your home, you can take action. There are laws to protect you against these criminal offences.

What is harassment?

Harassment is any unlawful action taken by a person, usually your landlord or agents, which is likely to make you want to leave your accommodation,

Harassment can be subtle or direct and can include.

- Changing the locks.
- Cutting off any of the essential utilities, e.g. gas, electricity or water supplies.
- Visiting the property at unsociable hours without notice.
- Interfering with or removing your possessions.
- Racial abuse.
- Other threatening or abusive behaviour.
- Sexual abuse.
- Starting but not finishing disruptive repairs or building work.

What you can do if you are being harassed

If you think you are being harassed in any way, seek advice immediately. Contact the Tenancy Relations Officer, the Citizens Advice Bureau or a private solicitor.

Keep details of all events that take place, including dates and times and what was said. Ask your landlord to confirm anything s/he has said in writing. When you see your landlord, try and have someone with you to act as support and as a witness.

Oxford City Council will take any action it can to stop harassment. If we cannot solve the dispute by speaking with the person responsible for the harassment, we may be able to prosecute them. In some cases, you may be advised to apply to the



Harassment and Illegal Eviction

court for an injunction against the person responsible. If successful, this means that the person is bound by law to stop the harassment.

If the person ignores the injunction, the court can send them to prison until they agree to accept the court's ruling.

In some cases the county court can award compensation to the person being harassed. A private solicitor can help you with your claim.

What is illegal eviction?

If your landlord or any other person forces you to leave your home without following the correct legal procedure, they may be guilty of illegal eviction. In most cases they will need a court order before they can make you leave.

What to do if you have been illegally evicted

There are specific rules that set out when and how your landlord can evict you.

These depend on the type of tenancy agreement you have. (See Section 2 of this booklet)

The first step your landlord may take is to give you written notice to quit the property. If this happens seek immediate advice from the Tenancy Relations Officer, Shelter or a private solicitor. Verbal notice to quit is not normally adequate.

If you have been locked out of your home, try and contact your landlord to find out what is going on. If you cannot get in touch with your landlord, inform the police and the Tenancy Relations Officer who will try and get you back into your home. If necessary, you may be able to apply to the court for an injunction which will order the landlord to let you back in. For help with your application contact the Tenancy Relations Officer, the Citizens Advice Bureau or a private solicitor.



Checklist

Use this checklist to help you find a property that is safe and meets your needs. Remember: even if you follow this list, the best reference for the property and landlord will come from the current tenants. Try to speak to them without the landlord there to get a true picture of what it is like to live in the property, and whether the landlord has been prompt in responding to requests for repairs etc.

Landlord

- Do you know the landlord or agent's name, address and telephone number? These details should be clearly displayed in an HMO and provided in all cases.

Agreements

- Do you know what the contract means?
- If so what type of contract is it?
- Are you jointly liable for the rent with other tenants?
- Is there an inventory of furniture etc.?
- Have you talked to the previous occupants of the house and asked them if they have any comments that would help you?
- Have you been given a copy of the contract you have signed?
- Have you got a written agreement for any repairs/alterations that need doing? If you have agreed anything verbally with the landlord, whether it be additional furniture, repairs or dates to pay rent. Please make sure you get these in writing and signed by the landlord.

Licensing

- Does the property have a current HMO Licence? A copy should be displayed within the property. If in any doubt seek advice from the council.

Outside the property

- Do the roof and walls look sound? (Check for damp inside the house)
- Are the gutters and drains clear? (e.g. plants growing out of the gutter)
- Is any of the woodwork rotting or unsafe? (e.g. porch or window frames)
- Is the garden overgrown or unsafe?



Checklist

Gas, electricity and fire safety

- Is there a copy of a gas safety certificate available for the gas appliances?
- Is there a working carbon monoxide detector?
- Has the electrical wiring been checked in the last five years? Ask for the electrical safety report and look out for broken sockets and burn marks.
- Does the sofa meet with fire regulations? (Check for fire safety labels)
- Are there working smoke detectors? (press and test a detector)

Plumbing

- Do all the sinks drain?
- Have you tried all the taps? (hot and cold water ok?)
- Does the toilet flush or leak?
- Are there any signs of pests (mouse droppings, slug trails, fleas) in the house?

Security

- Is the house secure?
- Can all the windows be opened and secured?
- Are all external doors solid, do they close and lock securely?
- Is there a letterbox cover, door-chain and spyhole?
- Does the property have a working burglar alarm?
- Are the ground floor bedroom curtains lined or thick enough?

Furniture and fittings

- Is your room big enough for all your possessions?
- Is the furniture, carpets and decor in good condition?
- Has the house got enough furniture for the occupants?
- Does any of the furniture belong to existing tenants?
- Is there sufficient space in the kitchen to store and prepare foodstuffs?(Cupboard, worktop, cooker and fridge/freezer space)
- Do the appliances e.g. cooker, dishwasher, washing machine work?
- Does the heating work?



Checklist

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Money

- What are you paying for in your rent and is it clear from your contract?
- Have you paid a deposit? If so, what is it for and is it protected in an approved scheme?
- Have you got a receipt for what you have paid?
- Are you or the owner responsible for water/electric/council tax or other bills?
- How much will it cost to heat the house? Is the heating adequate and affordable? (electric is more expensive) Will you be warm enough in the middle of winter without additional heating? Have you seen a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)?

Services

- What services is the owner providing for you, if any? Cleaning, gardening, lighting of common parts, dustbin and refuse disposal?

Insurance

- Do you need contents insurance? Have you shopped around online?

B Contact list



Tenancy Relations Officer

T: 01865 252267

E: tenancyrelations@oxford.gov.uk

Private Sector Safety Team

T: 01865 252658

E: psst@oxford.gov.uk

HMO Licensing Team

T: 01865 252307

W: www.oxford.gov.uk/hmo

E: hmoapplications@oxford.gov.uk

HMO Enforcement Team

T: 01865 252211

E: hmos@oxford.gov.uk

Environmental Health

T: 01865 249811

W: www.oxford.gov.uk/environment

E: environment@oxford.gov.uk

Community Response Team / Antisocial Behaviour Team

E: saferoxford@oxford.gov.uk

Housing Benefits

T: 01865 249811

E: benefits@oxford.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

T: 03444 111 444

W: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

E: oxfordcab@oxford.gov.uk

Trading Standards

T: 08450 510845

W: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Shelter

T: 0300 330 1234

W: www.england.shelter.org.uk

Thames Valley Police

T: 101 (non-emergency)

W: www.thamesvalley.police.uk

E: tvpa@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

First Tier Property Tribunal

T: 01223 841 524

W: www.gov.uk/housing-tribunals

E: rpeastern@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Valuation Office

T: 03000 501501

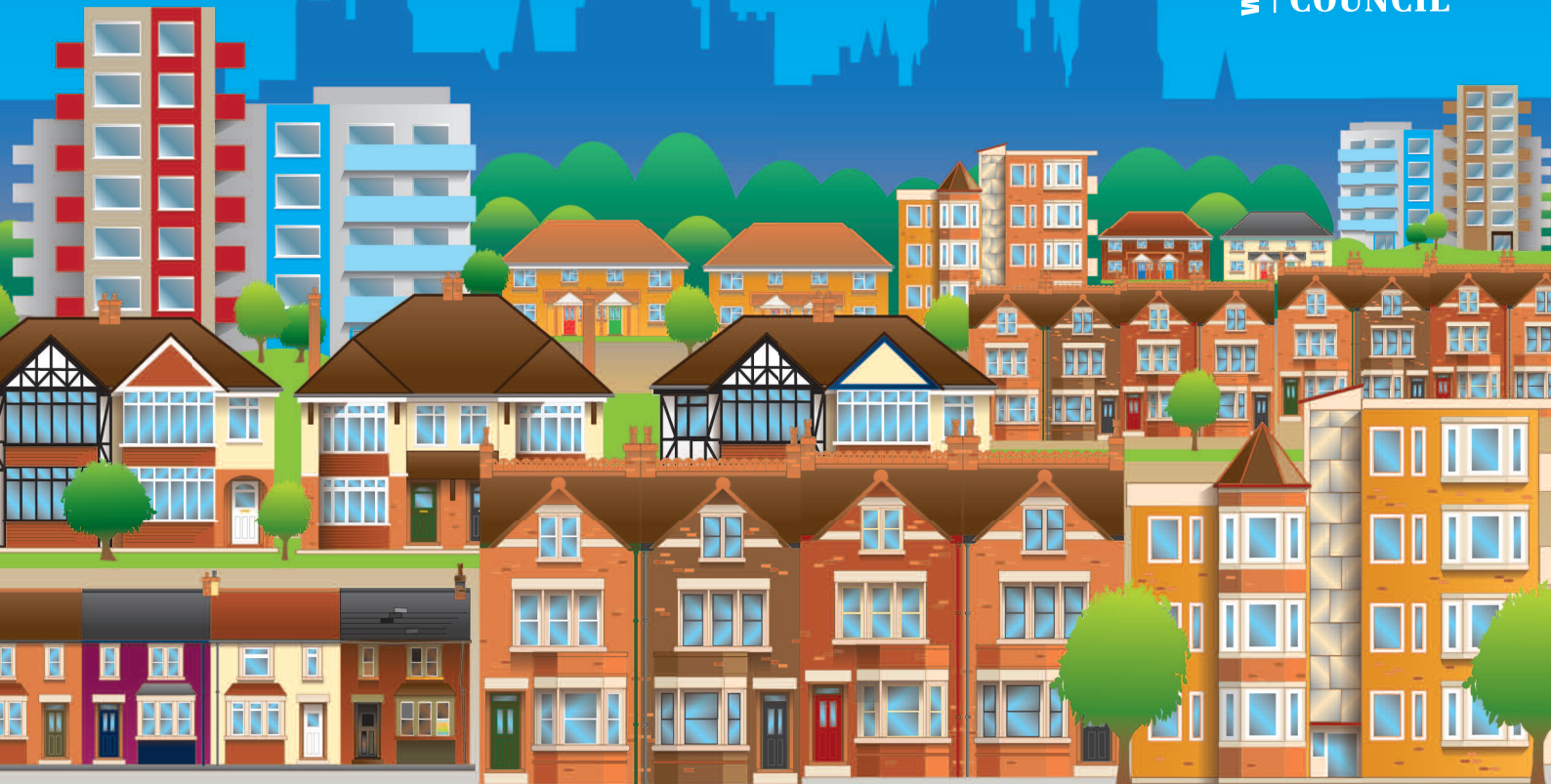
W: www.voa.gov.uk

The Property Ombudsman Scheme

T: 01722 333306

W: www.tpos.co.uk

www.oxford.gov.uk



Oxford's Guide for Private Tenants

Building a world-class city for everyone

