



Safety in the workplace

Letting properties during the
pandemic

Working in a COVID world

COVID has now been with us for some time, and we have all had to adjust the way we live our lives, on both a professional and personal level. Whilst we are all hopeful that this problem will be resolved as soon as possible, it is important to have precautions in place whilst the situation remains.

The government advice allows for the property lettings industry to continue both in terms of maintenance works and new tenancies. In this guide we will go into some of the actions which can be taken to minimise the risk to both your staff and prospective tenants.

Remote working

Advice remains that all those who can work from home should do so, and we would recommend this practice where possible. You will need to be sure that your agent's technology allows for work to continue seamlessly.

Considerations include:

- Phone re-routing to mobile or landline allowing continued 24-hour support.
- Access to any management software
- Communication between staff continues effectively.

If your agent has retained a physical presence in their workplace, the working environment should be safe for staff and any members of the public. Below is a list of actions which could be taken:

- 2 metre spacing between desks to maintain social distancing
- Single use of desks to avoid any surface contact
- Masks if/when meeting members of the public
- Ready availability of cleaning materials both for hand washing and surface cleaning
- Minimum number of staff in office space as is reasonably possible

Letting properties during the pandemic

As noted earlier, property lettings can go ahead during the pandemic and you are still able to find new tenants for your properties. There are several actions which can be taken to minimise any risks when organising new tenancies and they focus on reducing the need for face-to-face contact.

Virtual tours

The use of virtual video tours has become more prevalent in recent years and has been further escalated by the pandemic. Whilst a well curated selection of photos can give a good basis to understand a property, a virtual tour gives an enhanced sense of space and how the property feels. This can be helpful to focus the applications you will receive on a property and reduce the number of in person visits to a property.

They further have the benefit that those are unable to make a visit due to distance or other factors, will be able to see the property in more detail than with photos. In a market such as Oxford this can be especially helpful when dealing with prospective tenants from overseas.

You may find the following guide helpful to get started with your video tour:

[Link to Video Tour Guide](#)

Pre-application forms

When contacted by potential tenants we would recommend the use of pre-application forms prior to arranging any face-to-face visit to a property. This will allow you to gather certain information about the interested party prior to the visit and can be useful tools regardless of the pandemic. The information gathered in these can be split into three main categories:

- **General information:** This will relate to rental preferences such as move in date, tenancy duration, special conditions (e.g. pets) as well as information about the tenant. Tenant details suggested would include name, email, phone number and current address, which are useful both for contacting potential tenants as well as for security.
- **Financial status:** Gathering information on finances at this point may feel presumptuous, however experience shows that this can be important to minimise issues with affordability checks down the road and avoids potentially arranging visits for tenants who would not be able to rent a property. The generally used affordability check is a combined annual salary of above 30 x monthly rental income.

- **COVID disclaimer:** If you do find yourself agreeing to arrange a visit with a prospective tenant, it is recommended to ensure that they are not currently unwell with COVID or with COVID related symptoms, and that they are nor currently awaiting a COVID result for themselves or anyone else in their household.

Undertaking property visits

The previous steps are designed to minimise the number of property visits you complete; however it will still be necessary and appropriate to undertake these for interested parties. You should take the following actions to ensure the safety of yourself, any current tenants and prospective tenants:

General property visit safety

- If property occupied, ensure current occupants are aware of visit.
- Advise colleague of property visit time, who you are meeting and when to be expected back. If going home after, we would recommend calling a colleague after the visit to confirm.

COVID specific advice

- Ensure you wear a mask during the visit.
- Readily available hand sanitiser.
- Gloves available for visitors if they would like to use them.
- Advise occupants to be out of the property during the visit where possible.

These steps are designed to minimise the risk for all involved when undertaking visits and would also be applicable for any visits to the property which are not specifically for new tenancies.

A word on property management

The government has outlined their expectation that properties should still be kept in an appropriate condition for tenants and in a fit state of repair. As such repair and maintenance work can still be carried out if required, however you should carefully consider if this is required repairs. If it is possible to delay any work to a later date, without a delay having a further impact on the condition of the property or its habitability, we would advise on doing so.

Bright Properties are an ARLA registered letting agent based in Oxford providing personalised property management services to landlords across Oxford and the surrounding area. We aim to raise the bar for property standards across the city. Being landlords ourselves, we understand the importance of diligent property management and deliver the same high standards for your properties as we do for our own.

This guide is intended to be informative. Any advice taken from this document should be followed up with a consultation with a relevant property

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