

Assured and assured
shorthold tenancies
a guide for tenants



housing

Assured and assured shorthold tenancies

Who should read this booklet?

You probably need to read this booklet if you are renting, or thinking of renting, a domestic property and the letting began on or after 15 January 1989. However, if you are sharing or are going to share part of the landlord's home, you should read our separate booklet called "Renting Rooms in Someone's Home – a guide for people renting from resident landlords".

This booklet does not deal with agricultural lettings, or lettings by housing associations, local authorities or other social landlords.

This booklet explain the most important features of tenants' and landlords' rights and responsibilities but it is only a general guide.

This booklet does not provide an authoritative interpretation of the law; only the courts can do that. Nor does it cover every case. If you are in doubt about your legal rights or obligations you would be well advised to seek information from a Law Centre, Housing Advice Centre or Citizens Advice Bureau or to consult a solicitor. The addresses and phone numbers of advice organisations are listed in the telephone directory or can be obtained from your local library or local authority. Help with all or part of the cost of legal advice may be available under the Legal Aid Scheme.

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1. Introduction to assured and shorthold tenancies

1.1 What are assured and shorthold tenancies?

These are the names of the commonest forms of arrangement for the renting of houses and flats by private tenants. In their current form, they were introduced by the Housing Act 1988 but important changes were made by the Housing Act 1996 with effect from 28 February 1997.

In the legislation, the term “assured tenancy” covers both assured tenancies (sometimes called “full” or “ordinary” assured tenancies) and assured shorthold tenancies. For clarity, this leaflet will refer to *assured* tenancies and *shorthold* tenancies to highlight the important differences between the two.

An **assured** or **shorthold tenancy** is the usual form of letting if:

- you are a private tenant and your landlord is a private landlord;
- the tenancy began on or after 15 January 1989;
- the house or flat is let as separate accommodation and is your main home.

A tenancy will **not** be an assured or shorthold tenancy if:

- the tenancy began before 15 January 1989;
- it is a business or holiday let;
- no rent or a very low or very high rent is charged;
- the landlord is a “resident landlord” (see section 1.2).

Appendix A gives a more detailed list of tenancies or agreements which cannot be assured or shorthold tenancies.

Assured and shorthold tenancies allow landlords to charge a full market rent, unlike previous forms of tenancy. Shorthold tenancies also allow landlords to let their property for a short period only and to get it back if they wish after 6 months.

Changes in the 1996 Act mean that:

- a new tenancy will automatically be a shorthold tenancy unless the landlord gives written notice that it will not be a shorthold tenancy;
- the landlord has a right to possession if you owe at least 2 months' or 8 weeks' rent (rather than 3 months' or 13 weeks' rent);
- it will be easier for the landlord to evict you if you cause a nuisance or annoyance to other local people;
- if the landlord agrees a new or replacement shorthold tenancy with you, you have a right to a statement of the main details of the tenancy agreement if he or she does not provide a written agreement.

Under changes in the 1996 Act, if you are a new shorthold tenant, you will:

- only be able to refer your rent to a rent assessment committee during the first 6 months of the tenancy;
- continue to have the right not to be evicted without a court order and to have the same rights as existing tenants to stay in the property.

These are the most important changes. A summary of all the changes is at Appendix B.

1.2 If I do not have exclusive use of the accommodation or I live in part of the landlord's home, am I covered by the law on assured and shorthold tenancies?

Different rules apply if you do not have exclusive use of the accommodation or the landlord lets part of the house or flat he or she lives in to you.

If the landlord agrees to rent you accommodation for a period and you will have exclusive use of the accommodation, the agreement will almost certainly be an assured or shorthold tenancy. If you do not have exclusive use of any part of the accommodation, you are likely to have a **licence** to occupy, not an assured or shorthold tenancy. The agreement will probably be a licence if the landlord has specified that he or she requires unrestricted access to your room to provide services such as cleaning.

If the landlord is a “resident landlord”, then you will not have an assured or shorthold tenancy. This rule generally applies to converted houses. So if the landlord has his or her only or main home in a flat in a building which has been converted into flats and then lets you another flat in that same building, the arrangement will not be an assured or shorthold tenancy. The landlord does not need to share any accommodation with you to be held to be a resident landlord. It is enough that he or she lives in the same building.

However, if the landlord lives in a flat in a purpose built block of flats and rents you one of the other flats in the same block, he or she will not be a resident landlord and you will be an assured or shorthold tenant. If you share part of the landlord’s own flat in a purpose built block, you will have a licence or a tenancy, but it will not be assured or shorthold.

If you have exclusive use of part of the accommodation but can also use another part of the accommodation, such as a communal living room or kitchen, with someone who is not the landlord, you are likely to have an assured or shorthold tenancy.

It is important to establish whether an agreement is a tenancy or a licence as this will affect your rights and responsibilities. For further details, read the Department’s booklet “Renting Rooms in Someone’s Home – A Guide for People Renting from Resident Landlords”, listed at the end of this booklet.

If you are in any doubt about what sort of agreement you have, you should seek advice from a solicitor, Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau or Housing Advice Centre.

1.3 Where can I get more information?

The Department produces a range of booklets, free of charge, to help you. They are listed at the end of this booklet with an address and phone number for ordering copies.



2. The differences between an assured and a shorthold tenancy

2.1 What are the main differences between an assured and a shorthold tenancy?

If you have a **shorthold tenancy**, the landlord **can regain possession of the property 6 months after the beginning of the tenancy**, provided that he or she gives you 2 months' notice requiring possession. Sections 6.1 to 6.12 explain the procedures for regaining possession in a shorthold tenancy.

If you have an **assured tenancy**, **you have the right to remain in the property** unless the landlord can prove to the court that he or she has grounds for possession. The landlord does not have an automatic right to repossess the property when the tenancy comes to an end. Sections 6.7 to 6.12 explain the procedures for possessing an assured tenancy.

The landlord can charge a full market rent for an assured or a shorthold tenancy.

2.2 Should I choose an assured or a shorthold tenancy?

Most landlords let on shorthold tenancies and many are happy to grant a tenant a further tenancy when the first tenancy comes to an end. However, if you would like the security of knowing that the landlord cannot automatically regain possession after 6 months, you can try to negotiate an assured tenancy, or a shorthold tenancy for a fixed term (section 3.4 explains what a fixed term is). If you are unsure which type of tenancy you are being offered, you should seek legal advice.

2.3 Are there any tenancies which cannot be shorthold tenancies?

If you are an existing assured tenant, the landlord cannot replace your tenancy with a shorthold tenancy unless you agree that he or she can (see section 5.5). Appendix A gives a list of tenancies which cannot be shorthold tenancies. You should seek legal advice if you are in any doubt whether your tenancy can be a shorthold tenancy.



3. How a tenancy is agreed

3.1 How do the procedures for setting up assured and shorthold tenancies differ?

An important change was made in the Housing Act 1996. The change means that tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997 are automatically shorthold tenancies unless special steps are taken to set up an assured tenancy. Tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February were automatically assured tenancies unless a special procedure was followed to set up a shorthold tenancy.

3.2 How will I know whether the tenancy is a shorthold tenancy?

For tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997

There is **no special procedure** for creating a shorthold tenancy. A tenancy will automatically be a shorthold tenancy unless the landlord follows the procedure described in section 3.3.

For tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February 1997

A tenancy will be a shorthold tenancy only if your landlord informed you before the tenancy began, using a special form – a **Section 20 notice** – that the tenancy was to be a shorthold tenancy.

If the landlord is replacing your existing shorthold tenancy, see sections 5.1 and 5.2.

3.3 How will I know if the tenancy is an assured tenancy?

For tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997

The landlord must either **give you a notice** which says that the tenancy is not a shorthold tenancy before the beginning of the tenancy, **or include a simple declaration in the tenancy agreement** to this effect. If you both agree after the tenancy has started that it should be on assured terms, he or she can serve the notice after the tenancy has started. There is no special form for giving this notice – your landlord simply needs to state clearly that the tenancy will not be a shorthold tenancy.

For tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February 1997

If the tenancy began, or was agreed in a contract before this date and your landlord did not serve a Section 20 notice before the tenancy started, then the tenancy is **automatically** an assured tenancy in law.

If your landlord is replacing your existing assured tenancy, see sections 5.3 to 5.5.

3.4 Does a tenancy have to run for a set period or can it run indefinitely?

An assured or shorthold tenancy may either:

- last for a fixed number of weeks, months or years – called a **fixed term tenancy**; or
- run indefinitely from one rent period to the next – called a **contractual periodic tenancy**.

If you agree a fixed term tenancy, the landlord will only be able to seek possession during the fixed term if one of grounds for possession 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 in Appendix C apply and if the terms of the tenancy make provision for it to be ended on any of these grounds. If you agree a periodic tenancy, the landlord can seek possession at any time on any of the grounds in Appendix C. Furthermore, if you agree a shorthold tenancy on a periodic basis, the landlord has an automatic right to possession at any time after the first 6 months, provided he or she has given you 2 months' notice requiring possession. If you are an assured tenant, the landlord cannot seek possession without grounds when the fixed term ends. Section 6 explains in detail the procedures for seeking possession of a tenancy.

Shorthold tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February 1997 had to have an initial fixed term of at least 6 months. Shorthold tenancies starting on or after 28 February do not.

3.5 Does the initial period of a shorthold tenancy have to run for a fixed period?

Important changes were made in the Housing Act 1996.

For tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997

The landlord does not have to agree an initial fixed term but may do so if you both agree. The fixed term may be for less than six months if you agree. Or the tenancy can be set up as a periodic tenancy from the outset.

However, **the landlord does not have a guaranteed right to possession during the first 6 months of the tenancy**, even if you agreed a fixed term of less than 6 months or a periodic tenancy from the outset. The landlord can, however, seek possession during this period on one of the grounds for possession set out in Appendix C.

For tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February 1997

These had to have an initial fixed term of at least 6 months. The landlord can only seek possession of the property during the fixed term of the tenancy if one of the following grounds for possession in Appendix C apply – 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 – and the terms of the tenancy make provision for it to be ended on any of these grounds.

3.6 Does the tenancy agreement have to be in writing?

The landlord is not required by law to provide a written tenancy agreement (except for fixed-term tenancies of greater than 3 years) but you should ask for one. Tenancies for a fixed term which is greater than 7 years should be registered with the local Land Registry. This would be your responsibility.

The Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations apply to tenancy agreements, and if a term is found to be unfair it is not enforceable. The Office of Fair Trading publishes guidance as to what is and is not considered “unfair”; this includes issues such as use of plain English in an agreement; and in standard agreements, one party being given more right than the other to cancel a contract, or unreasonable restrictions.

If you have concerns about possible unfair terms in the agreement you have been given, you should contact your local council’s Trading Standards Department.

If you have a shorthold tenancy starting on or after 28 February 1997 and you do not have a written agreement, you have a legal right to ask for a written statement of any of the following main terms of the tenancy – the date the tenancy began, the amount of rent payable and the dates on which it should be paid, any rent review arrangements, and the length of any fixed term which has been agreed. You must apply in writing for this statement. The landlord is required to provide it within 28 days of receiving your request. Failure to do so, without reasonable excuse, will make him or her liable to a fine.

If you have only an oral agreement with the landlord, you are both bound automatically by the legislation applying to shorthold tenancies if the tenancy started on or after 28 February 1997 and by the legislation applying to assured tenancies if the tenancy started or was agreed before 28 February 1997.

You should be sure that you understand the terms of the agreement before you sign it. The landlord should give you every opportunity to read and understand terms of the tenancy, and any other agreement, before you become bound by them.

Prior to 1 December 2003 a tenancy agreement was a stampable document and should have been sent or taken to the Stamp Office for stamping in order for it to have validity if it was subsequently used in court.

Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) was introduced on 1 December 2003 to replace Stamp Duty. Details are in the Inland Revenue leaflet SD3 a guide to leases. This is available at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk, or by Orderline 0845 302 1472.

You can also ask for more advice about Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) by ringing the Inland Revenue Helpline on 0845 603 0135.

3.7 Can the landlord charge a deposit?

The landlord can ask you to pay a deposit before moving into the property to act as security in case you leave the property owing rent

or to pay for any damage or unpaid household bills at the end of the tenancy. You should negotiate the amount, but he or she is unlikely to charge a deposit of more than 2 months' rent because it could be regarded as a premium, which may give you the right to give the tenancy to someone else or sublet (see section 8.3).

You should ask the landlord to state clearly in the tenancy agreement the circumstances under which part or all of the deposit may be withheld at the end of the tenancy and to agree a list of furniture, kitchen equipment and other items in the property with you at the outset of the tenancy. In any case, taking photographs of the interior of the accommodation when the tenancy starts can also be a useful way of recording its condition, in case of any later dispute about what damage has been caused.

If, at the end of the tenancy, you believe that the deposit has been kept by the landlord unreasonably, you can make a claim through the Small Claims Court for the disputed amount. You should take advice before doing this.

If you cannot afford the deposit, you can check with your local authority's Housing Department or Housing Advice Centre whether there is a rent or deposit guarantee scheme in the area which would guarantee rent or the costs of damage for a specified period.

3.8 Should the landlord provide a rent book?

The landlord is only legally obliged to provide a rent book if the rent is payable on a weekly basis. If the landlord is not required to provide a rent book, you should ask for a record of rent payments or receipts for rent paid to avoid any disagreements later.

3.9 Can an accommodation agency charge a fee for finding the tenancy?

An accommodation agency may charge a fee for finding you accommodation which you subsequently agree to rent. It cannot charge a fee for providing you with details of properties for rent.



4. Landlord and tenant responsibilities and rights

4.1 What is the landlord responsible for?

Repairs

Unless the tenancy has a fixed term of more than 7 years, the landlord is responsible for repairs to:

- the structure and exterior of the property;
- baths, sinks, basins and other sanitary installations;
- heating and hot water installations;
- if you are renting a flat or maisonette, other parts of the building or installations in it which he or she owns or controls and whose disrepair would affect you.

Responsibility for other repairs depends on what the landlord agrees with you. He or she is not responsible for repairing damage caused by you.

The landlord can include a sum to cover the cost of repairs in the rent but cannot pass the costs on to you in the form of a separate service charge.

For further details, read the Department's booklet "Repairs" listed at the end of this booklet.

Safety of gas and electrical appliances

The landlord is required to ensure that all gas appliances are maintained in good order and that an annual safety check is carried out by a tradesman who is registered with CORGI (Council for Registered Gas Installers). The landlord must keep a record of the safety checks and issue it to you within 28 days of each annual check. He or she is not responsible for maintaining gas appliances which you are entitled to take with you at the end of the letting. Further guidance is contained in the leaflet "*Gas appliances – get them checked, keep them safe*", available, free of charge, from Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS, telephone 0800 300 363.

The landlord should ensure that the electrical system and any electrical appliances that he or she supplies such as cookers, kettles, toasters, washing machines and immersion heaters are safe to use.

Fire safety of furniture and furnishings

The landlord must ensure that any furniture and furnishings he or she supplies meet the fire resistance requirements in the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, unless he or she is letting on a temporary basis whilst, for example, working away from home.

The regulations set levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture. All new and second-hand furniture provided in accommodation that is let for the first time, or replacement furniture in existing let accommodation, must meet the fire resistance requirements unless it was made before 1950. Most furniture will have a manufacturer's label on it saying if it meets the requirements. Further guidance is contained in the booklet "*A Guide to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations*". This can be downloaded from www.dti.gov.uk.

Other

A tenancy is a contractual agreement, even if there is no written agreement, so the landlord must supply whatever he or she agreed to supply.

4.2 What is the tenant responsible for?

Council Tax

You will normally be responsible for paying Council Tax. However, if the property is a house in multiple occupation, the landlord will be responsible for paying it although he can include the cost in the rent. A house in multiple occupation, for Council Tax purposes, is a property which is constructed or adapted for occupation by individuals who do not form a single household or who have separate tenancies or who pay rent for only part of the property. If you are in any doubt as to who will be liable to pay Council Tax, contact your local authority. To

avoid confusion, the tenancy agreement should set out who is responsible for paying Council Tax.

Water and sewerage charges

You will normally be responsible for paying water and sewerage charges if the accommodation is self-contained. If you are in any doubt as to who will be liable for these charges, contact the water utility company for the area. The tenancy agreement should set out who is responsible for payment. If the landlord pays the charges, he or she can include the cost in the rent.

Other bills

You should agree with the landlord who is responsible for the payment of other bills (gas, electricity, telephone etc). You may be responsible directly to the utility company for payments, or the landlord may recharge you separately, for example through a coin meter. The resale of electricity and gas is subject to maximum resale prices, which depend on the gas or electricity supplier that the landlord uses. However, the maximum resale charges do not apply if a flat rate is charged to cover your usage, or if rent is charged on an all-inclusive basis.

Other

You have a duty to take proper care of the property and use it in a responsible way, pay the rent as agreed and keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement, unless the terms are in contravention of your rights in law.

4.3 What rights does the landlord have?

Access

The landlord, or landlord's agent, has the legal right to enter the property at reasonable times of day to carry out the repairs for which he or she is responsible and to inspect the condition and state of repair of the property. 24 hours' written notice of an inspection must be given. You should ask the landlord to set out in the tenancy agreement the arrangements for access and procedures for getting repairs done.

4.4 What rights does the tenant have?

Quiet enjoyment

You have the legal right to live in the property as your home. The landlord should ask your permission before he or she enters the premises.

The landlord cannot evict you without a possession order from the court.

If the landlord sells the freehold of the property, you will retain any rights you have to remain in the property, as the tenancy will be binding on any purchaser.

Matters such as whether you can keep pets and so on, should be negotiated and included in the terms of the tenancy agreement.

4.5 Should these responsibilities and rights be included in the tenancy agreement?

Statutory responsibilities and rights will apply to you and the landlord even if they are not included in the tenancy agreement. However, it is useful to include them in the tenancy agreement to prevent misunderstandings later.



5. What happens when a tenancy ends

5.1 What happens when a shorthold tenancy comes to the end of a fixed term?

When a shorthold tenancy comes to the end of the fixed term, the landlord can end the tenancy but must have given 2 months' notice that he or she requires possession (see sections 6.1 to 6.5).

If the landlord agrees a replacement tenancy, it will automatically be on shorthold terms unless he or she agrees to set up a replacement tenancy on an assured basis (see section 3.3).

If the landlord agrees a replacement tenancy, it can either be for a fixed term or run on a periodic basis – called a contractual periodic tenancy. If the landlord grants you a replacement shorthold tenancy on a fixed term basis, he or she will only be able to regain possession during the fixed term on one of grounds for possession 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 in Appendix C. Once the fixed term has ended, the landlord will be able to regain possession provided he or she has given you 2 months' notice. If the landlord grants you a replacement shorthold tenancy on a contractual periodic basis, he or she will be able to regain possession at any time provided that 2 months' notice that possession is required has been given.

If the landlord does nothing, the tenancy will automatically run on from one rent period to the next on the same terms as the preceding fixed term shorthold tenancy – called a **statutory periodic tenancy**. The tenancy will continue to run on this basis until you leave, the landlord replaces the tenancy, or the landlord requires possession of the property.

Sections 6.1 to 6.12 explain in detail the possession procedures for a shorthold tenancy.

5.2 How do the changes in the Housing Act 1996 affect existing shorthold tenants?

If your shorthold tenancy started or was agreed before 28 February 1997, any replacement tenancy which the landlord agrees with you will automatically be on shorthold terms. He or she will not have to serve a new Section 20 notice before the start of the replacement tenancy.

5.3 What happens when an assured tenancy comes to the end of a fixed term?

Any replacement tenancy which the landlord agrees with you will automatically be on assured terms whatever the tenancy says unless you agree that he or she can replace it with a shorthold tenancy (see section 5.5). If the landlord agrees a replacement tenancy, it can either be for a fixed term or run on a periodic basis – called a contractual periodic tenancy.

If the landlord grants you a replacement assured tenancy on a fixed term basis, he or she will only be able to regain possession during the fixed term on one of grounds for possession 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 in Appendix C although after the fixed term has ended, possession may be applied for on any of the grounds in Appendix C. The landlord does not have an automatic right to regain possession of an assured tenancy at the end of a fixed term.

If the landlord does nothing, the tenancy will automatically run on from one rent period to the next on the same terms as the preceding fixed term assured tenancy. The tenancy is called a **statutory periodic tenancy**. It will continue to run on this basis until you leave, the landlord replaces the tenancy or gives notice seeking possession of the property on one of the grounds in Appendix C.

Sections 6.7 to 6.12 explain in detail the procedures for possessing an assured tenancy.

5.4 How do the changes in the Housing Act 1996 affect existing assured tenants?

If your assured tenancy started on or after 28 February 1997, any replacement tenancy will automatically be on assured terms whatever the tenancy agreement says, unless you give the landlord notice on a special form that you want a replacement tenancy on shorthold terms (see section 5.5).

5.5 What do I do if my landlord wants to replace my assured tenancy with a shorthold tenancy?

If you are happy to accept a replacement tenancy on a shorthold basis, you should give the landlord notice on a special form that you want a replacement shorthold tenancy. The form is called “*Tenant’s notice proposing that an Assured Tenancy be replaced by an Assured Shorthold Tenancy*” which can be obtained from a law stationers or a rent assessment panel (see Appendix D). The landlord cannot give you a replacement shorthold tenancy unless you complete and sign the form and give it to him or her.

You do not have to complete this form even if your landlord has asked you to do so, unless you are quite sure that you want a replacement tenancy on a shorthold basis. If you give your landlord this notice, your assured tenancy will be replaced by a shorthold tenancy and you will be giving up your existing right to remain in the property. Your landlord will be able to regain possession of the property as soon as the initial 6 months of the shorthold tenancy have passed, or if the tenancy has a fixed term, at the end of the fixed term. The landlord will not have to give any grounds as to why he or she wants to repossess the property.

If the landlord is trying to make you accept a replacement shorthold tenancy and you are in any doubt about whether to accept it, seek advice from a Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Advice Centre or solicitor.

5.6 Can I leave during the tenancy?

If you have a fixed term tenancy but want to move out before the end of the term, you can only do so if the landlord agrees you can leave early or if this is allowed for by a “break clause” in the tenancy agreement and you have followed any requirements for giving notice specified in the tenancy agreement. If the agreement does not allow you to leave early and the landlord does not agree that you can break the agreement, you will be contractually obliged to pay the rent for the entire length of the fixed term. However, this does not mean that the landlord should necessarily be able to claim for the whole term’s rent if you leave early: there is also a responsibility on the landlord in this situation to try to cover his or her losses in other ways, notably by trying to re-let the accommodation.

If the tenancy has no fixed term, you must give the landlord reasonable notice in writing of your intention to leave. You must give at least 4 weeks’ notice if you pay rent on a weekly basis and at least a month’s notice if you pay rent on a monthly basis. See the Department’s booklet “*Notice That You Must Leave*”.



6. When can I be asked to leave the property?

6.1 Can the landlord ask me to leave when the fixed term of a shorthold tenancy has ended?

If the tenancy started on or after 28 February 1997

The landlord has a right to repossess the property without giving any grounds for possession at any time after any fixed term comes to an end or at any time during a contractual or statutory periodic tenancy, provided it is at least 6 months since the start of the original tenancy. For example, if the landlord initially agreed a tenancy of 4 months, and subsequently issued a replacement tenancy to follow it, he or she cannot regain possession until 2 months after the start of the replacement tenancy. However, if the original tenancy was for more than 6 months, he or she can regain possession at any time during the replacement tenancy.

If the tenancy started or was agreed before 28 February 1997

When the initial fixed term (which must have been for at least 6 months) or any subsequent fixed term ends, or if the tenancy is a contractual periodic or statutory periodic tenancy, the landlord can regain possession at any time without giving any grounds for possession.

6.2 What does the landlord have to do if he or she wants me to leave when the fixed term of a shorthold tenancy has ended?

The landlord must give you at least 2 months' notice that he or she requires possession. The landlord can give you notice at any time during the fixed term, but the date he or she states possession is required cannot be before the end of the fixed term. If the tenancy is on a contractual period or statutory periodic basis, the date on which the notice expires must be the last day of a tenancy period, and the notice must state that possession is required under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988.

If the landlord gives you notice on or after 28 February 1997 that he or she requires possession, the notice must be in writing.

6.3 Do I have to move out when the notice requiring possession expires?

You should leave the property if the landlord has given you at least 2 month's notice that he or she requires possession. The landlord cannot evict you without a possession order from the court. He or she can apply to the court to start possession proceedings as soon as the notice requiring possession expires. The landlord will not have to give any grounds for possession and he or she may use the accelerated possession procedure.

6.4 What is the accelerated possession procedure?

This is a procedure for getting possession of a property without a court hearing. The court will make its decision by looking at the documents which you and the landlord provide, unless it considers that a hearing is required. The landlord can only use this procedure if you have a written tenancy agreement (or, if the tenancy has lapsed into a statutory periodic tenancy, there was a written agreement for the original tenancy) and he or she has given you the required notice in writing seeking possession.

6.5 Do I have to leave when the landlord has a possession order from the court?

You should leave the property on the date specified in the court order. If you do not leave, the landlord must apply for a warrant for eviction from the court. The court will arrange for bailiffs to evict you.

6.6 Can the landlord ask me to leave during the fixed term of a shorthold tenancy?

The landlord can only seek possession during a fixed term of the tenancy if one of the following grounds for possession in Appendix C apply – grounds 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 – and the terms of the tenancy make provision for it to be ended on any of these grounds. It is for the court to decide whether one or more of the grounds for possession apply.

6.7 Can the landlord ask me to leave if I am an assured tenant?

The landlord can only seek possession during a fixed term of the tenancy if one of the following grounds for possession in Appendix C apply – grounds 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 – and the terms of the tenancy make provision for it to be ended on any of these grounds. Once the fixed term of the tenancy has ended, he or she can seek possession if one or more of the 17 grounds for possession in Appendix C apply. It is for the court to decide whether one or more of the grounds for possession apply.

6.8 What are the grounds for possession?

The reasons or “grounds” for possession cover, for example, cases where you have not paid the rent, or have broken another term of the tenancy agreement. Some are **mandatory** which means that if the landlord can prove that the ground applies, the court must grant him or her a possession order. The others are **discretionary** which means the court will only grant the landlord a possession order if it thinks it reasonable to do so, based on all the facts of the case.

Grounds 1 to 5 are **prior notice** grounds which means they can usually only be used if the landlord notified you in writing **before the tenancy started** that he or she intended one day to ask for the property back on one of these grounds. However, the court may grant possession on grounds 1 and 2 without the prior notice if it considers that there were good reasons for not serving the notice.

6.9 If the landlord is seeking possession on one of the grounds for possession, what should he or she do?

The landlord must first give you written notice that he or she intends to go to court to seek possession. The period of notice is usually 2 weeks or 2 months, depending on which ground for possession is being used. The notice periods for each ground are given in Appendix C. He or she must give you notice on a special form called “*Notice seeking possession of a property let on an Assured Tenancy or an Assured Agricultural Occupancy*”. (The landlord will also use this form if the tenancy is a shorthold tenancy). The form states which of the grounds for possession he or she is using.

The landlord can apply to the court to start court proceedings as soon as the notice expires.

You do not have to leave the property until there is a court order requiring you to leave.

6.10 What should I do if I do not think the landlord has the right to possession?

If the landlord is relying on one of the grounds for possession in Appendix C, the notice that he or she will give you to notify you that possession of the property is being sought will state which grounds for possession he or she is using.

If you do not think the landlord has the right to possession or you disagree with anything he or she says in the notice, you should seek advice on what to do. When you get a copy of the landlord’s application to the court for possession proceedings, you should act immediately if you disagree with anything in the landlord’s sworn statement (“affidavit”), particularly if the landlord has applied for possession under the accelerated possession procedure because you will only have a short time to provide a reply.

You can seek advice on what to do from a Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Advice Centre or solicitor. If your landlord is using the accelerated possession procedure, you should read The Court Service's leaflet "*Tenants leaflet – Assured shorthold tenancies – An application for possession – What you can do*", available from your nearest County Court.

6.11 Do I have to leave as soon as the landlord has a court possession order?

If the court orders possession on one of the mandatory grounds, you will have to leave on the date specified in the court order – this is called an **absolute possession order**. If the court orders possession on one of the discretionary grounds, it can either grant an absolute possession order or it may allow you to stay on in the property provided you meet certain conditions – for example, paying back an amount of rent arrears each week. This is called a **suspended possession order** and you cannot be evicted provided that you meet the conditions.

If you do not leave after the date specified in the order, the landlord must seek a warrant for eviction from the court. The court will arrange for bailiffs to evict you.

6.12 What happens if I breach the conditions of a suspended possession order?

The landlord may apply to the court for an absolute possession order or a warrant for possession, depending on the terms of the suspended order.



7. Rent increases and varying the terms of a tenancy

7.1 How frequently can the landlord put up the rent?

You should agree with the landlord the rent and arrangements for paying it before the tenancy begins. The details should be included in the tenancy agreement.

If the tenancy is for a fixed term, the agreement should say either that the rent will be fixed for the length of the term or that it will be reviewed at regular intervals and how it will be reviewed.

If the tenancy is a contractual periodic tenancy, the tenancy agreement should say how often the rent will be reviewed and how it will be reviewed.

7.2 Can the landlord put the rent up by more than he or she agreed in the tenancy agreement?

Only if you agree.

7.3 What happens if the tenancy agreement does not say when the rent will go up?

If the tenancy is a **fixed term** tenancy, the landlord can only put the rent up if you agree. If you do not agree, the landlord will have to wait until the fixed term ends before he or she can raise the rent.

If the tenancy is a **contractual periodic tenancy**, the landlord can put the rent up if you agree. Alternatively the landlord can use a formal procedure in the Housing Act 1988 to propose a rent increase to be payable a year after the tenancy began. He or she can then propose further increases at yearly intervals after the first increase.

When a fixed term tenancy ends and the tenancy lapses into a **statutory periodic tenancy**, the landlord can put the rent up if you agree. Alternatively he or she can use the formal procedure in the Housing Act 1988 to propose a rent increase to be payable as soon as the statutory tenancy starts. The landlord can then propose further increases at yearly intervals after the first increase.

7.4 What is the formal procedure for proposing a rent increase for contractual or statutory periodic tenancies where this is not covered in the tenancy agreement?

The landlord must propose the rent increase on one of two special forms called “*Landlord’s notice proposing a new rent under an Assured Periodic Tenancy of premises situated in England*” or “*Landlord’s notice proposing a new rent under an Assured Periodic Tenancy of premises situated in Wales*”. The forms can be used for assured or assured shorthold tenancies.

He or she must give at least a month’s notice of the proposed increase if the rent is paid on a weekly or monthly basis (more if the rent period is longer). More details are in Appendix E.

7.5 What should I do if I get formal notice of a rent increase?

If you accept the rent increase, you should simply pay it from the date given in the notice.

If you do not agree with the increase, you must apply to a rent assessment committee to decide what the rent should be. You must apply on a special form called “*Application referring a Notice proposing a new rent under an Assured Periodic Tenancy or Agricultural Occupancy to a Rent Assessment Committee*”, available from law stationers or rent assessment panels (see Appendix D). (This form must also be used if the tenancy is a shorthold tenancy). The committee must receive the application before the date on which the new rent would be due.

7.6 What is a rent assessment committee?

Rent assessment committees are made up of 2 or 3 people – usually a lawyer, a property valuer and a lay person. They are drawn from rent assessment panels – bodies of people with appropriate expertise appointed by Government Ministers. There are 6 rent assessment panels in England and Wales. Their addresses are given in Appendix D. The committees are independent of both central and local government. There is no appeal against a committee’s decision except on a point of law.

The committee may make a decision by considering the relevant papers although you or the landlord can ask for an informal hearing, which you may both attend. There is no charge for a committee decision.

7.7 When can I apply to a rent assessment committee for a decision on the rent?

If you are an assured or a shorthold tenant, you can ask a committee to set a rent under a contractual periodic or statutory periodic tenancy if you have been given notice by the landlord of a rent increase (see section 7.4).

If you are a shorthold tenant, you can ask a committee to set a rent at the beginning of a shorthold tenancy if you consider the rent to be significantly higher than rents for comparable tenancies (see section 7.10).

7.8 How does the rent assessment committee decide on a rent for a contractual periodic or statutory periodic tenancy?

When settling disputes on rent, the committee decides what rent the landlord could reasonably expect for the property if he or she was letting it on the open market under a new tenancy on the same terms. It does not take into account any increase in the value of the property due to voluntary improvements by you. The committee may agree the proposed rent or set a higher or lower rent.

The rent fixed by the committee is the legal maximum the landlord can charge. The new rent will be payable from the date specified in the landlord's notice unless the committee considers this would cause you undue hardship in which case it may specify a later date.

7.9 Can the landlord propose a further rent increase after the committee has made a decision?

The landlord can propose that the rent is increased a year after the date on which the rent decided by the committee was payable (but see Appendix E), unless you agree that he or she can put it up earlier. You must apply to a rent assessment committee to decide what the rent should be if you do not agree with the proposed increase.

7.10 What additional rights do shorthold tenants have to apply to a rent assessment committee for a decision on the rent?

If you are a shorthold tenant, you can also apply to a rent assessment committee at the beginning of the tenancy for a decision on the rent if you consider the rent to be significantly higher than the rent for comparable tenancies. The Housing Act 1996 made important changes to the deadline for applications.

For tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997

You can only apply to the committee once within 6 months of the beginning of the original tenancy. An application cannot be made if the original tenancy has ended and been replaced and more than 6 months have elapsed since the date the original tenancy started.

For tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February 1997

You may apply to the committee once during the initial fixed term of the original tenancy. The original fixed term had to be for 6 months but may be for longer.

7.11 What is the procedure for referring the rent for a shorthold tenancy to a rent assessment committee?

You must apply to the committee for a decision on the rent on a special form called “*Application to a Rent Assessment Committee for a determination of a rent under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy*”, obtainable from law stationers or rent assessment panels (see Appendix D).

7.12 How does the committee decide on a rent for a shorthold tenancy?

The committee will only fix a rent if it considers the rent to be significantly high compared with rents for similar properties let on assured or shorthold tenancies in the local area. It will not make a decision if there are not enough comparable properties. It will decide the amount of rent the landlord could reasonably expect to get for the shorthold tenancy, taking into account those other rents.

The rent fixed by the committee is the legal maximum the landlord can charge. The new rent will be payable from the date specified by the committee which cannot be earlier than the date you applied to it for a decision.

7.13 Can I refer the rent of a shorthold tenancy a second time to the committee?

Not under the procedure described in sections 7.10 to 7.12.

7.14 What if I or the landlord want to change the terms of an assured or a shorthold tenancy?

If the tenancy is a fixed term or contractual periodic tenancy, the landlord can only change the terms of the tenancy if you agree. It is best to agree any changes in writing.

However, if the fixed term of an assured or a shorthold tenancy has ended and the tenancy has automatically run on as a statutory periodic tenancy, it will continue on the same terms unless you, or the landlord, propose new terms. You or the landlord may propose new terms, and any consequent change to the rent, within a year of the statutory periodic tenancy starting, using a special procedure under the Housing Act 1988. You both have the right to apply for an independent decision by a rent assessment committee if you cannot agree new terms.

7.15 How does this procedure work?

You, or the landlord, must propose the new terms, and any consequent change to the rent, on a special form called “*Notice proposing different terms for a Statutory Periodic Tenancy*”, available from law stationers or rent assessment panels (see Appendix D). If you both agree the new terms, they can be included in the agreement.

If the terms are not agreed, you or the landlord must apply to a rent assessment committee to settle the terms and any consequent change to the rent. You, or the landlord, must apply to the committee within 3 months of receiving the notice proposing changes, using a special form. The form is called “*Application referring a notice proposing different terms for a Statutory Periodic Tenancy to a Rent Assessment Committee*” obtainable from law stationers or rent assessment panel offices (see Appendix D).

7.16 How does the committee fix the terms?

The committee decides whether the proposed new terms are reasonable for the tenancy or whether other terms are more appropriate. The committee may adjust the rent up or down to reflect the new terms, whether or not you or the landlord proposed a new rent to match the new terms. The new terms and the new rent, if the committee decides that the rent should be changed, will apply from the date stated by the committee, but the committee cannot apply the new rent before the date proposed in the notice.

7.17 If the committee sets new terms, can the landlord propose further changes?

The landlord can only make further changes to the terms of the statutory periodic tenancy if you agree. He or she can, of course, propose a new fixed term tenancy or a contractual periodic tenancy on new terms at any time.



8. Succession rights, joint tenancies, subletting

8.1 Can joint tenancies be agreed with assured and shorthold tenants?

The landlord can agree a joint tenancy with you and your partner or friend or any combination of people from the outset of the tenancy. Each of you is then responsible jointly and individually for meeting the terms of the tenancy in full, including paying the rent. So if one joint tenant leaves the property before the end of the tenancy without the landlord's agreement and the landlord cannot recover the rent due from him or her, the remaining joint tenant or tenants will be responsible for paying the full rent. Under a joint tenancy, all tenants have equal rights under the tenancy and are equally entitled to share possession of the whole of the house or flat.

You and your partner might want to ask for a joint tenancy so you both have equal rights under the tenancy and to avoid any possible arguments about succession rights later if one partner dies (see section 8.2).

If you and your husband or wife are joint tenants and you subsequently divorce, the court can decide as part of the divorce settlement who should take on the tenancy.

8.2 Can a member of an assured or shorthold tenant's household succeed to the tenancy?

If a tenant dies and the tenancy is a joint tenancy, the remaining joint tenant or tenants have an automatic right to stay on in the property.

If the tenant was a sole tenant, the right to succession will depend on whether the tenant had a fixed term tenancy or a periodic tenancy. If he or she had a fixed term tenancy and the fixed term has not expired, his or her executors will arrange for it to be passed onto whoever the tenant has left the tenancy to in his or her will. If it was a contractual periodic tenancy or a statutory periodic tenancy, the tenant's husband

or wife (or a person living with the tenant as husband or wife), has an automatic right to succeed to a periodic tenancy if he or she was living with the tenant at the time of the tenant's death, unless the tenant who died was already a successor themselves. Only one succession is allowed. No one else in the family has an automatic right to succession although other family members can negotiate a new tenancy with the landlord. If more than one person claims to have the right to succeed to the tenancy, the court can decide who should succeed.

If you have inherited a contractual periodic tenancy or a tenancy which was or has become a statutory periodic tenancy under the will or intestacy of a former tenant and you do not have a right to succeed to the tenancy, the landlord has a right to possession under ground 7 in Appendix C, provided that he or she starts possession proceedings within a year of the death of the original tenant.

If the tenancy is a shorthold tenancy, the landlord has an automatic right to repossess the property at the end of any fixed term, even if you had a right to succession, provided that he or she gives 2 months' notice that possession is required.

8.3 Can I give the tenancy or sublet to someone else?

If the tenancy is a fixed term tenancy, you will not be able to sublet or give the tenancy to someone else if the tenancy agreement says that you cannot.

If the tenancy is a contractual periodic tenancy, or a statutory periodic tenancy which has arisen at the end of a fixed term, you cannot by law give the tenancy or sublet to someone else unless the landlord agrees that you can. However if you have paid a premium for the property (a sum which is additional to rent or a sum paid as a deposit which is greater than 2 months' rent), you will be able to do so unless a term in the tenancy agreement prevents you from doing so.



9. Housing benefit

9.1 Can I get housing benefit to help with the rent?

If you are on a low wage or claiming other benefits, you may be able to get housing benefit from the local authority to cover part or all of the rent.

The amount of benefit payable by the local authority will depend on both your income and savings and a rent officer's assessment of the rent you are paying compared with rents for properties of the same size in your locality. Since January 1996, housing benefit is generally only paid in full to new claimants and claimants who move, for rents which are at or below the average level of rent for accommodation of the same size in the same locality. If the rent officer finds that the accommodation is larger than is reasonable for your needs, the rent is restricted to the average level of rent for accommodation of an appropriate size. If you are a single person, benefit may be restricted to the average level of rent in the locality for a non-self contained room without board.

The rules on housing benefit are complicated. This is only a very general outline of the rules. If you want to know more about how housing benefit payments are calculated and paid, your local authority's Housing Benefit Department will be able to provide leaflets and advice.

9.2 Can housing benefit be paid direct to the landlord?

The local authority can arrange for benefit to be paid direct to the landlord if you and the landlord agree this. Direct payments are also made in some other circumstances – for example, if you are in rent arrears.

9.3 Can I find out how much rent will be covered by housing benefit before I sign the tenancy agreement?

You can apply to the local authority's Housing Benefit Department for a Pre-Tenancy Determination. The landlord will need to sign the form. The local authority will ask a rent officer to make an assessment for

you and the landlord of the maximum amount of rent which will be met by housing benefit. The actual amount of benefit payable will depend on your financial circumstances.

9.4 What do I do if housing benefit payments are delayed and the landlord is seeking possession on the grounds of rent arrears?

You should contact the person handling your housing benefit application in your local authority's Housing Benefit Department immediately and explain that the landlord is taking steps to evict you because you are in arrears with the rent. The local authority has powers to make certain payments to you if it has not processed your claim but you have provided all the information that was needed with the claim. You can also seek advice from a Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau or Housing Advice Centre.

If the landlord is seeking possession for rent arrears using ground 10 or 11 in Appendix C, then the court may take into account the fact that it is not your fault that the rent is overdue. This is because the grounds are discretionary (see section 6.8). However, the court cannot take this into account if the landlord is seeking possession on ground 8 in Appendix C because the ground is mandatory (see section 6.8).



10. Harassment and illegal eviction

10.1 What do I do if I think my landlord is harassing me or trying to evict me illegally?

If you are an assured or a shorthold tenant, your landlord cannot evict you without a court order. To do so is a criminal offence. It is also a criminal offence for the landlord, or someone acting on the landlord's behalf, to try to drive you out of your home or stop you using part of it if you have a legal right to live there, by bullying, violence, withholding services such as gas or electricity, or any other sort of interference.

Local authorities have powers to start legal proceedings for offences of harassment and eviction, and to prosecute if they believe an offence has been committed. Any complaints should be made to the local authority's Tenancy Relations Officer or if the local authority does not have one, its Housing Department or Environmental Health Department.

For further advice, read the Department's booklet "*My Landlord Wants Me Out – Protection Against Harassment and Illegal Eviction*" listed at the end of this booklet.



11. Getting advice

11.1 Where can I go if I need further advice?

You can get advice from a Law Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Advice Centre or a solicitor. The addresses and phone numbers of advice organisations are listed in the telephone directory or can be obtained from your local library or local authority.

Appendix A

Tenancies which cannot be assured or shorthold tenancies

The following tenancies cannot be assured or shorthold tenancies:

- a tenancy which began, or which was agreed, before 15 January 1989;
- a tenancy for which the rent is more than £25,000 a year;
- a tenancy which is rent free or for which the rent is £250 or less a year (£1,000 or less in Greater London);
- a business tenancy or tenancy of licensed premises (where alcohol is sold or consumed);
- a tenancy of a property let with more than two acres of agricultural land or a tenancy of an agricultural holding;
- a tenancy granted to a student by an educational body such as a university or college;
- a holiday let;
- a letting by a resident landlord – see section 1.2;
- a tenancy where the property is owned by the Crown or a Government Department: however, lettings by the Crown Estates Commissioners, the Duchy of Cornwall or the Duchy of Lancaster may be assured tenancies;
- a tenancy where the landlord is a local authority, a new town, a development corporation, a housing action trust, or a fully mutual housing association.

Tenancies which can be assured but not shorthold tenancies

The following tenancies cannot be shorthold tenancies:

- a tenancy replacing an earlier assured tenancy with the same tenant which has come to an end unless the tenant asks for a shorthold tenancy (see section 5.5) or a statutory periodic tenancy arising automatically when the fixed term of an assured tenancy ends;
- an assured tenancy which the tenant has succeeded to on the death of the previous regulated (pre-1989) tenant;

- an assured tenancy following a secure tenancy as a result of the transfer of the tenancy from a public sector landlord to a private landlord;
- an assured tenancy arising automatically when a long leasehold tenancy expires.

Appendix B

Summary of changes introduced by the Housing Act 1996

The Housing Act 1996 made the following changes to the Housing Act 1988 from 28 February 1997:

- to set up a shorthold tenancy with a new tenant on or after 28 February 1997, the landlord no longer needs to serve a Section 20 notice on the tenant before the tenancy starts saying that it will be on shorthold terms. All tenancies are automatically shorthold tenancies unless the landlord follows the procedure for setting up an assured tenancy (see section 3.2);
- to set up an assured tenancy with a new tenant on or after 28 February 1997, the landlord must either serve a notice on the tenant saying that the tenancy is not a shorthold tenancy or include a statement to that effect in the tenancy agreement. The notice does not have to be given on a special form (see section 3.3);
- a shorthold tenancy set up on or after 28 February 1997 no longer has to have an initial fixed term. The tenancy can be on a contractual periodic basis from the outset. However, shorthold tenants retain the right to stay in the property for an initial 6 months (see section 3.5);
- tenants with shorthold tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997 have a right to ask for a written statement of the main details of the tenancy agreement if they have no existing written agreement or statement (see section 3.6);
- if the landlord serves notice on or after 28 February 1997 requiring possession of a shorthold tenancy at the end of the fixed term, the notice must be in writing. It does not need to be on a special form (see section 6.2).

- tenants with shorthold tenancies starting on or after 28 February 1997 can only refer their rent to a rent assessment committee within 6 months of the beginning of the original tenancy. Tenants with shorthold tenancies which started or were agreed before 28 February 1997 can still refer to a committee at any time during the initial fixed term of the tenancy which may be for longer than 6 months (see section 7.10);

The following changes to the grounds for possession apply from 28 February 1997 to all assured and shorthold tenancies regardless of when they started:

- the landlord can now seek possession under ground 8 if the tenant has at least 2 months' rent arrears (rather than 3 months) if the rent is paid monthly or 8 weeks' rent arrears (rather than 13 weeks) if the rent is paid weekly;
- ground 14 has been strengthened so possession can be sought where the tenant, or someone living in or visiting the property:
 - has caused, or is likely to cause, a nuisance or annoyance to someone living in or visiting the locality;
 - has been convicted of using the property, or allowing it to be used, for immoral or illegal purposes, or an arrestable offence committed in the property or the locality;
- the landlord can start court proceedings as soon as he or she has served notice that he or she intends to seek possession under ground 14;
- a new ground, ground 17, allows the landlord to seek possession if he or she was persuaded to grant the tenancy on the basis of a false statement by the tenant or someone acting at the tenant's instigation.

See Appendix C for full details of the grounds for possession.

Appendix C

Grounds for possession

This appendix provides a summary of the grounds for possessing an assured or shorthold tenancy. During the fixed term of an assured or shorthold tenancy, the landlord can only seek possession if one of grounds 2, 8, 10 to 15 or 17 apply and the terms of the tenancy make provision for it to be ended on any of these grounds. When the fixed term of an assured tenancy ends, possession can be sought on any of the grounds. When the fixed term of a shorthold tenancy ends, the landlord does not have to give any grounds for possession (see section 6.1).

Mandatory grounds on which the court must order possession

(A prior notice ground means that the landlord must have notified the tenant in writing before the tenancy started that he or she might seek possession on this ground – see section 6.8).

Ground 1: a prior notice ground The property was previously the landlord's only or main home. Or, so long as the landlord or someone before him or her did not buy the property after the tenancy started, the landlord (or landlord's spouse) requires it to live in as his or her main home.

Ground 2: a prior notice ground The property is subject to a mortgage which was granted before the tenancy started and the lender, usually a bank or building society, wants to sell it, normally to pay off mortgage arrears.

Ground 3: a prior notice ground The tenancy is for a fixed term of not more than 8 months and at some time during the 12 months before the tenancy started, the property was let for a holiday.

Ground 4: a prior notice ground The tenancy is for a fixed term of not more than 12 months and at some time during the 12 months before the tenancy started, the property was let to students by an educational establishment such as a university or college.

Ground 5: a prior notice ground The property is held for use for a minister of religion and is now needed for that purpose.

Ground 6 The landlord intends to substantially redevelop the property and cannot do so with the tenant there. This ground cannot be used where the landlord, or someone before him or her, bought the property with an existing tenant, or where the work could be carried out without the tenant having to move. The tenant's removal expenses will have to be paid.

Ground 7 The former tenant, who must have had a contractual periodic tenancy or statutory periodic tenancy, has died in the 12 months before possession proceedings started and there is no one living there who has a right to succeed to the tenancy.

Ground 8 The tenant owed at least 2 months' rent if the tenancy is on a monthly basis or 8 weeks' rent if it is on a weekly basis, both when the landlord gave notice seeking possession and at the date of the court hearing.

Note: This ground was amended by the Housing Act 1996 and applies from 28 February 1997.

Discretionary grounds on which the court may order possession

Ground 9 Suitable alternative accommodation is available for the tenant, or will be when the court order takes effect. The tenant's removal expenses will have to be paid.

Ground 10 The tenant was behind with his or her rent both when the landlord served notice seeking possession and when he or she began court proceedings.

Ground 11 Even if the tenant was not behind with his or her rent when the landlord started possession proceedings, the tenant has been persistently late in paying the rent.

Ground 12 The tenant has broken one or more of the terms of the tenancy agreement, except the obligation to pay rent.

Ground 13 The condition of the property has got worse because of the behaviour of the tenant or any other person living there.

Ground 14 The tenant, or someone living in or visiting the property:

- has caused, or is likely to cause, a nuisance or annoyance to someone living in or visiting the locality;

or

- has been convicted of using the property, or allowing it to be used, for immoral or illegal purposes, or an arrestable offence committed in the property or in the locality.

Note: This ground was amended by the Housing Act 1996 and applies from 28 February 1997.

Ground 15 The condition of the furniture in the property has got worse because it has been ill treated by the tenant or any other person living there.

Ground 16 The tenancy was granted because the tenant was employed by the landlord, or a former landlord, but he or she is no longer employed by the landlord.

Ground 17 The landlord was persuaded to grant the tenancy on the basis of a false statement knowingly or recklessly made by the tenant, or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

Note: This is a new ground added by the Housing Act 1996 and applies from 28 February 1997.

Notice periods

The landlord must serve notice seeking possession of the property on the tenant before starting court proceedings. He or she must give the following amount of notice:

- for grounds 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 or 17 – **at least 2 weeks**
- for grounds 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 16 – **at least 2 months**. If the tenancy is on a contractual periodic or statutory periodic basis, the notice period must end on the last day of a tenancy period. The notice period must also be at least as long as the period of the tenancy, so that 3 months' notice must be given if it is a quarterly tenancy.
- for ground 14 from 28 February 1997 – the landlord can start proceedings as soon as he or she has served notice.

Appendix D

Addresses of rent assessment panels and areas covered

London

10 Alfred Place
London
WC1E 7LR
020 7446 7700

All London Boroughs

Eastern

Great Eastern House
Tenison Road
Cambridge
CB1 2TR
0845 100 2616

Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Hertfordshire
Oxfordshire
Suffolk
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Luton
Milton Keynes
Peterborough
Southend-on-Sea
Thurrock and Essex

Midland

2nd Floor East Wing
Ladywood House
45-46 Stephenson Street
Birmingham
B2 4DH
0845 100 2615

Northern

20th Floor
Sunley Tower
Piccadilly Plaza
Manchester
M1 4BE
0845 100 2614

Staffordshire
Shropshire
Herefordshire
Worcestershire
West Midlands
Warwickshire
Leicestershire
Derbyshire
Nottinghamshire
Rutland
Stoke-on-Trent
The Wrekin

Blackburn
Blackpool
Cheshire
Cumbria
Darlington
Durham
East Riding of Yorkshire
Greater Manchester
Halton
Hartlepool
Kingston-upon-Hull
Lancashire
Lincolnshire
Merseyside
Middlesborough
North East Lincolnshire
North Lincolnshire
North Yorkshire
Northumberland
Redcar and Cleveland
South Yorkshire
Stockton-on-Tees

Southern

1st Floor
1 Market Avenue
Chichester
West Sussex
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Appendix E

Rules on timing of rent increases under the formal procedure in the Housing Act 1988

There are 3 rules on the timing of rent increases under this formal notice procedure:

1. The first rule, which applies in all cases, is that a minimum period of notice must be given before the proposed new rent can take effect. That period is:
 - one month for a tenancy which is monthly or for a lesser period, for instance weekly or fortnightly;
 - six months for a yearly tenancy;
 - in all other cases, a period equal to the length of the period of the tenancy – for example, three months in the case of a quarterly tenancy.
2. The second rule applies in most cases:
 - the starting date for the proposed new rent must not be earlier than 52 weeks after the date on which the rent was last increased using this statutory notice procedure or, if the tenancy is new, the date on which it started, unless
 - that would result in an increase date falling one week or more before the anniversary of the date in the notice, in which case the starting date must not be earlier than 53 weeks from the date on which the rent was last increased.

This allows rent increases to take effect on a fixed day each year where the period of a tenancy is less than one month. For example, the rent for a weekly tenancy could be increased on, say, the first Monday in April.

Where the period of a tenancy is monthly, quarterly, six monthly or yearly, rent increases can take effect on a fixed date, for example, 1st April.

The two exceptions to the second requirement, which apply where a statutory tenancy has followed on from an earlier tenancy, are:

- where the tenancy was originally for a fixed term (for instance, 6 months) but continues on a periodic basis (for instance, monthly) after the term ends; and
- where the tenancy came into existence on the death of the previous tenant who had a regulated tenancy under the Rent Act 1977 (see booklet “Regulated Tenancies”).

In these cases the landlord may propose a new rent at once. However, the first and third requirements must still be observed.

3. The third rule, which applies in all cases, is that the proposed new rent must start at the beginning of a period of the tenancy. For instance, if the tenancy is monthly, and started on the 20th of the month, rent will be payable on that day of the month, and a new rent must begin then, not on any other day of the month. If the tenancy is weekly, and started, for instance, on a Monday, the new rent must begin on a Monday.

Other booklets on landlord and tenant legislation

The following booklets are available, free of charge:

Renting Rooms in Someone's Home – A guide for people renting from resident landlords

Regulated Tenancies

Repairs – a guide for landlords and tenants

Notice that you must leave – a brief guide for landlords and tenants

My landlord wants me out – protection against harassment and illegal eviction

These leaflets, and further copies of this leaflet, can be obtained from:

DCLG Publications

PO Box No 236

Wetherby

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– or via the DCLG website: www.communities.gov.uk

The Welsh Assembly Government

Crown Buildings

Cathays Park

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Tel: 029 2082 3761

Fax: 029 2082 5391

They are also available from many Citizens Advice Bureaux, Law Centres, and Housing Advice Centres.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Published by the Department for Communities and Local Government
and the Welsh Assembly Government.

Crown Copyright 2000. Reprinted in the UK May 2006
on paper comprising 75% post consumer waste and 25% ECF pulp.

Product code 97 HC 228A.