

Tenant Handbook



Your guide to being a tenant with NGU Homelettings

Welcome to your new home

Welcome to your new home and now that you have moved into your property, we would like to tell you a little about NGU Homelettings service.

Our aim is to provide you with a first class management service and subsequently we have produced this handbook to make you aware of the full range of services available to you as a tenant(s).

It contains useful information about how to access such services and clearly sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant(s). As part of the handbook we also aim to give guidance on the standard of service you can expect from our team.

We have tried to include as much information as possible, however, if you do not find what you are looking for, please don't hesitate to contact us.

All tenant(s) are issued with a copy of the Tenant Handbook at the beginning of their tenancy but as the document is updated regularly aspects can change over time. If you have lost your copy, or require the latest version please contact us.

Kind regards,

The NGU Homelettings Team

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How to Contact Us?

0191 491 0344

Please Press:

Option 1 for New Lettings related issues

(Monday-Thursday 8:30am-6.30pm, Friday 8:30am-5pm and Saturday 9am-2pm)

or email us on: info@nguhomelettings.com

Option 3 for Maintenance related issues

(Monday-Thursday 9am-5.30pm, Friday 9am-5pm). This number also includes a 24 hour emergency call out service. Please do not misuse the emergency call out service)

or email us on: maintenance@nguhomelettings.com

Option 4 for Rent related issues

(Monday-Thursday 9am-5.30pm, Friday 9am-5pm)

or email us on: rent@nguhomelettings.com

or text only: 07706 881316

Alternatively you can also visit us directly at:

NGU Homelettings
469-471 Durham Road,
Gateshead,
NE9 5EX

You can also contact us via our website: www.nguhomelettings.com

Customer Service Standards

One of NGU Homelettings priorities is to provide a customer focused service. To help us do this we have developed a set of customer service standards which shows the level of service you can expect from us.

All staff will:

- Treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times
- Find out about customers needs and meet them where possible
- Help customers, who need extra support, to explain their needs
- Give customers information about services including what they can expect and when
- Listen to customer's comments, suggestions and views

Correspondence:

- All letters will be clear and easy to understand
- Letters will be replied to within 5 working days. If this is not possible, an acknowledgement will be sent within 2 working days, providing a timescale for a full reply. We will send a further letter and explanation if this timescale subsequently slips
- All emails will be clear and easy to read
- We will give you alternative contact details in response to emails when the recipient is going to be out of the office for more than one working day
- Emails will be replied to within 5 working days. If this is not possible, an acknowledgement will be sent within 2 working days, providing a timescale for a full reply. We will send a further email and explanation if this timescale subsequently slips

Telephone:

- Messages will be responded to within one working day

Your Rent - 0191 491 0344 option 4 or

Text Only 07706 881316

When is your rent due?

Your rent is due as per the rental schedule given to you at the start of your tenancy agreement. If you have any doubts of when your rent is due or have any questions please call our rent department. It is essential that your rent is paid on time because any late payment of rent incurs a late charge of £30.00 as per your tenancy agreement and if your rental account falls into arrears, you are in breach of your tenancy agreement and you could lose your home.

Can your rent change?

The amount of rent you pay is reviewed annually and will be assessed in your annual review where a member of our team will discuss this with you at your property. We will give you one clear calendar months notice of any rent changes.

How to pay your rent?

You must pay your rent via Direct Debit. If you do not set up your Direct Debit in time and you pay your rent via any other method, there will be an additional £5.00 administration fee on top of your rent to process your payment. The minimum payment we can take via our card machine is £10.00.

How do I set up my Direct Debit Payments?

Just after the application stage on your new rental property, our new lettings team will email you the link for the **GoCardless** Direct Debit system. You will simply need to follow the instructions on the link and get your payments set up.

You must ensure that you have a valid email address. If you do not, please organise to use a family member or close friends to set up your Direct Debit payments.

What should you do if you have rent arrears?

If you have arrears on your rent account you can take one of the following steps:

- Where possible make a one-off payment to clear your arrears in full
- Agree a repayment plan to clear your arrears within a reasonable time scale
- Remember NGU Homelettings **RENT** department is there to help you so please get in contact if you are experiencing difficulties

What happens if you do not clear your rent arrears?

If you don't pay your rent and fail to get in touch with us, we will make every attempt to contact you and help with any difficulties that might be stopping you making payment. However, if you do not work with us and reduce your arrears, we will serve you a "Notice of Seeking Possession". This is the first stage of legal proceedings, which may result in you losing your home.

We will continue to try and help, but if you do not pay your rent, or if you continually fail to keep to a repayment plan to clear any arrears, you may end up being evicted from your home. If it does become necessary to refer your case to court, you will be responsible for paying all court costs. These are currently several hundred pounds.

What happens if I withhold rent due to disrepair?

You do not have the right to withhold/stop paying rent because of a landlord's failure to do repairs. If you do, then a 'Notice to Seek Possession' can be served against you because you will have rent arrears, this will put you at risk of losing your home.

If your decision is to do this then you should keep the money in a separate bank account. This way, if proceedings for possession are started against you then you have the money to pay off the arrears immediately. However you can still be evicted.

Repairs and Improvements-0191 491 0344 option 3

Maintenance service levels:

We use outside contractors for our reactive maintenance. To be an approved contractor for maintenance work we check the contractors:

- Public liability is valid
- VAT registration (where applicable)
- Relevant professional qualifications

Before instructing any work we check the service log on our lettings package (GEMINI) for any previous maintenance history, any warranties, guarantees or service contracts that may be relevant for this work.

Some of the properties we manage require permission from the landlord before any work can be organised. If this is the case, this can lead to a delay in the work getting booked in and during this time we ask for your patience. Once authorisation has been given, a member of our reactive maintenance team will give you a call and the following will be read out to you:

"I will phone the relevant tradesman after this call and I will get them to call you within 2 hours. If you don't hear from the tradesman within 2 hours, or if you do and they don't give you a date to do the job, you must call the office back. If I don't hear back from you, as far as I am concerned the job has been booked in. If you aren't happy with the tradesman, if he doesn't turn up, or is late, or the work is of a low quality you must let me know because we use outside contractors".

All of our approved contractors have agreed to our service levels and must carry out the following tasks within the agreed time frames:

- Gas and water - The contractor must go to the job within 24 hours of it being given
- Roof leaks - The contractor must go to the job within 24 hours of it being given
- Non-emergency jobs - The contractor must book in the job within 7 working days of it been given
(These time frames are subject to weather conditions)

If you miss the appointment set with the contractor you will be **charged £40.00** as per the terms in your tenancy agreement.

Long term programmed maintenance work

We do work that does not fit into the responsive repair category. Here are some examples of the work we mean which are planned in advance:

- Servicing your gas central heating
- Decorating the outside of your home
- Fitting windows

Gas safety

If your property has a gas installation and/or appliances that are integrated, then in accordance with the Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations, the Gas Safety record must be renewed annually (CP12). This could save your life and if installations are in a poor condition they can produce carbon monoxide gas which is invisible and doesn't smell but can kill.

One of our gas contractors will contact you directly to make an appointment to service your gas appliances and if they cannot contact you by telephone they will send a letter.

You must allow our contractors access to your home to carry out this work. It is a condition of your tenancy agreement and if you refuse, the contractor is entitled to enter your property giving 24 hours notice to do so.

What do you do if you lock yourself out?

We have a copy of the keys to your property. We charge £20.00 + VAT per set cut and an additional charge of £30.00 if a member of the NGU Homelettings team has to drop replacement keys off at a property.

Your garden

The conditions of your tenancy make it clear that it is your responsibility to look after your garden hedges and trees. Gardens must be kept tidy and free from rubbish. You must ask our permission to remove any fence, hedge or tree. Please call our maintenance department if you are thinking of doing this. Trees and hedges should not obstruct public footpaths or interfere with a neighbour's property and fencing.

Trampolines

Trampolines can cause damage to gardens due to restricting sunlight reaching the grass under the trampoline. If you want to get a trampoline, plan an area of the garden where the trampoline can go that has the most direct sunlight allowing the sun to penetrate the trampoline bed or rotate the trampoline position. Please note the conditions of gardens are your responsibility and must be returned in the same condition as the start of your tenancy agreement. If grass dies as a result of a trampoline you will be liable for the damage.

Sheds

If you want to put up a shed or outbuildings in your garden, you must get our written permission beforehand. Please call our maintenance department if you are thinking of doing this.

What improvements can you make?

We are happy for you to improve your home but you must put in writing what improvements you plan to make and get authorisation back from us before doing them. If you have any questions regarding this, please call our maintenance department.

Taking care of your property

You are responsible for keeping the inside of your home in good and clean condition. Examples of the type of repairs you are responsible for include the following:

- Maintaining your own appliances
- Filling in small cracks in plaster
- Replacing broken windows
- Other minor repairs to your home, such as replacing light bulbs and fitting a plug or chain to baths and sinks
- Replacement of a bath panel or toilet seat if it breaks, unless stated on the inventory that there was a problem with it when you moved into the property
- Internal doors, locks and handles, cupboard doors and catches
- Wall, floor and fireplace tiles
- Keeping laminate floor dry to prevent excessive wear and tear
- Toilet seats
- Cleaning of carpets
- Preventing your kitchen and bathroom pipe work from becoming blocked. Do not pour grease down sinks or put nappies or wipes down the toilet. (If a tradesman has to come out to unblock pipe work or drains as a result of your actions, you will be charged for this)
- Cleaning external windows and frames

Communal areas

If you share facilities outside your home with other people (for example, a staircase, landing or driveway), you also share the responsibility for keeping these shared areas clean, tidy and free from obstructions.

Rubbish

Please make sure you put all rubbish in the appropriate wheelie bin and leave it out for collection on the appropriate day. Where possible, you should put rubbish suitable for recycling in the appropriate bin or recycling box where provided to be collected. Your local council can collect large items of furniture or other larger items, however you need to arrange this with the council.

Pest control

As a general rule, it is your responsibility to deal with pests in your home.

Rechargeable repairs

Unauthorised alterations or DIY- You must have written permission from NGU Homelettings before starting any alterations or improvements to your home. If NGU Homelettings has to do any work as a result of the alterations you have done, the cost will be recharged to you.

Moving out-When you end your tenancy, we will explain your responsibilities and what you must do to avoid being recharged. This includes handing back all keys to the property on the agreed date and time, leaving the property clear of all goods, belongings and rubbish and making sure the property is in a good state of repair.

Emergency repairs- If emergency repairs are needed due to deliberate damage, vandalism, neglect or botched DIY, by any members of your household (including pets) or visitors to your home, NGU Homelettings will carry out the repair and recharge you. This includes any call out charges for a plumber if your boiler goes off as a result of you not having sufficient funds on your gas supply if it is a pre-payment meter.

Keep your home free from damp, condensation and mould

Types of dampness - There are four main types of dampness that could affect your home. It is important to understand the difference between them so that you can effectively treat the problem.

1. Rising damp

This is caused by water rising from the ground into the home. The water gets through or round a broken damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the natural brickwork if the property was built without a DPC. A DPC is a horizontal layer of waterproof material put in the walls of a building just above ground level. It stops moisture rising through the walls by capillary action.

Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms. It will normally rise no more than 12-24 inches above ground level (300mm to 600mm) and usually leaves a tide mark low down on the wall. You may also notice white salts on the affected areas.

Rising damp will be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area.

NOTE. Black mould will rarely be seen where there is rising damp (and then only in the early stages). This is because rising dampness carries with it ground salts which prevent the growth of black mould.

2. Penetrating dampness

This type of dampness will only be found on external walls or in the case of roof leaks, on ceilings. It only appears because of a defect outside the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering or missing roof tiles. These defects then allow water to pass from the outside to the inner surfaces.

Penetrating dampness is far more noticeable following a period of rainfall and will normally appear as a well-defined damp patch which looks and feels damp to the touch.

NOTE. Black mould is rarely seen on areas of penetrating dampness. This is because the affected area is usually too wet and the dampness contains salts picked up when passing through the wall, which prevent the growth of black mould.

3. Defective plumbing

Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common. They can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside. A quick examination of the water and waste pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks; plus the external pipework, such as guttering will usually find the source of the problem.

NOTE. Black mould will rarely be seen on this type of dampness because the area is usually too wet and the chemicals in a waste leak will prevent mould growth.

4. Condensation

Condensation is caused by water vapour or moisture from inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. The resultant water drops (condensation) may then soak into the wallpaper or paintwork or even plasterwork. In time, the affected damp areas then attract black mould that grows on its surface. Condensation mainly occurs during the colder months, whether it is rainy or dry outside. It is usually found in the corners, north facing walls and on or near windows. It is also found in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

NOTE. Black mould is frequently seen on this type of dampness.

Damage caused by condensation- Condensation is probably the biggest cause of damp in rented properties. If you are having condensation problems in your property please call our maintenance department for advice on how to minimise it. If condensation causes damage to your property this will be a rechargeable repair.

Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point. However, certain activities can increase the problem. Condensation and mould growth is often due to habits and lifestyle and is something that can be reduced or remedied by the occupant.

Cooking, washing, drying clothes indoors, even breathing - all produce water vapour that can be seen when tiny drops of water (condensation) appear on colder surfaces such as walls, windows, ceilings or mirrors.

The amount of condensation in a home depends upon three factors:

1. How much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents.
2. How cold or warm the property is.
3. How much air circulation (ventilation) there is.

Simply turning up the heating will not sort out the problem, this may only temporarily reduce condensation. All three factors may need to be looked at to reduce the problem.

The first sign of a problem is water vapour condensation on windows and other cold surfaces, which then takes a long time to disappear, allowing surfaces to become damp. The second indication is **black mould** patches growing on these damp areas.

Black mould

Mould spores are invisible to the human eye and are always present in the atmosphere both inside and outside dwellings. They only become noticeable when they land on a surface upon which they can grow and then multiply.

For mould to thrive and survive it requires four elements:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Moisture- | obtained from condensation. |
| 2. Food- | such as wallpaper or emulsion paint. |
| 3. Suitable temperature- | courtesy of the householder. |
| 4. Oxygen- | courtesy of mother nature. |

By dealing with the causes of condensation you will automatically deal with the problem of mould.

Six steps to reducing condensation and black mould growth

A six-step plan can help to reduce the amount of condensation and thus black mould growth in your home.

1. Produce less moisture

- Dry clothes outdoors. Avoid drying clothes indoors or if they have to, dry them on a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and either an extractor fan on or a window slightly open.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside (never into the home) or buy a condensing type.
- Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Do not use paraffin or liquid petroleum (bottled) gas heaters. They produce large amounts of water vapour and are very expensive to run.

2. Remove excess moisture

Always wipe the windows and window sills of your home every morning to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen- just opening the window is not enough.

3. Ventilate to remove moisture

It is important to remove condensation and excess moisture by ventilating rooms. You can ventilate a room without making draughts or causing it to become cold. To do this, you may only need to open the window slightly or use the trickle vent that can often be found on new UPVC windows. This allows warm (but moist) air to escape to the outside and let in cool (but dry) air.

- Always ventilate or open a window when using the kitchen or the bathroom and close the doors to prevent moisture in the air from spreading to other parts of the house. Continue to ventilate these rooms for a short time after a shower, a bath or cooking, and keep the door closed.
- Open bedroom windows for up to one hour as soon as you arise and throw back the sheets or duvets to air the bed and bedding.
- Clear window sills of clutter that will restrict opening the window.
- Leave space between the back of furniture and cold walls.
- Ventilate cupboards, wardrobes and avoid overfilling them as this prevents air circulating.
- Do not completely block chimneys and flues- fit with an air vent and make sure you meet ventilation requirements for any gas appliances in a room.

4. Heat your home a little more

In cold weathers, the best way to keep rooms warm and avoid condensation is to keep low background heat on all day rather than short bursts of high heat when you are in the house.

Good heating controls on your radiators, room thermostats and a timer will help control the heating throughout your house and manage costs.

5. Insulate and draught-proof

This will help keep your home warm and save money on your heating bills.

- a) Insulate the loft to a depth of 10 inches (25cm).
- b) Consider secondary or double glazing.
- c) Consider cavity wall insulation.
- d) Draught-proof windows and external doors. When draught-proofing, do not block permanent ventilators or rooms requiring ventilation.

6. Dealing with black mould

Black mould can grow on walls, ceilings, furnishings and even on clothes and toys, which can be depressing and expensive.

To kill and remove the mould:

- a) Carefully remove excess mould with a damp cloth and throw away after. Or if possible use a vacuum cleaner and empty after. Do not brush mould as this releases spores into the air.
- b) Wipe down affected areas using a fungicidal wash or diluted bleach- remember always use rubber gloves and wear safety glasses.
- c) Tea Tree oil is a natural antiseptic and disinfectant but its also great for cleaning especially on mould or mildew. Try a dilute of three to four drops of Tea Tree oil in two litres of water (hot or cold). Soak mildewed items in the solution or spray onto trouble spots using a plant mister. Wipe, then rinse off. Always ensure you carry out a test on small area of the fabric/material/surface beforehand.
- d) After treatment redecorate using a fungicidal paint or wall paper paste- do not paint over using an ordinary paint.
- e) Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

Remember dealing with condensation is not easy. Only carrying out one or two of the above steps may not solve your problem. You need to do as many as possible every day, so that it becomes part of your habits and lifestyle.

Warmth versus ventilation

Striking the right balance between warmth and ventilation is important and can be very effective. By opening windows or ventilating your home it may appear that you are losing heat, but what you are actually doing is allowing warm moisture-laden air to escape and permitting cool dry air to enter your home. Dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than warm moist air!

Many people who have double-glazing installed experience problems with condensation and mould growth that they never had with their old draughty window frames. This is because all the natural draughts around the poorly fitted windows have been sealed. However, by using trickle vents or opening windows slightly, then the necessary ventilation can be achieved.

Remember- The advice is to ventilate for an appropriate period of time, not to leave the windows open all day.

Still getting mould in your bathroom even if you have an extractor fan?

If your bathroom has an extractor fan built in and you are still getting mould/condensation marks on your bathroom ceilings and walls, you need to make sure that your extractor fan is clear from fluff/dust and debris as it will not function correctly. Get an old tooth brush or cotton bud and wipe between the vents which will make the air flow better and help towards reducing condensation in this area.

Living in Your Home

Gas and electricity suppliers

As part of NGU Homelettings utility management policy, pre-tenancy we will set up your electricity and/or gas supply, council tax and water supply in your name to ensure accurate billing.

Most of our properties are supplied by our preferred supplier **British Gas**. In the event that your new property is supplied by an alternative provider, we strongly recommend that your property should be switched back to **British Gas**.

Once on supply with **British Gas**, if you wish to switch to an alternative provider at a later date, you are free to do so. However, you must inform us so that we can notify the correct energy supplier when you leave on check out, to finalise your account and ensure accurate billing.

Pets

You must not keep any animals, reptiles, insects or other such pets on the premises without written consent from NGU Homelettings. The introduction of pets **without consent is considered as a direct breach** of a tenant(s) obligation which could result in notice being served on a tenant(s). If pets are approved a statutory top up of a tenant(s) deposit is required through a one off payment of £135.00 which will be lodged with the DPS (Deposit Protection Service). Please note-we do not allow more than 2 pets per household. If you want to get a pet which does not fit in the following categories it will not be approved:

- Domestic pet including a dog, cat, fish, small bird, a rodent, a rabbit, non-venomous insect or small non-venomous reptile
- If you live in a property which has a shared entrance, you are not allowed to keep cats and dogs

To get authorisation for a new pet or if you have any questions regarding this, please call our rent department.

Business and trade

Your tenancy agreement makes it clear that you must not run a trade or business from your home.

Neighbour nuisance

We expect you to behave in a way that will not annoy your neighbours or interfere with the peace or comfort of other people. We expect you, your family, friends and visitors to your home to behave in a responsible manner and not to cause nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours and to have due respect for other tenants and residents.

Examples of nuisance include:

- Loud music, television or other noise
- Shouting and slamming doors
- Dogs barking and fouling
- Offensive drunkenness
- Selling drugs, drug or solvent abuse
- Having bonfires frequently
- Carrying out noisy repairs to your home late in the evening

If you are experiencing neighbour nuisance and you cannot solve the problem by talking with your neighbour, we may be able to assist you.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour can cause or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the perpetrator.

There are many forms of anti-social behaviour which include:

- Abuse or insulting words
- Harassment
- Intimidation/ Assault
- Violence
- Noise nuisance
- Using and/or selling drugs
- Alcohol and/or solvent abuse
- Dumped rubbish

Harassment

You (or anyone living with you, or visiting your home) must not harass any other person. Harassment is the deliberate interference with the peace, comfort or safety of any person. Examples of harassment include:

- Insulting or abusive behaviour or language referring to someone`s race, sex, disability, religion, sexuality or age
- Using or threatening to use violence
- Using abusive or insulting words or behaviour
- Damaging or threatening to damage someone else`s home or possession
- Graffiti of any kind
- Offensive drunkenness
- Selling drugs, drug abuse or solvent abuse
- Having a bonfire frequently

- Dumping rubbish
- Playing ball games close to someone else`s home

If any nuisance, anti social behaviour or harassment occurs out of the examples given, you will be in breach of your tenancy agreement and you could lose your home.

Noise

- You must not play musical instruments or any form of audio media in a way that will cause nuisance, annoy neighbours or be heard outside the property between 11:00pm and 7:30am
- You must not carry out noisy repairs to your home before 8am and after 9pm

Parking

You may only park on a properly built driveway. If you want to build a driveway, you must first get our written permission. If we give you permission, you must also arrange for your local council to build a footpath crossing.

Repairing vehicles outside your home

We do not mind you carrying out repairs to vehicles outside your home occasionally, as long as you are repairing your own vehicle or a vehicle that belongs to someone who lives in your home. However, you should not be carrying out these repairs for profit. Please make sure that you carry out all work at reasonable times of the day (as stated in the noise section above) and you do not cause noise, vibration, smells, fumes, oil spillages or dirt which may disturb your neighbours. You must not carry out repairs to vehicles over a long period.

Caravans

You are not allowed to park a caravan on your property or outside of it.

Using your home

You must use the property as your main home and let us know if there are any changes to how you use the property. For example, if you are going away from your home for a long time or if new people are going to move in.

Holidays

You must inform our maintenance department if you are going to be away from your home for more than 21 days.

Subletting

You must not rent part of your home to someone else as this is a direct breach of your tenancy agreement.

Overcrowding

You must not allow extra people to move into your home without getting permission. Please call our rent department regarding any additional people who you would like to live in your home.

The right to live peacefully in your home

We will ask for your permission before we enter your home. However, we have the legal right to enter your home at reasonable times of the day. We will do this to carry out repairs which we are legally responsible for and to inspect the condition your property is in. We will give you 24 hours notice, in writing, before we inspect your property. We also have the right to show prospective tenant(s) around your property as soon as you have given notice. Again 24 hours notice will be given for this.

Bi-annual inspections

NGU Homelettings can carry out bi-annual inspections of your home as part of the requirements of your rental agreement. This involves confirming your gas check is up to date to ensure your gas appliances are safe, ensuring the property has been fitted with smoke alarms or performed an inspection to confirm that they are working, performing an inspection to ensure the property is well kept (cleanliness and tidiness) and to discuss your annual rent review if applicable. You will receive a letter in the post and a text message confirming this appointment. It is essential that you are present for this appointment. If an appointment is booked and you fail to attend as per your tenancy agreement, **you will incur a £40.00 charge if the visit has to be re-arranged.**

(If you are **working full time** and you are unable to make this appointment please phone the rent department).

Please note that if a property fails an inspection on cleanliness or damage, then a further additional inspection will take place to confirm the property has been brought back up to standard. The guarantor will be sent a copy of the feedback and/or pictures and must be present for the second visit. If the property falls below the standard expected on this second inspection, professional cleaners could be brought in and the tenant(s) and the guarantor will be liable for this cost. Similarly if tenant(s) have caused damage in the property then it will be fixed/ replaced at the expense of the tenant(s) and guarantor. If a property fails a second inspection you are at risk of losing your home and the tenancy being ended.

Bi-annual inspection checklist guide

- It is the responsibility of the tenant(s) to ensure that all rooms are adequately heated and vented as appropriate to avoid damage by dampness, especially in those rooms where there are frequent periods of high humidity (i.e. kitchens, bathrooms, en-suite shower rooms and laundry/utility rooms)
- The tenant(s) must ensure that all grounds/gardens are regularly maintained and kept to the appropriate standard that they were found at the commencement of the agreement
- The most common charges incurred by a tenant(s) following a MOVE OUT are a result of deficient cleaning. Tenant(s) must keep the premises in a clean and tidy condition and in tenable repair for the duration of the tenancy until it expires (cleaning must be carried out to all areas and be conducted regularly to a high standard)

Insuring your homes contents

We strongly advise all tenant(s) to take out household contents insurance, as we do not insure your belongings or decorations. NGU Homelettings works in partnership with Endsleigh to provide all of our tenant(s) with comprehensive yet affordable contents insurance. Cover starts as little as a few pounds per month and also includes a number of benefits:

- Protection for possessions valued up to £40,000
- Comprehensive cover for individuals or everyone if you are living in a shared flat or house

- £50,000 of legal cover to provide financial support and professional advice

As well as protecting your possessions we all know that accidents can happen in your home. By law it is the tenant's responsibility for any damage caused to their landlord's property and as a result something as simple as a spilt glass of red wine on your landlord's carpet could result in you losing your deposit or being liable for the full cost of replacements.

Protecting your belongings and deposit couldn't be easier. Call Endsleigh direct on 0800 783 2526 and quote NGU Homelettings agent reference number- 30117.

How to avoid burst pipes in a cold freeze

1. Know where your stopcock is and how to turn it off
2. Check existing insulation and replace areas showing wear and tear
3. Fully lag all pipes if possible but especially those in unheated areas such as lofts, garages or gardens
4. Get advice about insulation thickness from the experts at a DIY store
5. Isolate and drain outside taps
6. On very cold days, leave the loft hatch open to allow warm air to circulate and prevent pipes from freezing
7. Keep the central heating at a minimum 12C-15C, if it is forecast to freeze
8. If you go away for a few days, ask a friend to visit and keep watch for leaks
9. If you go away for an extended period, leave your central heating on at a minimum 12C-15C
10. Cold water tanks should be insulated on all sides but not underneath to allow warm air to circulate

What to do if you discover a problem

1. If you haven't any water, check with neighbours. If they have no interruption to their supplies, your pipes may be frozen
2. Check pipes for signs of a split-a burst pipe will not occur until the water has thawed
3. Turn off the water supply using the stopcock
4. Drain the system by flushing the toilet and opening cold taps over sinks and baths
5. Turn off the central heating and any other water heating appliances
6. If you don't find any damage, turn on all the taps and thaw the frozen pipe using a warm towel or hot water bottle
7. When the pipes have thawed and you are sure no damage or leak has occurred, turn off the taps and slowly switch the supply back using the stopcock
8. Check the pipes again now that they are under pressure and check again for signs of damage or a leak before switching on water heating appliances
9. If you discover a leak or burst pipe, call us immediately

Working Alongside of Tenant(s)

Mystery shoppers

NGU Homelettings wants to work closely with our tenant(s). We actively seek tenant mystery shoppers to make unannounced visits or telephone calls and report back on the service they receive. Training is provided to help residents to do this. Mystery shopping helps us to check how well we deal with our customers so we can improve our service to our tenant(s). If you are interested in finding out more about this please get in contact with

Chris Fitzakerley (Managing Director) via email- christopherfitzakerley@nguhomebuyers.com

Rent to Buy

You may want to buy the home you are living in- we can offer this through 'Rent to Buy'. Please email Christopherfitzakerley@nguhomebuyers.com for more details.

Ending a Tenancy

Your tenancy can be ended in at least one of the following ways

- You break any conditions of the tenancy agreement. We will always try to sort out matters before taking legal action but, if you continue to break the terms of your tenancy agreement, we may have no option but to take possession of the property
- You abandon your home or live permanently at another address
- The landlord may end the tenancy by giving not less than two months notice in writing at any time after the full term of the initial tenancy agreement
- There is legal ground for possession under the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 1996 or any other law
- We are granted a county court order to evict you

Examples of when we may try to evict you

- You have broken one or more of the tenancy conditions
- If you have got behind with your rent
- If you or anyone living in your property causes a serious nuisance
- If you or anyone living with you has been convicted of using your home for illegal purposes
- You seriously neglect or damage your property or shared area
- You got your tenancy because you deliberately gave us false information

If you want to give notice and move out of the property as per your tenancy agreement the following applies

- If the tenant(s) intends to terminate the tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term, notice must be received in writing at least 28 days before the tenancy end date (If notice is late or not received the tenant(s) will become liable for a further 28 days from the date the notice is received or the tenancy end date)
- If the tenancy continues as a periodic tenancy after the expiry of the initial fixed term, following the expiry of the initial fixed term the tenant(s) may terminate the tenancy by giving at least **one clear calendar month's written notice**

Examples of notice.

Example 1 – You moved into the property on the 16th March. You wish to move-out at the end of your fixed term on 15th September. You need to give 28 day's clear notice. So your notice has to be received by NGU Homelettings before 19th August.

Example 2- You are out of your 6 month fixed term, today's date is the 15th August, you hand in your notice the same day, your notice period is one full month ending on the 15th September.

If you are still not sure about how much notice you must give, please give our rent department a call.

Where is your deposit?

From the 6th April 2007, by law all deposits taken from a tenant(s) on an assured short hold tenancy agreement must be lodged with a tenancy deposit protection scheme. Your deposit has been lodged with the Deposit Protection Service (DPS).

You must put your notice in writing

As mentioned on the previous page you must give one clear calendar months notice in writing (not verbally) if you want to vacate your property. Please ask for confirmation from us in writing or via an email to confirm that we have received this notice to prevent any discrepancies that may arise from notices not being received or not in sufficient time.

1st move out appointment with yourself and NGU Homelettings

Once you have given notice an 1st move out appointment is booked where a member of the NGU Homelettings team will come to your property. The property will be checked against the initial 234 inventory check-list and dated photos which were completed when you first moved into the property and any bi-annual inspections if applicable. You will be given a handout at this appointment from the NGU Homelettings representative who will confirm any damages that need to be rectified before you move out to get your deposit back and the final move out appointment date and time.

Final move out appointment with yourself and NGU Homelettings

At your final move out appointment, an NGU Homelettings representative and you will agree how your deposit should be divided. Upon this being agreed **YOU** will then need to go online on www.depositprotection.com and request the release of your deposit by entering the agreed amount of deposit you are entitled to. To do this you will need your unique 5 digit repayment ID number (You will find this on the letter that was posted to you from the DPS at the beginning of your tenancy). If you do not have this then please call the **DPS** on **0330 303 0030**. They will ask you a series of security questions and upon these questions being answered correctly, the DPS will either email or post this 5 digit repayment ID code to you.

If you are on housing benefits and you have given notice on your property call NGU Homelettings for advice

If you are worried about the move out dates for your current property and your prospective new property in regards to housing benefit payments, please contact NGU Homelettings because we can provide the appropriate advice to make sure that you are not out of pocket.

Complaints

Complaints procedure

We always try to get things right first time but appreciate that this doesn't always happen. As a first step it is often best to contact the person who dealt with the enquiry. They will know most about the matter and it may be possible to sort out the problem straight away. If you are not satisfied with our first response please contact the Operations Director Annelise Inglis via email operationsmanager@nguhomelettings.com

If you find this matter has still not been resolved, please contact the Managing Director Chris Fitzakerley via email christopherfitzakerley@nguhomebuyers.com

When we get it right

We would also like to know if you are pleased with us. Our team take pride in their work, so it means a lot to us when someone tells us that we got it right. This helps us to find out which parts of our service work well.

Useful Contacts

Council numbers

- Northumberland Council: 0845 6006400
- Newcastle Council: 0191 2328520
- Gateshead Council: 0191 433 3000
- South Tyneside Council: 0191 427 7000
- North Tyneside Council: 0845 2000101
- Sunderland Council: 0191 5205555
- Durham Council: 0300 1237070
- Stockton Council: 01642 393 939
- Middlesbrough Council: 01642 245 432
- Redcar and Cleveland Council: 01642 774 774
- Darlington Council: 01325 380 651
- Doncaster Council: 01302 736 000
- Hull City Council: 01482 300 300
- Sheffield Council: 0114 273 4567
- Kirklees (Huddersfield) Council: 01484 221 000
- Leeds Council: 0113 222 4444
- Hartlepool Council: 01429 266 522

If you have problems with the following, call your local council through the numbers provided above:

- Street lights
- City council drainage
- Stray dogs and dog mess
- Pest control

Water

- Northumbrian Water: 0845 7335566
- Yorkshire Water: 0845 1 24 24 24
- Hartlepool water 01429 858 030

To find out who currently supplies the gas to the property:

- Gas: 0870 608 1524

Emergency numbers

- Transco-Gas Emergency/Leaks: 0800 111 999
- Police (emergency): 999
- Police (to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response): 101

General numbers

- TV Licence: 0870 8501 202
- Citizens Advice Bureau: 08444 111 444
- Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90