



The key to a quiet life

Disagreements between tenants and landlords can be long and sometimes bitter. Yet most can be avoided with the right legal advice at the start.

Solicitors can deal with all areas of Landlord and Tenant Law and are skilled in settling disputes. But prevention is better than cure. The key to a happy tenancy is to understand your rights and duties as a tenant and to make sure your tenancy agreement reflects them. This is why it's vital to visit a solicitor before you agree to your landlord's terms.

Tenancy agreements

A tenancy agreement is a contract between you and your landlord. This contract can be written or verbal. In England and Wales there is no law to say that landlords have to provide a written tenancy agreement, but it is always a good idea to ask for one - even if your landlord is a friend or family member. Otherwise, if you have a dispute with your landlord about the terms of your tenancy, it is your word against theirs as to what has been agreed.

There are several types of tenancy agreement. Of these, the two most common types are the 'assured shorthold' tenancy and 'assured' tenancy.

Assured shorthold tenancy

This is normally for six months. You have no right to stay at the end of the tenancy period agreed if your landlord has given you valid notice to leave.

Assured tenancy

This is often used by public-sector landlords. It gives you far greater rights to stay at the end of the tenancy period agreed.

Ideally, you should contact your solicitor before you agree the terms of a tenancy with your landlord. This will give you the chance to check whether the terms are fair and legal before you commit to them.

Finding a solicitor

If you don't already have a solicitor, you can find a list of solicitors in your area by visiting our website at www.lawsociety.org.uk/findasolicitor and searching under 'Landlord and tenant - residential'. Or you can call 0870 606 2555.

How long will it take?

If the tenancy agreement you are considering is relatively straightforward, you will probably only need one meeting with your solicitor to check the agreement through. Your solicitor will then send you a letter to summarise the advice they have given you.

