

NEXT STEP LETS



LandlordNews

Issue four July 2022

Landlord Forum

We were able to hold a Landlord Forum in May 2022. We were joined by other teams including SADA, Environmental Health, Fire Safety, Leaseholder Income and No More Service. It was a great opportunity to speak to some of our existing landlords and meet a few new people.

The team especially enjoyed the talk from National Residential Landlords Association in regards to legislation changes affecting the private rented sector.

We hope to hold another one later this year so watch out for more details. To ensure you are invited, get in touch with the Next Step Lets team by emailing nextsteplets@stevenage.gov.uk or calling 01438 242909.



Feedback:

Some recent feedback Adam Lucas has received from one of our landlords who we have been working with since April 2020.

“As we were new to renting property it seemed sensible to have an agent do the managing to ensure that we complied with the necessary legislation, to vet prospective tenants, and support us through any difficulties that we might encounter.[...] Coincidentally we discovered that Stevenage Borough Council would do much of what a letting agent would do (for free), and we have been supported by them since April 2020. They have taken on board our requirements for a tenant and introduced us to suitable people, that we have had the opportunity to interview for our own peace of mind. All of the legalities have been carried out by Next Step Lets, and we have been very satisfied with the help and support that they have provided. All this during a global pandemic.”

Great work as always!

Industry Latest: Right To Rent

The Home Office are making some changes to right to rent checks that will come into effect from 6 April 2022, including:

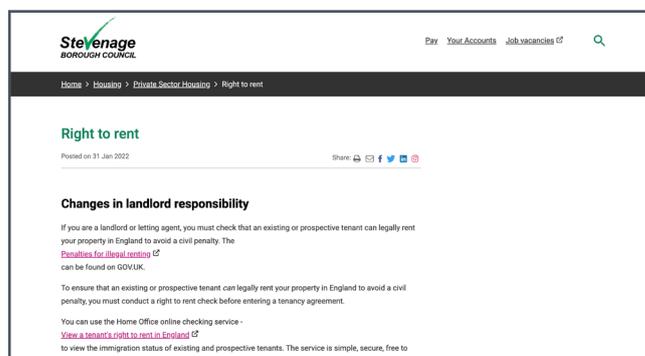
- The right to rent online checking service will need to be used for biometric residence card and permit (BRC/P) holders, as they will no longer be able to use their BRC/P for a manual right to rent check, even if it shows a later expiry date.
- In addition, you will be able to use certified Identification Document Validation Technology (IDVT) service providers to carry out digital checks on behalf of British and Irish citizens who hold a valid passport (or Irish passport card).

You can use the Home Office online checking service on GOV.UK to view the immigration status of existing and prospective tenants and conduct your right to rent check. The service is simple, secure, free to use and enables checks to be carried out by video call.

You can find out more information from the right to rent factsheet for landlords on GOV.UK or get in touch with Next Step Lets and we can assist further. Further info is available on our website:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/right-to-rent>

[https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/right-to-rent-answers-to-your-questions](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/right-to-rent/right-to-rent-answers-to-your-questions).



Facts & Figures – Did you know?

HOW MANY?

423 INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES ASSISTED INTO PRS

Since 2017, Next Step Lets have assisted 423 individuals and families into the private rented sector. These tenants have come through our Housing Options and homeless route, which has ensured we free up any pressure on the social housing sector within Stevenage and surrounding areas.

On average, we have over 250 individuals and families at one time that are seeking assistance into PRS properties so we are always looking for new properties to assist with.

282 DIFFERENT LANDLORDS AND AGENTS

Of the 423 individuals and families, we have worked with 282 different landlords and agents. If you would like more details make sure you email nextsteplets@stevenage.gov.uk or call 01438 242909

WHERE?

It is not only properties in Stevenage that we have assisted tenants and landlords. Our service has been used to secure accommodation in;

Arlesey, Baldock, Biggleswade, Broxbourn , Codicote, Harlow, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Herne Bay, Hitchin, Knebworth, Langford, Letchworth, Littleport, London, Luton, Sandy, Solihull, Stotfold, Swinton, Walkern, Ware , Watton-at-Stone, Welwyn Garden City, West Ealing, Westcliff-on-Sea, Weymouth and Wilstead.

WHAT?

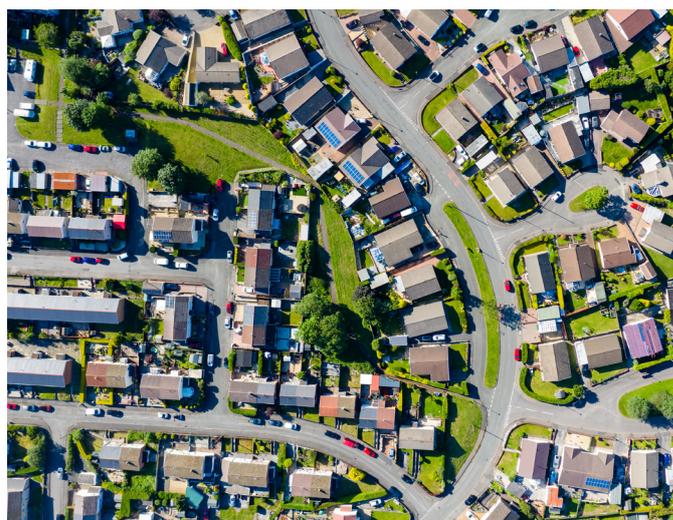
The types of properties we have helped with range from HMOs, studios and 1 beds to 2 bed flats and 3 or 4 bedroom houses.

HOW MUCH?

Some of our clients and your future tenants work full time and others work alongside claiming some form of benefits. The table below shows the Local Housing Allowance rates for Stevenage and North Herts locality.

Effective from 1 April 2022 (weekly rate):				
1 Bed*	1 Bed	2 Beds	3 Beds	4 or 5 Beds
£78.59	£155.34	£195.62	£241.64	£299.18

* This column relates to the amount which will be paid where a tenant has the sole use of 1 bedroom, but has to share the other facilities, such as the kitchen and bathroom with others who are separate independent tenants. The other columns show the amounts for self-contained accommodation.



Council Tax & Energy

Ofgem announced this year a 54 per cent rise in energy bills from April 2022 for 22 million homes in the UK. To combat the upcoming increase in gas and electricity costs, the UK government have announced a series of financial support.

Households in England, which are in council tax bands A to D, will also receive a £150 rebate to the bills by local authorities from April 2022. This will not need to be rapid. This one-off payment will benefit around 80 per cent of all homes in England. For those in Stevenage, if you pay by direct debit, SBC will arrange to transfer the money directly to that account. Otherwise, there is a link available on our website to claim.

The government have also announced rebates direct from energy companies as well. The original plan, announced earlier this year, was for households to receive a £200 discount on their energy bills in October 2022. This rebate would have been paid back over five years from 2023, with customers paying an additional £40 on their bills each year. However, the government announced the discount will be increased to £400, and will no longer have to be paid back. There is also additional support available for those on certain benefits. If your tenant is concerned, Next Step Lets are happy to provide some advice.

On top of this, a discretionary funding of £144 million will also be provided to support vulnerable people and individuals on low incomes that do not pay Council Tax, or that

pay Council Tax for properties in Bands E –H.

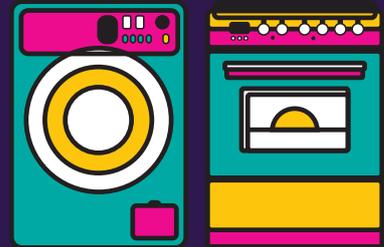
Low income homeowners, some tenants and landlords in Stevenage can also now apply for a new series of Green Homes grants to help improve the energy efficiency of their properties. The focus comes as part of SBCs commitment to become a net zero emissions town by 2030 to help defeat climate change. Details on how the grants work can be found at:

www.warmworks.co.uk/greenhomesgrant or call the Warmworks helpline on 0800 011 6189

If you are looking to save energy and emission at home or advise your tenants to do the same, you can also download the new, free Hertfordshire Energy Advice Tool (HEAT) app to discover the changes you can make at home to reduce your carbon footprint. The app is available in the Apple App Store or from Google Play.

Keeping your tenants safe

If you supply appliances as part of a tenancy agreement, you have a responsibility to ensure that they are safe.



Occasionally, appliances can develop faults that pose a risk to your property and your tenants; therefore, it is important that you are aware of product recalls and take the required action.

Keep an up-to-date inventory of the appliances in each of your properties. Be sure to include identifying information such as: item description, brand name, supplier, model and serial numbers, purchase and installation date, instructions present and current condition.

Check if any of your appliances are subject to an existing recall via <https://productrecall.campaign.gov.uk>

Act immediately by following the instructions in the safety notice and alert your tenants to ensure their safety.

Register all appliances to be notified of future product recalls via <https://www.registermyappliance.org.uk>

Encourage tenants to do the same for any of their own appliances.



Further information can be found by scanning the QR code

AMDEA
The Association of Manufacturers
of Domestic Appliances

Register
my appliance
Right now




Hertfordshire