

A Life Away From War

Landlords – How YOU can help



To fulfil Devon's pledge to resettle at least 40 Syrian refugee families, more than anything else we need self-contained homes for refugee families.

We are looking for self-contained accommodation – houses or flats – where families can live independent and productive lives.

Your property would be managed on a day-to-day basis by the Council. We will provide the following:

Rental Income

- Pay a guaranteed rent during the term of the lease – regardless of whether the property is occupied or not
- Pay rent quarterly in advance. The rent would be less than market rent but it is guaranteed, and there are no agent's fees.

Full Management

- Manage the property day-to-day including regular inspections on at least a quarterly basis
- Take over the gas, electric, water, sewerage and Council Tax accounts
- Find occupants for the property and make sure, as far as possible, it is kept occupied and they abide by the terms of their occupation agreement
- Manage and arrange repairs with your consent
- Guarantee full vacant possession at the end of the lease

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Lease?

It is a legal agreement whereby you rent out your property to Exeter City Council, and we then sub-let it to people in need of housing. Under this agreement, we are responsible for paying you rent and managing the property. A lease agreement offers you peace of mind and a guaranteed income.

What type of property is suitable?

We are currently looking for two, three and four bedroom family-sized flats and houses. Our needs change from time to time but our Officers can advise you further. The property must:

- Be in a good state of repair, fit for human habitation and safe (see Lettings Standards on page 5)
- Have floor coverings and curtains, but otherwise be unfurnished (appliances other than built-in hobs and ovens will need to be removed). **We can arrange for certain items to be listed as excluded within the terms of the lease however any remaining furnishings must meet current fire safety standards.**

What does the Landlord have to do?

Under the agreement, the main responsibilities of the Landlord are to:

- Provide the property in the condition agreed prior to the lease being signed and make sure it is well maintained and safe for the period of the lease.
- Insure the building including liability cover for £2m, provide evidence of insurance yearly and claim against the insurance if required.
- Repair and maintain the main structure of the property, any built-in services and outside features such as walls, fences and paths.
- Allow the Council to manage the property and the occupants to live in the property without interference.
- Agree to a heating and hot water service agreement with Robert Heath Heating at the cost of £180 per annum.
- If the property is a flat, continue to pay the Service Charge.

A specimen lease will be provided, so you can see exactly what is involved in the legal agreement and enable you to seek legal advice if required.

PSL Process

Initial Inspection

The first thing to do is arrange to visit to inspect the property and identify what, if anything, needs doing to bring it up to our letting standard and how it might be done. Following the inspection we will also confirm the guaranteed rent we would be willing to pay.

If you have a mortgage

You are advised to check the agreement with your mortgage lender to see if permission is required. It is also advisable for you to seek independent legal advice in regards to your mortgage agreement if you have any concerns.

Buildings Insurance

Under the terms of the lease you will remain responsible for the buildings insurance. You will need to tell your insurer that you are joining the scheme and that some of the tenants may be on benefits. The cover needs to provide Public Liability up to the value of £2million, which will offer protection to the occupants of the building in case they are injured through some problem with the building. We also require cover against malicious damage.

Proof of Ownership

The Council will need proof that you own the property. We normally establish this from the Land Registry. However, if the property has not been registered or you have only just bought it, we will need to see a letter from your solicitor confirming ownership.

Safety Checks

For the safety of our tenants, before the lease is signed we will need a Gas Safe certificate, NICEIC electric certificate, an asbestos report and an Energy Performance Certificate. We can provide more details and advice regarding this.

The gas and electric certificates will need to show that no remedial works are required to make the property safe. The asbestos report will need to show that the property is safe for tenants. If the checks require any remedial works to be done these works will be at the landlord's expense.

Final Inspection

Once any required works are completed and before the lease is signed we will return to inspect your property to check that it is now ready to be taken onto the scheme and to make an inventory of the property which will be entered into the lease agreement.

Lease Agreement

Everything should now be ready. We will instruct our solicitors to prepare the lease, there will be two copies, one for you to sign and one for us to seal. Once signed and witnessed your copy should be returned to the solicitors. When the solicitor has both copies the agreement will be dated and a copy sent to you for your records.

You should receive your first payment within 14 days of the lease being signed.

Please note that you are advised to check a copy of the lease agreement carefully as the terms of lease will take precedence over these guidance notes, we encourage you to take independent legal advice if unsure.

Handover

Now that the property has been taken into management it is handed over to our Housing Customer Relations team who will be responsible for the day to day management. They will be your point of contact during the term of the lease agreement.

Letting Standards

Required standards

We need to ensure that properties we take on meet the decent homes standard. Our main concern is that the property is safe, in good repair and has basic amenities. You can use this section as a check-list to work out what might need to be done to bring your property up to this standard. This is the standard we will use when we inspect your property.

Any property let to the Council must meet the Decent Homes standard. A dwelling is suitable if:

- it is structurally stable, fully wind and weather tight and free from disrepair, including roof;
- all facilities including plumbing, drainage, ventilation, heating and lighting must be in full working order;
- it is free from Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System;
- Room layout must be suitable for safe and comfortable occupation. We will not accept any properties that have rooms (e.g. bed or lounge) accessed via the kitchen;
- it is free from dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupants;
- balconies must be secure and safe to use
- waste water goods should be clear, leak free and in good working order;
- it is clean and tidy to floors, windows, carpets and surfaces;
- it has adequate provision for lighting, heating, and ventilation and has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water;
- there are satisfactory facilities for the preparation and cooking of food, including a sink with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water;
- it has a suitably located WC for the exclusive use of occupants
- it has, for the exclusive use of occupants a suitably located fixed bath or shower and wash-hand basin each of which is provided with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water; and
- it has an effective system for draining foul, waste and surface water

(For flats, there are requirements similar to the above for the “common” parts of the building outside the flat such as stairways, halls etc.)

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