

City Lets

Landlord Information

The scheme explained:

This scheme is an initiative run by Winchester City Council to help people who are in housing need, to find accommodation within the private rented sector. In some circumstances, tenants may be on a low wage or receiving top up benefits.

We offer tenants and landlords a range of support services in order to try to create lasting and sustainable tenancies for the benefit of all parties.

We offer landlords a bond guarantee on behalf of our clients and then support tenants to enable them to maintain their tenancy.

How can you benefit from our free service?

In short, if you are a landlord willing to work with us and offer your property on an assured short hold tenancy for a minimum of twelve months, we can offer you the services listed below **FREE** of charge:

1. Free of charge - A chance to let your property promptly and efficiently.

- a) We will meet and refer any prospective tenants and provide them with basic pre-tenancy advice regarding their responsibilities.
- b) You will be given the name and contact details of the specific officer dealing with the case and you will be able to contact them throughout the tenancy with any queries you may have.
- c) In the unlikely event of any problems arising, we can provide assistance to you and your tenant to help bring any disputes to a satisfactory conclusion.
- d) We have direct access to a trained mediator if needed.
- e) Furthermore, depending on the tenant's circumstances, we are happy to visit them on an agreed regular basis to ensure standards within the property are being well-maintained.

2. Free of charge - Covering Void Periods

It is unlikely that lengthy void periods will occur but, in the event that they do, we are prepared to cover the rent for these periods for up to two months, as part of the Bond Guarantee, after the first tenancy has ended.

3. Free of Charge - Inventory

Before the tenancy starts, we will arrange for Chase Inventory Services, an independent and impartial company, to undertake a professional inventory service which we will pay for. Should there be a dispute regarding the condition of the property at the end of the tenancy, a further check out inspection can be arranged in order to identify matters considered to be over and above normal wear and tear. This will be supported by photographic evidence.

4. Free of charge - Bond Guarantee

A bond guarantee is equivalent to obtaining a cash rent deposit, but secured by the Council without the need to protect the deposit. The bond is provided by the Council to the landlord or agent and acts in the same way as a deposit but does not have to be protected under the Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme. It is designed to help people secure rented accommodation in the private sector whether via letting agents or private landlords in circumstances where they cannot afford to pay a deposit. If eligible, the scheme will offer landlords or letting agents a bond for up to two times the monthly rent (to a maximum of £2,000), to cover rent loss and any damages to the property beyond reasonable wear and tear. For example, if the monthly rent is £500 and a single month's rent was not paid, plus damage to the sum of £500 occurred and was claimed for and justified by the Council, the Council would honour the Bond up to the value of £1,000.

The Council will provide a bond certificate to the landlord or agent as a guarantee that if, at the end of the twelve month tenancy, there is unreasonable damage over and above normal wear and tear, or theft from the property, or loss of rent caused due to a void period, the Council will honour the bond and reimburse them up to the agreed terms of the bond.

The bond will **not** cover the following:

- personal debt to the landlord
- items not identified on the inventory agreement
- damage or theft by anyone other than the tenant
- unpaid bills

At the end of the tenancy agreement, if both parties are happy to renew for a further twelve months, the bond certificate will be reviewed. The review process will include a further visit from Chase Inventories to confirm the current condition of the property,

the tenant/s undergoing an updated financial assessment and a home visit to confirm the property is still suitable for the tenant/s' household. If the tenant is now in a position to convert the current bond into a cash deposit and it is appropriate to do so, we may ask that they do. This will not effect any other part of your City Lets package and we will continue to support you and offer all of the other services outlined in this scheme.

5. Housing Benefit and Direct Payments

We have a very strong relationship with the Benefits Department and have direct access to officers who deal with such matters speedily and effectively. In some cases your tenant may need help with the cost of the rent and claim housing benefit.

6. Free of Charge - Support

We will be here to support both you as the landlord and also the tenant throughout their tenancy.

As previously stated, you will have a named contact who you can contact about any issues and, if they are unable to answer a query immediately, they will know who to ask on your behalf.

The same service will be provided to the tenant.

Depending on the tenants' circumstances, regular visits by an officer may be deemed appropriate throughout the tenancy and the frequency of such visits can be agreed at the outset by all parties.

7. Free of Charge - Tenancy Agreement

Although we are more than happy to be involved, the actual tenancy agreement will be between yourself and the tenant. We are, however, happy to provide you with a standard Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement template for you to use if you wish.

In order to try and create greater stability for tenants, it is expected that a tenancy will roll on and continue past twelve months if there have not been any problems between the tenant and landlord and both parties are agreeable to this.

8. Free of Charge - Cleaning

Where required we are happy to organise and pay for a professional deep clean of the property when the tenancy ends. This will be particularly useful if you have granted permission for the tenant to keep pets.

9. Free of Charge – Accreditation Status

City Lets is part of the Council's accreditation scheme where privately rented properties are assessed in terms of suitability, health and safety and general condition. If the property meets the required standards you will be granted accreditation status free of charge and you will be issued with a laminated certificate which can be displayed at your property.

10. Advice and Information

Finally, the Council is committed to providing the tenant with impartial advice relating to tenancy matters and the rights and obligations of both the landlord and tenant.

Also, we are happy to discuss and consider any other services or aspects of our agreement should you wish.

What does Winchester City Council ask of you?

Working with the council provides landlords with a safe, secure option for letting their properties. As a local authority, our services are transparent and fully accountable and all our staff are professional and experienced. If you are looking for a trustworthy and reliable service, come to City Lets.

As a landlord your normal repairing obligations and responsibilities will apply to ensure:

- keeping in repair the internal and external structure of the house including drains, gutters and external pipes;
- keeping in repair and proper working order installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity and for sanitation (including basins, baths and sanitary conveniences) and appliances for heating rooms and water;
- to meet all required standards for property fitness and safety (including annual safety checks of all gas appliances – a copy of the certificate is to be provided to the Council);
- if necessary, to be willing to rent your property to people who may receive low income or top up benefits;
- to work with us in trying to resolve any problems;
- to inform us before taking any action to bring the tenancy to an end;
- to uphold your responsibilities as a private sector landlord.

What do you need to do next?

Winchester City Council wants to work with as many landlords as possible, so if you think you might be interested in working with us, or would like to discuss the scheme further without any obligation, please contact:

Tel: 01962 848 483

Email: citylets@winchester.gov.uk

Property Requirements

In order for a property to be considered suitable for a tenant placed by the Council under the City Lets Bond Guarantee Scheme, it will require inspection and certificates will need to be supplied to ensure it meets the following standards:

- The property must be in reasonable physical condition and free from any serious housing health and safety hazards.
- The electrical installation and any electrical appliances supplied with the accommodation must be in satisfactory condition.
- Any furniture supplied with the accommodation must conform to the requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.
- The property, as a minimum, must have battery operated smoke detectors provided to the hallway and landing. In a house in multiple occupation (HMO) a mains powered alarm system and other fire precautions must be installed appropriate to the type and size of the accommodation in-line with LACORS guidance and a fire risk assessment have been completed.
- A carbon monoxide detector of the audible alarm type must be fitted in close proximity to the gas boiler.
- An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) must be provided.
- The property must not be an unlicensed house in multiple occupation under section 55 or 56 of the Housing Act 2004.

Landlord Requirements

Any landlord must declare themselves to be 'Fit and proper', in that they have not:

- (i) Committed any offence involving fraud or other dishonesty, or violence or illegal drugs, or any offence listed in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003(b) (offences attracting notification requirements);
- (ii) Practised unlawful discrimination on grounds of sex, race, age, disability, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender reassignment in, or in connection with, the carrying on of any business;
- (iii) Contravened any provision of the law relating to housing (including landlord or tenant law);
- (iv) Acted otherwise than in accordance with any applicable code of practice for the management of a house in multiple occupation, approved under section 233 of the Housing Act 2004(c); or
- (v) Is operating a house in multiple occupation subject to licensing under section 55 of the Housing Act 2004 and which is not licensed.

If you require any further advice please contact: -

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Email: citylets@winchester.gov.uk