A GUIDE TO LETTING YOUR PROPERTY

aspire sales and lettings.com

“A house is made of bricks and beams. A home is made of hopes and dreams.”
RALPH WALDO EMERSON
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WELCOME TO ASPIRE

When you entrust an agent to let your property, you are looking for reliable, professional, transparent and trustworthy support throughout each tenancy.

This is where we aim to exceed your expectations.

Aspire provides full letting and property management services using both traditional and innovative tools. On your behalf we will reach out to the widest audience to find the perfect tenant for your property.

One leading online property site rated Aspire’s detailed property viewing performance as 70% better than the local average. We feel that this is due to the exceptionally high quality of our property details.

We will efficiently and proactively help you find the perfect tenant, look after rent collection or handle all of the day-to-day management of your tenancy. The choice is yours.

From beginning to end we’ll make sure that communication is fast, clear and reliable. Keep in touch with us as your agent and your tenant easily, using the interactive features of our website.

Emily Hannan, Director at Aspire, offers you the benefit of 18+ years of experience delivering award-winning client care and satisfaction. During this time, she held a non-executive director’s seat on the Board of the Guild of Letting and Management.

Living locally in Barnwell, she can also add her excellent local knowledge to her outstanding professional credentials. In 2018 all this expertise saw Aspire win the Local Letting Agent category for the Peterborough area in the British Property Awards.

You can have peace of mind throughout your journey as a landlord, in the knowledge that Aspire adheres to industry codes of practice, to ensure that all transactions follow the latest regulations.

Aspire is a member of the Property Ombudsman scheme, is a Propertymark licensed agent, and a member of the Guild of Letting and Management.

OUR MARKETING PROMISE
Tenants and landlords receive personal, accurate and efficient support to make the right choices...

Online – Most tenants start their search for a new home online. To be sure as many people as possible see a property placed with us, it will be listed on our website as well as on Rightmove, Zoopla, Prime Location, social media sites, and in local magazines, when appropriate.

Boards – It might be a traditional approach, but it’s one that still works well. A lot of our tenants register with us because they have seen our ‘To Let’ boards around the area.

Slideshows – To complement this popular approach, we also like to make the best use of new technology to market properties available for rent. We make sure that floor plans and slideshows are available online. We want everyone who comes along for a viewing to have all the information they need, to know whether this could be their new home.

FIVE-STAR RATINGS
HERE’S WHAT SOME OF OUR CLIENTS SAY..

“In rented a property through Aspire Sales Lettings and Property Management, Oundle. They were fantastic. Everything was done on time and in a professional manner. Highly recommended and I would certainly use them again. Thank you.”

Dean

“We spend a considerable amount of time each year abroad, and need to feel fully confident that any letting agent that we employ is fully reliable and very professional in their approach. From our very first meeting with Emily we felt assured that she would be extremely capable, and that our affairs would be in very safe hands. Subsequent dealings with Emily and her team have confirmed that original impression.”

Ronald

“We are very happy to recommend Aspire. Emily and her team are professional and knowledgeable regarding all aspects of lettings. They are unfailing in their desire to provide a quality service for both landlords and tenants, but remain personable throughout the process. Well done Aspire!”

Sue


**ASPIRE’S SERVICES**

**OUR 1-2-3 APPROACH AIMS TO GIVE YOU COMPLETE PEACE OF MIND...**

Whether you would like us to help you find the right tenant for your property, or are interested in a fully managed service, we like to keep things straightforward.

With over 18 years of lettings and property management experience, we set exceptionally high standards to make sure that we exceed the expectations of landlords and tenants.

**It’s as easy as 1-2-3**

**Option 1** – Ideal for landlords who are happy to have day-to-day involvement with their tenants, we provide a letting-only service. We market and advertise your property, using professional photographs, floor plans and descriptions. We accompany viewings and give you feedback. When we find the perfect tenant, we arrange introductions, and then create the legal documentation that is required for a tenancy. This is charged upfront and taken from the first month’s rent and calculated at the rent amount x 12 (term of 12 months and no less) x 7% + VAT.

**Option 2** – For a seamless experience, we can find your ideal tenant in just the same way as Option 1, and then collect the rent on your behalf. If necessary, we will follow up any late payments, and we’ll provide you with a monthly statement.

**Option 3** – Many landlords don’t have time to handle the day-to-day management of their property, so we provide a fully managed service. This includes a check-in service, utility registration, deposits, repairs, maintenance, inspections and certifications. At the end of the tenancy we will also manage the check-out process, and any necessary deductions from the tenant’s deposit.

*For more details and an explanation of our fees see Appendix 1 – How it works*

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**PROPERTY APPRAISAL & VALUATION**

**WE PROVIDE SENSIBLE, PROFESSIONAL ADVICE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY**

When we first meet, we’ll assess your property and give you advice about the monthly rental you can expect and the type of tenants you are likely to attract. This is the very important first step.

For landlords who don’t live locally, we will be very happy to continue the process by telephone and email.

**HOUSE DOCTOR**

Our advice also covers the details of how to prepare your property for rent. This can help you realise the best possible rental value, and is especially important if you are letting your own home, while you are working abroad for example.

We will be happy to arrange no-obligation quotations from trusted contractors for any work that you might want to undertake.

As part of the House Doctor service, we also advise you about what is needed to meet the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) standards. This helps landlords to check things like:

- The risk of ponds, stairs and steps
- Appropriate glass for doors
- Electrical safety
- Safe gas supply and connections.

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**IT’S AS EASY AS 1-2-3**

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* Tenancy set up fee of £180 + VAT (charged on every tenancy that we set up).
**GETTING STARTED**

WE HELP TO MAKE SURE YOUR PROPERTY CREATES A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION.

**Presentation** - Making sure that the basics are right is an important first step. This can include cleaning your front door and windows, tidying up the front garden, or giving a communal entrance a spring clean.

**Decoration** - A fresh-looking and recently decorated property will be immediately appealing. To be attractive to the widest possible audience, neutral colours, laminate flooring or plain carpets will normally be the best choices.

**Outdoors** - Making sure your outdoor spaces are tidy and well maintained is another way you can make your property more attractive.

**Freshness** - Kitchens and bathrooms don’t have to be brand new, but they should ideally be free from limescale. Grout and sealant should be fresh and unstained. If your property is empty, visit it regularly to keep everything looking its best, and run water regularly to avoid stale smells.

**Viewing** - Polish taps and mirrors, open your curtains as far as they will go to let in as much light as possible, and turn on side lamps and wall lights.

We recommend that your property is professionally cleaned (including carpets) before a tenancy begins. Part of your tenant’s agreement will require them to return the property in the same condition, less fair wear and tear, when they leave.

Setting these high standards will help to make sure that your tenants take good care of your property and will give you the best chance of receiving a good rental return.

As part of our House Doctor Service (see page 7) we will be happy to arrange quotations from trusted contractors for any work you might want to complete.

**VIEWINGS**

**Accompanied viewings** - The most successful landlords make sure that their property can be viewed by prospective tenants at any time. Aspire’s viewings are always accompanied by a member of our team. We will meet the prospective tenant at the property to show them around. Importantly, we’ll give you feedback, so that you know exactly what is happening.

**Responding to feedback** - Because we take care to make sure that prospective tenants know all the details of your property before they visit, the reasons they might feel it won’t be for them can be really valuable to you as a landlord. These could be very simple things that you might want to change such as adding a rail to steep garden steps or the decor in a specific room.

**Receiving an offer** - Once an offer has been made, we can arrange for you to meet the tenant if you wish, although many of our landlords are happy to go ahead with our recommendations.

**The agreement** - We will make sure that every aspect of the agreement is clear for you and your tenant. Our aim is to make sure that the best possible terms are agreed for you both.

**Acceptance** – Once you have accepted the offer, you have agreed in principle to let the property, and the proposed start date for the tenancy will be set. This will normally be 15 days later. Although this isn’t legally binding, this is the basis of the Tenancy Agreement.

**Holding fee** – The tenant will pay a holding fee equivalent to one week’s rent to confirm their commitment to renting your property. We will then put marketing the property ‘on hold’ and, if it is also being promoted elsewhere, we will let other agents know.

**References** – We make sure that every tenant has a full reference check, completed with our referencing company, LetsXL. With a warranted reference, your rental payments will be protected and, if legal action is needed, it will be dealt with for you (subject to terms and conditions). Reference costs will be paid by you, as the landlord.
**KEY REQUIREMENTS**

**Warranties and repairs** – As a landlord you are responsible for appliances at your property, including servicing, maintenance, break-down call-outs, repairs and replacements. Appliances and heating must be in good working order and, where necessary, have current portable appliance testing (PAT) labels. Gas boilers must have regular gas safety inspections and an annual service is recommended.

If you have chosen Option 1 (letting only) or Option 2 (letting and rent collection) with us, then you will deal with these requirements directly *(we can arrange this if required)*. If you have chosen Option 3 (fully managed) then we will hold details of appliances, warranties, service contracts and user manuals that tenants can access online and they can report any problems to us.

*For more details see Appendix 1 – How it works*

**Energy performance** – The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) came into effect on 1 April 2018. This applies to privately rented residential properties. It is intended to encourage landlords to improve the energy performance of their properties. An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E or better is now required for new tenancies, and will be needed for all existing tenancies by 2020.

Note: If your property is Grade II listed you will still require an EPC.

**Lender’s permission** – If you plan to rent a property and you currently have a mortgage, you will need the lender’s permission. Some lenders will only allow this through a Propertymark licenced agent, such as Aspire. If there is a lease on your property, then it is important that you check whether there are any restrictions on renting in the management agreement. In order to make rental agreements on your behalf Aspire will need to see Land Registry details and the passports of the named owners.

**Landlord’s insurance** – You will need a specific Landlord’s Insurance policy for a rented property. The premiums are likely to be higher than a standard home owner’s policy.

**Taxation** – Landlord Overseas: If you live outside of the UK you can apply to HMRC for a tax exemption certificate as a non-resident landlord (NRL). However, if the exemption isn’t granted, you will be liable to pay tax on your rental income. Aspire will retain 20% tax on NRL rental income unless a copy of your NRL exemption certificate is provided.

**ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

YOUR CONTRACT WILL BE PROFESSIONALLY PREPARED AND WILL INCLUDE ALL CURRENT LEGISLATION AND REQUIREMENTS

We will create either an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) or a Contractual Tenancy Agreement.

**The tenancy agreement** – Most tenancies are ASTs that will normally run for six or 12 months, although they can last for a total term of up to seven years. If everything is going well, a new fixed-term tenancy or a Periodic Tenancy agreement can be created.

You can ask for a clause to be included in the AST that will allow you to end the agreement if your circumstances change. You can also add clauses about pets or satellite dishes, for example.

We will be happy to give you advice if you are considering a Contractual Tenancy as an alternative.

**Inventory** – A full inventory will protect your interests, as the landlord, by making sure that the contents and condition of your property are fully recorded when the tenancy begins.

A poorly created or incomplete inventory will not be sufficient if legal action is needed concerning deductions from a tenant’s deposit. If you are using our let-only or rent collection services, we strongly recommend you use the services of a professional inventory clerk.

As part of Aspire’s fully managed service, we will prepare your inventory. We can then maintain continuity by ensuring that your routine inspections are completed by the person who prepared your inventory.
Your tenant will provide a deposit. All Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) agreements must have the deposit protected in an approved tenancy deposit scheme. From 1st April 2019 all agents managing lettings in England will have to belong to an approved Client Money Protection (CMP) deposit protection scheme. This ensures that tenants’ deposits cannot be wrongfully withheld. Aspire is a member of the government’s Deposit Protection Scheme.

**Deposit amount** - The deposit will be five weeks rent, although an additional deposit might be taken if pets are to be kept.

**Starting the tenancy** - Before the tenancy begins Aspire will receive the deposit and the first month’s rent, as cleared funds.

**On move – in day** - The tenant must be given a complete set of keys, including house keys, gas and electric box keys and window keys. Additional tenants will also need their own main door key.

If you are a let-only or rent collection landlord, you will meet the tenant and complete the check-in process with them.

For our fully managed service, we will also need a full set of keys. We will meet the tenant to complete their check-in, sign off the inventory and check smoke detectors.

Please note that our inventory clerk won’t be able to complete the check-in if you have prepared your own inventory.


**APPENDIX**

**HOW IT WORKS**

**Service options** - If you would simply like us to set up a tenancy agreement for you, our fee will be £180 + VAT.

We also offer our “1-2-3” service options to suit the preferences of our landlords, and to make sure that their property is managed properly and professionally.

* Tenancy Set Up Fee - Every service provided by Aspire when finding a tenant will have a Tenancy Set Up Fee applied of £180 + VAT.

**OPTION 1 – Let-only 7% + VAT**

This option suits landlords who are happy to be involved with the day-to-day management of their property, but who would like help to find the right tenant. Aspire will provide:

- Marketing and advertising
- Floor plan and description
- Accompanied viewing and feedback
- Landlord/tenant introduction
- Right to rent checks
- References via our referencing company, LetsXL
- Right to rent checks
- Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) agreement
- Any required additional clauses for the agreement
- Stipulation of where the deposit is to be held
- Details of utility supplier for tenants to register
- Receipt of deposit and first month’s rent, which will be remitted to the landlord, less fees
- Standing order for ongoing rental payments to the landlord
- Safety checks and certification (Aspire can arrange for these to be completed).

On request Aspire can also provide:

- Inventory
- Further tenancy agreements.

**OPTION 2 – Letting and rent collection 8.5% + VAT**

This option helps landlords to find the right tenant and make sure that rental payments and regularly are reliably collected. It includes all of the services in Option 1 (above) and monthly rent collection directly from the tenant each month. Aspire’s fee will be deducted from the rent received and the balance will be sent to the landlord with a statement.

Late payments will be followed up and, if necessary, a claim will be forwarded to our insurers for unpaid rent. On the rare occasions that this is necessary, we will keep you informed throughout the process.

**OPTION 3 – Full Management 10% + VAT**

Our full service is for landlords who don’t want to be involved in the day-to-day management of their property. In addition to the services included in Options 1 and 2 (above), the full management option includes:

- Comprehensive inventory and check-in service
- Registration of tenant details with the utility companies
- Replacing the tenant’s deposit with the Deposit Protection Service
- Management of day-to-day repairs and maintenance within an agreed budget (Aspire is not responsible for these costs)
- Monthly electronic remittance of monies less fees and maintenance costs
- Monthly statement
- Assistance with rent disputes and changes
- Point of contact for dispute resolution and legal action
- Three-monthly property inspections and written report (reduced to six-monthly if the tenancy continues satisfactorily for more than one year)
- Liaison with the tenant for tenancy renewals
- Co-ordination of the gas safety record
- Co-ordination of electrical safety checks
- Managed check-out process and independent check-out report (note: charges might be incurred if disputes concerning deposit deductions have to be resolved in court).

**DUTY OF CARE**

Aspire ensures that landlords meet legal and regulatory requirements and that they have shown due diligence concerning tenant safety.

**Furniture and furnishings Fire Safety Amendment Regulations 2010** - levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furniture, furnishings and other products containing upholstery must comply with these regulations. Landlords must make sure that upholstered furniture including (but not limited to) beds and frames, mattresses, pillows, cushions, headboards and loose and stretch covers are compliant. Furniture manufactured after 1990 should meet these standards (check safety labels). Curtains, carpets, bed linen, duvets, period and antique furniture manufactured before 1950 are exempt.

**Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998** - Rental properties with mains gas supply must have an annually completed Gas Safe record. It is the landlord’s responsibility to make sure that all appliances, including (but not limited to) boilers, cookers, gas fires and flues are checked by a Gas Safe engineer. A certificate is required before the start of a new tenancy and must be renewed every year.

**Electrical Periodic Inspection Report (PIR) and Portable Appliance Test (PAT)** - Electrical installations, wiring and appliances should be safe and be regularly checked and serviced. Although not a legal requirement, it is recommended that landlords have their property checked at least every five years and that PAT tests are completed annually.

**Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarm (England) Regulations 2015** - On the first day of the tenancy, smoke detectors should be checked to confirm that they are working properly. There should be a smoke detector on every floor, and every room used for living accommodation that has a fuel-burning combustion appliance. Homes built after 1992 must have mains-operated and interlinked smoke alarms on every floor.

**Legionnaires risk assessment** – Inhaling small droplets of water containing high levels of the legionella bacteria could cause serious illness if someone has a weakened immune system. There is potential for domestic water systems to harbour this bacteria. As part of a landlord’s duty of care, a risk assessment should be completed. See the Landlords Hub on the Aspire website for more information.

**Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)** – Before advertising or viewing a property for rent, an EPC must be produced. This has been a requirement since October 2008. The EPC rates energy efficiency from A to G and makes recommendations about how a property’s energy performance can be improved. The minimum EPC level for private rental properties must be E or better. This requirement is already in force for new tenancies and will apply to existing tenancies from 1st April 2020.

An EPC is valid for 10 years (as long as it meet’s MEES).

**Right to rent checks** – Landlords must complete a right to rent check for any tenant. The check must confirm that the tenant is over 18 years old, even if they are not named on the tenancy agreement, if there’s no tenancy agreement or if it is not in writing. As your agent, Aspire can complete this check on your behalf and pass the cost onto you. See the Landlord Hub on the Aspire website for more information.

**Landlord Licences** – Many local councils, including East Northamptonshire Council, now require houses in multiple occupation (HMO) to be licenced. An HMO is defined as a property occupied by three or more people (including children) who form more than one household. This includes buildings converted into self-contained flats (that do not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations).

The licence can be held by the landlord or someone they nominate, such as an agent. The fee for an HMO Licence will vary, depending on location. In East Northamptonshire the fee is £1,000 per property and the licence will last for five years. If landlords fail to obtain a licence or breach its conditions, they can face a financial penalty of up to £30,000 or, in extreme cases, be prosecuted and receive an unlimited fine.

* You can find out more at www.gov.uk/house-in-multiple-occupation-licence.

**Furniture and safety** – As further safety measures, all furniture must comply with these regulations. Upholstery must comply with these regulations. Furniture manufactured after 1990 should meet these standards (check safety labels). Curtains, carpets, bed linen, duvets, period and antique furniture manufactured before 1950 are exempt.

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 Been inspired, then register with Aspire! 

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ASSOCIATED BODIES