A GUIDE TO LETTING YOUR PROPERTY

aspire-lettings.com
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WELCOME TO ASPIRE

Aspire Lettings & Property Management prides itself on providing the service all landlords deserve. Founded by Emily Hannan, Aspire offers market-leading value for money and complete transparency on fees.

Aspire uses a suite of traditional and cutting-edge marketing tools from local press to social media in order to market properties to the widest possible audience. Its interactive website will also ensure that communication between agent, landlord and tenant is simplified with customers able to remotely contact Aspire and log queries or to check the status of their account wherever they are.

Aspire also offers unrivalled client satisfaction underpinned by Emily’s national award for her dedication to customer service. Indeed, Emily’s 16 years’ experience in the industry to date also included a seat on the board of non-executive directors for the Guild of Letting and Management.

Having lived locally in the village of Barnwell for many years, Emily is able to offer an impressive, highly professional and tailored service with detailed knowledge of the surrounding area.

Aspire is a member of The Property Ombudsman, an ARLA-licensed agent and a member of the Guild of Letting and Management and adheres to the industry codes of practice to ensure all property transactions follow the latest regulations.

INTERNET
Some 90% of tenants begin their home search online. All Aspire’s properties are listed on its own website as well as on Rightmove, Zoopla, Prime Location, social media sites and The Peterborough Telegraph online portal.

BOARD MARKETING
A huge number of tenants register with Aspire after seeing our To Let board.

360-DEGREE TOURS
Aspire believes cutting-edge marketing is crucial. The 360-degree virtual tours and floorplans on our website are a first in the locality and serve to highlight tenants’ must-have criteria and eliminate time wasted by showing room sizes, positioning of windows, radiators, doors and lights. Coupled with written detail, prospective tenants can see exactly how their furniture will work.
Aspire’s Products & Services

Our 1-2-3 Approach

Aspire Lettings & Property Management offers a straightforward 1-2-3 approach, whether you are looking for assistance in finding and vetting tenants or are considering the full management option. Aspire provides reassurance of a comprehensive letting and property management service that takes care of everything for complete peace of mind.

With over 16 years’ experience in lettings and property management, Aspire promises an unrivalled service where standards are high and expectations of both landlord and tenant are exceeded. And it’s as easy as 1-2-3!

Investors should also ensure that the agent they use can advise on the relevant laws and legislation. Aspire prides itself on offering a unique experience to all its landlords and ensures they understand what is involved in becoming a landlord, that they recognise the associated risks and are able to secure the right protection.

*Refer to appendix for a full service breakdown

ASSOCIATED FEES

Let Only

The first service level is all about finding the right tenants and is suitable for landlords who wish to deal with all aspects of the tenancy after the tenant has moved in. A fee of just 7% + VAT of the annual rental value is taken in advance of the start of the contract.

Rent Collection

This service level includes all of the above but also offers support to landlords who would rather that Aspire collects the rent but the landlord retains management of both tenants and property. A fee is taken monthly enabling landlords to spread agency costs across the term of the let. A fee of 8.5% + VAT is automatically deducted monthly.

Full Management

Our full management service is designed to remove landlords from the daily issues and problems of managing a property. A fee of 10% + VAT is automatically deducted each month.

FROM LET ONLY THROUGH TO A FULL MANAGEMENT SERVICE IT’S AS EASY AS 1-2-3...
During an initial meeting to assess the property, landlords are advised on the rent achievable and likely profile of prospective tenants. This is the first step towards successful letting and where all the information on the process is provided. For landlords who do not live locally or reside abroad, all further communication is carried out via phone or email following the appraisal of the property.

House Doctor is an additional complimentary service, particularly relevant when landlords are letting their own homes. If required, Aspire can offer impartial advice on basic repairs and refurbishments, covering:

- Decluttering
- Replacing dated decor
- Renewing carpets
- External updating – repairing of wooden framework, facias and bargeboards
- Modernisation on a budget, of key rooms, such as kitchens and bathrooms

House Doctor also offers support in ensuring the home meets Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) standards. This helps eliminate additional risks for landlords, namely:

- Protecting children from open ponds
- Ensuring all glass doors are safety-rated
- Checking of electricals by qualified tradesmen
- Checking of gas supply and connections by a qualified Gas Safe engineer
- Advising landlords about the requirement for a Legionella Risk Assessment

Some tenants may be new to the area and may only want an initial term of six months. Landlords should not be disheartened with this as it works well for both parties and can ensure that, at the end of the initial term, everyone is happy to proceed with another term. Aspire recommends its landlords sign a maximum of 12 months, unless it is a company let or a military let.

Aspire advocates flexibility over whether to furnish the property or not. When landlords offer properties either furnished or unfurnished, they open up 100% of the rental market.

‘Fully furnished’ means that the property is ready for a tenant to occupy immediately. Some tenants expect fully furnished properties to include crockery, cutlery, small appliances, TV and bed linen, but Aspire will always offer advice in this instance.
Marketing your property starts with the photos we take and the 360-degree digital tour we create. This is why it is so important that the condition of the property meets tenants’ expectations. Decoration and furnishings are the deciding factors of whether a tenant will make an offer or not. Properties recently decorated or freshened up stand a much greater chance of renting out quickly. Fresh decor also means tenants are more likely to maintain the property better if the walls are freshly painted and the carpets free of stains. Providing a high-standard finish to your property will maximise your rent and help to minimise any void periods where no income is received. Neutrally painted walls are recommended throughout with laminate or a single-colour carpet.

### Key Requirements

#### DECORATION

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Kitchens and bathrooms, if not modern, then fresh grout and sealant with shower screens free from limescale and residue will ensure a good finish. Aspire’s complimentary House Doctor service is invaluable in these instances and we can arrange for contractors to quote for any work required.

#### WARRANTIES AND REPAIRS

All appliances and heating sources must be in full working order and PAT-tested. Boilers must have an annual gas-safety inspection and an annual service is recommended. Landlords are liable and responsible for any appliances, including servicing, breakdown, call-outs, repair and replacement. Within Aspire’s terms of business, all appliance models, serial numbers, warranties and any service contracts in place are passed to the tenants under our fully managed service and held on our website under a unique filename. If something breaks down, tenants can report this issue directly to us. Instruction booklets and manuals received are kept on our website (also within the tenant’s unique file) and tenants can access them day or night. However, under both rent-collection and let-only services, the landlord will liaise with the tenant over any maintenance queries.

#### DUE DILIGENCE AND SAFETY COMPLIANCE

Landlords have a responsibility to ensure tenants are safe. There are numerous legal requirements regarding the safety of rental properties and it is vital that Due Diligence has been shown to every tenant. All of this information can be found in the appendix (at the back of this brochure).

#### ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE

Prior to any marketing, Aspire requires an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) which rates the energy efficiency and environmental impact of the property on a scale from A to G. This certificate is valid for 10 years and shows tenants how energy-efficient the property is. Aspire can arrange for an EPC to be completed.

#### LENDERS’ PERMISSION

If the property has a mortgage on it, landlords must seek permission to let. Some lenders will only allow landlords to rent let-to-buy or buy-to-let properties through an ARLA-registered agent (which Aspire is associated to). If there is a lease on the property, then the management agreement will detail any restrictions against renting out. Aspire will need to see land registry details of named owners as well as copies of passports. All names on the registry are owners and permissions from all parties must be given.

#### PROTECTION

Landlords’ insurance companies must be made aware that the property is being let out. This may mean increased premiums to building and content insurance charges.

#### UK LANDLORDS TAXATION

UK Landlords: All rent received is deemed an income and needs to be declared to HMRC on a Self-Assessment tax form. HMRC looks at mortgage repayments, interest charged, management fees and services charges. Monies left over once the mortgage is paid could leave a tax liability. Further information on taxation should be sought through independent financial advice. NRL1: NRL stands for Non-Resident Landlords. Landlords residing outside the UK are classed as NRL and need to apply to HMRC for an exemption certificate (NRL1). Sometimes exemptions are not granted and landlords are then liable for taxation. If Aspire does not receive a copy of an NRL1 certificate, 20% tax from all NRLs will be retained.

#### Welcome to Aspire

Aspire is a fully managed letting agent specialising in letting rental properties. Whether you have a house, a flat, a garden flat, a cottage or a mansion, Aspire has a solution for you. Whether you have one property or an entire portfolio, Aspire is here to help. Our expertise is in the letting market and we have contact with some of the country’s largest estate agents to ensure your property is rented as quickly as possible. We are passionate about marketing your property and show it off in the best possible light. Our quality marketing pack is designed to attract attention and can include a photo shoot, 360-degree digital tour and professional advertising. Our marketing experts will ensure your property is marketed correctly and attract the right type of tenant. Tenancy agreements and contracts are written and printed to your specifications and are passed to the tenants under our fully managed service and held on our website under a unique filename. If something breaks down, tenants can report this issue directly to us. Instruction booklets and manuals received are kept on our website (also within the tenant’s unique file) and tenants can access them day or night.

Within Aspire’s terms of business, all appliance models, serial numbers, warranties and any service contracts in place are passed to the tenants under our fully managed service and held on our website under a unique filename. If something breaks down, tenants can report this issue directly to us. Instruction booklets and manuals received are kept on our website (also within the tenant’s unique file) and tenants can access them day or night. However, under both rent-collection and let-only services, the landlord will liaise with the tenant over any maintenance queries.
HOW TO PRESENT YOUR HOME

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
The very first glance at a property will tell all. Our eyes move to the front door first, then the windows, then the whole façade. So, how do we make the most out of this first impression. By simply making sure the entrance is inviting, by cleaning the front door and windows, removing any dead plants, picking up any litter and, if there is a communal area, ensuring it’s maintained.

GARDEN PARTY
The garden should be viewed as another room because it’s a space that will be used by your tenants and it should always be shown in its best light with shrubbery maintained, trees lopped and lawns mown. When tenants moves in, they will be responsible for the upkeep of the garden but they are rarely able to lop trees. Therefore, some landlords choose to incorporate a gardener’s fee into the rent and, as always, Aspire is able to advise on the way forward for a particular property.

CLEANING AND FRESHNESS
Regular cleaning is essential during void periods too, plus collecting the post at the door, removing the flies from the sills and cobwebs from the beams! Musty smells develop in some properties where they are not being regularly aired and this must be monitored. Many prospective tenants are put off properties from the smell as they enter.

PICTURE PERFECT
A picture is worth 1,000 words, but only if it’s the right one. When we create marketing material, we take professional pictures that make a statement about your property. Help us to capture the very best pictures by ensuring the property is in tip-top condition.
VIEWINGS
Access at all times for prospective viewings will ensure the maximum number of potential tenants get to see the property.

SWEET SUCCESS
The most successful landlords ensure that their property is available for tenants to view at all times.

Aspire’s viewings are ‘accompanied’. The prospective tenant will be met at the property and, when the viewing is over, Aspire will place a call to the landlord within 24 hours to provide all-important feedback.

INSPIRED BY FEEDBACK
Again, successful landlords act on this feedback to improve their chances of letting the property. Landlords can also log on to their dedicated account on the Aspire website and collect any feedback from tenants or viewings from there.

FROM OFFER TO CONTRACT
Aspire prides itself on ensuring landlords are 100% happy with the offer and understand all its parts. Aspire can arrange for landlords to meet their tenants, although often landlords are happy to go ahead purely on our recommendation.

AGREEMENT
Aspire will work closely with both parties to ensure that the best possible terms of the tenancy have been agreed and will, no matter what service level agreed, continue with ongoing advice and support.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE OFFER
Once the landlord accepts an offer, the let is agreed in principle and the proposed start date of the tenancy is set. Although not yet legally binding, it forms the basis of the Tenancy Agreement.

HOLDING DEPOSIT
A deposit is taken from the tenant to ‘hold’ the property until the date of occupation (usually no longer than four weeks from the offer agreement). The property is then removed from the market and, if it is advertised elsewhere, the relevant agents are informed.

REFERENCING
Any tenant renting through Aspire will have a full reference completed and be provided with a rental warranty. If a tenant fails to pay rent, a comprehensive insurance policy from our referencing company LetsXL will cover up to six months. The insurance also covers all legal expenses up to £25,000 (subject to terms and conditions).

CUTTING-EDGE MARKETING TOOL ON THE WEBSITE
360-DEGREE VIRTUAL TOURS, A FIRST IN THE LOCALITY
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
Within Aspire’s Terms and Conditions there are various clauses which will alter each contract slightly depending on varying factors, but essentially either an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) or a Contractual Tenancy agreement will be created.

SIGNING THE AGREEMENT
Most tenancies will be Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreements (ASTs) and run for a term of up to 12 months. These agreements can be created for a total term of up to seven fixed years. However, at Aspire we like to ensure our landlords retain options to terminate the tenancy if a change in circumstances arises.

Of course, at the end of the fixed term, a new term can be created or the tenancy can run on to a Periodic Tenancy agreement.

Within the AST, landlords can instruct to have a break clause inserted or there may be additional clauses added, such as for pets or satellite dishes. It may be that the tenant requires a guarantor, so an additional Deed of Guarantee can also be created.

Some landlords may be members of the Tenancy Deposit Scheme so the deposit is paid to them as opposed to the Deposit Protection Scheme. Whatever the final agreement, Aspire ensures its contracts are professionally drawn up, include the necessary provisions and are up to date in terms of laws and legislation.

Occasionally, a landlord may propose a ‘company let’. This means a Contractual Tenancy is then created which falls outside the Housing Act. Different laws and rules will apply in this instance and these can be explained and discussed when necessary.

INVENTORY
An inventory will protect the landlord against any damage or neglect caused by the tenant. No inventory, or a poorly created one, will not stand up in court if a tenant challenged any deposit deductions. Under the fully managed service, the inventory fee is incorporated.

Our inventory clerks are members of the Association of Independent Inventory Clerks (AIIC) which offers further support and comfort knowing that the inventory has been produced in the best format with the correct terminology and dated images.

Any landlord on a let-only or rent-collection service level needs to make arrangements for an inventory to be carried out. A sample of our inventories can be sent to you, so please feel free to ask.

In this inventory, or Schedule of Condition, it will accurately detail the condition of the property at the commencement date of the tenancy and show how the property was ‘handed over’ to the tenant.

At Aspire, we want our tenants to move into a property that has been professionally cleaned (including carpets) and, when vacating, the tenant ensures the same professional clean is carried out because the AST, signed by the tenant, instructs them to return the property in the same condition, less fair wear and tear.

DEPOSIT PROTECTION
Legislation was altered on April 6, 2007, and now protects tenants’ deposits from landlords wrongly withholding or even spending tenants’ funds. Any AST agreement must have the deposit safeguarded in an approved tenancy deposit scheme. Aspire is a member of the Government-run Deposit Protection Scheme and all tenants’ deposits are held there.

DEPOSIT TAKEN
Aspire ensures the deposit is a total of six weeks’ rent or eight weeks’ rent if the landlord has agreed the tenant can keep a pet.

INSTRUCTIONS AND WARRANTIES
Fully managed properties: instruction booklets and warranties must be passed to Aspire to upload onto our management website.

COMMENCEMENT OF TENANCY
Prior to the tenancy occupation date, Aspire will have received all monies in cleared funds, including the first month’s rent and deposit. On the day of occupation, tenants collect the keys. For managed properties, Aspire will meet the tenant to complete the check-in, sign off the inventory and safety check smoke detectors. For a rent-collection and let-only service, the landlord will meet the tenants for the check-in and testing of the smoke detector. Our independent inventory clerk would not be able to conduct a check-in if it was the landlord’s own inventory.

There must be one full set of house keys, including gas/electric box key and window keys provided. Additional tenants need to receive a main door key. For managed properties, Aspire would hold a full set of keys.
appendix

WHICH SERVICE? 1-2- OR 3?

Sometimes landlords prefer hands-on involvement in the process of letting their properties, while others opt for a full management service.

Clients’ circumstances vary enormously, from going to work overseas, to property investment, job relocation, or family separation. Aspire will provide support for every need and formulate the best way forward in ensuring the property is managed properly and professionally.

1. LET ONLY – 7% + VAT

This service supports landlords who prefer to be involved from the start and, with service level 1, the landlord appoints Aspire to carry out:

• Marketing and advertising the property
• Floorplan and virtual tours
• Accompanied viewings and delivery of feedback
• Arranging for landlords to meet the tenant before references are carried out
• Right to Rent checks
• Full reference with rental warranty for the initial tenancy term, usually for a one-year period (renewed thereafter)
• Drawing up of documents including Assured Shorthold Tenancy (deposit paid to landlord)
• Addition of non-standard clauses: pet clause, military clause, satellite clause or break clause
• Ensuring contract stipulates where the deposit is held and then transferred to landlord
• Ensuring payment of rent and deposit received
• Arranging for gas Safe certification, where an additional charge is due
• Creation of inventory, where there is an additional charge
• Remit the balance of initial funds to the landlord at the let-only fee of 7% + VAT with a statement. If the tenant signs for six months and then wants to continue, Aspire will take a payment at the six months’ renewal for the following six months – maximum charge for our let-only service is 7% for one year
• Creating a standing order for the rent to be paid to the landlord each month from the tenants’ account
• Tenants given utility suppliers in order to register

DUTY OF CARE

Aspire oversee elements of legislation that landlords must abide by, ensuring they have shown due diligence over the tenants safety:

1. FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS (FIRE SAFETY) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2010

Upholstered furniture and soft furnishings provided in rental properties must comply with current regulations.

Landlords need to ensure that any upholstered furniture incl. curtains, carpets, bed linen, duvets, period and antique furniture manufactured before 1950. (Furniture purchased since 1990 should meet current regulations).

2. THE GAS SAFETY INSTALLATION & USE REGULATIONS 1998

Any rental property that is rented out and has gas mains must have an annual Gas Safe record completed. The certification is a Gas Safety record and it complies with the Gas Safety Regulations (installation and use) Act 1998.

3. ELECTRICS: PIR (PERIODIC INSPECTION REPORT) AND PAT (PORTABLE APPLIANCE TEST)

The electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 imply that landlords have a duty of care towards any tenant residing in their home to ensure that all electrical wiring installations and appliances supplied as part of the dwelling are safe. To comply with the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994, all electrical installations and appliances in the property need to be regularly checked and serviced.

4. SMOKE DETECTORS AND CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS – REGULATIONS 2015

On the day of occupation all properties must have their smoke detectors checked to ensure they are working.

A smoke detector must appear on every storey of the building. A working carbon monoxide alarm must be placed in any room used as living accommodation and which contains a solid fuel-burning combustion appliance or is built after 1992 must have a mains-operated and interlinked smoke alarm fitted on every floor.

5. LEGIONNAIRES’ RISK ASSESSMENT

Legionnaires’ Disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by the inhalation of small droplets of contaminated water containing Legionella. All hot and cold water systems are likely to provide an environment where Legionella can grow.

Where conditions are favourable (ie suitable growth temperature range; water droplets (aerosols) produced and dispersed; water stored and/or recirculated; some ‘food’ for the organism to grow such as rust, sludge, scale, biofilm etc) then the bacteria may multiply, thus increasing the risk of exposure.

Landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their tenants are safe. A landlord should show Duty of Care to the tenants and a Risk Assessment should be conducted.

See Landlord hub for information and costs.

6. EPC (ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATE)

An EPC must be created prior to the property being advertised for rent or any viewings can occur. In October 2008 landlords were required by law to provide an EPC for their rented property. The EPC, which is valid for 10 years, will make recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of your property. It rates energy efficiency and its environmental impact and shows Duty of Care to the tenants and a Risk Assessment has been completed.

See Landlord hub for information and costs.

7. RIGHT TO RENT CHECKS

Landlords have a legal responsibility to complete a Right to Rent check on their tenants. As an agent, Aspire will carry out these checks on your behalf.

Aspire must check that a tenant or lodger can legally rent your residential property in England. Before the start of a new tenancy (whether of a short or long term) all landlords must conduct a PAT test annually to ensure electrical appliances are also safe. See Landlord hub on our website for more details.

All tenants must be checked. It is against the law to check only people you think are not British citizens. If the tenant is only allowed to stay in the UK for a limited time you need to do the check-in 28 days before the start of the tenancy. You won’t need to check tenants in some types of accommodation (for example, social housing and care homes).

The checks completed are thorough and we will ensure that they are conducted correctly – we can provide more information if required. See the Landlord hub for information and costs.
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ASSOCIATED BODIES