

How to contact West Berkshire Council Housing Service

Contact us by phone, email, in person or in writing using the following contact information

Housing

West Berkshire Council Offices
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Tel: **01635 519530**

E-mail: **housing@westberks.gov.uk**

Website: **www.westberks.gov.uk**

If you would like any part of this leaflet explained, translated or provided in another format such as large print, audio or Braille, please contact us on the number above.

WBC/HO/IMBI/0716

Your Guide to Renting Privately



When you rent privately, you rent a property from a landlord or a company, usually on a commercial basis.

The Housing Options service can help with private renting and is here to help you with any questions about your housing needs.

Please just contact us - we want to help

What does private renting mean?

When you rent privately, you rent a property from a landlord or a company, usually on a commercial basis. The rent is set by your landlord. There will be a legal contract between you and your landlord.

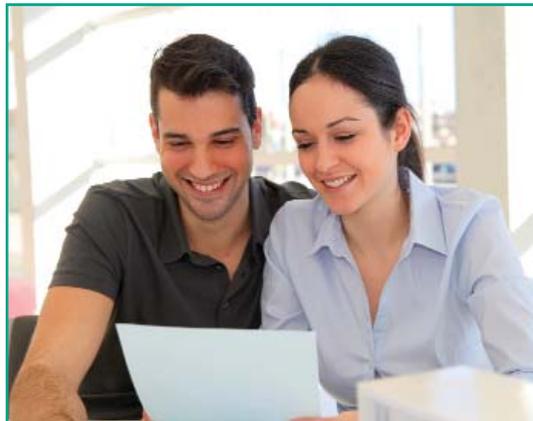
This contract is called a tenancy agreement

The tenancy agreement covers each person's rights and responsibilities. This includes:

- how and when you must pay the rent
- how your landlord will deal with repairs.

Your tenancy will be for at least 6 months to start with. This is known as the fixed term of your tenancy.

Renting privately is different from social housing where the property is owned by a council or a housing association.



You choose what you want to rent and where it is.



Notes:

What sort of properties are available?

You can rent both flats and houses. A private rented property can be an entire property, for example, a house or a flat rented to you or your family.

The property may be:

- fully furnished, with everything you would need.
- part-furnished, with only the main items included.
- unfurnished, with no furniture at all.

Check whether the property has carpets, curtains, a cooker, a fridge and a washing machine.

A private rented property can also be a room in a shared house.

Shared properties:

- are usually furnished.
- may have a shared kitchen, lounge or bathroom.
- provide a separate bedroom for each sharer.

How can I find a property to rent?

There are lots of places to look for a property to rent privately. These are some of the best ways:

Look in The Press

Houses, flats and rooms are advertised in the Newbury Weekly News newspaper every Thursday. Each Thursday, there is a special property section advertising properties to rent.

Look on websites

There are lots of websites advertising properties to rent. The website title generally tells you what sort of properties the website deals with.

- www.clickflatshare.co.uk
- www.Fish4.co.uk
- Google.co.uk (then search for Gumtree Newbury)
- www.Easyroommate.com
- www.Spareroom.co.uk
- www.Findaproperty.co.uk
- www.Hotproperty.co.uk
- www.Homesandproperty.co.uk
- www.Zoopla.co.uk

Look in local shops

Local corner shops and newsagents often advertise properties on cards in their windows. You can put your own card in asking for the sort of property you want.

Check supermarket notice boards as well.

Can a letting agent help?

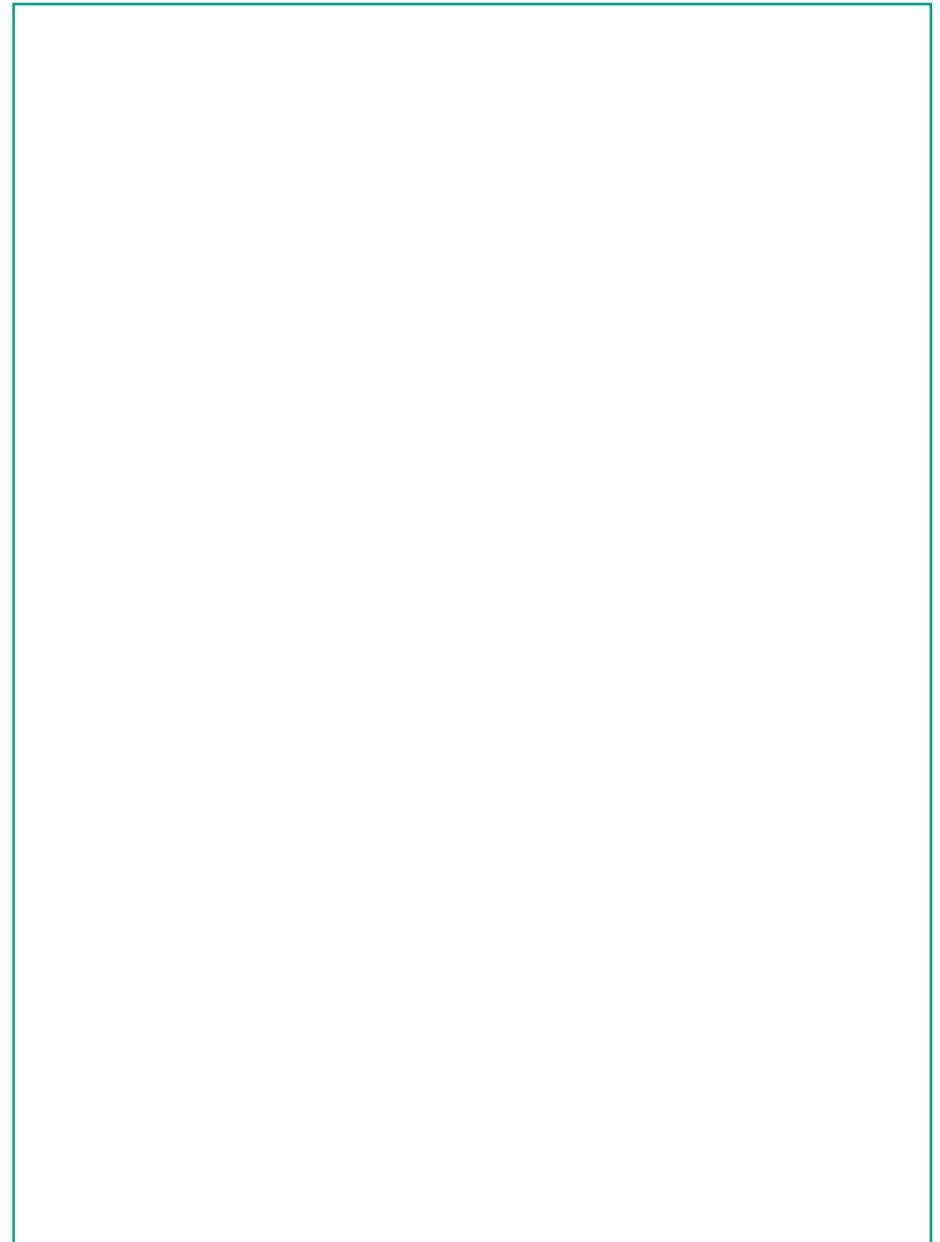
There are lots of letting agents in West Berkshire. Search for Letting Agents on the internet or take a look at websites like www.yell.co.uk.

Finding a property through a letting agent may involve costs, for example:

- an administration fee
- a credit check fee

Make sure you get a written explanation of all the costs involved before you sign any paperwork or a tenancy agreement

Notes:



What's good about private renting?

There's a lot of choice and a wide range of properties.

You choose what you want to rent and where it is.

You can often find a property to rent quickly as landlords don't want their properties empty for long.

If you are on benefits or a low income, you may be able to get help with paying your rent. Contact the Housing Benefits on **01635 519530** or complete the on-line benefits calculator by visiting <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/apps/bencalc/bencalc.htm>

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Does the rent include bills?

If you have a rented property to yourself, bills are not usually included. As well as rent, you will have to pay:

- council tax
- water rates
- gas and electricity bills
- phone and internet charges
- household insurance

In shared properties some or all bills may be covered in the rent, so ask your landlord what is included.

Will I need a deposit?

Most landlords will expect a deposit, which is also called a bond. Some landlords will agree to you paying a deposit in instalments if you ask to. Make sure you get a receipt for any money you pay.

Will my deposit be safe?

Your landlord has to pay your deposit into an approved scheme for safe-keeping. They are not allowed to keep your money themselves. Your landlord must tell you where they have put your money so that you know who to contact if there is any dispute when you leave. The approved schemes are:

- The custodial scheme
Tel: 0870 7071707
Website: www.depositprotection.com
- Tenancy deposit solutions ltd
Website: www.mydeposits.co.uk
- The tenancy deposit scheme
Website: www.tds.gb.com

What if I don't have a deposit?

The Housing Options Team offer a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme but access to the scheme is not available to everyone. Your Housing Options Officer will advise you if you are eligible for the scheme, and will give you a leaflet explaining the scheme in more detail.

If you are eligible for the scheme, it offers a written bond or guarantee to your landlord, instead of giving them a cash deposit. You should ask the landlord if they would accept a written bond instead of a cash deposit and then contact the Housing Options team once you have the landlord's agreement.

If you are not eligible for the scheme and are on welfare benefits, you may be able to access a Budgeting Loan or Crisis Loan via Jobcentre Plus.

What rights do I have renting privately?

Everybody has the right to:

- their landlord or agent's name and address
- a written tenancy agreement
- an inventory or list of furniture in the property

Legally, a property must be safe and free from significant hazards.

If your landlord lives in the property and shares facilities with you, your rights are more limited.

The Housing Options team can always give you advice about your housing rights if your landlord asks you to leave or if you have problems paying your rent.

Can the landlord make me leave?

When a landlord wants their tenant to leave the property, the landlord must give the tenant formal, written notice. This tells you how long you have before you must leave the property.

The length of notice you get from your landlord will depend on:

- your tenancy agreement and
- the type of property you are in

If your landlord lives in the property and shares facilities with you, you can be asked to leave after being given a reasonable period of notice.

If you are ever in danger of losing your home, contact the Housing Options team straight away for advice.

How can Housing Options help me?

There are lots of ways we can help you rent a property privately.

The Housing Options team can:

- help you with a rent deposit guarantee, if you qualify
- offer advice on affordability and Local Housing Allowance
- help you claim housing benefit towards your rent if you are on a low income or benefits and
- offer advice on Discretionary Housing Payments
- refer you to support with budgeting, advice about paying bills and looking after the property
- help you understand the responsibilities of being a tenant and living on your own