

## **INVENTORY INSIGHT – MARCH 2015**

**Thanks goodness for spring, the odd sunny day injects us all with energy and enthusiasm. Lettings is waking up again (not that it has ever been asleep!) and the prospect of new regulations, the dreaded election and another busy year will keep us all on our toes.**

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2015 AWARD WINNERS.**

**At our recent AGM three of our members were presented with their Inventory Clerk of the Year Award. Clients had voted giving us the reasons why their AIIC clerk deserved to win this prestigious award. The AIIC has almost 700 members nationwide so competition is stiff. This year we presented three awards:-**

**Executive member of the Year: - Adrian Kelly of let Check Inventories Ltd**

**Full Member of the Year: - Jae Gadar of the Ashworth Group**

**Associate Member of the Year: - Joshua Goody of E A Inventories.**

### **SMOKE ALARMS TO BECOME LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR ALL**

From October 2015 all landlords will have to provide smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in every rented property. This is something that the AIIC has been championing for several years. These vital warning devices are cheap to buy and install, there is never any excuse to leave tenants unprotected and from October it will be unlawful to do so.

### **Is Your Property Pest Free?**

Spring is here and it's not only the birds that are building nests. Inside a rental property all sorts of pests could be working away causing tenants and landlords a real headache. No surprise then that the last study by the National Union of Students found that 75% of student tenants reported a problem with pest infestation.

Infestation can be caused by a variety of problems, cockroaches, mice, rats, ants and other insects can be encouraged by poor living conditions. There's nothing more tempting to vermin than a grubby kitchen with lots of lovely crumbs and other food lying around.

Patricia Barber, Chair of the Association of Independent Inventory Clerks reports 'all too often it is the landlord that is blamed for providing an unsafe property but tenants need to look at the way they live and their hygiene habits sometimes and make efforts not to provide the sort of environment that pests enjoy.

Tenants can help themselves by making sure that any food spillages are cleaned as soon as possible and that cupboards, worktops and floors are kept clean and crumb free. Carpets that are not vacuumed very often will allow things like carpet moths and beetles and fleas to lay their eggs and sit safely until it is time to hatch and cause mayhem – to the property and to the tenants.

Common pest problems we have found in rented properties include:-

Mice – if these appear mid tenancy it is usually the tenant's responsibility to organise pest control.

Cat fleas – if the tenant has just moved in it is likely that these were left by the previous tenant. Flea eggs can lay dormant for several weeks until the next warm body comes along. Fleas discoloured very early in a tenancy is usually the landlord's problem.

Wasps - again a wasps nest found on moving in day is the landlord's problem however if wasps set up home after this time then it is up to the tenant to pay for pest control

Ants and woodlice – these minor problems are the tenant's responsibility.

Bees – to be treated the same as wasps in terms of responsibility but cannot just be killed. The tenant should pay for removal by a bee keeper.

Squirrels and bats – much more tricky, bats are a protected species and as such tenants will have to put up with bats in the belfry. Squirrels are very destructive but can only be exterminated at certain times of the year - outside of their breeding season - so professional advice will be needed. Both of these problems are the responsibility of the landlord.

## **CARRY ON LETTINGS.**

### **True tales from our members this month included the following gems:-**

A landlord had a 6 year tenancy and on check out there was some damage to the vinyl floor in the small kitchen. The vinyl it seemed was at least ten years old, the tenant was quite rightly shocked to be asked to pay £437 for new flooring.

A recent court case involved a tenant losing more than his deposit in 'dilapidations'. One item involved replacement of both bath and basin taps. When the landlord was asked why this was necessary his response was that the washers needed changing -this was part of the tenancy agreement - and the plumber could not manage this so new taps were brought. The judge found in favour of the landlord even though the taps were around ten years old!

Landlord's – and many others – would benefit from our 94 page AIC publication 'Guide to fair wear & Tear' – available via our website for £9.99. [www.theaic.co.uk](http://www.theaic.co.uk)

## **END OF BEDS IN SHEDS?**

Good to see that at last action is being taken over illegal lettings of outbuildings and illegal property conversions. A recent report in UK Landlord Magazine tells of two recent court cases. One North London landlord was fined over £280,000 for letting outbuildings converted into six small flats without planning permission. Another London landlord was fined more than £70,000 by Ealing council, for letting five flats and a garden outbuilding converted without planning permission. Both landlords were given several warnings which they blatantly ignored.

### **Election footnote:-**

Apparently, according to media reports, Labour want to ban all letting charges and regulate letting agents, the Conservatives are against this. I wonder who letting agents will be voting for. One should never underestimate the power the lettings industry! Sadly, politicians do not seem to understand how the private rental sector actually works. Agents and landlords do not provide services to tenants for free, the blanket banning of charges will inevitably raise agents fees to landlord's and rents as there are considerable costs involved in the whole lettings process, if carried out properly, and these must be recovered from somewhere.