



April 2014

Welcome to the April issue of the AIIC newsletter. The lettings market is warming up nicely, along with the weather, as prospective landlords are gaining confidence in the market again. There seems to be no shortage of tenants either - good news for all of us.

Administration Charges

Following on from the big stink about clarity of agents (and landlords) administration fees to tenants the [Office of Fair Trading \(OFT\)](#) has suggested that a re-draft of tenancy agreement terms should include the statement that 'the tenant is responsible for any reasonable costs incurred by the landlord as a result of a breach of a tenant's obligation'.

At present most good letting agents list their tenant fees clearly, in writing, from the start. Most things are quantifiable and agents will be very aware of the kind of charges that tenants may incur.

As well as set up fees these can cover a range of problems during a tenancy such as rent chasing and late payments, fees for aborted interim inspections and other appointments, and contractors call out charges if a reported problem is caused by tenant negligence.

What then are 'reasonable' costs? The OFT cannot say, it is down to the letting agent, who should be after all the expert in their field, to ensure clarity and good business practice.

Are You Protected?

The lack of a decent inventory can cause huge problems at the end of a tenancy. No inventory means no proof of check in condition and therefore no chance of a landlord winning any dispute. Landlords are finding themselves in trouble with hundreds of pounds worth of damage and cleaning caused by tenant which the landlord has to pay for at the end of the tenancy term. Without a good detailed inventory your property will be unprotected.

Many 'Let Only' landlords feel that they can cover every part of a let themselves only employing the letting agent to find their tenant for a set fee. Saving money in this way is not a sensible option as tenants are sometimes a difficult breed and landlord's expectations are high. Some landlord's will not supply even a basic inventory thinking that it's not worth worrying about.

A common comment from let only landlords is 'the property is unfurnished, there is nothing to put on the inventory'. Just think about the cost of replacing a kitchen worktop, or a damaged basin, what about making good that hole in the wall?

Fire (Un)Safe Furniture

The recent BBC 'Fake Britain' TV show has revealed that 8 out of 10 sofas and mattresses being sold by some of the UK's best-known retailers are illegal and potentially lethal, failing part of all safety tests.

The show focused on compliance with the UK's fire safety regulations for furniture and followed Leicestershire Trading Standards whilst they conducted a programme of formal testing. Samples were purchased from various high street retailers and independent stores. Landlords may have unwittingly furnished their properties with sofas and beds that fail to meet the UK's rigorous fire safety regulations.

The [Fire Industry Research Association \(FIRA\)](#) independently test furniture and upholstered products to ensure that standards are met recently. Recently they found that a number of products available from major chains (including Amazon, Argos, Homebase, Tesco Direct, SCS) failed to meet fire safety standards.

Tenants are well aware of their right to invoke a dispute any many do for sums as low as £30 according to the [Deposit Protection Scheme](#).

A fully detailed inventory will help to ensure that the landlord is well protected against end of tenancy problems and additional expense. A properly compiled inventory is part of the legal documentation of every let and protects both landlord and tenant.

Training Courses in 2014

The AIIC run industry leading training courses on all aspects of inventory work. Two more course dates have been released, and they are open to ALL interested parties. Our courses are always popular and places are filled quickly so if you are interested please contact us immediately.

Guidelines for Inventory Professionals – Saturday 17th to Sunday 18th May 2014. This course is aimed at new and inexperienced clerks and also persons thinking of becoming an inventory clerk. It would also be ideal for any new Associate Members, or indeed any other colleagues or interested parties.

Inventory Refresher Workshop – Wednesday 11th June 2014. This is a classroom based one-day Inventory Refresher workshop and is aimed at both new and experienced clerks wishing to hone their descriptive skills.

Check Out Workshop – Date to be confirmed. This is a one-day workshop covering the whole check-out process. End of tenancy check-out inspections can be contentious if not handled correctly, causing wasted time, energy and money for all parties.

Details for all our courses and booking information can be found on our web site, www.theaiic.co.uk, or pre-register your interest for the workshops by emailing centraloffice@theaiic.co.uk.

No more meter readings?

Accurate meter readings are an important part of all lets. Big changes are happening that will affect all of us. The Government is backing the introduction of Smart Meters and by 2020 every home in the country will have one. Smart Meters will send your meter reading directly back to the service provider so if a tenant moves in or out and no-one bothers to take a gas or electricity reading it won't be such a problem, everything will be carried out remotely.

See www.gov.uk/smart-meters-how-they-work for more information on Smart Meters.

To find out more information about the Association Of Independent Inventory Clerks and the find a member in your area to inspect your properties please see www.theaiic.co.uk.

Patricia Barber, Chairman

Prospective Tenant Failures

According to a recent survey, 60% of tenants are not earning enough to pass reference checks.

The survey was carried out by [Rentguard Referencing](#).

The survey also showed over 18% of tenants have a poor credit record, including bankruptcy and CCJs.