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AIIC: GROWING NUMBER OF AGENTS AND LANDLORDS FACE FILTHY PROPERTIES AT CHECK-OUT

1 Comment

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Since the introduction of tenant deposit protection in 2007, cleaning has been the no 1 cause of disputes and the problem is getting worse, according to the Association of Independent Inventory Clerks (AIIC).

The annual review by the Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS) for 2012-13 highlights the types of disputes and the most common cause of complaint brought by tenants is about cleaning, increasing from 49% in

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2009 to 56% in 2013 and are now at their highest level since 2007.

Pat Barber, Chair of the Association of the AIIC comments: "We are seeing a sharp rise in the number of properties that require professional cleaning services at check-out and it is a growing problem. There is a general lack of respect for property by tenants with a change in tenant's hygiene standards. Many tenants fail to leave their property in the same condition when they leave a property and we have seen many properties left in a filthy state.

"The main problems are dirty ovens and fridges; stains and marks on carpeting and flooring; bathrooms which have not been cleaned for months; and pet hair and excrement on floors, furniture and soft furnishings.

"At a recent check out, the property was left in a very poor condition. The tenants has left without paying the last month's rent and it was obvious that they had not carried out any cleaning for the whole tenancy. The oven was dripping with grease with old food items left inside and the bathroom was extremely dirty, with heavy scale to all areas. As well as being stained, the lounge carpet had a large area cut out in the centre and this was 'hidden' with a bath mat.

"Tenants are often shocked to realise that professional cleaning can cost anything from £10 – £20 per hour depending on the area and type of work required. Some tenants claim that cleaning issues are just normal wear & tear.

"The simple answer is that if an area or item was clean at check in it should be left clean at check-out. If something can be cleaned then it should be. If any dust or crumbs are present then this is clearly not clean. A property should be vacated with no sign of previous occupation in terms of cleaning issues.

"According to the TDS, many tenants claim that the cleanliness of the property at the start of the tenancy was not clear, or that the tenancy agreement did not make clear what was expected of them. So it is vital that landlords and agents have a proper inventory prepared and do a thorough check-in and check-out, so they have the right proof of condition at the start and end of a new tenancy agreement.

"At the check-out stage, the tenant should be made aware of the areas requiring cleaning and the potential cost involved. It is important to remember that the tenant is only obliged to return the property in the same state of cleanliness as at the start of the tenancy, after allowing for fair wear and tear."

AIIC has put together the most common cleaning problems at check-out:

- Ovens – cause the most problems. If it was listed as completely clean at check in, it must be left in the same condition. Burn marks to any part of the appliance means it is not clean. Tenants are amazed that professional oven cleaning costs between £50 – £80.
- Stained and marked carpets – this is a very common problem with some tenants trying to hide stains with rugs and furniture. Tenants are also known to cut out the stain and fill the hole with carpet they have cut from a hidden part of the property eg under the bed
- Heavy lime scale to kitchen and bathroom fittings – the response of tenants is often 'it's not my fault, this is a hard water area'
- Grease deposits throughout the kitchen, surfaces and cupboards may look clean but will feel sticky to touch.
- Thick dust & cobwebs, particularly around furniture and on the ceilings