

# A GUIDE TO LETTINGS

**MARTIN&CO**  
Sales & Lettings





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**Customers love  
our service.  
We think you  
will too.**

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# Who are we?

Welcome to Martin & Co, where a passion for property has fuelled our success. Put simply, you're in safe hands. We have been building a lettings and property management pedigree since 1986. Our job is to let your property and keep it let.

Our network consists of 195 branches across London and the UK, and each of them is independently run by hand-picked property experts who know their local market inside out.

We will help you find loyal tenants who pay their rent and don't cause damage. We work hard to make the letting process as smooth as possible to ensure longer tenancies, loyal tenants, and no sleepless nights.

This is reflected by the fact that Martin & Co customers gave us a 92% rating for excellent customer service, and 95% said they would recommend us to others.\*

Martin & Co let a property every seven minutes.<sup>§</sup> If you would like your property to be one of those, then read on to find out how we do it, and how we can work for you.

§During office hours. \*Source: Martin & Co customer satisfaction survey Jan-Sept 2015



MARTIN & CO

# We are here for you

Letting your property can be a daunting prospect. That is why we are here – to make the process as hassle-free as possible.

## Professional Expertise

Our agents are skilled not only at finding the right tenants for your property, but also in advising the best way to present your property to attract those tenants. We will ensure the property is safe and that all legal requirements are met, giving you peace of mind. Martin & Co is primed to offer advice on the lettings market, provide professional management services, and ensure your investment is working for you.

## Take The First Step

The first step is to meet with a representative from our lettings department. We will be able to make recommendations to maximise the letting potential of your property and advise on a realistic rental value.

We can help you decide whether letting is for you and the kind of tenants that will suit your property. This service is provided free of charge and without obligation.



## Furnished or unfurnished?

**An early question you will need to consider is whether to provide your property furnished or unfurnished.**

If you choose to let your property furnished, it will need to be fully equipped so that tenants can move in with only personal belongings. Unfurnished accommodation should include the basics - carpets, curtains and basic kitchen appliances.

In our experience, the preference is towards unfurnished accommodation and we particularly recommend this option for first-time landlords. Good quality, well equipped, furnished properties also appeal to certain types of tenants, particularly corporate tenants. Anything included by you will be your responsibility to repair

or replace. A full inventory is vital for all properties, particularly when furnished.

Legislation changes in 2015 will affect your decision to own either a furnished or unfurnished property, as landlords only get tax relief for the cost of directly replacing furniture. This tax relief replaces traditional 'wear and tear' allowance which gave you tax relief proportionate to your rental income. We recommend that you contact your local Martin & Co office to help you make a decision on whether to furnish your property or not.

# Put your best foot forward

Tenants today are sophisticated, and look for a rental property that reflects their lifestyle. To achieve a competitive rent, and ensure your property is let quickly to a preferred tenant, remember that first impressions count.

## **Here are some tips to consider when preparing your property for viewings:**

- Keep colours neutral
- Kitchens and bathrooms should be well equipped
- Less is more in terms of decoration
- Rooms should be light and bright
- Where possible use earth tones on floors
- Gardens should be neat and tidy
- Contemporary lighting is particularly important in modern apartments
- Everything should be sparkling clean, including the windows

## **There are also practical considerations, including:**

- Windows and doors need to be secure and in good working order
- Roofs should have no broken tiles
- Outside patios, walls, fences and paved areas should be well maintained
- The heating system needs to be functioning properly
- Stairs and rails should be secure and safe
- Seals around showers, sinks and baths should be in good repair and drainage fully functioning
- Appliances must meet electrical and gas regulations

# Moving forward

When we receive your instructions and signed terms of business we will visit the property to take internal and external photographs.

We will finalise your tenant requirements with you so that we can match your property to the potential tenants we have on our database. Our multiple office network gives us a real advantage as we have access to a large number of potential tenants.

Whether it is through existing contacts or from advertising enquiries, we aim to find the right tenant to suit both you and your property.

To protect your investment and show the property to its best advantage all potential tenants are accompanied during viewings by a Martin & Co member of staff, who will be familiar with the property and able to deal with questions.

## Getting Checked

Once a tenant has been found, references are taken up by an independent referencing agency. On our Manage & Protect service we will provide an

Elite reference which will qualify the landlord for substantial legal and rental cover.

## The Elite reference includes:

- Tenant Risk Score, which measures the likelihood of the tenant defaulting on rent
- Affordability Check, to check if the tenant can afford to pay their rent
- Previous Landlord Reference, to check if the applicant paid their rent in former tenancies
- Free Eviction, if your tenant doesn't pay their rent for the duration of the tenancy
- Tenant Credit Monitoring, so we can take regular snapshots of a tenant's financial situation

References are used to provide verification of the information provided by the tenants. The agency will check that each tenant is credit worthy by checking for CCJs and arrears and obtaining employer and landlord references. Once references have been received we will contact you to confirm the result and moving-in date.

# Getting agreement

Martin & Co use an approved tenancy agreement which has been carefully designed to protect the landlord's rights to possession, help control the tenant's activities and comply with standard mortgage lender requirements.

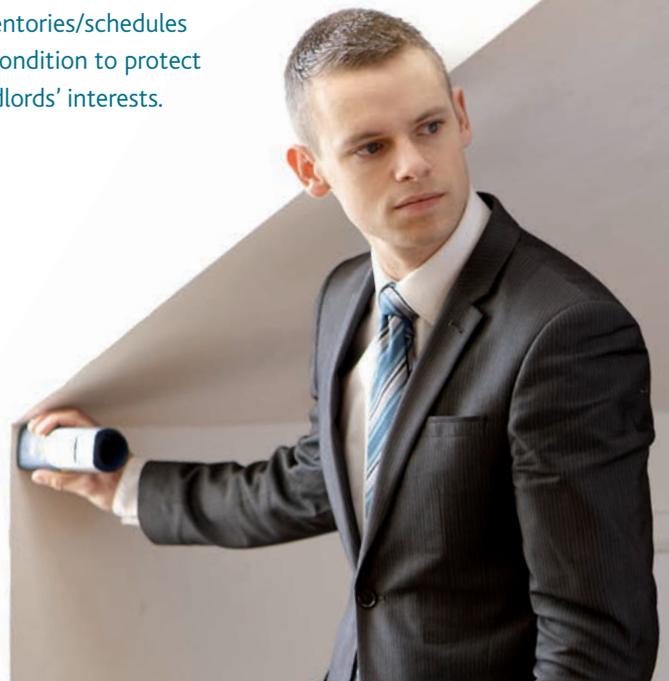
Tenancy agreements are usually for an initial term of 6 or 12 months, however shorter or longer term tenancies can be negotiated. Your tenancy is likely to be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or Contractual Tenancy.

## Taking Note

Whether you are letting furnished or unfurnished, an inventory/schedule of condition is essential. We arrange this using local independent inventory companies. At the end of a tenancy the property is checked against the inventory and any damage or deterioration is noted. The tenant is responsible for

the cost of rectifying any damage, over and above what is considered to be fair wear and tear.

Legislation is weighted in the tenant's favour. It is necessary to provide properly prepared and accurate inventories/schedules of condition to protect landlords' interests.



# Tenancy Deposit Scheme

As part of the Housing Act 2004 the Government introduced tenancy deposit protection for all Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST) in England and Wales.

## Deposit Protection

All deposits, paid under an AST, must be registered with a government approved scheme within 30 calendar days of receipt.

At the end of a tenancy the landlord and tenant attempt to agree the basis for repayment of the deposit. In the case of a dispute the case is allocated to an independent, impartial adjudicator.

## Cashing In

When the tenant signs the tenancy agreement we take the initial rental payment and the security deposit. The level of deposit is generally the equivalent of 4-6 weeks' rent.

We ensure funds are cleared before the tenant is allowed to move in and a payment method is agreed for ongoing rent.





# Responsibilities

## Being a Landlord

The landlord is responsible for maintaining the structure and exterior of the property, heating and plumbing installations and dealing with routine repairs. If the property is leasehold, the landlord is responsible for paying the service charge and ground rent. The Landlord's obligations are clearly determined in Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

## Being Insured

Landlords should ensure they have adequate building and contents insurance cover in place for all fixtures, fittings and white goods (or plumbing

and heating installations). Tenants are responsible for insuring their own personal belongings.

## Being a Tenant

The tenant has the responsibility of taking care of the rented property and using it in a responsible way, paying the rent and keeping to the terms of the tenancy agreement. If tenants cause damage to the property, they are responsible for a contribution towards the cost of repair beyond fair wear and tear.

# Being managed

If you choose to have your property fully managed, we will ensure your property is cared for. We will deal with maintenance issues and arrange essential repairs and payments to contractors if required.

Our prime concern is to ensure the property is maintained in good condition. We will advise you of any improvements that may be required and work with proven contractors, of your choosing if you wish, ensuring prompt service at a reasonable cost.

The accounts team will ensure rent is paid on the due date and passed on to you quickly. Statements of rental income and expenditure are provided every month to ensure you have full information for tax purposes. The tenant pays rent directly to us and commission is collected on the basis agreed in our Terms of Business.

We commit to visiting the property regularly during the term of the tenancy if we are providing a full management service, and we will assist with extending or completing the tenancy. We can negotiate rent increases and will draw up an Addendum for the new term. If notice is not served on the tenant, the tenancy agreement automatically continues on a statutory periodic basis or we can renew the tenancy for you for a further fixed term.



# We know about safety

Safety regulations are extensive, designed to ensure the safety of the property and its tenants. There are heavy penalties for non-compliance. We can advise on safety matters for your property. These regulations change, but some things to consider include:

## **Gas Safety (Installation And Use) regulations 1998**

These cover all gas appliances, flues, meters and associated pipe work and require landlords to arrange an inspection, carried out by a 'Gas Safe' registered engineer. Once the engineer is satisfied, a Landlords Gas Safety Certificate will be issued, a copy of which must be held by us and given to the tenant before they move in. This certificate must be renewed annually. It is advisable to arrange the inspection before a tenant is found. This will avoid delaying the start of the tenancy and we can make these arrangements on your behalf.

Landlords are also responsible for ensuring that either the operating instructions are shown on the appliance or an instruction booklet is supplied.

## **Furniture And Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (Amended 1989 And 1993)**

This Act covers all upholstery and upholstered furniture supplied by the landlord, including beds, curtains, pillows, headboards, mattresses, cushions, sofa beds, futons and so on. New compliant furniture will always carry the correct safety label.

## **The Electrical Equipment Safety Regulations 1994**

These regulations apply to landlords who let accommodation containing electrical equipment. The electrical installation at a property and all electrical appliances should be regularly checked.

The landlord is responsible for ensuring either the operating instructions are shown on the appliance or an instruction booklet is supplied.

## **Smoke Detectors**

All new homes built after June 1992 must be fitted with mains operated smoke detectors. There are no specific regulations governing older buildings, but legislation introduced in October 2015 states that alarms on each floor of a property are required.

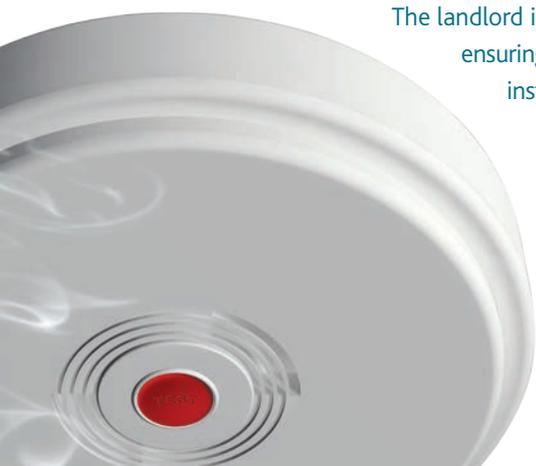
## **Legionella**

Legislation introduced in 2015 puts a significant responsibility on landlords to conduct risk assessments for Legionnaires' disease. This falls under your remit of duty of care and is therefore a legal requirement. The risk assessment should be carried out by a competent person, whether this is the landlord or a contractor recommended by Martin & Co. Your property will be most at risk if it has not been used for a long time, for example in a long void period, but we will advise you on how to check the property and explain to your tenants how to minimise their own risks during a tenancy.

## **Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)**

EPCs have been introduced to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. The EPC is required by law when a property is offered for sale or rent. It gives home-owners and tenants information on the energy efficiency of the property. Part of the EPC is a recommendation report listing the potential rating that the property could achieve with changes. The report lists improvements and how this would affect the energy and carbon emission rating of the property.

You do not have to act on the recommendations contained in the report. Landlords need to provide an EPC to prospective tenants the first time the property is let or when re-let. The EPC is valid for 10 years.



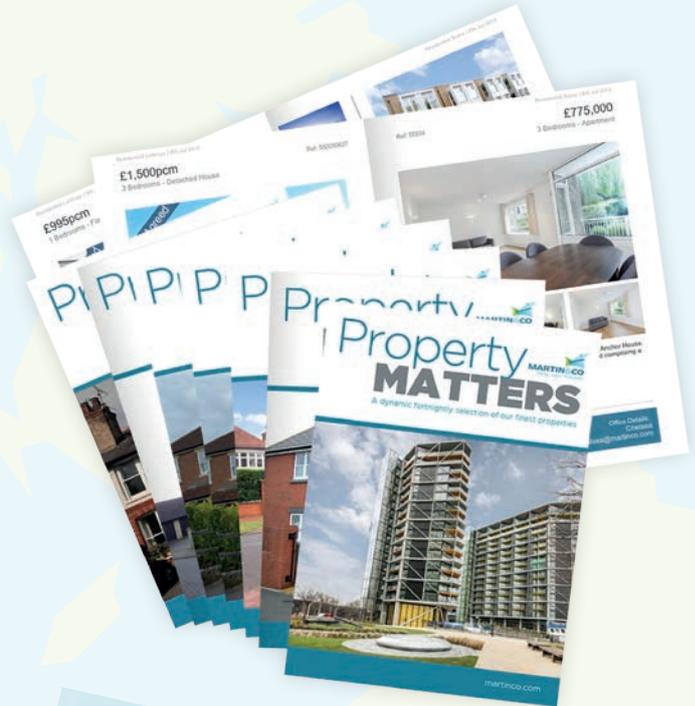
# We are property marketing experts

Martin & Co has national media exposure and we are proactive in conducting market research to understand and respond to the needs of tenants and landlords.

This is demonstrated by our market intelligence reports, which give investors an in-depth look at how regional UK property markets behave and perform.

Our commitment to creating new data that allows consumers to shape their business decisions has been repaid, and the market intelligence reports we commissioned are in high demand.

We produce and distribute fortnightly e-zines called Property Matters. Property Matters features properties from your region and these are sent to a database of 250,000 applicants – giving you the best chance of getting your property seen by an interested party.



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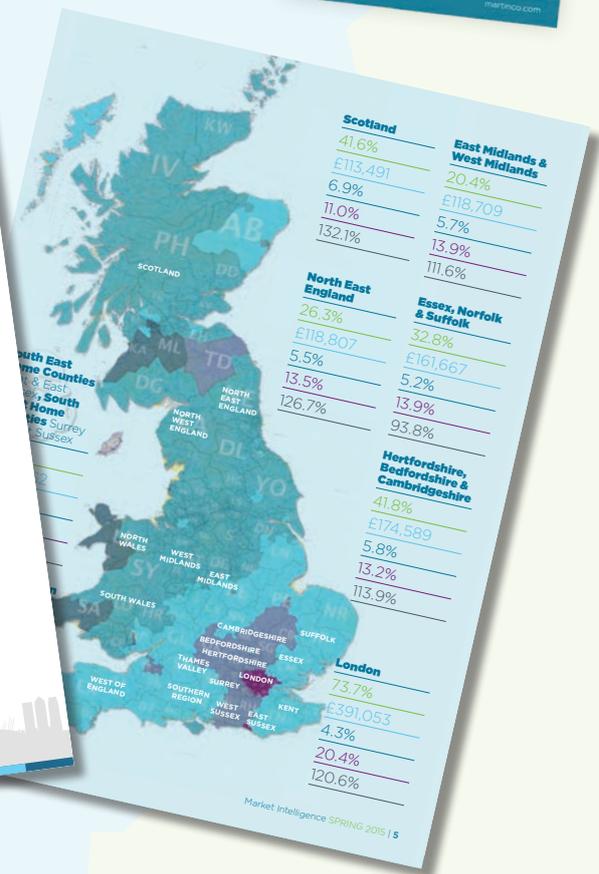
Market Intelligence

**13.2%**

**The net total return that can be earned from a buy-to-let investment in London.**

Welcome to the Spring 2015 report for our London region. In this edition we respond to the pension reforms by reviewing the latest trends in the private rental sector and highlight the returns that can be made by investing in property across the region.

LONDON  
\*This statistic is from the Martin & Co London region and Land Registry figures.



# We know about advertising and PR

**Martin & Co recognises the importance of advertising and PR. Our advertising schedule is extensive.**

Our national brand regularly features in national press, including The Sunday Times, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, The Evening Standard and Scottish press, to reach hundreds of thousands of home owners across the UK. Martin & Co's coverage is extended with targeted online advertising and social media activity, maximising our exposure within the property market.

## We also work in print

**Property Life is our glossy lifestyle magazine.**

Property Life has articles of interest including travel features and recipes, plus it gives you the chance to market your property across an entire region in the best possible light.



# We are online

We recognise that the internet is one of the most important tools for tenants and that is why we made a serious investment in online technology for promoting, letting and selling property.

Martin & Co's website uses cutting edge technology and is updated the instant a property's status changes. With links to Rightmove, one of the UK's largest property portals, it offers a sophisticated but simple-to-use method of accessing property details and ensuring these details are available to a broad audience of potential tenants.

Landlords and tenants are both served by our online systems. We will make sure your property is immediately visible, and with a single entry the details are instantly distributed throughout the network.

Our website achieves around 250,000 views per month, the majority of which come from new visitors – another great way of demonstrating how our brand power attracts new people to search out our rental properties every day.

We agree that websites are not enough. Martin & Co also communicates with tenant applicants across social media platforms, keeping investors immediately informed of new properties and local and national market updates. Martin & Co distributes information via Twitter and Facebook to ensure your property gets the maximum exposure.



# We set high standards

**Martin & Co has an established reputation to protect. We ensure our branches meet and exceed the highest professional standards.**

All Martin & Co branches are members of the Property Ombudsman and many branches have staff who are members of ARLA (Association of Residential Lettings Agents) or are in the process of becoming members. This means you can rest assured that you will receive professional, unbiased advice at all times.

Commitment to the highest standards is developed within our team through the Martin & Co training academy's unique mix of on-the-job training and external professional development courses.

## Next steps

**If you plan on letting your property in the near future, please organise a rental valuation. They are free of charge, no-obligation, and you will get an up-to-date appraisal of your property as part of it.**

Contact us now to get things moving.



# Providing answers

We recognise that landlords have questions. Here are the answers to some of the most common ones.

## **What should I do if my tenant doesn't pay the rent?**

If you have a rental protection product in place with us, it will be invoked as specified. Martin & Co will demand the rent from the tenant if a rent collection service is in place. There are set procedures for dealing with rent arrears and we can give guidance on the process for gaining possession of the property if needed.

## **Who will oversee any repairs?**

Depending on the service, our staff will determine who is liable and arrange for the work to be carried out by a qualified contractor, usually one who does regular work for Martin & Co.

## **What is management?**

Martin & Co provide a management service to protect and maintain a property to the standard it was at the beginning of the tenancy, excluding fair wear and tear. This includes arranging all maintenance and running repairs, except for items that are clearly the tenant's responsibility.

## **What is an inventory?**

A list detailing every item contained within a rental property, including its condition. An inventory will be signed by both parties before a tenant moves in, and will go a long way in resolving issues to do with property damage throughout the tenancy.

How should I arrange insurance when I let out a property?

It is a good idea for landlords to insure the property and its contents, including furniture and white goods. Tenants will insure their own possessions (but you can avoid complications by putting this in the tenancy agreement).

## **How will you find me a tenant?**

Once we have established your requirements, these will be carefully matched against our database of potential tenants. We will advertise properties via internet and newspaper advertising to attract new tenants. Once a suitable tenant has been found we carry out stringent checks to ensure nothing is left to chance.

## **How do I know I'm getting a good tenant?**

We conduct identity and residency checks on all applicants. Depending on your level of service we will provide regular tenant credit checks to ensure they will be able to meet their rent obligations during their tenancy.

## **Should I inform anyone that I intend to let my property?**

Yes. You must obtain permission from your mortgage lender and inform us of any special conditions that they impose. We recommend providing written evidence of this.

## **When and how will I receive my rent?**

With our Full Management and Rental Receipt Service, we will arrange for payments to be made directly into your account within approximately seven days of the rent clearing into our account. If you are on our Tenant Find Service you will receive rent from the tenant directly by standing order.

## **Who pays the bills?**

In addition to the rent, tenants are responsible for paying water charges, council tax, gas, electricity and telephone bills.

# MARTIN&CO

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Martin & Co is a franchise group and each office is independently owned and operated under licence from Martin & Co (UK) Ltd.

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