

News from Citizens Advice Swale May 2025

Are you thinking about renting somewhere for the first time? It can seem daunting so we've shared some tips below.

Most properties available for rent are listed online or with lettings agents.

If you have the chance, renting directly from a landlord might be a bit cheaper before you move in, as they may ask for fewer references and you might not need to do a credit check. You'll have to deal with them directly if any issues arise during the tenancy. Some landlords use a lettings agent to find their tenants and then manage the properties themselves. If an agent is managing the property then you'll deal with them rather than with the landlord directly, for instance, if you need to get any repairs done.

Never pay any money before you've seen the property as this is a common tactic used by rental fraudsters. If you can, take someone with you when viewing properties for a second opinion.

Ask the landlord or letting agent some key questions to make sure properties you're considering are safe, affordable and meet your needs.

- How much is the rent? Is it payable monthly or weekly?
- How long is the tenancy for?
- Are bills included in the rent?
- Are any appliances or furniture included?
- Is there a break clause allowing any fixed term to be ended early, if needed?
- Does the landlord need a guarantor?
- Is there a tenancy deposit, how much is it, and how will it be protected?

It's also good to ask whether the tenancy is for a self-contained property, or whether there are shared facilities, whether or not it's a joint tenancy with other people and, if relevant, if you can have pets. Make sure you're happy with the arrangements.

Check if you'll need to pay a holding deposit while the landlord carries out pre-tenancy checks. A deposit can't be more than a week's rent and should be returned to you at the start of the tenancy. You should also

ask your landlord or letting agent what documents you'll need to provide when you agree to rent the property including evidence of your Right to Rent.

Avoid 'subletting' which is when you rent directly from an existing tenant, as they might not have the landlord's permission to rent to you. If a tenant is showing you around the property on behalf of the landlord they should give you the landlord's contact details.

If a landlord refuses to rent to you because of who you are, this may be discrimination - for example because of your race, religion or sexual orientation. A 'no kids policy' or refusing to rent to you because you get benefits could also be discrimination. You only need to tell a landlord or letting agent you receive benefits if they ask.

If you need any other pointers or advice on renting, or you run into any problems, here's how to contact us for advice:

Drop-in sessions (no appointment necessary)

Monday, 10am-12pm, Swale House, Sittingbourne

Tuesday, 10am-12pm, Sheppey Gateway, Sheerness (except the second Tuesday of every month, which is held at Sheerness East Working Mens Club)

Tuesday, 11.30am-1.30pm, Murston Family Hub, Tonge Road

Wednesday & Friday, 10am-12pm, 43 Stone Street, Faversham

Telephone advice

Call Adviceline on freephone 0808 278 7979 (Monday-Friday 10am-3.30pm)

Email advice

Contact us online at www.citizensadviceswale.uk/email-general-advice (Monday-Wednesday)

Debt advice

Request a call back from our specialist money advice team at www.citizensadviceswale.uk/debt

To stay up to date with our opening times, please visit www.citizensadviceswale.uk or follow us on Facebook.