

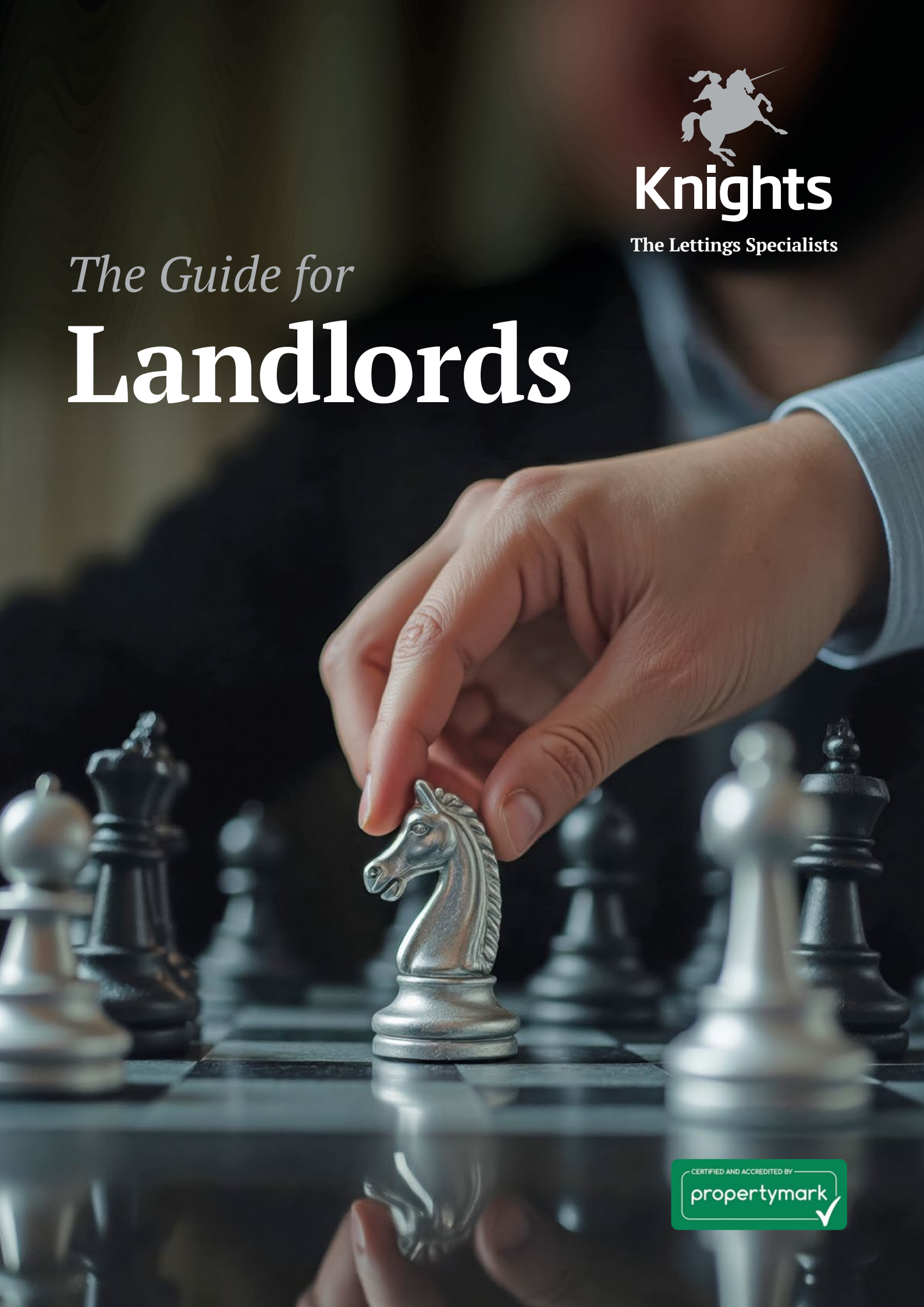


**Knights**

The Lettings Specialists

*The Guide for*

# Landlords



CERTIFIED AND ACCREDITED BY

propertymark



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# Working With Knights

This guide sets out how we approach residential lettings and why that approach matters. Letting property today involves ongoing legal, financial, and operational responsibility. Outcomes are shaped less by marketing activity and more by process, judgement, and consistency over time. The purpose of this guide is to explain the standards we work to and the thinking that underpins how we manage property.

Working with Knights means operating within a considered, structured framework. We focus on doing the right things in the right order, setting tenancies up properly from the outset, and managing them in a way that remains robust as circumstances and regulation evolve.

Throughout this guide, you will see the same themes repeated: clarity over urgency, accuracy over assumption, and long-term outcomes over short-term wins.

This approach is not for everyone. It does not prioritise speed, shortcuts, or optimistic assumptions. It requires realistic expectations, informed decision-making, and a willingness to accept advice that is measured rather than flattering.

For landlords who recognise that lettings is no longer informal or forgiving, and who value professional oversight, clear communication, and disciplined processes, this alignment matters. If the thinking in this guide reflects how you want your property managed, then working with Knights will make complete sense - and we hope it does.. If it doesn't, it's better to recognise that early.

We are moving into a new era of lettings, one where experience, legal understanding, and active day-to-day oversight matter more than ever.

The expectations placed on landlords continue to rise, and professionalism is no longer optional. Having the right agent in place can make all the difference to both your finances and your wellbeing.

We look forward to working with you.

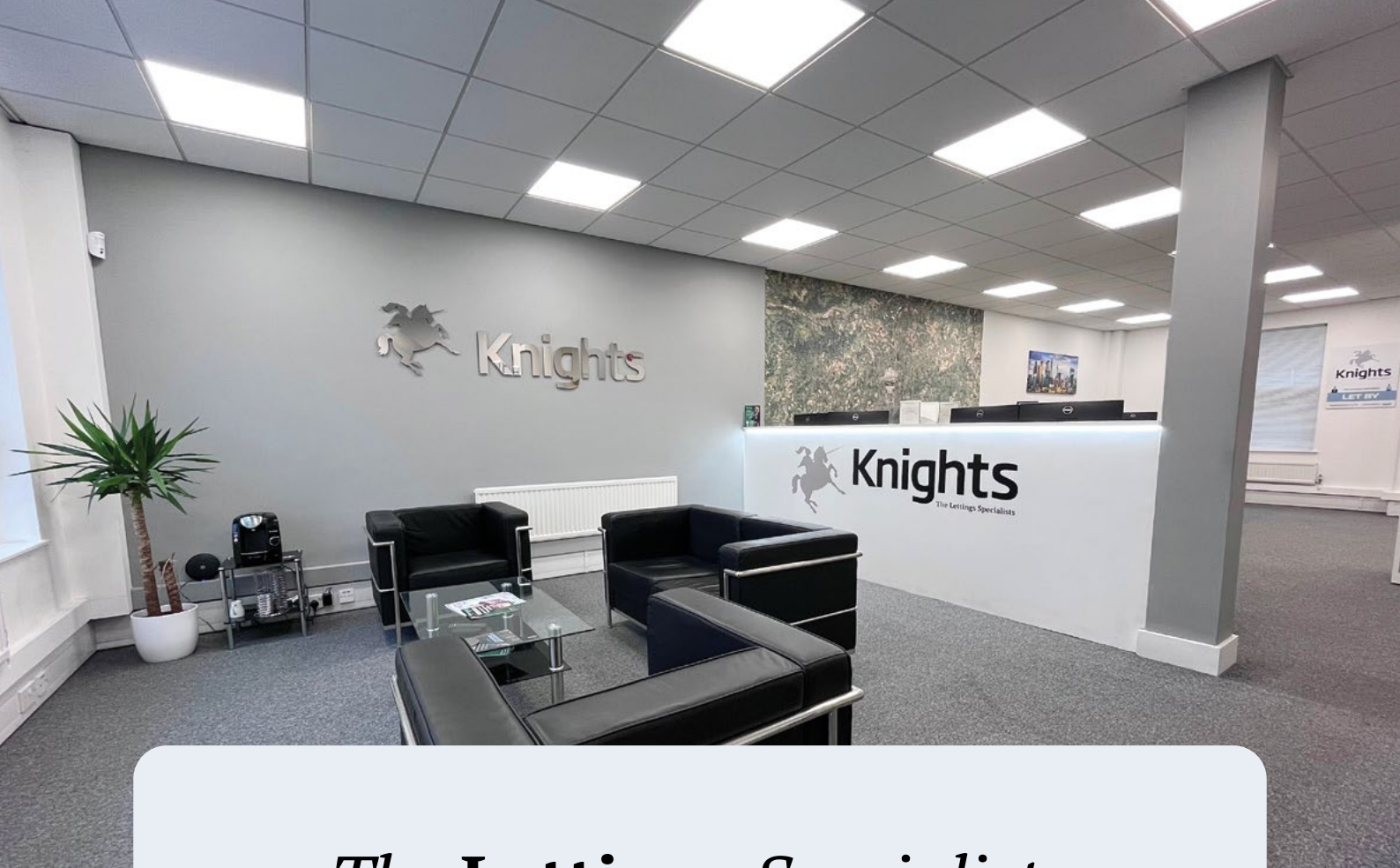
## **Mark & Ross.**



**Mark Halsey** MARLA  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



**Ross Gardner** FARLA  
DIRECTOR



## *The Lettings Specialists*

**Knights exists for one thing: Residential Lettings and Property Management done properly. We don't sell property, and that focus is deliberate. Lettings is not a transaction; it's an ongoing legal, financial, and operational responsibility. Outcomes depend on process, standards, and judgement, not promises.**

With over 60 years of combined experience, we run lettings the way a serious landlord should run an asset: with clear decision-making, controlled risk, and consistent execution. Our priority is simple: protect your income, protect your property, and build stable, long-lasting tenancies.

We are ARLA Propertymark certified and accredited, and one of our Directors, Ross, holds Fellowship status (FARLA) and has contributed directly to House of Lords discussions during the parliamentary stages of the Renters' Rights Act. That matters because the sector is moving fast and "good enough" compliance is where many landlords get caught out. We take legislation seriously because it has real-world consequences: for possession, rent recovery, safety and the long-term value of your investment.

Knights is the right fit for landlords who value integrity, clarity, and long-term outcomes, not shortcuts, grey areas, or short-term wins that create long-term problems.

Why we wrote this guide. The Knights Guide for Landlords was updated in early 2026 to give landlords a practical overview of letting a property, the standards we work to, and how we structure our services. If you want clarity on anything in this guide, please ask Mark or Ross.

- Knights:**
- ✓ Rent paid.
  - ✓ Property protected.
  - ✓ Compliance handled.

# Leadership & Accountability



**Mark Halsey** *MARLA*  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

With experience spanning four decades in residential lettings, Mark has witnessed extensive legislative change and brings a deep, practical understanding of how regulation impacts real-world tenancy management. His focus is on process control, consistency of standards, and long-term tenancy performance, with the clear view that successful lettings are measured over years, not weeks.

Mark works closely with landlords to structure tenancies correctly from the outset, ensuring they remain robust, compliant, and workable throughout their full lifecycle as regulation continues to evolve. As an experienced landlord himself, he also advises clients on maximising the performance and resilience of their assets, while personally overseeing day-to-day operational processes, including rent administration and client account management.



**Ross Gardner** *FARLA*  
DIRECTOR

Ross is jointly responsible for the day-to-day operation, legislative compliance, and strategic oversight of Knights alongside Mark.

A Fellow of ARLA Propertymark (FARLA), one of fewer than 500 nationally, Ross advises on best practice in an increasingly regulated sector and has contributed directly to House of Lords discussions during development of the Renters' Rights Act. That experience feeds directly into how Knights structure tenancies, manage risk, and protect landlords from legal exposure.

Ross brings a risk-aware, detail-driven approach to tenancy structure and compliance, ensuring that Knights' landlords are protected not just at move-in, but throughout the life of the tenancy.



**Phillipa Gill** *MARLA*  
LETTINGS AND  
PROPERTY MANAGER

Phillipa is responsible for the day-to-day management of tenancies, acting as the primary point of contact for landlords and tenants once a tenancy is live.

She oversees maintenance coordination, tenancy compliance, routine inspections, and communication, ensuring issues are handled promptly, professionally, and in line with statutory requirements. Her role is central to maintaining the high standards and long tenancy lengths Knights are known for.

Phillipa works closely with Mark and Ross to ensure that operational decisions align with Knights' broader compliance framework and long-term management philosophy.

# Choosing a Letting Agent Is a Risk Decision

It's easy to assume that choosing a letting agent is much the same as choosing a selling agent. Both involve marketing, viewings, and agreeing terms, but the similarity ends there.

When you sell a property, the relationship with the agent ends at completion. When you let a property, the relationship is only just beginning.

Letting creates ongoing legal, financial and operational exposure. The agent you appoint will influence not only how quickly a tenant is found, but how the tenancy performs over time, how it is structured, how problems are handled, and how well you are protected if things go wrong.

## **Lettings is not a transaction.**

Once a tenancy begins, decisions continue to matter. Tenant selection, referencing, documentation, compliance timing, rent collection, the quality of inspections, maintenance management and communication all shape the outcome. Poor decisions at the outset tend to compound over time, often surfacing months or years later when options are limited.

In a regulatory environment that continues to tighten, small mistakes can carry disproportionate consequences. Documentation errors missed deadlines or poorly structured tenancies can restrict possession options and expose landlords to enforcement action and fines. These risks rarely appear during the marketing stage, but they become very real once the tenancy is underway.

## **Why Many Landlords Eventually Change Agent**

Many landlords only recognise the importance of this after experiencing problems elsewhere. Accordingly, a significant proportion of our clients come to us after working with another agent first. The issues are rarely about marketing.

More often they relate to tenant selection, inconsistent compliance processes, weak communication or reactive management once the tenancy is in place.

Changing agent is rarely the result of a single incident. It usually reflects a gradual realisation that successful letting depends on disciplined processes, informed judgement and consistent oversight. Speed, headline rent and low fees are not measures of quality. A fast let is not always a good let, and the highest advertised rent is not always sustainable or likely to produce the best long-term outcome.

Effective letting is about judgement and control, not flashy sales gimmicks and urgency. Taking time to select the tenant, setting realistic expectations and structuring the tenancy properly from the outset leads to longer tenancies, fewer disputes and more predictable outcomes.

Our own portfolio data shows that tenants who remain beyond their initial 12-month term stay for an average of 51 months, reducing voids, minimising reletting costs and creating more stable income over time; our managed portfolio also recorded no outstanding rent arrears in 2025.

Choosing a letting agent is therefore not about who can "get it let". It is about who can manage risk properly and deliver stable outcomes over time.

*'51-month average tenancy beyond year one. Zero outstanding rent arrears across our managed portfolio in 2025.'*

# Sole vs Multi Agency

When letting a property, one of the earliest decisions a landlord makes is whether to instruct a single agent or multiple agents at the same time. While multi-agency can appear attractive on the surface, it rarely delivers the best outcome in practice.

Most prospective tenants now search for property through the same principal portals. Instructing multiple agents does not significantly widen exposure, it results in the same property being advertised multiple times to the same audience, often with inconsistent presentation, varying information, and/or differing terms.

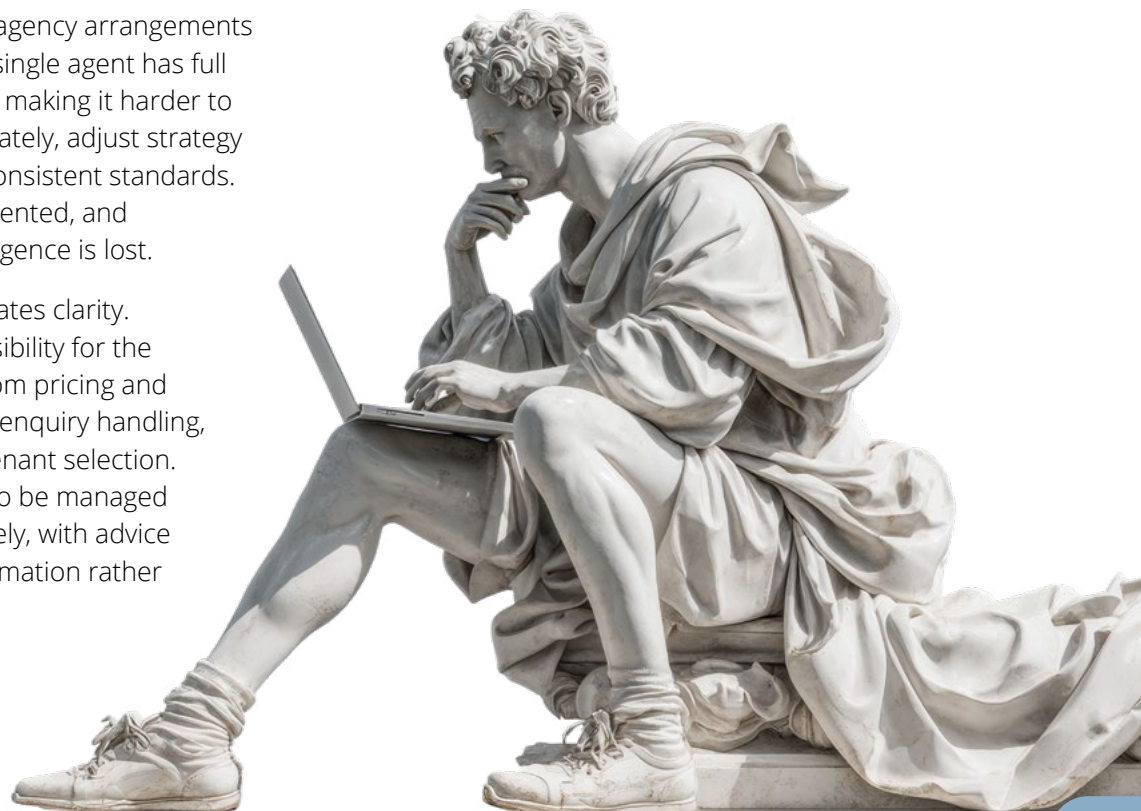
From a tenant's perspective, this lack of consistency can create uncertainty. It can also weaken the landlord's position, encouraging negotiation and delay as agents compete to be first, rather than focusing on securing the right outcome.

More importantly, multi-agency arrangements dilute responsibility. No single agent has full oversight of the process, making it harder to interpret feedback accurately, adjust strategy effectively, or maintain consistent standards. Decisions become fragmented, and meaningful market intelligence is lost.

Marketing exclusivity creates clarity. One agent takes responsibility for the entire letting process, from pricing and presentation through to enquiry handling, feedback analysis, and tenant selection. This allows the process to be managed cohesively and deliberately, with advice based on complete information rather than partial data.

Sole agency is not about restriction or lock-in. It is about accountability. If confidence is lost, the approach can be reviewed. But while it is in place, standards are clear, communication is focused, and decisions are made with the full picture in view.

For landlords who value consistency, control, and long-term outcomes, a sole agency approach remains the most effective way to let property properly.



# Experts in Property Marketing



Effective marketing in lettings is not about generating the most enquiries; it's about generating the right enquiries.

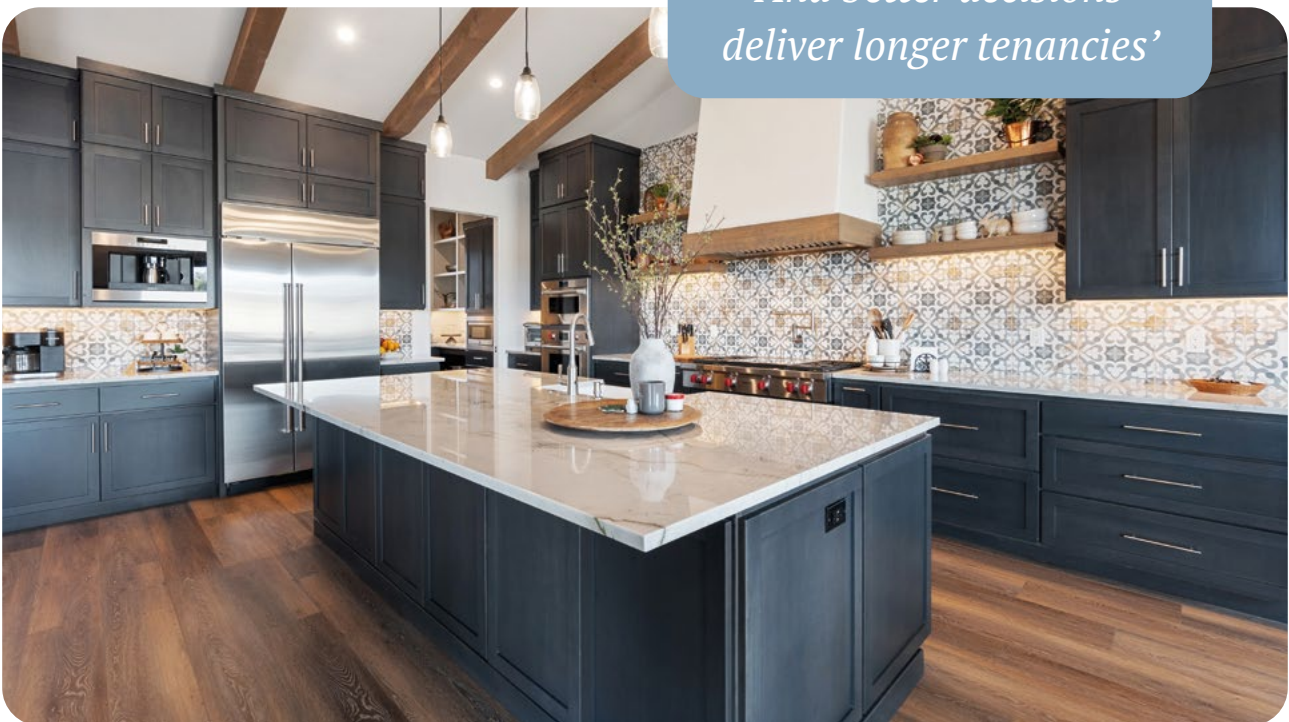
Every element of a property's presentation influences how it is understood, what expectations are set, and how smoothly the tenancy progresses. When marketing is clear, accurate, and well-considered, it helps ensure enquiries are appropriate to the property and the terms on offer, reducing friction later in the process and supporting more stable tenancies.

We believe in quality, not quantity. That principle shapes how we present properties, how we respond to enquiries, and how we control the letting process from the outset. We don't rush properties to market, and we don't push tenancies through for the sake of speed. Instead, we focus on clarity, accuracy, and consistency, because the decisions made at this stage echo throughout the life of the tenancy.

Good marketing creates better options. Better options lead to better decisions. And better decisions deliver longer tenancies, fewer disputes, and better outcomes for landlords and tenants.

That's why all our marketing is complete and consistent, combining clear imagery, accurate descriptions, measurements, floorplans, video tours, and the full set of required material information.

*'Good marketing creates better options. Better options lead to better decisions. And better decisions deliver longer tenancies'*



# Presentation *Sets Expectations*

Photography plays a practical role in lettings. It is not about styling or exaggeration, it's about clarity, accuracy, and consistency.



We have been photographing rental property for decades and we understand how homes should be presented so they are properly understood. Experience matters here. Choices around angles, lighting, sequencing, and what is shown, directly affect how a property is perceived and whether expectations are aligned from the outset.

Images are only part of that picture. Letting agents are required to include Material Information in property listings, details such as measurements, room layout, EPC ratings, connectivity, planning or use restrictions, and other information that can influence a tenant's decision.

We include this information as standard. It sets clear expectations, supports informed decisions, and reduces the scope for misunderstanding later. While this level of detail is now a regulatory requirement, it is not consistently applied across the sector. For us, it is simply part of doing the job properly.

Clear presentation and complete information are not marketing extras; they are professional standards and they form the foundation of a well-run tenancy.

# Video Tours



Video tours provide context that still images cannot. They help prospective tenants understand flow, proportion, and layout before viewing a property in person.

Used properly, video tours support better decision-making. They reduce unnecessary viewings, help manage expectations, and allow conversations to focus on suitability rather than basic clarification. This benefits tenants, landlords, and the wider management process.

We use video tours as a practical extension of clear, accurate marketing, not as a substitute for viewings, and not as a promotional tool. They sit alongside photography, floorplans, and material information to provide a fuller understanding of a property from the outset.

The result is a more efficient letting process, fewer misunderstandings, and a smoother transition once a tenancy is agreed.

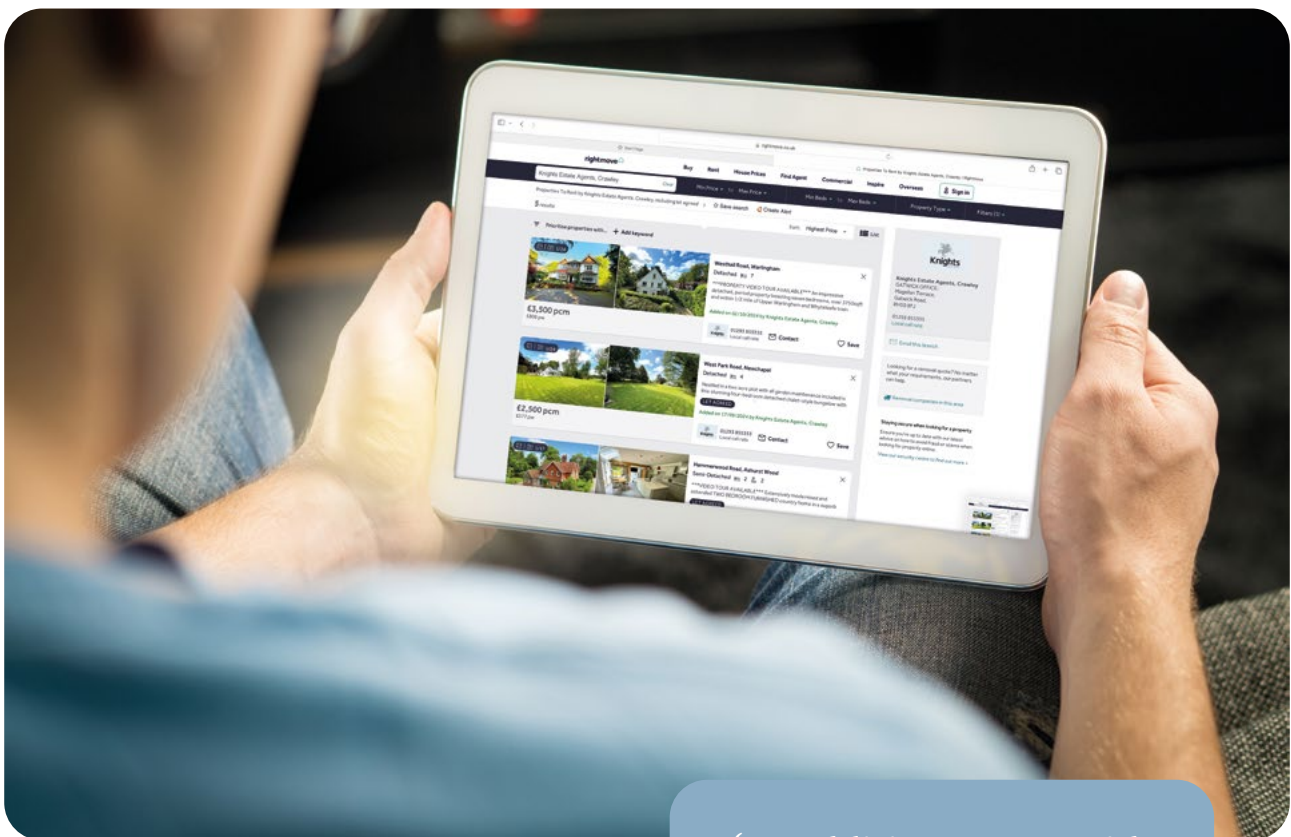
Video tours are shared selectively as part of a considered marketing process, rather than placed on public portals for unrestricted viewing.



# Exposure



To ensure properties are visible to the widest relevant audience, we advertise on both *Rightmove* and *Zoopla* and other portals from time to time.



Portal exposure is only one part of an effective letting strategy. Listings are structured, presented, and monitored carefully to ensure accuracy, consistency, and compliance with material information requirements. This allows enquiries to be managed properly and decisions to be made on the basis of clear, reliable information.

In addition, we provide further exposure through our established network of corporate clients and relocation agents, ensuring properties are presented to qualified, high-quality applicants beyond the main portals.

*‘In addition, we provide further exposure through our established network of corporate clients and relocation agents’*

Combined with professional presentation and controlled marketing, this approach ensures properties are visible, understood, and positioned correctly from the outset.

# Getting the Price Right



Pricing a rental property is not about optimism or negotiation; it is about positioning.



The asking rent you choose determines who enquires, how quickly momentum builds, and how the tenancy performs over time. Set correctly, pricing supports strong demand, informed decisions, and stable tenancies. Set poorly, it can introduce friction from the very start.

Our pricing guidance is based on current market evidence, enquiry behaviour, and experience, not headline comparisons or best-case assumptions. The aim is not to chase the highest theoretical rent, but to achieve the best overall outcome: a suitable tenant, a sustainable rent, and minimal disruption.

Overpricing often feels harmless at first, but it carries real consequences. Early momentum is lost, enquiries soften, and the marketing becomes stale. When adjustments are eventually made, they are often from a weaker position; resulting in longer voids or compromised terms.

*‘Pricing at the right level from the outset creates choice. It allows the letting process to remain controlled, measured, and selective, rather than reactive.’*

Pricing at the right level from the outset creates choice. It allows the letting process to remain controlled, measured, and selective, rather than reactive. In most cases, this leads to stronger quality and longer tenancies, a better outcome.

In a market where regulation, enforcement, and tenant expectations continue to evolve, disciplined pricing is not conservative; it is strategic.

# Using Viewing Feedback Effectively



Feedback is often misunderstood. Collecting comments after a viewing is easy; understanding what they mean is not.

Individual opinions, taken in isolation, are rarely useful. What matters is context, how feedback compares across multiple viewings, how it aligns with market activity, and whether it reflects a genuine obstacle or a simple preference.

We analyse viewing feedback alongside enquiry levels, time on market, and comparable availability. Patterns are identified and assessed before any recommendations are made. This avoids overreacting to isolated comments and helps ensure decisions are based on evidence rather than emotion.

We use real-time online performance data to give our clients clear, measurable feedback on marketing activity. By benchmarking each property

against our branch averages, we know exactly how they should be performing and can quickly adapt the pricing or marketing strategy to maximise response.

Used properly, feedback becomes a decision-making tool. It can confirm that pricing and presentation are working as intended or highlight when a measured adjustment may improve outcomes. Used poorly, it creates unnecessary doubt and reactive changes that weaken the letting process.

Our role is to interpret the information, provide perspective, and advise on the right course of action, whether that means holding steady or adjusting strategy.



# Why Professional Regulation Matters

At the time of writing this guide, Letting property in England remains unlicensed. In practical terms, this means anyone can operate as a letting agent, regardless of training, experience, or professional oversight.



*'Each member of the Knights team is individually qualified'*

That reality matters. Lettings is no longer a simple administrative function. It requires a working understanding of evolving legislation, case law, compliance requirements, and the practical consequences of getting decisions wrong. In this environment, knowledge is the primary safeguard.

Professional regulation exists to set standards around competence, training, and accountability, not just to provide badges or financial backstops.

As members of **Propertymark**, we operate within a framework that requires formal qualifications, ongoing professional development, and adherence to a strict code of conduct. Unlike many agencies where qualifications sit with one individual, or none, each member of Knights' team is individually qualified. This level of collective professional competence is very rare in the sector.

Director, Ross Gardner holds Fellowship status (FARLA), a designation held by fewer than 500 professionals nationwide, recognising an advanced level of experience, knowledge, and contribution to the industry. That expertise feeds directly into how we structure tenancies, interpret regulation, and guide landlords through an increasingly complex landscape.

Professional regulation does not replace judgement, it underpins it. It ensures that advice is informed, decisions are defensible, and processes stand up to scrutiny when challenged.

For us, regulation is not something to point at. It is how we work.

# *Letting Property in a* **Regulated Environment**

**Residential landlords operate within a highly regulated framework, and the direction of travel is clear: greater scrutiny, higher standards, and less tolerance for error.**

We are moving into a new era of lettings, one where experience, legal understanding, and active oversight matter more than ever. The expectations placed on landlords continue to rise, and professionalism is no longer optional. Having the right agent in place can make the difference between a tenancy that is well-managed and protected, and one that becomes exposed to avoidable risk, legal challenge, or enforcement action.

Legislation sets the framework, but outcomes are shaped by interpretation, timing, and judgement. Many issues do not arise at the start of a tenancy, but months or years later, when options are limited and mistakes are costly. This is why well-designed processes, consistent decision-making, and experienced day-to-day oversight matter so much in practice.

The pages that follow focus on the current legislative landscape, beginning with the Renters'

Rights Act and the changes it introduces, before looking more broadly at how law and case law operate in real situations. The intention is not to catalogue every regulation, but to explain what matters, why it matters, and how it affects the day-to-day management of a tenancy.

Information is widely available. Guidance, commentary, and opinion can be found online. But information alone does not equal understanding. You don't always know what is relevant, what has changed, how different requirements interact, or what you don't yet know until a problem arises.

This is why qualified, experienced professional guidance matters.

This section is about practical reality, not theory, and about why informed judgement is now as important as knowledge in protecting both property and income over the long term.



# The Renters' Rights Act

The Renters' Rights Act represents the most significant change to residential lettings in a generation. It reshapes how tenancies are structured, how rent is managed, and how possession is recovered, with a clear shift toward greater formality, oversight, and enforcement.

The Act is being implemented in defined phases, with the first changes taking effect on 1 May 2026. From this date, the new tenancy system will apply to all private tenancies. Existing tenancies will convert to the new system, and any new tenancies created on or after this date will also be caught by the legislation.

## Phase 1 from 1 May 2026

- ✓ The tenancy reform measures come into force, including:
- ✓ Periodic tenancies
- ✓ Abolition of Section 21
- ✓ Cap on rent in advance
- ✓ Anti-discrimination measures
- ✓ Ban on rental bidding
- ✓ Annual rent increases via Section 13 notices
- ✓ Tenant's right to request a pet
- ✓ Strengthened local authority powers and rent repayment orders

## Phase 2 from late 2026

Introduction of the Landlord Ombudsman requirements and the rollout of the new Private Rented Sector Database.

## Phase 3 timing to be confirmed

Implementation of the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law.

# Phase 1 - Tenancy Structure and Security

Phase 1 of the Renters' Rights Act replaces the current system with a single tenancy framework, removing the distinction between fixed-term and periodic arrangements.

All private tenancies will become assured periodic tenancies. Existing tenancies will convert automatically, and all new tenancies created from this date will follow the same structure. Tenancies will no longer have a fixed end date; instead, they will continue until either the tenant chooses to leave, or the landlord establishes a valid legal ground for possession.

## The End of Section 21

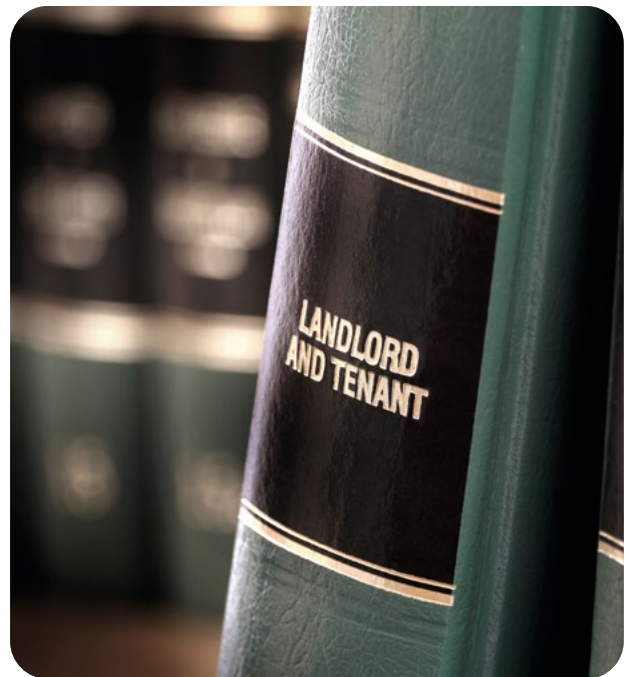
The abolition of Section 21 removes the ability for landlords to regain possession without providing a reason. Going forward, possession will rely on Section 8 grounds and will be linked to a specific event, like rent arrears, or the landlord needing the property for themselves, their family or to sell.

This does not remove a landlord's right to recover possession, but it does place greater emphasis on having the correct tenancy documentation in place, managing issues early and consistently, and maintaining clear, accurate records throughout the life of the tenancy. Preparation, process, and evidence now matter far more than timing.

## Notice Periods and Tenant Security

Under the new framework, tenants will have the right to end a tenancy with two months' notice, providing greater flexibility. Landlord notice periods will vary depending on the ground relied upon and the circumstances of the tenancy.

The practical effect is a shift towards longer-term occupation by default, with possession becoming a managed legal process rather than a discretionary one.



## What This Means in Practice

Phase 1 places greater weight on how a tenancy is set up and managed day-to-day. Decisions taken at the start of a tenancy will have a direct impact on the options available later.

For landlords, this reinforces the importance of structured tenancy setup, consistent management, and informed professional oversight throughout the tenancy lifecycle.

The following pages look at how Phase 1 also affects rent, pricing, and fairness, and why disciplined processes are now essential.

# Phase 1 - Rent, Pricing and Fairness

Phase 1 of the Renters' Rights Act introduces tighter controls around how rent is set, increased, accepted and advertised. The intention is to create greater consistency and transparency, while reducing practices that distort the market or place undue pressure on tenants.

## Rent Increases

Under the new framework, rent increases will be limited to once per year and must be implemented using a Section 13 notice. This reinforces the importance of setting rent at a sustainable level from the outset.

The tenant can challenge the increase and take the matter to the First Tier Tribunal. Pricing decisions must therefore be realistic, evidence-based, and defensible.



## Rental Bidding and Rent in Advance

Phase 1 introduces a ban on rental bidding, preventing landlords or agents from inviting and accepting offers above the advertised rent. In addition, there will be a cap on rent in advance, limiting the amount that can be requested at the start of a tenancy to one month maximum.

## Fairness, Advertising and Pets

Phase 1 strengthens rules around fairness and non-discrimination, affecting how properties are advertised, how enquiries are handled, and how decisions are made. It will be illegal for landlords and agents to have a blanket ban on letting to tenants with children or who are in receipt of benefit payments.

Tenants will also gain a statutory right to request a pet. While landlords are not required to accept every request, refusals must be reasonable and justifiable. This places greater emphasis on clear policies, documented decision-making, and consistent communication.

## Accountability and Enforcement

Phase 1 is accompanied by stronger local authority powers and expanded rent repayment orders. Compliance failures are more likely to be identified and enforced, increasing the consequences of poor process or informal practices. Fines range from £7,000 to £40,000.

In this environment, disciplined pricing, accurate marketing, and well-documented decisions are not simply good practice, they are a key part of risk management.

# Law, Case Law and Practical Reality



Letting property is governed not only by legislation, but by how that legislation is interpreted and applied in practice. Statute sets the framework, but case law determines how obligations are understood, enforced, and judged when disputes arise. Two pieces of legislation underpin much of modern residential letting:

**The Landlord and Tenant Act** establishes core responsibilities for repair and maintenance. It requires landlords to keep a property in repair, but it does not impose an obligation to effect improvements. Understanding where responsibility begins and ends is essential, particularly when expectations differ between landlord and tenant.

**The Housing Act** governs the structure of most residential tenancies and defines the statutory rights and responsibilities of both parties. While a tenancy agreement sets out the contractual terms, it must always operate within the boundaries of this overriding legislation. Agreements that fail to reflect statutory requirements can be rendered ineffective.

Alongside legislation, case law plays a critical role. Decisions made by higher courts clarify how laws are interpreted and applied. These decisions create precedents that shape everyday letting practice, often in ways that are not immediately obvious from the wording of the statute itself.

A commonly cited example is *Warren v Keen*, which established the principle of “tenant-like manner”. This case clarified that tenants are expected to carry out minor, everyday tasks associated with reasonable occupation, while landlords remain responsible for structural integrity and essential services. That distinction continues to influence how responsibilities are allocated today.

The practical reality is that law is rarely black and white. Outcomes depend on facts, evidence, timing, and interpretation. This is why day-to-day oversight matters. At Knights, experienced, professionally qualified senior management remain closely involved in the operation of the business, ensuring that decisions are informed, consistent, and defensible throughout the life of a tenancy.

*‘Understanding where responsibility begins and ends is essential’*



# Housing Health *and* Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The Framework Behind Local Authority Enforcement

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is the risk-assessment framework used by local authorities to assess housing conditions and determine whether enforcement action is required.

*The current system covers 29 categories of hazard, ranging from damp and mould, excess cold, fire and electrical safety, through to falls, sanitation, water supply and structural safety.*



Rather than prescribing minimum standards, HHSRS focuses on risk. Inspectors assess the likelihood and severity of harm arising from deficiencies in a property, particularly to those considered most vulnerable, regardless of who currently occupies the home.

The current system covers 29 categories of hazard, ranging from damp and mould, excess cold, fire and electrical safety, through to falls, sanitation, water supply and structural safety. Hazards are scored and banded, with the most serious (Category 1) placing a statutory duty on the local authority to act.

## Why HHSRS Matters More Now

With the expansion of local authority powers under the Renters' Rights Act, HHSRS will play an increasingly central role in enforcement activity.

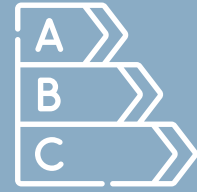
Councils are being encouraged to intervene earlier, take a more proactive stance, and pursue formal remedies where risks are identified.

Crucially, HHSRS assessments look at how a property is managed over time, not just its condition on a single day. Poor maintenance, inconsistent oversight, delayed repairs or weak record-keeping can all contribute to enforcement risk.

This is where experience and judgement matter. Understanding how hazards are identified, how risks compound, and how inspectors think allows issues to be addressed before they escalate into formal action.

The pages that follow look more closely at some specific areas of health and safety that commonly feature in HHSRS inspections, and why disciplined, professional oversight is now essential for landlords operating in today's regulatory environment.

# Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)



An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) provides an assessment of a property's energy efficiency, rating it from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). An EPC must be commissioned before a property is marketed and made available to prospective tenants.

## Minimum Energy Standards

Under current regulations, privately rented property in England must meet a minimum EPC rating of E, unless a valid exemption applies.

EPCs are valid for 10 years, but the rating reflects the condition and features of the property at the time of assessment. Improvements or deterioration over time may not be captured unless a new EPC is obtained.

## Forthcoming Changes and Direction of Travel

The Government has confirmed that energy efficiency requirements for rented property are changing. While some detail is still being finalised, the overall direction is clear.

The minimum EPC standard for privately rented homes in England is set to rise to a grade C from 1st October 2030, replacing the current minimum standard of E. Alongside this, the Government has confirmed a £10,000 cost cap per property, after which landlords may apply for an exemption if the required standard cannot reasonably be met.

What is less widely understood is that the EPC system itself is also expected to change. A new assessment methodology is anticipated to come into force from October 2029, which may alter how properties are scored and rated.

This timing matters. Under current proposals, any EPC achieving a grade C before October 2029 will remain valid for its normal 10-year lifespan and will continue to be treated as compliant with the minimum standard until it expires.

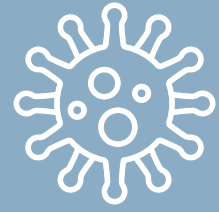
## EPCs as a Planning Consideration

For some landlords, the proposed changes create a clear planning opportunity. By understanding current EPC ratings, considering what improvements can reasonably and proportionately be made, and scheduling works sensibly, it may be possible to commission a new EPC in summer 2029 under the current methodology. If that EPC achieves a C rating, it could provide up to 10 years of compliance from that point. This approach will not suit every property, but it is a strategic option worth understanding early rather than discovering too late.

Energy efficiency is becoming a long-term investment consideration. Awareness, forward planning, and measured timing of expenditure will be key to controlling costs, avoiding rushed decisions, and protecting a property's long-term 'Lettability' and value.



# Legionella



Landlords have a legal duty to assess and manage the risk of Legionella bacteria within their properties. In most domestic settings the risk is low, but it must still be considered and reviewed. Legionella bacteria multiply most readily in water temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. Reasonable control measures therefore include:

- ✔ Ensuring hot water is stored at an appropriate temperature (typically 60°C)
- ✔ Avoiding prolonged water stagnation and flushing the system out
- ✔ Ensuring outlets are used or flushed regularly.

Where properties are left unoccupied, or where taps or showers are unused for extended periods, flushing outlets through helps reduce risk. Redundant pipework or “dead legs”, where water can stagnate, should be removed or capped where identified.

A formal Legionella certificate is not always required. What is required is a risk assessment, sensible control measures, and periodic review, particularly when occupancy changes or water systems are altered.

# Blind Cord Safety



Landlords have a duty of care to ensure their properties are safe and free from health hazards. This includes ensuring that any window blinds fitted with cords or chains do not present a strangulation risk.

All blinds installed within a rental property must be made safe, typically through the fitting of compliant safety devices that keep cords out of reach. Where blinds cannot be made safe, they should be replaced or removed. This requirement applies regardless of the age or circumstances of the occupants, including where no children are present.

Blinds installed by tenants should also be checked as part of routine inspections to ensure they meet safety standards.

Responsibility ultimately rests with the landlord to ensure that hazards are identified and addressed.

These requirements are about reasonable foresight and ongoing awareness, not excessive intervention. Identifying risk, taking proportionate action, and reviewing conditions periodically is the smart thing to do.

Managed properly, both Legionella and blind cord safety are straightforward to control and form part of a wider, well-run safety and compliance framework.

# Gas Safety



Gas safety is governed primarily by the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, with additional requirements clarified through subsequent amendments and case law.

Landlords must ensure that all gas appliances, flues, and pipework provided at a property are maintained in a safe condition and checked at least once every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

A current valid Gas Safety Certificate must be in place, and a copy must be provided to tenants in accordance with statutory requirements. Failures in certification, timing, or service of documentation can restrict possession options and expose landlords to enforcement action or prosecution.

## Safety Checks and Servicing

A gas safety check and a service are not the same thing, and they serve different purposes.

The annual safety check confirms that appliances are safe to use at the time of inspection. A service, by contrast, focuses on the condition and performance of the appliance. Regular servicing helps identify wear, maintain efficiency, and reduce the likelihood of breakdown during a tenancy.

While servicing is not always a strict legal requirement, annual servicing is strongly recommended. It helps prolong the life of appliances, supports reliable heating and hot water, and reduces disruption for tenants and landlords alike.

Gas-related hazards are treated as high risk under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) due to the potential severity of harm. Issues are rarely viewed in isolation; delayed action or incomplete records can significantly increase enforcement risk.

Gas safety should be planned rather than reactive. Safety certificates should be renewed in good time, servicing scheduled sensibly, and records retained accurately.

Consistent oversight, proactive management, and clear documentation are essential in a regulated environment.



# Electrical Safety



Electrical safety in rented property is governed by a combination of long-standing legislation, including the Plugs and Sockets (Safety) Regulations 1994, the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994, together with more recent requirements introduced under the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

Landlords must ensure that electrical installations are safe for continued use throughout the tenancy. This includes fixed wiring, consumer units, sockets, switches, and any electrical fittings provided as part of the property.

A formal Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) must be obtained at least every five years, or sooner if recommended. Any remedial works identified as urgent must be completed and evidenced appropriately.

Outdated installations, overloaded circuits, damaged sockets, or poorly maintained appliances can all increase enforcement risk. As with gas safety, documentation, scheduling, planning and follow-up are important.

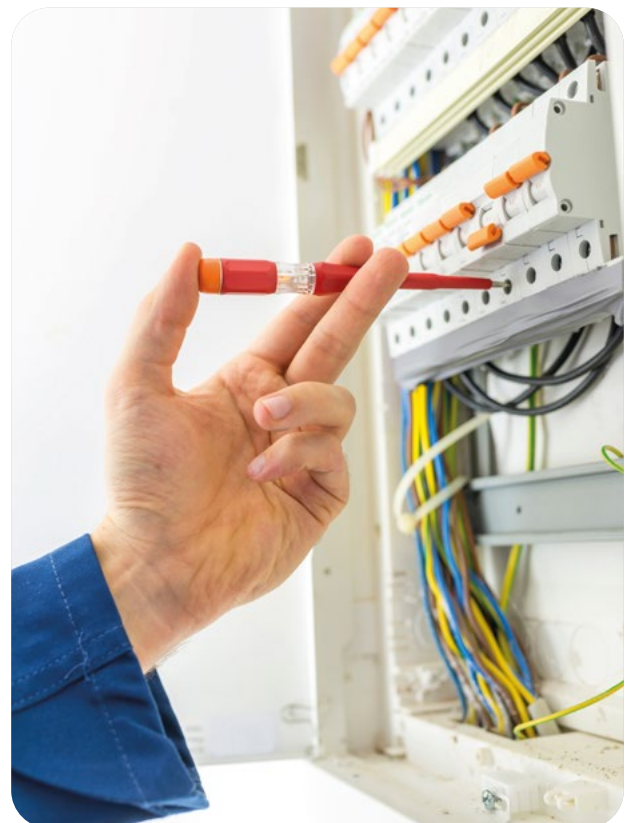
Understanding what is legally required, acting promptly on identified risks, and keeping clear, accurate records are central to managing electrical safety properly in a regulated environment.

## Plugs, Sockets and Electrical Equipment

Where landlords supply electrical appliances or equipment, the Plugs and Sockets (Safety) Regulations 1994 require that plugs, sockets, and associated wiring are safe and correctly configured.

There is no blanket legal requirement for routine PAT testing (Portable Appliance Testing) in single-let residential property. However, supplied equipment must be safe at the start of the tenancy and maintained in a safe condition throughout. Periodic testing is therefore strongly recommended as a practical way of evidencing compliance.

Electrical hazards are a common trigger for local authority intervention under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), particularly where defects are allowed to persist or inspection recommendations are ignored.



# Furniture, Furnishings and HMOs



## Furniture and Furnishings Safety

Where a property is let with furniture or furnishings, landlords must ensure that items comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, amended 1993. These regulations are designed to reduce fire risk and apply to upholstered items such as sofas, armchairs, mattresses, headboards, and cushions supplied as part of the tenancy.

Furniture must meet prescribed fire-resistance standards and be in safe condition. Non-compliant items must not be supplied. While these requirements have been in place for many years, enforcement remains active, particularly where fire risk is identified.



## Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is generally defined as a property occupied by three or more people from two or more households, sharing facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom.

Landlords should be particularly careful in this area, as a property can become an HMO unintentionally. Changes in occupancy, relationship breakdowns, or additional occupants moving in can alter the legal status of a property during a tenancy.

Once a property meets the definition of an HMO, the management and compliance obligations change significantly. These can include:

- ✔ Licensing requirements,
- ✔ Enhanced fire and safety standards,
- ✔ Minimum room size rules,
- ✔ Additional management duties.

Operating an unlicensed HMO where a licence is required is a serious offence and can result in enforcement action, financial penalties, rent repayment orders, and restrictions on possession.

Understanding who occupies a property is as important as how it is marketed or managed. Occupancy should be monitored carefully, and any changes assessed promptly to ensure compliance is maintained.

Furniture safety and HMO status are areas where assumptions create risk. Clear oversight, regular review, and informed advice are essential to avoid inadvertent breaches.

# Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarms



Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are a legal safety requirement for all private rented properties in England. The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which came into force on 1 October 2022, updated the 2015 regime and expanded landlords' responsibilities.

Landlords must ensure that at least one smoke alarm is installed on every storey of a property that contains rooms used as living accommodation and they must ensure the alarms are in proper working order on the first day of a tenancy.

A carbon monoxide alarm must be installed in any room used as living accommodation that contains a fixed combustion appliance, such as a boiler, gas fire, wood burner, or similar unit. All alarms must be installed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and best practice.

## Alarm Condition and Maintenance

Alarms must be in proper working order on the day a tenancy begins. If a landlord is informed during a tenancy that an alarm is faulty, it must be repaired or replaced as soon as reasonably practicable. Alarm compliance is enforced by local housing authorities, who may issue remedial notices and impose financial penalties where obligations are not met.

These requirements reflect a broader shift towards assessing safety as part of overall risk, rather than isolated certification. As with other safety obligations, poor maintenance, ignored faults, or weak documentation increase enforcement risk under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Alarms are not simply regulatory boxes to tick; they are critical life-safety devices. Landlords should ensure alarms are tested at the start of every tenancy, with checks recorded alongside replacement or expiry dates.

Where tenants report faults, action should be prompt and documented. Periodic checks during routine inspections help reinforce compliance and reduce the risk of failure being overlooked.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms sit alongside gas safety, electrical safety, and EPC compliance as part of a proactive risk-management framework. Keeping them up to date protects tenants and supports stable, complaint-ready tenancies.

At Knights, where required, we install 10-year sealed-battery alarms.



# Tax, Mortgage & Residency

## Making Tax Digital (MTD)

Making Tax Digital is a Government initiative that changes how many landlords report rental income to HM Revenue & Customs.

From April 2026, landlords with gross annual property income of £50,000 or more will be required to keep digital records and submit quarterly updates to HMRC using approved software. This threshold is due to reduce in subsequent years, bringing more landlords into scope over time.

MTD does not change how much tax is paid, but it does change how and when information is reported. Landlords who may be affected should consider their record-keeping arrangements early and take professional tax advice where appropriate.

Further guidance is available on the Government website at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

## Overseas Landlords

Landlords who are resident outside the UK for tax purposes may fall within the Non-Resident Landlord (NRL) Scheme. Under this scheme, tax may need to be deducted from rental income at source unless approval is obtained from HMRC to receive rent gross. The rules apply regardless of whether a property is fully managed by an agent.

Overseas landlords should ensure their tax position is correctly registered and kept up to date. Detailed guidance is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). For reference Knights' registered identification number is: NA49902, If you are entering online you may need to enter: NA049902.



## Consents to Let

If a property is subject to a mortgage or lease, landlords must ensure that letting the property is permitted. Mortgage lenders may require consent to let or a specific buy-to-let product. Leasehold properties may also include restrictions on sub-letting or require formal consent from a freeholder.

Letting without the appropriate consent can place a landlord in breach of their mortgage or lease terms, with potentially serious consequences. This should always be checked before a property is marketed.

These matters sit alongside, rather than within, the day-to-day management of a tenancy. They are areas where assumptions create risk, and where early clarification is far easier than late correction.

Landlords should ensure they understand their own position and seek specialist advice where needed. Up-to-date official guidance is available via [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), which remains the primary reference point for all three areas.

# Right to Rent *and* Security Deposits

Some of the most serious compliance risks in residential lettings arise at the start of a tenancy. Right to Rent checks and deposit handling are both tightly regulated and closely scrutinised, particularly where possession or enforcement action is later required.



## Right to Rent

Under Right to Rent legislation, landlords must verify that all adult occupiers have the legal right to rent property in England. Checks must be carried out before the tenancy begins and must follow the prescribed process. Where occupiers have time-limited rights, follow-up checks may also be required. Failure to carry out checks correctly, or to keep adequate records, can result in civil penalties, criminal liability in serious cases and complications when seeking possession.

Right to Rent is a procedural requirement. Accuracy, timing, and documentation matter more than speed.

## Security Deposits

Security deposits are governed by strict rules around amount, protection, and prescribed information.

Deposits are capped at set limits depending on the annual rental income and must be protected within an approved tenancy deposit scheme within the statutory timeframe. Prescribed information must also be served correctly and on time.

Non-compliance can result in:

- ✘ Restricting the ability to serve valid possession notices.
- ✘ Financial Penalties.
- ✘ Exposing landlords to claims by tenants.

These obligations are not complex, but they are unforgiving. Small errors at the outset of a tenancy can have disproportionate consequences later.

This reinforces the importance of clear processes, accurate documentation and informed oversight from the very start of the tenancy lifecycle.

# How Our Services Are Structured

Letting property involves different levels of responsibility and ongoing involvement. Our services are structured to reflect this, allowing landlords to choose the level of support and oversight that best aligns with their experience, capacity, and risk appetite.

## Letting and Rent Collection

This service covers the core stages of the letting process, including marketing, tenant selection, tenancy setup, and rent collection. Once the tenancy is live, responsibility for ongoing compliance, maintenance decisions, safety certifications and day-to-day management remains with the landlord.

This option is best suited to seasoned and experienced landlords with a working knowledge of current legislation, relevant case law, and the practical realities of managing compliance over time.

The regulatory environment has changed significantly. Under the Renters' Rights Act, enforcement powers have widened and the scope for financial penalties has increased. Even experienced landlords can be caught out by documentation errors, missed deadlines, knowledge gaps or evolving requirements. For this reason, we advise clients to consider Full Management, where compliance oversight and day-to-day coordination sit within a structured, professionally managed framework overseen by appropriately qualified experts.

## Full Management

Full Management provides continuous oversight throughout the life of the tenancy. In addition to the initial letting process, this service includes day-to-day tenant liaison, coordination of repairs and maintenance, routine inspections, compliance tracking and reminders, and informed guidance as legislation and circumstances evolve.

This option is designed for landlords who want their property actively managed within a disciplined compliance and risk framework, rather than handled reactively. It reduces exposure, improves consistency, and supports long-term tenancy performance in an increasingly regulated environment.



# What Our Landlords Say



We believe the best measure of a letting agent is not what they promise, but how they perform over time. The following comments are excerpts from independently published landlord reviews on Google, Trustpilot and AllAgents.

“ We have been with Knights for nearly 9 years, I have found Ross, Mark and the rest of the team, always offer a professional service based on sound advice and expertise. Over this period we have had 3 tenants averaging 3 years per tenant all vetted and checked by Knights. ”

“ Have just started dealing with Knights and the difference between them and my former managing agents is immeasurable. They respond to calls and emails quickly, listen to concerns, offer guidance and generally just put things right! ”

“ As a landlord I was looking for someone who knew and understood what I wanted; I didn't want to rip off tenants but equally expected to have responsible individuals. Ross is dedicated to his business and the service he provides is excellent, as is that of Mark, his business partner. ”

“ I have worked with the team at Knights for many years and simply put, they would be my first and only port of call for lettings as a landlord. Responsive, quick turnarounds, good processes, agile network of trades for property issues and happy to work with both parties to handle any conflicts. ”

“ I started using Knights letting agents six years ago to let one property after a bad experience with another agent, I was so pleased with their performance they now let all my properties. ”

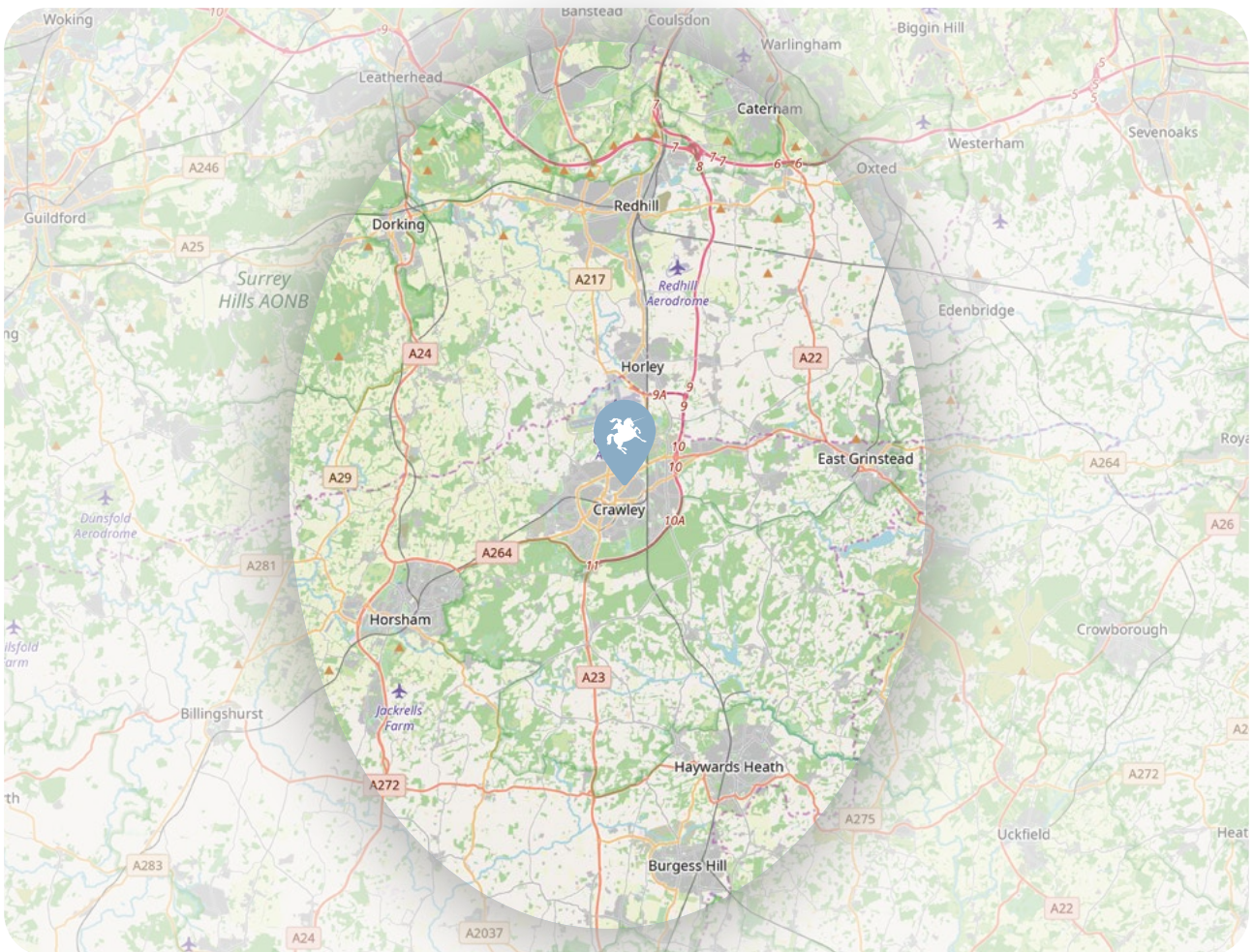
“ Knights manage my properties and they are professional, helpful and extremely knowledgeable. I am very glad to have found them and would highly recommend them. I have been using them for 4 years and it has been a stress-free experience. ”

“ The best decision I've made. Honestly, I'm still surprised at how seamless the whole process was. Since handing the keys over to Ross, I've just sat back and received the (positive) updates. He took care of the security certificates, pricing, and ultimately - finding the perfect tenant. ”

# Our Area of Operation

Our office is based in Manor Royal Business District, close to Gatwick Airport, but our work is not confined to a single town or postcode. We operate across a regional area. Our primary catchment area covers East Surrey and much of West Sussex. This core area is defined by the boundary shown below; however, we are able to operate further afield.

This broader coverage is deliberate. We work with a selected group of landlords throughout this area whose values, expectations, and approach to residential lettings align with ours.



Thank you for reading our guide.

We look forward to working with you

# Specialist Residential Lettings & Property Management

Sussex & Surrey



## Knights

The Lettings Specialists

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