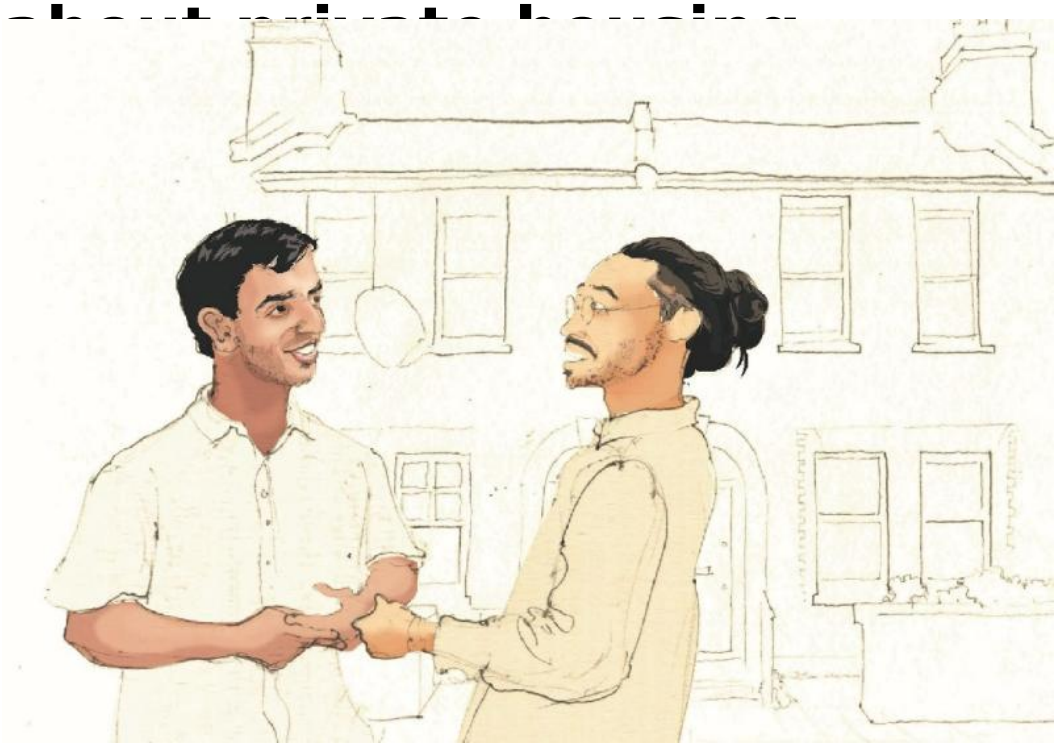
Frequently asked questions about private housing



Are there any official government websites to check the credibility of the estate agents?

There's no government register of estate agents, but one of the ways to check their credibility is to verify whether they are members of one of the approved redress schemes. Some approved redress schemes are:

- Propertymark
- Property Ombudsman Limited
- Property Redress Scheme

If there are any disputes there are processes members of the schemes have to follow.

Would a reference from an employer from Hong Kong be helpful, particularly for my first rent application?

Yes, absolutely, but the references need to be in English. Other helpful ways to improve your chances of renting are to build your credit score rating and register to vote.

Would the overall costs of rent be lower for rent-only tenancies, compared to when the utilities are

included in the rent payment?

This depends, but in the same area, rent-only tenancies are usually cheaper than tenancies where utilities are included in the rent.

Which party pays the council tax when renting a property?

Usually, council tax is payable by the tenant. Only if the accommodation is shared and the tenancy is for a room only, the overall council tax bill is payable by the landlord. Here you can find how to pay council tax bill, and to which council.

Do children under 18 have to provide proof of their BNO visa if they are part of the household for verifying 'right to rent' purposes?

No, only adults are subject to ‘right to rent’ checks. Our FAQ for employers and landlords provides information on how landlords can verify the right to rent for BNO visa holders.

Is the holding deposit refundable if we don't sign the agreement?

No, the holding deposit is only refundable if the tenancy agreement is signed.

Is paying rent 6-12 months upfront legal? It seems quite common without a reference.

Yes, there is no legal limit on upfront payment of rent landlords can request.

If an appliance is damaged, how much would the owner charge?

The owner can only charge a "reasonable amount" so you can ask to see the bill for a new appliance / repair.

How do you define 'damage to property'?

It is damage that is not a normal ‘wear and tear’. It is recommended to take a video recording or a photo of the house before renting, so the condition of the house at the start of the tenancy is agreed between you and the landlord.

If I do not sign a cleaning agreement when I leave, can I clean the property myself?

Yes, property can be cleaned by the tenant. It is recommended that photos are taken after cleaning before the property is vacated to keep as evidence that the property was left clean.

Is it a common practice for the landlord to raise the monthly rent, eg by 5% after a fixed term?

It is not necessarily a common practice, but the landlord could do it.

In case there is any argument of deposit return, are there any government departments that can

help?

The deposits have to be protected in one of three approved schemes:

- Deposit Protection Service
- MyDeposits
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme

Each scheme offers a free dispute resolution service if you disagree with your landlord about how much deposit should be returned.

If all bills are included, how can we get proof of paid council bill from the council?

If a council tax bill is not on your name and all bills are included in the rent, it is responsibility of the landlord to pay it. Only if the bill is on your name, you can request a copy of the bill from your local authority. You can find how to contact your local council here.

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