



This document can be made available on request, in other languages and formats (large print, Braille or on audio tape) by contacting:

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Council Offices  
Desford Road  
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LE19 2EP  
Tel: 0116 272 7770  
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## How to find a Home



## HOW TO FIND A HOME

When you are looking for a home to rent, you should spend a day or two in the areas of choice, visiting local letting agents, registering on the mailing lists, getting property details from letting boards and looking at property websites.

- If you do not have a computer then you could visit a local library for free or internet café.
- Newspapers are useful starting point to finding home and local landlords with one or two homes will normally advertise their homes in the classified sections.
- Post offices, news agents and other local shops are also useful places to look for homes which may be advertised in the window.
- Neighbours, friends & family are also a useful way of finding a property as they may have come across a landlord or they may know an owner of a empty property which may not have sold.

## WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND A HOME

You should arrange to view the home as it gives you the chance to see if it is suitable and it gives the landlord a chance to meet you. It is important to bear in mind that landlords will be looking to see if you are or can be a suitable tenant.

A private landlord will not normally ask for fees and will usually be flexible on the rents being asked, however you should **always** try and negotiate the rents wherever possible.

A letting agent may ask for fees and you should ask in advance of viewing a home what the fees will be for and if it will include anything. **Never be pressured** into making **any payments** if you are unsure on the home, agents or landlord.

Some useful websites :

- [www.FindaProperty.com/leicestershire](http://www.FindaProperty.com/leicestershire)
- [rightmove.co.uk](http://rightmove.co.uk)
- [yourmove.co.uk](http://yourmove.co.uk)

### Blaby District Council - Housing Options Team

Housing Nominations, Homelessness, Private Rented Advice, Tenancy Issues, Mortgage Rescue Schemes.

Tel: 0116 2727770

Fax: (0116) 2727601

Email: [housing.options@blaby.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@blaby.gov.uk)

### Blaby District Council - Housing Benefit Team

Financial assistance with rent for tenants of private landlords, Housing Associations and people with low incomes, unemployment, sickness, disability and pensioners.

Tel: 0116 2727510

Fax: 0116 2727591

Email: [benefits@blaby.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@blaby.gov.uk)

### Blaby District Council - Domestic Violence Coordinator

Contact us for a copy of the Blaby's Domestic Violence directory which lists all the organisations who will be able to help.

Tel: 0116 272 7637

Fax: 0116 272 7600

Email: [community.safety@blaby.gov.uk](mailto:community.safety@blaby.gov.uk)

### Blaby District Council - Anti Social Behaviour Team

Contact us If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour in your current accommodation

Tel: 0116 272 7734

Fax: 0116 272 7600

Email: [community.safety@blaby.gov.uk](mailto:community.safety@blaby.gov.uk)

### Blaby Citizen Advice Bureau

(Offers independent and impartial advice on a range of issues)

Blaby Service Shop, 10 Forge Corner, Blaby, Leicester, LE8 4FZ

Drop-in Session: Tues 10am – 2.00pm Appointment only: Thurs 5pm – 7pm

Make an appointment by either visiting in person or phone 0116 2727793, or 0844 848 9009 and leave a message.

### Shelter line: 0808 800 4444

They can offer advice and assistance on all aspects of housing.

### Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project “SHARP”

(Housing and Homeless Advice)

13 Welford Road, Leicester, LE2 7AD

Tel: 0116 2546064

## Renovation Loans

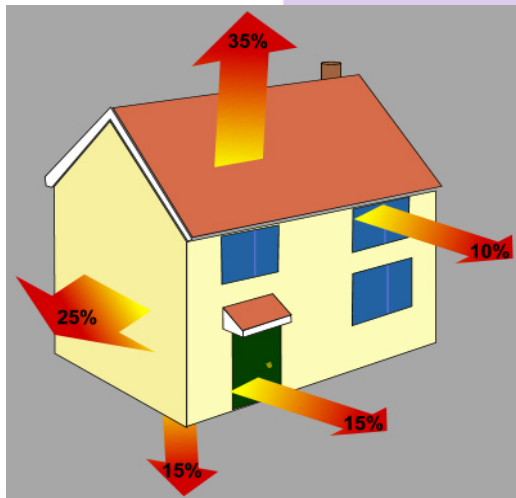
The council will only consider owners of a property, this could be a landlord of a privately rented accommodation. It does not apply to Authorities, Corporations, Boards, Bodies, Trusts or their tenants.

### Who is eligible ?

You may be eligible for a nil interest Renovation loan if you own and occupy the property and are 18 or over. The loan is means tested. The loan is registered at the Land Registry and goes onto your property as a legal charge, it is repayable at anytime but will be recovered when you sell the property.

### What is the criteria ?

The loan can only be offered where works are confirmed necessary by the council's representative to remedy unfit, category 1 hazards, non-decent accommodation and / or poor energy efficiency. Loans cannot be provided for conversion of properties to dwellings or extensions and is not available for houseboats or park homes. You can check if you are entitled to apply for a Renovation Loan by contacting : Private Sector team - Tel: 0116 2727536



## THE VIEWING OF THE HOME

When you are viewing a home there are so many things to think about, such as the area, closeness to shops, schools and travelling distance from work and family. You will have a lot of information to take-in within a short space of time, write down questions you would like to ask the landlord or agent at the property, take a pen, paper and a copy of the agents home details (if available) with you to the viewing. It may also be useful to take a tape measure with you so you can measure any narrow walkways to see whether or not your furniture will fit into the rooms or through doorways.

When viewing the home it is essential to make sure you take enough time to check both the outside and inside of a home as closely as you possibly can. You do not have to be a qualified surveyor to identify some potential problems and hazards, by following the simple check list on the next page you will stand a far better chance of identifying problems before you commit to renting the property.

The key is **not to allow your self to be rushed**, either by those viewing with you or the landlord or agent that is showing you around. The home could be your next home and a few extra minutes of checks are certainly worthwhile. Where possible and if it is safe to access, you should look at the loft space to ensure no furniture is stored or left behind by past tenants.

If you will be claiming the Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) then you should also contact the Housing Benefit Team to find out how much Local Housing Allowance you will get towards the rent. You can find this out by visiting the valuation website: [www.lha-direct.voa.gov.uk](http://www.lha-direct.voa.gov.uk). some useful Housing Benefit Team numbers:

- Blaby District Council - Tel: 0116 2727510
- Oadby & Wigston Borough Council - Tel: 0116 2572703
- Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council - Tel: 01455 238141
- Harborough Borough Council - Tel: 01858 828282
- Melton borough Council - Tel: 01664 502502
- Leicester City Council - Tel: 0116 252 7006

## What to look for inside a property

**Safety Certificates** – it is the landlord legal obligation to ensure that all gas appliances are checked annually and a safety certificate is provided at the beginning of the tenancy. The landlord should also be able to provide an electrical inspection report (**NICEIC or ECA**) see website [www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetycouncil.org.uk).

**The size of the property** – consider whether or not the property will be big enough for your needs. If you have furniture check that the furniture will fit into the hallway and / or up the stairs.

**What is included** – if the property is furnished check what furniture will remain in the property when you move in i.e fridge, cooker, microwave If they are not needed will the landlord be able to remove them.

**Decoration** - check for marks behind furniture, holes in walls heavy staining to painted surfaces particularly in kitchens or bathrooms. Is or will the property be redecorated prior to occupation, will the landlord let you decorate the property to your taste (always obtaining the landlords written permission in writing before commencing any decorative work). All soft furnishings within the property should have the British Standard Institution Kite mark on a label to prove the furniture is fire resistant. See website [www.dti.gov.uk](http://www.dti.gov.uk)

**Evidence of dampness** - check all walls for staining, mould growth, peeling wallpaper and so on. If furniture is placed against a wall, do not be afraid to move it as it may be used to disguise property defects.

**Flooring and carpets** – check for tears, stains, burn marks or any other damage to floors, also check under rugs to make sure they have not been placed to mask defects. Walk over as much of the floor as possible, note any sunken floorboards or excessive flexing. Problems with floorboards are easily covered by carpet.

**Electrical sockets** – check each and every electrical socket. If they are chipped or cracked or show sign of excessive heat they will need to be replaced as they may constitute a danger of electric shock. Check that the all light fittings are complete and working, with no visible cable core.

**Central heating** – ask to see the service records for the boiler as every boiler should be serviced annually. Ensure the heating and hot water are switched on. Check all rooms have radiators, kitchens and bathrooms are the most likely rooms to be lacking a radiator.

**Windows** – if the windows are double glazed, check for condensation between the glazed panels. If there is condensation present, the seal has been compromised. Check all rooms have adequate ventilation, be it through opening windows or mechanical devices such as extractor fans. Check that all windows open and that all extractor fans work and are clean.

## What help is available if I want to improve the property ?

### Warm Front

Warm Front is the Governments main heating scheme and is open to most households in England who are claiming certain benefits. The grant provides energy-efficiency advice and a package of insulation and heating improvements tailored to each property up to the value of £3,500. Some properties that need oil central heating may receive a grant up to £6,000.

Warm Front are for people on certain benefits and who own their own home or rent it from a private landlord. You can check if you are entitled to a Warm Front Grant by calling :

- Benefit Entitlement Check Team  
Tel: 0800 072 9006 (8pm to 6pm)

### Minor Works Grant

The Council can offer Minor works grants up to a maximum of £2,500 in any 4 year period, if you meet certain criteria. You can apply for a minor works grant if you are an owner or a tenant with a repairing obligation. If you 60 or over or disabled (or both) if you are not on a mean tested benefit you must meet our 'low income' figures for weekly income and total capital. Means tested benefits are :

- Income Support
- Income-based Employment & Support Allowance
- Income-based Job seeker's Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Guaranteed Pension Credit (not Savings Pension Credit)
- Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit - with an annual income for the purposes of assessing entitlement to the tax credit less than £15,050

The grant is for items of disrepair and can be used for works such as Re-Wiring, Roof Repairs, Window replacements, Central Heating. It can also cover Warm Front client contributions. You can check if you are entitled to a Minor works Grant by contacting :  
Private Sector team - Tel: 0116 2727536

## Energy Performance Certificates

### What is an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)?

An EPC is similar to the energy performance certificates provided with domestic appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, etc. It provides a rating from the energy performance of a home from A to G, where A is very efficient and G is very inefficient. The EPC will show you two things about the home you will be renting:

- The energy efficiency rating of the house (how much it would cost you to run)
- The environmental impact rating (how much carbon dioxide is released into the environment)

### Why do I need an EPC ?

The certificate will show you with information about how much it is likely to cost to run the home you are interested in renting. You should bear in mind that the estimated costs are based :

- Standard assumptions about the property including, how many people will live there and how long it will be heated each day
- Average fuel prices when the EPC was produced

The report will recommend cost effective measures that you and the landlord can make to improve the energy efficiency of your home, for example :

- Using low-energy light bulbs
- Adding loft insulation
- Installing double glazing
- Installing a condensing boiler

### How can I check my EPC is genuine ?

Every EPC has a reference number on the top right –hand side of the certificate. To check it is genuine, go to [www.epcregister.com](http://www.epcregister.com) and enter the reference number into the register. You should see a copy of your EPC.

### What if the Landlord won't provide me with an EPC ?

If you have viewed a property or are moving into a rented home and the landlord or their agent hasn't given you an EPC, contact

Trading Standards Office

Tel : 0116 305 8000

Consumer Direct

Tel : 08454 04 0506

## What to look for outside a property

**Neighbouring Properties** – are they kept in good repair? Is there any evidence of vandalism?

**Roof** – any missing tiles? Does there appear to be a substantial sag in the roof? Can you see any raised or missing lead flashing around the chimney?

**Chimney** – does it lean to one side? Are there any cracks in the brickwork?

**Brickwork** – does it appear to need re-pointing? Are there any stepped cracks in the brickwork (this may indicate structural movement).

**Render** – if the property is rendered is there any bulging or fallen render.

**Guttering/ down pipes** – are they damaged, leaking or filled with vegetation?

**Essential Services** – where are the gas and electric meters? Are they card meters or quarterly meters? Is there a water meter? Where is the stop tap? Does it work? Is there a fuse box or RCD detectors?

**Windows** – are they in good condition? If you are viewing a property with wooden window frames press your finger firmly into the corner of the window frame below the glazing to check for rot or evidence of filler in the frames. With UPVC frames it is always worth running your finger under the edge of the window sill adjacent to the brickwork to check the sealant has been applied where the window and brickwork meet.

**Boundary Walls and Fences** – are they stable, is there any loose brickwork? In particular, check for loose coping stones on top boundary walls.

**Front and Rear External Doors and Frames** – are they in good repair and do they open and close smoothly? Are they secure? Check fittings like letter box and check locks (5 lever mortice locks are more secure), check for rot to the frames and doors, particularly at ground level.

**Exterior Security Precautions** – such as security lights, if they are present, check they are working

**Lighting** – check to see whether the front of the property will be well lit at night. If not check there is a light source that will light the entrance to the property for safety and security purposes.

**Dustbins** – check to see whether dustbins are provided in the area ensure there is a dustbin for your property.

**Waste Pipes, Gullies & Soil Vent Pipes** – waste pipes should be secured to the property with brackets and flow directly into the drain. Gullies should be clear of debris and vegetation, Soil Vent Pipes should have a cage or cap at the top of the pipe, check for cracks or splits in the pipe.

## DEPOSITS

A landlord / agent may ask for a deposit / bond for any damage that may occur in the property. The deposit / bond amount is normally equivalent to 1 months rent, but it can vary from landlord to landlord, if you are unsure you should discuss this with the landlord / agent before exchanging any money for referencing or credit checks are carried out.

**Always get a receipt** for any money paid to a landlord / agent clearly stating what the payment is for, this will help to resolve any misunderstanding and disputes that may arise at the end of the tenancy.

In April 2007 new reforms came into force that safeguards tenant's deposits / bonds paid. Landlords will have a **legal obligation** to pay a deposit / bonds taken into either an insurance based scheme or custodial scheme. The landlord is also legally obliged **to inform you** in writing **within 14 days** of which scheme the money is being held in, you should also confirm this with the scheme provider.

If the landlord / agent does not provide you with details of which scheme the money is being held or the provider is unable to confirm that the money has been paid into the scheme, you can seek compensation through the small claims court, the amount that the landlord or agent would have to **pay you** would be equivalent to **3 months rent**, the judge would also order the landlord to pay the deposit / bond into a approved scheme or return it to the tenant, if any section 21 notices have been served then they will become invalid. For further information visit: <http://www.direct.gov.uk>

If you are having difficulties in raising a deposit the council may be able to assist you with 0% loan for the deposit which can be repaid on a weekly or monthly basis. you may also be able to get financial help from :

Job Centre  
Provide Community Care Grants , Budgeting & Crisis loans

Clockwise— 0116 247 1740  
Provide loans at an interest rate of 2%

## Moving in Inventory (List of Items)

An inventory is a record of the condition of the home and the items included in the tenancy agreement. When the tenant moves out of the property, the landlord can use the inventory to justify keeping some or all of the deposit that has been paid. The tenant can also use the inventory to their advantage if the landlord attempts to charge them for damage that was already present when the tenant moved in.

### What should be included on the inventory ?

Whether a property is furnished or unfurnished an inventory should be completed. Even if there is no furniture in the property, the condition of the property as well as any built in fixtures and fittings should be recorded. It should be used to record the condition of doors, walls, windows, floors, carpets, stairs, etc, as well as any issues concerning the property such as:

- Poor décor
- Beds
- Furniture
- Kitchen units
- Fridge
- Microwave
- Missing roof tiles
- Damaged guttering
- Damaged drains
- Rotten windows
- Gardening equipment
- Keys to property

### Why will I need an Inventory?

From 6<sup>th</sup> April 2007, Tenancy Deposit Protection will apply to all Assured Short hold Tenancies in England and Wales where a deposit is taken, an inventory is a good way of resolving disputes at the end of the tenancy and will be required by the Alternative Resolution Service (ADR). To avoid any confusion, the document should be clear and preferably printed. Either the landlord or letting agent and tenant (s) should sign the inventory and both parties should have identical copies.

You can download a Inventory from:

- [www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk](http://www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk)  
Tel: 01332 715 780

### Before signing a tenancy

It is advisable for tenants to spend time in the home at the start of the tenancy, identifying and recording existing defects so that they are not charged for them at the end of the tenancy.

### At the end of the tenancy

The property should be checked out with the landlord or agent to avoid and resolve any disputes.