

# FOCUS PROPERTIES

YOUR HOME...OUR PASSION

This handbook has been designed to offer practical advice. If you need any clarification of the information in this guide, please do not hesitate to contact our branch, where our trained staff will be pleased to help with any of your questions.

## INTRODUCTION

### Focus Properties for your personal bespoke service.

- Property Management
- Lettings
- Sales in London
- International Sales

Individually tailored to **YOUR** property.

The key benefits that all our clients enjoy are **Staging, Positioning and Pricing**.

We consistently exceed landlord's expectations for each client's needs.

**YOU get:**

- Professional
- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Speedy service
- Highest Quality

**Your Home** is Our Passion. **YOU** get a personal level of service unavailable elsewhere. If you are

- Buying
- Selling
- Renting

Our handbook is a useful guide to our services. It is designed to give a thorough understanding of the initial lettings process.

For further information, please contact Focus Properties. *(Put a click CTA on here Musa.)*

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## WHY FOCUS PROPERTIES?

**We are the friendliest around. The most honest and efficient. Quite simply we are your best choice.**

If you're a first-time investment owner, a corporate landlord or just want to let your own home, our team will assist with your every need.

Online services are provided for clients searching to purchase or rent properties moving nationwide.

Services such as:

- Architects
- Professional photographers
- Study of property listings
- Interview of prospective clients
- Accompany clients to property viewings
- Conditions of sales or rentals
- Agency agreements.

### **Pricing Strategy**

**WE FOCUS ON YOU:** Your property's value, the position in the local market, and its price.

OUR goal is to understand YOUR expectation. WE meet that in the most effective way possible.

Correct pricing from the start achieves the best result. We present a thorough market analysis. That will give an optimal and agreeable solution and will achieve the highest price for your property.

### **The Network**

Your property will be promoted national and locally.

### **Extent of Services**

We take care of every aspect of your property; contract renewals, tax advice & valuations.

### **Our Online Offering**

Over 90% of property searches start online, and as such, all our properties are marketed on all three of the major property portals: Zoopla, Prime Location, and On the Market as well as our website and shop front.

## HOW SHOULD I PRESENT MY PROPERTY?

If it's your own home or a rental investment, it's important to think about the kind of tenant you are trying to attract and present your property accordingly. We are happy to advise you on the expectations of your market. However, as a general guide, when refurbishing an investment property, you should consider the following:

### Wall Colors and Finishes

- Use neutral tones, allowing the property to appeal to more tenants.

### Flooring

- Wooden floors are very desirable and easy to maintain.

### Other Features

- Choose well-designed, good quality fixtures and fittings that will not date.
- Kitchens should be equipped with a large fridge/freezer and washing machine.
- Dishwasher & tumble dryer appeal to more tenants.
- Invest in good quality appliances with long guarantees.
- Bathrooms should have high quality fittings and be well lit with good storage.
- Power showers and fully tiled floors and walls are preferred. Good ventilation is also a must.
- There should be ample wardrobe space in the bedrooms.
- Window dressings are essential, whether the property is furnished or unfurnished and should be of a good quality in neutral tones.

### Technology

- Many tenants want properties that can support the latest technologies, so it's important to ensure that any required cabling is added during a refurbishment.

### Communal Areas and Facilities

- Communal areas and/ or entrance hallways should ensure a good first impression.

### Furnishings

By taking a flexible view on this question, you will reach a far wider range of potential tenants. Simply furnishing a property won't necessarily affect the rental price, but the quality of the furnishings certainly will.

With a short-let property, the tenant must be able to live comfortably having just arrived with a suitcase.

Focus can help maximise your property's appeal and ultimately the rental return. From complete internal and external refurbishments to furniture packs. Focus can even provide furnishings to temporarily dress properties, while they're on the market.

## Well-presented properties let quicker and achieve higher rents

### HOW WILL FOCUS MANAGE MY PROPERTY?

Even with experience, managing a property can be a full-time job. One you could probably do without, particularly if you already have a full-time job, family or live overseas.

#### A Comprehensive Management Service

Our property management team take care of every aspect of letting your property. We ensure that your property and tenants are looked after in a prompt cost-efficient and professional manner. Annual safety inspections are completed. Apart from the convenience and peace of mind that our property management team provide it is worth remembering that many companies will only rent a property for their employees if it is professionally managed to ensure that any problems will be promptly dealt with. Company lets represent a significant share of the market.

Our complete service includes:

- No tenant contact required
- Excellent property manager
- Repairs carried out by vetted tradesmen at competitive rates
- Annual safety tests arranged
- Deposit claims negotiated
- Annual inspections
- Up to date market values provided at time of renewals

#### Regulation

As government bodies and industry regulators tighten the reins on safety requirements. Rest assured that our team is on hand to advise on current safety regulations.

### Letting Yield Returns

Before you let, you must have a realistic, achievable rental income figure. From this, you need to deduct the costs associated with letting, these include costs to make the property attractive to the rental market, secure a tenant, manage the letting, re-letting and on-going maintenance costs.

### Marketing and Presentation

Promoting your property isn't just about descriptive text, photos and floor plans, you also must fulfil legal requirements, for example, attaching the energy performance certificate (EPC) to any property and including that rating in any marketing material. If you don't produce property details, you still need to make the full EPC available during viewings. Health and Safety requirements and general compliance with current legislation needs to be addressed and our teams can discuss what is required with you whilst also advising on any other pre tenancy works that may be required. It is now a legal requirement that all tenants receive a copy of the "How to rent guide".

### Viewings and Tenants

We have found that the most successful method of finding a tenant is for one of our experts to show prospective tenants your property at pre-arranged times – we vet any potential tenants prior to showing them around your property. We ensure that they are a good match. We will ensure that any tenants are legally entitled to rent your home. For your peace of mind, once a deal has been struck we take up references on the tenants via an independent specialist referencing company.

### Deposit Deduction Negotiations

As your managing agent, we put a useful distance between you and your tenant whilst negotiations are carried out by us on your behalf. Our goal is to manage this process in the most effective and efficient way providing you with a smooth & amicable synergy throughout those tenancy negotiations.

### Maintenance Issues

This can be an alarming thought for any landlord. As your managing agent Focus Properties will field calls from tenants regarding maintenance issues. For example, if a tenant calls because a light bulb has blown, we can be the point of contact to advise them that this is not the landlord's responsibility. On the other hand, if the tenant calls to report a faulty boiler our property management team can arrange for the relevant tradesmen to attend the property and resolve the issue quickly and efficiently, even outside of normal working hours. Unless instructed to the contrary we will not instruct work without your permission.

### Annual Inspection Visits

As your eyes and ears during the tenancy, we undertake an annual inspection visit each year.

\*Please note that the commission fee for our Standard Lettings Service is payable not only for the initial period of the tenancy, but for the whole length of time that the tenant introduced by us, or the occupant, remains in the property. The charging of a commission fee which covers both the initial period of the tenancy and any subsequent renewals incentivizes Focus to find good quality, long-term tenants for our clients. It is to your advantage that we find a tenant who will honor their obligations and will want to remain in the property for longer than the initial tenancy period. Hence the commission covers both the initial period of the Tenancy and any subsequent renewals.

### Comprehensive Management Service

### Standard Letting Service

### Rent Collection Service

Comprehensive Marketing

Introducing a Tenant (s)

Negotiate terms for an initial Tenancy

Obtaining tenant references & identity verification

Prepare Tenancy Agreement

Collecting the rent and issuing payment to Landlord (s)

Register Deposit (as required)

Provide tenant with method of rental payment

Undertake inspections on a six-monthly basis and report to Landlord (s)

Arrange maintenance and repairs and arrange payment of invoices (subject to charges as informed)

Pre-tenancy safety checks

Hold keys throughout Tenancy

Advise all relevant utility providers of changes

Dedicated Property Manager

Review the rent and negotiate any subsequent renewal of the Tenancy

Chasing non-payment of rent or any possible shortfalls

Managing the check-out process

Deposit claim negotiation, compilation & submission

Serve appropriate notices

Rent Guarantee with legal backup (if required)

Submitting a rent claim to the insurance company under the rent guarantee (if required)

Advice on legal compliance

Attend Court for possession hearings (if required)

Make any HMRC deduction as required (if relevant)

### **Renewal Stage**

Contact all Parties to Assess Plans

Handling all Negotiations

Drawing up Renewal Agreements and

Accompanying Documents

### **End of Tenancy**

Key Holding

Arranging the Check-Out

Deposit Negotiations

## WHAT ARRANGEMENTS DO YOU NEED TO MAKE?

To let any property there are arrangements that you will need to have in place. Below is a check list of these items.

### **Consents to Let**

If your property is subject to a mortgage, your mortgage provider must consent to the rental. For a corporate tenant, this will need to be in writing.

If your property is leasehold, you will need permission from the freeholder. This can usually be obtained from the managing agent of the building. An increasing number of local authorities require landlords to hold a license in order that they can let their property. Details of any requirements relating to your property will be available on the local authority website.

### **Insurance**

It is vital that you protect yourself, your property and your contents with the right insurance products. We can provide information on insurance policies.

### **Keys**

You will need to provide the tenants with the equivalent of one set of keys for every bedroom in the property, plus a spare set for the tenants. If the property is to be managed by Focus Properties, a further set of keys will need to be held in our branch.

### **Manuals**

Make a copy of any manuals or guides for your property and leave a copy for the tenants. It is advisable to leave a local area guide for your tenants.

### **Professional Cleaning**

Prior to occupation, all properties should be professionally cleaned. When the property is returned, the tenant is expected to do the same. Any outside space should also be left in seasonal good order.

### **Sundry Maintenance**

Please also ensure that every light bulb is working and that everything is in good working order in any associated buildings.

### **Utility Bills**

We will assist the tenant in changing the bills over to their own name, but it is imperative that you speak to your suppliers confirming the new tenant will take over the bills.

### **Inventory, Check-In & Check-Out**

We will happily arrange one of our approved inventory clerks to create a professional inventory for your property. This lists the contents of the property and the condition of its fixtures and fittings. On the day of move in, we will also arrange a check-in, which ensures that there is an accurate recording of the condition of the property when possession is granted to the tenant.

If we manage your property, we will also arrange a check-out on the last day of the tenancy to record the property condition in its final state.

Please note that professional inventory documents are a necessity in the event of any possible future claims against the tenant's deposit, particularly if you need to rely on adjudication.

### **Legal Safety Documentation Recommendations**

- If your property has a gas supply, you will need to provide a valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record every year.
- To ensure electrical safety, we recommend that a portable appliance test (PAT) is completed every year.
- We recommend a fixed wiring electrical certificate (NICEIC) test at 3 to 5 yearly intervals.
- You must provide an Energy Performance Certificate for each property you wish to let. An EPC lasts for 10 years.
- All relevant furniture/ furnishings must comply with fire regulations.

- Smoke detectors should be installed on each storey and tested on the tenancy commencement date.
- Carbon monoxide alarms should be installed one meter away from rooms containing gas appliances.

#### **Signed Documents**

As well as delivering the best tenant in the shortest time paying the best rent, we will ensure that all the documentation is in place correctly. An Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement is the most common residential rental agreement and protects both landlord and tenant in its terms. We do require the legal owner of the property to have signed our Terms and Conditions before the tenant moves in.

All paperwork can be received either as a computer scan or you can attend our branch. Provided it is properly signed and witnessed, then it is perfectly valid.

If you live abroad or if you're travelling at the time when signatures will be needed, please inform us. We will not allow a tenant to move in without the necessary documentation. We will always put your protection as our client as our number one priority, please don't risk losing your tenancy by not being able to sign the documentation when requested.

## WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF LETTING YOUR PROPERTY?

When preparing to let your property, it is useful to know what costs landlords and tenants must pay. In general, the costs for both landlord and tenant include the tenancy agreement and inventory check in or out. There are also the following costs for landlords:

- Lettings management and renewal fees
- Service charges and ground rent
- Maintenance and repairs of property
- Building and contents insurance
- Annual gas and electrical checks
- Energy Performance Certificates
- Deposit Registration
- Tax

### Tax Tips for all Landlords

The excess of rental income over allowable expenses is subject to UK income tax.

Our advice is simple:

- Under no circumstances should you conceal property income from HMRC.
- Take steps to mitigate your tax liabilities by seeking professional advice from a reputable firm of accountants who will advise on income tax and capital gains tax issues.
- Retain all invoices for sundry expenses such as ground rents and repairs and ensure that the nature of the work is clearly stipulated. Along with your mortgage interest, you may be able to offset these expenses against your rental income to reduce your tax bill.
- A detailed inventory and record of damages must be drawn up at the beginning and end of each letting period. This may well avert a potential dispute over replacement costs which are allowable if no 'wear and tear' allowance is claimed.

**Tax Services for Overseas Landlords** Income from letting UK property is subject to UK income tax. If you live abroad, we must retain tax on rents received unless you have been approved by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) to receive rent without tax deducted. In order to receive your rent gross, you must complete the relevant paperwork and submit it to the HMRC before the start of the tenancy. You will then have to submit annual tax returns showing details of your letting's income and expenses.

Visit [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk) for more information or contact your local Hamptons International office who can provide you with the relevant forms.

### Mortgages

If you have a mortgage on your property and you want to let it, you must get permission from your lender in the form of a 'consent to let'. If you do not, you could be in breach of your mortgage agreement.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How long will it take to let my property?**

Unfortunately, there is no fixed answer to this question. It depends on the prevailing market conditions, the presentation of the property and the asking price amongst other things. Our office is happy to advise you on a marketing strategy to bring you the best quality tenant within the quickest possible time.

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

Focus endeavor to transfer rent to the landlord within five working days of receipt. As part of our Standard Lettings Service, we will chase rent arrears on your behalf. We can provide details on rent and legal protection available to you.

### **What happens if either the landlord or the tenant wishes to end the tenancy early?**

This can be done where both parties agree to surrender the tenancy and it may involve financial compensations. However, if the parties do not agree, the only way a landlord can evict their tenant is if they have a court order to this effect.

**How can I trust that the tenant will look after my property?** Unfortunately, there is a certain amount of trust involved here. At Focus we take great care to provide our landlords with high calibre tenants and we thoroughly reference them via an external referencing agency. A deposit is usually paid by the tenant and held by the agent against any damages or dilapidations. One of the more challenging aspects of the landlord and tenant relationship is agreeing what should be deducted from the deposit at the end of the tenancy. We strongly recommend that a professional inventory is prepared for the property. An inventory check-in report should then be completed when the tenants take possession of the property and an inventory check-out report should be drawn up when the tenants leave. This gives a thorough account of any changes during the tenancy. If Focus manage your property, we put a useful distance between you and the tenant whilst we carry out negotiations on your behalf

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