

JW WOOD

COUNTY DURHAM · DARLINGTON

EST
1910

YOUR PROPERTY GUIDE

A Tenant's Guide to *renting well.*

Everything you need to know about renting a home in the North East — finding the right property, understanding your rights under the new 2026 rules, and making yourself at home. Friendly and clear, from people who've been doing this since 1910.

JW WOOD ESTATE AGENTS
OPENING DOORS SINCE 1910

JWW.CO.UK

A WARM WELCOME

Let's find you a place to call home.

Renting your home shouldn't be stressful. It should be transparent, friendly, and straightforward – and from 1 May 2026, tenants enjoy more security and protection than at any time since the 1980s thanks to the Renters' Rights Act 2025. Whether you're renting your first place, relocating to the North East, or moving on to somewhere new, our job is to make finding and living in your next home feel easy.

This guide walks through the whole process in plain English. Keep it to hand, dip in when you need to, and pick up the phone whenever you'd like a human answer to a human question.

The JW Wood Lettings Team

COUNTY DURHAM & DARLINGTON

A family-owned agency, on your side

JW Wood has been letting homes across County Durham and Darlington since 1910. We're ARLA Propertymark protected – which means your deposit, your rights and your money are held to the industry's highest standards. No hidden fees, no surprises.

115+ years local

Generations of experience matching good tenants with good homes across the North East.

ARLA Propertymark

Client money protection, strict codes of practice, independent redress.

Repairs made easy

Raise a repair request on our website any time of day – no more chasing voicemails.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Your guide, chapter by chapter.

We've broken the journey into bite-sized stages so you can read the whole thing through, or jump to the bit you need right now.

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 01 | Why rent with JW Wood Heritage, accreditation and the JWW way | 04 |
| 02 | Your renting journey at a glance The seven stages, in one view | 05 |
| 03 | Step one – Getting ready to rent Budget, documents and what you'll need | 06 |
| 04 | Step two – Finding the right home Searching, viewing and your viewing checklist | 07 |
| 05 | Step three – Applying & referencing Holding deposit, checks and what they mean | 08 |
| 06 | Step four – Signing & moving in Agreement, deposit, inventory and keys | 09 |
| 07 | Step five – Living in your rental Rent, repairs, inspections and your rights | 10 |
| 08 | Step six – Your 2026 rights The Renters' Rights Act, in plain English | 11 |
| 09 | The costs of renting Deposit, rent in advance and monthly running costs | 12 |
| 10 | Jargon buster Plain-English definitions of the words you'll hear | 13 |
| 11 | Get in touch Your local branches and how to reach us | 14 |

THE JWW DIFFERENCE

A different kind of letting agent.

Choosing who to rent through matters — because they're the people you'll be dealing with for everything from a dripping tap to your deposit return. Here's what sets us apart for tenants.

Transparent from the start

No hidden fees, no vague language. We'll tell you exactly what you'll pay, what you're entitled to, and what happens at every stage. Under the Tenant Fees Act 2019 we can only charge you for a small list of specific things — we don't charge for the rest.

ARLA Propertymark protected

Your deposit, your rent and your rights are held to the industry's highest standards. That means client money protection, strict codes of practice, and independent redress through The Property Ombudsman if anything ever goes wrong.

"Very efficient — the whole referencing and move-in process was smooth and clear. Always responsive when I had a question."

— TENANT REVIEW

People you can actually reach

We have five branches across County Durham and Darlington, with dedicated lettings teams in Durham and Darlington. When something needs fixing, you call or message us directly — not a call centre in another county. We know the property, we know the landlord, and we get things done.

Repairs without the runaround

Need something fixed? Raise a repair request on our website any time, day or night. We'll triage it the next working day and get one of our trusted local trades on it as quickly as possible.

Emergencies are dealt with immediately.

YOUR SELLING JOURNEY

Seven steps, start to finish.

Every rental is different, but the path from "I'm looking for a place" to "I'm in" generally follows the same seven stages. Here's the lay of the land – the rest of the guide unpacks each step in detail.

01

Step

Work out your budget & needs

How much you can afford comfortably each month – and what matters to you in a home. Area, size, pets, garden, commute.

02

Step

Register with JW Wood

Tell us what you're looking for and we'll alert you the moment something suitable comes to market – often before the portals.

03

Step

View properties

Book viewings online or by phone. We'll meet you at the property and answer everything honestly – bring our viewing checklist.

04

Step

Apply & reference

Found the one? Pay a holding deposit (max 1 week's rent) and we'll run referencing – credit, employment and previous landlord checks.

05

Step

Sign the agreement

References approved. Sign your tenancy agreement, pay the first month's rent and deposit (max 5 weeks) – we'll protect it within 30 days.

06

Step

Move-in day

Inventory checked and signed, keys handed over, How to Rent guide in your hands. Welcome home.

07

Step

Live there — we're here

Pay rent, raise repairs through our website, enjoy your home. We'll be in the background keeping things running smoothly.

STEP 01

Getting ready to rent.

A little preparation before you start viewing makes the whole process quicker and less stressful – and means you're ready to move the moment you find the right place.

Work out your budget

A good rule of thumb: rent shouldn't take more than about 35% of your take-home pay. Factor in everything you'll pay each month – not just rent, but council tax, utilities, broadband, contents insurance, TV licence.

Don't forget one-off costs to move in: usually a deposit (max 5 weeks' rent) plus your first month's rent. A holding deposit (max 1 week's rent) is taken when you apply, and credited against the rent or deposit later.

Know what you need

Write two lists: your non-negotiables (location, number of bedrooms, pets allowed, parking) and your nice-to-haves (garden, garage, south-facing). Sharing these with us means we can alert you only to homes that actually fit.

Good to know for 2026

From 1 May 2026, landlords can't refuse you because you have children, receive benefits, or want a pet – they have to consider every request on its merits. Rental bidding wars are also banned; the advertised rent is the price.

Get your paperwork ready

You'll typically need:

- Photo ID (passport or driving licence).
- Proof of right to rent in the UK.
- Recent payslips or employment contract (usually 3 months).
- Bank statements (usually 3 months).
- Previous landlord reference if you've rented before.
- A guarantor's details if your income is lower than required.

Check your credit

Most referencing agencies run a soft credit check. Register on the electoral roll, make sure loans and cards are being paid on time, and if you've had issues, be upfront when you apply – honesty upfront saves awkward conversations later.

STEP 02

Finding the right home.

The fun bit. A little system and a good checklist turn the hunt from overwhelming into satisfying – and help you spot a great place when you see it.

Register with us first

Many of our rental properties are matched with tenants from our registered list before they even reach the portals. Tell us what you're looking for and we'll alert you the moment something suitable comes up.

Search smart

Rightmove, OnTheMarket and jww.co.uk. Set up alerts on the big portals with your criteria so you hear immediately when new listings come live. Be ready to view quickly – good rentals go fast.

Know the area

Before committing, walk the streets at different times – weekday rush hour, a Sunday morning, an evening. Check council tax bands, broadband speeds, the nearest shops and transport. We'll share everything we know about the local area.

Your viewing checklist

- Damp & mould**
Check ceilings, corners, behind furniture, around windows.

- Heating**
How is it heated? Boiler age? EPC rating?

- What's included**
Appliances? Furniture? Curtains? White goods?

- Storage**
Wardrobes, cupboards, loft, bike storage.

- Windows & insulation**
Double-glazed? Draughty? Single-pane anywhere?

- Water pressure**
Run the taps and flush the loo.

- Broadband**
Check the Openreach checker for your postcode.

- Mobile signal**
Check on your own phone in every room.

- Neighbours & noise**
Flats above, roads, pubs, train lines.

- Parking**
On-street, permit, or dedicated?

- Pet policy**
If relevant – check, and ask about formal consent.

- Who manages it?**
Landlord direct, or JW Wood Fully Managed?

STEP 03

Applying & referencing.

You've found the one. Now it's about getting yourself onto the application and through the reference checks — smoothly and quickly.

Applying for a property

Let us know as soon as you want to apply. We'll confirm the rental figure (under the new rules, this is the advertised rent — no bidding wars allowed) and take a holding deposit to reserve the property off the market while references are run.

Your holding deposit

By law, a holding deposit is capped at **one week's rent**. It comes off your first rent or deposit payment once you move in, or gets refunded if the tenancy doesn't go ahead for most reasons.

Referencing — what happens

A specialist agency runs:

- A credit check (soft — doesn't affect your credit score).
- Employment and income verification — typically 2.5× annual rent.
- A previous landlord reference, if you've rented before.
- A Right to Rent check to confirm your status in the UK.

Most references come back within 3–5 working days. Responding to your referencer's emails quickly is the single best thing you can do to keep things moving.

Not quite meeting affordability?

You may be asked for a guarantor — usually a family member or close friend with UK income who agrees to cover rent if you can't. They'll need to be referenced too.

Requesting a pet

Under the Renters' Rights Act 2025, landlords must properly consider pet requests and can't refuse without a good reason. Raise it at application stage — expect to be asked about your pet's size, age and behaviour, and whether you'll take out pet insurance.

If referencing fails

It happens. The holding deposit is refundable unless you withdrew, failed Right to Rent, gave misleading information, or stopped responding. We'll always explain clearly why.

STEP 04

Signing & moving in.

References approved – now it's about signing properly, paying the right amounts, and stepping into your new home with everything in order.

The written statement of key terms

Your landlord (or us, on their behalf) must give you the key terms of your tenancy in writing before you move in. This includes the rent, any deposit, the address, start date, and your rights to request a pet.

Deposit & rent

Your deposit is capped at **5 weeks' rent** (or 6 if your annual rent is over £50,000). We'll protect it in one of three approved schemes (DPS, TDS or mydeposits) within 30 days and send you confirmation.

Under the new rules, you can't be asked for more than **1 month's rent in advance**. Anything above this is a prohibited payment.

! What you'll receive on move-in day

- A signed copy of your tenancy agreement.
- The government's "How to Rent" guide.
- Your inventory / schedule of condition.
- Gas Safety Certificate (if there are gas appliances).
- Energy Performance Certificate.
- Electrical installation report (EICR).
- Deposit protection certificate & prescribed information.
- Your keys – and all the codes you'll need.

The inventory

Walk round the property with the inventory on move-in day. Note any marks, damage or missing items – photograph them, too. A thorough check-in is your best protection when getting your deposit back later.

Utilities & council tax

You'll usually need to set up utilities (gas, electric, water, broadband) and register for council tax. Take meter readings on the day you move in.

STEP 05

Living in your rental.

A good tenancy is a long tenancy. Know your rights, know your responsibilities, and you and your landlord can enjoy a happy relationship for as long as you want to stay.

Paying your rent

Rent is due on the day set out in your agreement, usually by standing order. If something unexpected happens and you're going to be late, tell us straight away — we can often agree a short-term arrangement. Silence is always worse than honesty.

Reporting repairs

The fastest way is to raise a repair request on our website — attach photos and describe the issue. Emergencies (leaks, no heating in winter, security) are prioritised. Routine works are scheduled with our vetted trades panel.

Periodic inspections

We typically inspect every six months. We'll give you notice, work with your schedule where possible, and use it as a chance to raise anything that needs attention.

Your right to quiet enjoyment

You have a legal right to the undisturbed enjoyment of your home. Your landlord (or us) must give you at least **24 hours' written notice** before any visit, except in genuine emergencies.

Rent increases (Section 13)

Under the new rules, rent can only go up once per year, via a formal Section 13 notice with **two months' notice**. If you think a proposed increase is above market, you can challenge it at the First-tier Tribunal.

When you want to leave

Give at least **two months' written notice**. On your last day, we'll check the property back in against the inventory. Your deposit should be returned within 10 days of agreeing any deductions — or, in a dispute, held by the scheme until resolved.

A good tenancy is built on communication. Tell us what's going on, raise issues early, and look after the home like it's your own — because, for now, it is.

STEP 06

Your rights in 2026.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 — in force from 1 May 2026 — gives tenants more security than at any time since the 1980s. Here's what it means for you, at a glance.

! New rights from 1 May 2026

- No more "no-fault" evictions — your landlord needs a valid legal ground to end your tenancy.
- All tenancies are **Periodic** — no forced end dates or fixed terms.
- Rent can only rise **once per year**, with 2 months' notice.
- You can challenge any rent increase at the First-tier Tribunal.
- You can **request a pet** — blanket refusals no longer allowed.
- No discrimination against tenants with children or on benefits.
- Rent in advance capped at **1 month**.
- Written key terms must be given to you before you move in.

✓ Protections that still apply

- Deposit protected in an approved scheme within 30 days.
- Maximum deposit of **5 weeks' rent** (6 if £50k+).
- Holding deposit capped at **1 week's rent**.
- Banned from being charged unfair fees (Tenant Fees Act 2019).
- Annual Gas Safety Certificate.
- Electrical installation report (EICR) every 5 years.
- Minimum EPC of Grade E to legally let.
- 24 hours' written notice before any landlord visit.

i If your tenancy started before 1 May 2026

Your existing fixed-term tenancy automatically converts to a Periodic Tenancy on 1 May 2026. Your landlord must give you the government's Information Sheet before 31 May 2026, explaining how the new rules apply to you. Nothing else changes — you keep all your current protections and gain the new ones.

BUDGET CONFIDENTLY

The real cost of renting.

Beyond the headline rent, here's what else to factor into your monthly budget and your moving-in costs. The Tenant Fees Act 2019 bans most other charges.

| | |
|--|---|
| Rent MONTHLY | The advertised rent. Under the new rules, can't be increased above the listed amount at the point of letting. |
| Security deposit ONE-OFF, REFUNDABLE | Maximum 5 weeks' rent (6 if annual rent over £50,000). Protected in an approved scheme within 30 days. |
| Holding deposit ONE-OFF, OFFSET | Maximum 1 week's rent. Paid at application, credited to your first rent or refunded if the tenancy doesn't proceed. |
| First month's rent BEFORE MOVE-IN | Usually paid in advance on or before move-in day. No more than 1 month in advance under new 2026 rules. |
| Council tax MONTHLY | Varies by band and council. £100–£250/month for most North East properties. Check with your local authority. |
| Utilities MONTHLY | Gas, electric, water, broadband, TV licence. Typically £150–£300/month depending on property size and usage. |
| Contents insurance MONTHLY OR YEARLY | Optional but recommended — your landlord's insurance doesn't cover your possessions. Around £8–£20 per month. |
| Moving costs ONE-OFF | Van hire, removals, transferring utilities, a redirect service. Budget £150–£800 depending on distance and volume. |

£ We'll be transparent, every time

Before you commit, we'll walk you through every cost — what you'll pay on day one, what you'll pay monthly, and what's refundable at the end. Nothing hidden, nothing sneaky.

PLAIN ENGLISH

The words you'll hear, explained.

Renting has its own vocabulary — and the 2026 reforms have added a few new terms. Here are the ones you're most likely to meet.

ARLA Propertymark

Industry body for letting agents, with strict codes of practice and client money protection. Look for the logo.

Assured Periodic Tenancy

The new standard tenancy from 1 May 2026 — rolling month to month, no fixed end date.

Break clause

A term in older fixed-term tenancies letting either side end early. Mostly irrelevant under the 2026 rules.

Check-in / check-out

The inventory inspections when you move in and out. Document everything — it protects your deposit.

Contents insurance

Optional cover for your possessions. Your landlord's policy does not cover your things.

Council tax

Monthly tax on the property you live in. Usually paid by tenants. Full-time students are exempt.

Deposit protection

Legal requirement — your deposit must sit in one of three approved schemes (DPS, TDS, mydeposits) within 30 days.

EPC

Energy Performance Certificate — rates the property's energy efficiency A to G. Must be E or above to let.

Fair wear and tear

Normal deterioration from reasonable use. You can't be charged for this out of your deposit.

Gas Safety Record

Annual inspection if the property has gas appliances. Landlord must give you a copy within 28 days.

Guarantor

Someone (usually a family member) who agrees to cover your rent if you can't. They'll be referenced too.

Holding deposit

Max one week's rent. Reserves the property while references are run. Refunded or credited to first rent.

How to Rent

The government's tenant information guide. Must be given to you at the start of your tenancy.

Inventory

A detailed record (often with photos) of the property's condition at move-in. Used to assess deductions at move-out.

Joint tenancy

When you share a tenancy with housemates or a partner. You're all jointly and individually liable for the rent.

Let Agreed

An offer has been accepted on the property and referencing is underway. Not yet signed and sealed.

Periodic tenancy

A rolling tenancy with no fixed end date. From 1 May 2026, this is the only kind of new tenancy available.

Renters' Rights Act 2025

The 2026 reform package that abolishes Section 21, caps rent in advance, bans bidding wars, and more.

Right to Rent

An immigration status check — required on every adult occupant before a tenancy starts.

Section 8

The formal eviction notice with a specific legal ground (rent arrears, sale, etc). The only route from 1 May 2026.

Section 13

The formal rent-increase notice. Can only be served once per year, with at least 2 months' notice.

Tenant Fees Act 2019

Bans most fees to tenants. Landlords and agents can only charge a small list of specific things.

JW WOOD

ESTATE AGENTS · EST. 1910

Looking for somewhere to call home? *Let's talk.*

Five branches across County Durham and Darlington, with dedicated sales and lettings teams across the region. Pop in, register with us, or browse our latest rentals online – and we'll be in touch as soon as something suitable comes up.

Durham (Sales)

0191 386 9921
durham@jww.co.uk

Durham (Lettings)

0191 383 0184
lettings@jww.co.uk

Bishop Auckland

Sales & Lettings
01388 604273
bishop@jww.co.uk

Chester-le-Street

Sales & Lettings
0191 388 7245
chester@jww.co.uk

Consett

Sales & Lettings
01207 502109
consett@jww.co.uk

Darlington

Sales & Lettings
01325 485151
darlington@jww.co.uk

jww.co.uk

facebook.com/jwwoodgroup

OPENING DOORS SINCE 1910

This guide is intended as a general introduction to renting residential property in England. It is not legal advice. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 continues to be implemented in phases; if you're in a dispute or unsure of your rights, contact Citizens Advice or Shelter. JW Wood Estate Agents is a trading name of JW Wood Ltd.