

PRESS CUTTING
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Damage to unfurnished properties is costing Landlord thousands

Thursday 20th October 2011

Landlords with unfurnished properties often fall into the trap of thinking that as there are no actual 'loose' contents, there will be nothing to worry about at the end of a tenancy. However, according to The Association of Independent Inventory Clerks (AIIC), landlords can face very expensive repairs due to damage on doors, walls, carpets and worktops and is urging landlords to have professional check-ins and check-outs to avoid potential costly bills.

Pat Barber, Chair of the AIIC, said: "A rented property is made up not only of contents, but of fixtures and fittings too and these are often the most expensive things to repair. A recent example brings to life the potential costly damage facing landlords with unfurnished properties. A tenant had cut out a large piece from a sitting room carpet where there was a sizeable burn. He then cut carpet from inside a fitted cupboard and placed it in the hole in the sitting room carpet. Fortunately, the AIIC clerk carrying out the check-out inspection had the experience to detect this kind of damage and managed to save the landlord the cost of a new carpet.

"Another recent case featured and landlord's hand written inventory that consisted of a short list of contents covering just one A4 page. During the six month let the tenants set up a cannabis factory in the garage, causing damage to the structure of the house due to fitting of heating and watering systems. The tenants also wrecked the property, leaving a huge amount of rubbish to be removed. Extensive cleaning, repairs and redecorating needed. However, due to lack of firm evidence of the original condition, the landlord had to cover all these costs himself."

According to the AIIC, the most common damage found in unfurnished properties includes the following:

- Doors and walls - Damage/holes from impact, walls - nail and screw holes, drilled cable holes, impact indents from door handles, general excessive dirt and marks.
- Painting and redecoration - Tenants repainting without permission in outrageous colours. Often redecoration is required before the property can be let again.
- Carpets - Stains, burns, tears, sometimes whole sections cut out due to tenant damage and replaced with off cuts of a similar carpet found inside cupboards or wardrobes.
- Light fittings - Tenants take bulbs and lampshades, sometimes whole fittings and the bare wires are hanging from the ceiling.
- Kitchen worktops – Damage, burns to worktops, knife marks in worktops and chips.
- Kitchen appliances - Damage to ceramic hobs, one recently was cracked right across, fortunately the inventory was professionally compiled and the tenant was made to pay for a new hob. Broken shelves in fridges, damage to washing machines and dish washers.
- Bathrooms - Cracks in sinks toilets and baths - bathroom suites are very expensive to replace and sometimes hard to match when replacing only one item.

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- Windows - Common damage are chips and cracks, broken window fittings.
- Gardens - If the condition is not clear at time of check in, gardening is very expensive - £20 per hour is normal - and the landlord, without any firm evidence, will be picking up the bill. Every area of a garden needs to be listed on an inventory, not just the grass, but the condition of the borders, weedy or not, patio - weedy, mossy, stained etc. Loose or broken flagstones - as always detail is needed to be able to judge what additional damage has occurred.
- Cleaning - if the inventory does not categorically state the cleaning condition of every area, then the landlord will be stuck with the cleaning bill after the check-out.

The AIIC is committed to excellence and professionalism in the property inventory process and works hard to ensure that all landlords, tenants and letting agents understand the importance and benefits of professionally completed property inventories.

For further information, please visit www.theaiic.co.uk