BRIGHT HILL PROPERTIES

Inventories, Check-In / Outs & Property Inspections

A thorough record of your property's condition — at the start, during and at the end of a tenancy — is your single best protection in a deposit dispute. This guide explains each stage and why it matters.

The four stages — at a glance

Stage	What happens	When
Inventory & schedule of condition	A detailed written and photographic record of the property's condition, fixtures and any contents.	Before the tenant moves in
Check-in	The tenant reviews and agrees the inventory, meter readings are taken, keys are handed over and the record is signed.	At the start of the tenancy
Periodic inspection	A routine visit to check the property is being looked after and to catch maintenance issues early, reported to you with photos.	Typically every 6 months
Check-out	The property is re-inspected against the original inventory to identify any damage beyond fair wear and tear.	At the end of the tenancy

1. The inventory

The inventory (or 'schedule of condition') is a detailed, dated record of the property at the start of the tenancy — the condition of every room, the fixtures and fittings, décor, cleanliness, and any furniture or appliances you provide. It should be supported by clear, time-stamped photographs. This document is the baseline that everything is measured against later, so the more thorough it is, the stronger your position.

2. Check-in

At check-in the tenant goes through the inventory, has the chance to note anything they disagree with, and signs to confirm they accept it. Meter readings are recorded, keys are counted and handed over, and the tenant is given their copy. A signed, agreed inventory carries far more weight than one the tenant never saw.

3. Property inspections during the tenancy

Periodic inspections — usually around every six months, with proper notice to the tenant — let us confirm the property is being kept in good order, spot small maintenance issues before they become expensive, and check for early signs of problems such as damp or mould. You receive a short report with photographs after each visit. With the new focus on property standards and 'Awaab's Law' timescales for hazards, regular inspections are increasingly important.

4. Check-out

At the end of the tenancy the property is inspected again and compared, room by room, against the original inventory. The check-out report highlights any damage, missing items or cleaning required that go beyond fair wear and tear — and this is what any deposit deductions are based on.

Why it matters: deposits and 'fair wear and tear'

If you want to make a deduction from the deposit, the burden is on you to prove it — and the deposit scheme's adjudicator will look for a signed inventory and a matching check-out report as evidence. Without them, deductions are very hard to justify and are often refused. 'Fair wear and tear' — the gradual, reasonable deterioration expected from normal living — cannot be charged for; the inventory and check-out are how genuine damage is distinguished from ordinary use.

Best practice

- Use an independent inventory clerk — an impartial report is harder for either side to dispute.
- Make sure the inventory is detailed, dated and backed by photographs, and that the tenant signs it.
- Record meter readings at check-in and check-out.
- Carry out inspections at regular intervals with proper written notice.
- Keep every report on file for the duration of the tenancy and beyond.

How Bright Hill Properties helps

We arrange professional, independent inventories and check-in/check-out reports and carry out regular inspections as part of our management service — giving you a clear, defensible record at every stage and taking the admin, and the disputes, off your hands.