

## Rent Deposit Scheme

### **What is the rent deposit bond scheme?**

The Rent Deposit Bond Scheme is where Epsom & Ewell Borough Council can assist people threatened with homelessness with a deposit bond or cash deposit to help them rent a property in the private rented sector.

The Rent Deposit Officer will liaise with private landlords or agents, give advice on welfare benefits and assist with setting up the tenancy, organise the bond or cash deposit and will provide on-going tenancy sustainment.

### **What is a deposit bond?**

A bond is a letter of promise to a landlord from the Council on behalf of the tenant. This is instead of providing the landlord with a cash deposit.

### **How much will the bond cover?**

The bond will usually cover the equivalent of a month's rent however we will discuss the exact amount with each landlord or agent.

### **What will the bond cover?**

The bond will cover everything that a normal cash deposit will cover. This includes any damages to the property (which cannot be classed as reasonable wear and tear) or any rent arrears up to the agreed bond limit.

At the end of the tenancy if the landlord claims on the deposit bond, the Council will recharge the tenant for this amount.

### **Am I eligible for a rent deposit bond or cash deposit?**

This scheme is intended to help people we would have a duty to under the homelessness legislation and referrals to the scheme can only be made by the Housing Options Officer after you have had a Housing Options interview.

You must have no other means of being able to fund a deposit yourself (eg family/friends/employer/bank loan). We must be satisfied that you can manage a tenancy, both financially and how the property will be looked after.

You must also have a local connection with the borough. However the accommodation can be located either in or outside the borough.

### **What happens next?**

Following the interview you will be told whether you qualify for a rent deposit bond. You will be advised an approximate figure as to how much the bond will cover depending on your household circumstances.

If accepted for the scheme you will be issued with a deposit bond offer letter, which will be valid for three months. This can be given to prospective landlords to inform them about the scheme.

You will also be required to complete an application form with your personal details and your previous housing history, which will be given to the prospective landlord.

Generally you will be responsible for finding your own private rented accommodation. The Rent Deposit Officer will be able to give you advice and guidance about looking for a property and they will assist with setting up the tenancy and issue the bond or cash deposit.

Occasionally we may be told of a property to rent. Should this happen we will select a household for the property depending on their circumstances. It is therefore important that you do not rely on us finding a property for you and instead actively search yourself.

Further information about rent levels and bedroom eligibility can be found in the Local Housing Allowance leaflet and Finding Private Rented Accommodation.

### **Pre-tenancy training**

In order to help you find a property the council will ask you to complete an on-line pre-tenancy training module. This will give you advice on how to find a property, how to manage your tenancy and what your responsibilities are. After completing this training you will be issued with a certificate which you can give to landlords. The council will organise and pay for this.

### **What happens when I find somewhere I would like to rent?**

When a property is found you should advise the Rent Deposit Officer of the property address, rent and deposit, the name, address and contact details of the landlord or letting agent and other relevant details.

The Rent Deposit Officer will then:

- Assess the suitability and affordability of the property
- Liaise with the landlord/agents to check that all safety certificates and energy performance certificates are in order
- If the property is considered to be in good condition, has all relevant certificates and is affordable the Rent Deposit Officer will advise you and the landlord that we are prepared to support the tenancy
- Once satisfied that the letting is going ahead the Rent Deposit Officer will formally confirm the deposit/ bond with the landlord/agent and ensure all relevant documentation is completed.
- Where you are likely to receive assistance with your rent through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, the Rent Deposit Officer will inform you and the landlord/agent of the local LHA rates. If necessary, they will assist you to complete the relevant applications or direct you to another agency who can help.

### **Tenants Bond Agreement and Charter**

You will need to sign the Council's charter and bond agreement. This sets out the basis we are agreeing to a bond or cash deposit and how we expect you to manage your tenancy.

If a cash deposit is issued it must be registered with a government approved Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme with EEBC registered as a 3rd party. Cash deposits must be returned to the council at the end of the tenancy and the council will recover any money claimed on the deposit from you.