

InStyle
DIRECT

REFRESH, REPAIR OR REPLACE?



*A practical guide to smarter furniture decisions
and stronger rental returns.*



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INTRODUCTION

More than a third of households in England rent their homes, while private rents remain high across the UK. In August 2026, the average UK monthly private rent reached £1,400, representing a 3.8% increase compared with the previous year.

For landlords, this creates both opportunity and responsibility. Rental demand remains strong, but tenants paying higher rents are likely to look more closely at the quality, condition and presentation of a property. A home that feels tired compared with a well-presented alternative may take longer to let or achieve a lower rent.

Furniture is one of the few elements of a rental property that landlords can review and improve between tenancies, long after the kitchen and bathroom have been fitted.



8.79m

Estimated renting households in England

Around 35% of households in England rent their homes across private and social tenancies.



£1,400

Average UK monthly private rent

The average UK private rent in August 2026.



34%

Average share of income spent on rent

The average privately renting household in England spends around 34% of its income on rent.

Sources: Office for National Statistics, Private rent and house prices, UK: September 2026; ClearScore/NimbleFins, Number of Homeowners and Renters in the UK, January 2026; NimbleFins, Rent Affordability Calculator UK, updated February 2026.



When a tenancy ends, deciding whether furniture needs to be refreshed, repaired or fully replaced is not always straightforward. Making the right decisions can keep a property looking fresh, functional and competitive. Making the wrong ones can mean spending unnecessarily without meaningfully improving its appearance or appeal.



INTRODUCTION



Every tenancy ends with the same set of small decisions waiting on the other side: The sofa has a stubborn stain, or the dining chairs have become unsteady. The bed frame is fine, but the mattress has seen four tenants come and go.

It becomes a reflective moment for a landlord or an investor: Do you clean it, fix it, or replace it?

In this guide, we cover how to assess furniture properly at the end of a tenancy, when a repair or a clean is genuinely enough, the signs that an item has reached the end of its useful life, and how to tell ordinary wear from a genuine safety issue. We also look at refreshing a tired scheme without replacing everything in it, reusing good furniture elsewhere in a portfolio, and budgeting for replacements in phases rather than all at once.

If you're looking for day-to-day cleaning and upkeep advice, our [furniture care](#) and maintenance guide covers that. Here, we're looking at the bigger question: what do you do when maintenance alone isn't enough?





HOW TO ASSESS FURNITURE AT THE END OF A TENANCY

A proper assessment should happen before a new tenancy is confirmed, not after a tenant has already asked when they can move in. Rushing this stage can leave landlords replacing furniture that still had plenty of life left in it, or patching up something that really should have been replaced years ago.

Start by walking through every room and looking at each piece of furniture on its own, rather than judging the whole room at once. It's easy to look at a lounge and think it needs a complete refresh when actually it's one tired sofa making the whole room look worse.

The first signs that something needs attention are usually easy to spot once you know what to look for. Sagging cushions, wobbly frames, and peeling or stained fabrics can all signal neglect to a prospective tenant straight away. But don't just look for obvious wear. Check whether each piece still works for the room, too. An oversized sofa blocking a walkway or a rug that's too small for the space can throw off the whole room, even when nothing is technically broken.

It's also worth looking beyond what you can see. A sofa might look perfectly fine but still have a cracked frame or snapped coils underneath the cushions. Simply sitting on it for a few seconds won't necessarily reveal cracked internal timber or stretched webbing underneath.

A handful of other checks are easy to miss on a quick walkthrough:

- Check fire-safety labels. If one is missing or unreadable, confirm compliance with the manufacturer or supplier.
- Flip mattresses over to check the underside for stains, moisture or damaged slats.
- Load drawers with some weight before deciding they're fine. Glides and dowels can be fractured even when a drawer slides smoothly empty.
- Check contact points around the room. Missing rubber bumpers on chair backs or felt pads on table legs cause fresh scuffs on walls and floors within days of a new tenant moving in.



HOW TO ASSESS FURNITURE AT THE END OF A TENANCY

If you manage more than a handful of properties, this is also the point to start, or update, a simple record for each piece of furniture. Note the item description or product code, dimensions, colour and finish, the date it was bought, a few photos, warranty information where it applies, and supplier details if you have them. Keeping this information from the outset saves considerable time when an item needs repairing or replacing, particularly once the original is no longer easy to identify or source.

None of this needs to be complicated. A shared spreadsheet, or even a folder of dated photos, is enough to start spotting patterns, which items wear out first, which rooms need attention every tenancy, and which pieces have quietly outlasted three or four lets without a single complaint.



“When assessing a rental property as a designer, the first signs that furniture needs attention are sagging cushions, wobbly frames, and peeling or stained fabrics, defects that immediately communicate neglect to prospective tenants. Beyond obvious physical wear, I look for scale and proportion mismatches, like oversized sofas blocking walkways or tiny rugs that throw off the room’s balance. Dated, clashing styles or sticky, malfunctioning hardware also signal that pieces either need refinishing, reupholstery, or a complete swap to protect the home’s value and appeal.”

- Emma Silburn, Lead Interior Designer, InStyle Direct



WHEN CLEANING OR MINOR REPAIR IS SUFFICIENT

A lot of furniture that looks tired between tenancies isn't actually damaged. It may just need a thorough clean or some attention after months of daily use. Before booking a replacement, it's worth ruling out the simpler, cheaper fix first.

Flattened cushion foam, minor wood scratches, wobbly joints, stuck drawers and outdated cabinet hardware are usually easy to sort. Cushion inserts can be swapped, joints reglued, drawers sanded so they run smoothly again, and hardware updated relatively inexpensively. None of this means replacing the piece itself.

A solid wood coffee table with a scratched, dated dark stain is a good example. At first glance, it might look like something to replace, but its solid construction may just need a light sanding, a coat of modern neutral paint or an updated wood stain, and a clear protective sealer. Swap the handles too, if it has drawers, and the piece can look fresh and intentional again for a fraction of the cost of a replacement. Just as importantly, the property keeps a piece of solid wood furniture rather than replacing it with a cheaper alternative that may not hold up as well to rental wear.

Quality matters more here than people often expect. A sofa that needs a joint fixed every year and a cushion replaced every eighteen months isn't actually cheaper than a better-made one that just needs the occasional clean.

As a rule of thumb, repair or cleaning is the right call when the frame and structure are sound, when the damage is cosmetic rather than functional, and when the item still fits the room and the property's overall standard. It stops being the right call once the same fault keeps recurring, or once the cost of fixing it starts to approach what a replacement would cost anyway.



WHEN CLEANING OR MINOR REPAIR IS SUFFICIENT

Worth trying before replacing:

- Reupholstering or slipcovering dining chair pads and sofas rather than buying new
- Sanding and repainting or restaining dated wood furniture
- Swapping cushion inserts rather than the whole cushion or sofa
- Updating handles, knobs and hinges on cabinets and wardrobes
- Reglueing loose joints and tightening wobbly frames



"In high-end or luxury long-term rentals, tenants expect pristine aesthetics and premium finishes; even minor cosmetic defects, visible repairs, or dated silhouettes can justify a complete replacement to maintain top-tier rental rates. Conversely, in student housing or high-turnover budget units, structural safety and durability outweigh pristine visuals, making sturdy, easy-to-clean pieces or straightforward repairs the smarter investment over delicate or high-end replacements. Ultimately, the target tenant's expectations determine whether a worn piece is a quick cosmetic fix or an immediate deal-breaker for the property's value."

- Severina Oborotova
Head of Design, InStyle Direct



SIGNS THAT AN ITEM SHOULD BE REPLACED

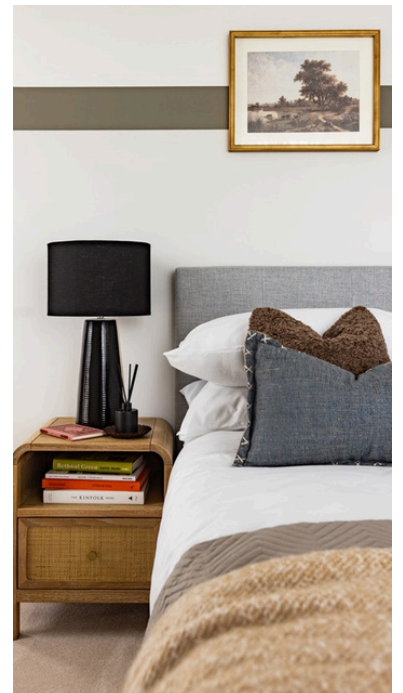
Sometimes, there's no getting around it: a piece of furniture has reached the end of its useful life. Knowing when a problem can be fixed and when something genuinely needs replacing isn't always obvious, but there are a few signs that can help.

Structural failure is the clearest one. A sofa with a broken frame, snapped coils, or webbing that has given way underneath the cushions isn't something you can simply patch up. Once the core support has failed, cleaning or reupholstering won't solve the problem. The same applies to cabinets and wardrobes where joints have properly failed rather than simply loosened, or drawers that have come off their tracks because the rear glides have fractured.



Lifespan is another useful guide, even if it isn't an exact science. A well-made sofa can reasonably be expected to last around ten years or more, and potentially longer in a lower-traffic property. A cheaply made one, however, may be on borrowed time after three to five years of regular use. Mattresses follow a similar pattern, with most lasting around seven to ten years before support and comfort start to drop, although the quality of the original mattress has a big impact on where it falls within that range.

The same thinking applies when deciding what to replace as it does when choosing furniture in the first place. It's difficult to tell from a photo online how well a piece will hold up, and the items that look like a bargain when you buy them can sometimes be the ones that need replacing sooner than expected.



SIGNS THAT AN ITEM SHOULD BE REPLACED

There are several reasons furniture reaches the end of its life. Misuse and heavy use can play a part, as can normal wear and tear across several tenancies. But the quality of the original furniture is often the bigger factor. Choosing a cheaper furniture pack at the start may mean items need replacing sooner, making the initial saving less economical over the life of the property. Appliances add another layer, as they can reach the end of their working life through age alone, without any misuse or obvious damage.

Before signing off on a replacement, it helps to ask three questions rather than simply reacting to how tired an item looks. Does the standard of the furnishing match the value of the property? Who is likely to be living there? And does the furniture match the rental profile the property is aiming for?



“Longevity and sustainability go hand in hand. The quality of the original furniture is often the bigger factor in how long it lasts. Choosing cheaper furniture at the start may seem like a saving, but if it needs replacing after one tenancy, that saving quickly disappears. We’re not the cheapest in the market, and we don’t aim to compete with low-quality furniture that has a short lifespan.”

- Mansi Mehra, Director, InStyle Direct



These questions can help prevent a like-for-like replacement from becoming an unnecessary upgrade while also making sure a genuine upgrade isn't skipped simply because it wasn't obviously needed.

A few reliable signs a replacement is the right call.

- Structural damage to the frame, joints or internal support that a repair won't fix
- Fabric or upholstery damage beyond what cleaning or a slipcover can hide
- The item has already been repaired once for the same fault
- It no longer matches the standard the property is being let at
- It's reached or passed the typical lifespan for that type of item



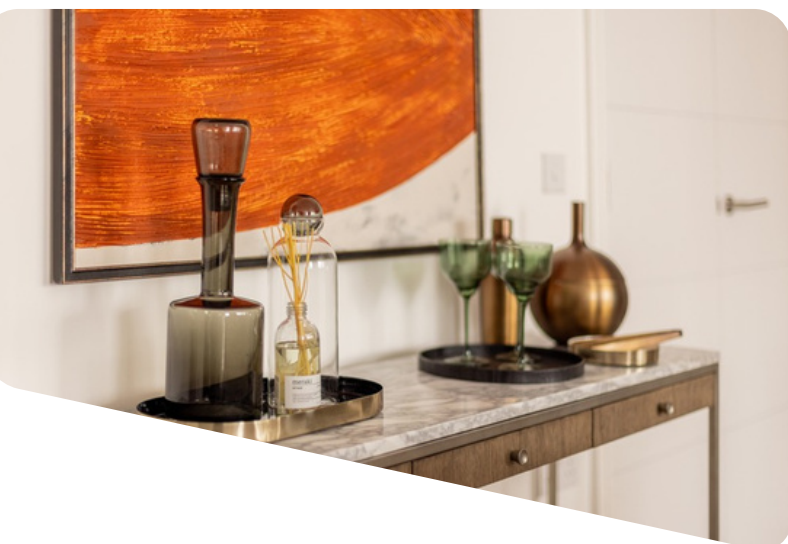
DISTINGUISHING COSMETIC WEAR FROM SAFETY CONCERNS

Not every mark or scuff needs the same response. The key is knowing whether you're looking at normal wear, something that needs attention, or a genuine safety concern.

Cosmetic wear:

- Scuffs, minor marks and faded fabrics are generally cosmetic issues.
- Fair wear and tear is the gradual deterioration that comes from normal, everyday use of a property. It is generally a landlord's responsibility rather than something that can be charged against a tenant's deposit.
- Cleaning is the most common issue raised in deposit disputes. In 2024/25, cleaning appeared in 54% of Tenancy Deposit Scheme disputes, followed by damage at 49% and redecoration at 31%.¹

The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 set fire-safety requirements for upholstered furniture supplied with residential furnished lettings. They apply to both new and second-hand furniture.²



They cover items including:

- Sofas and armchairs
- Upholstered headboards
- Scatter cushions and pillows
- Mattresses and certain bed bases
(Mattresses and bed bases follow different labelling arrangements, with compliance potentially indicated by a BS 7177 label.)

DISTINGUISHING COSMETIC WEAR FROM SAFETY CONCERNS



Exceptions: Furniture made before 1 January 1950 that has not been modified is excluded, while certain baby and young children's products were removed from scope by the 2025 amendments.^{[2] [3]}

What to check

- Upholstered furniture: Look for a clear, permanent compliance label, usually sewn or stapled to the item.
- Mattresses and bed bases: These follow different labelling requirements, with compliance potentially shown through a BS 7177 label.²
- Missing labelling: Don't assume the furniture is compliant. The guidance recommends obtaining evidence from the manufacturer or original supplier before including the item in a letting.²



The Regulations were updated in October 2025. The changes removed the requirement for a separate display or swing label on new furniture, while keeping the requirements around permanent labels. Certain baby and young children's products were also removed from scope, and the period for enforcement authorities to begin proceedings was extended from six months to twelve.³

Please note: Furniture safety requirements can vary depending on the item and current regulations. Always check the latest requirements and, if you're unsure whether a piece is safe or compliant, speak to a qualified professional before supplying it to a tenant.

Sources

Tenancy Deposit Scheme, Statistical Briefing 2025.¹

Business Companion, Goods in rented accommodation.²

GOV.UK, Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.³



PRIORITISING THE MOST VISIBLE ROOMS AND ITEMS

Budgets are rarely unlimited, so where you spend first matters. Not every room makes the same impression, and not every piece of furniture gets the same amount of use.



Start with what tenants see first:

Most prospective tenants browse properties online before booking a viewing, so the furniture in your listing photos has an important job to do. If your budget only stretches to a few key pieces, prioritise the rooms and furniture that will feature most prominently in the photos — usually the living room and main bedroom.

Next, look at what gets the most use:

Sofa seating, dining chairs, coffee tables and mattresses tend to experience the most wear in a rental property. These are worth keeping an eye on and planning to replace when needed, rather than waiting until they are noticeably worn.



Leave lower-use items until later:

Furniture in spare rooms, occasional storage and less visible areas can usually be dealt with in a later phase if the budget is tight.

A simple priority order:

1. Most visible: Living room and main bedroom, particularly furniture featured in listing photos.
2. Most used: Mattresses, sofa seating, dining chairs and other high-touch pieces.
3. Least urgent: Spare room furniture, occasional storage and lower-use items.



PRIORITISING THE MOST VISIBLE ROOMS AND ITEMS

Expert Corner

Things that get commonly overlooked:

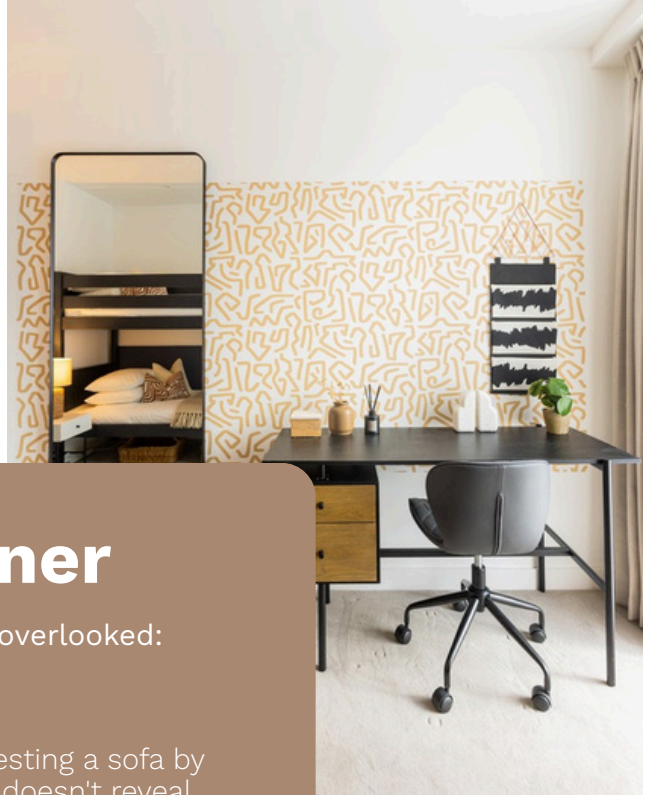
Hidden Structural Fatigue: Testing a sofa by sitting on it for five seconds doesn't reveal cracked internal timber, snapped S-coils, or stretched webbing underneath the cushions. Removing the cushions and physically pressing down on the base frame catches damage before the next tenant sinks into a broken couch.

Fire-safety information: Check permanent labels on sofas and armchairs and relevant safety information on mattresses and bed bases. If this is missing or unreadable, confirm compliance before supplying the item to a tenant.

Mattress Undersides and Slats: Flipping a mattress to check for hidden stains, moisture buildup, or broken bed frame slats underneath is often skipped, leaving structural safety and hygiene risks unaddressed.

Cabinet and Drawer Stability under Weight: Drawers that slide smoothly when empty often stick, tilt, or pull off their tracks once loaded with heavy items if the rear glides or dowels are hairline-fractured.

Wall and Floor Contact Point Wear: Missing rubber bumpers on the backs of chairs or felt pads on table legs cause fresh scuffs on newly painted walls and hardwood floors within days of a new tenant moving in.



UPDATING AN OUTDATED SCHEME WITHOUT REPLACING EVERYTHING

A perfectly functional property can still feel dated. Nothing is broken, but the furniture and finishes no longer feel right for the property or the tenants it is trying to attract. A refresh can often bring the space up to date without replacing furniture that is still doing its job.

Small details can make a difference: Swapping outdated cabinet knobs and drawer pulls for a modern finish, replacing worn cushion inserts, or updating dining seat pads can make a room feel noticeably fresher without a major spend.

A simple paint job can take things further: A dark, dated wooden dresser, bedside table or coffee table can look completely different with a light sanding and a coat of warm beige, crisp off-white or another neutral, contemporary finish. Touching up worn paintwork around doors and skirting boards can help too. These details are easy to overlook, but they have a big effect on how fresh a room feels.

Play with textiles and lighting: A large modern rug, fresh cushions and throws, and warm ambient lighting can help bring older furniture into a more current scheme. The aim isn't to hide older pieces but to make them feel like part of the room.

Think about the room as a whole: Adding new furniture one piece at a time can leave a property feeling disjointed, even when each individual item looks good. Before keeping or adding a piece, consider its scale, proportion, colour and materials. A similar wood tone, metal finish or colour undertone can be enough to connect older and newer pieces.



UPDATING AN OUTDATED SCHEME WITHOUT REPLACING EVERYTHING

It is also worth checking how much furniture the room actually needs. Oversized or unnecessary pieces can block walkways, reduce useful space and make a room feel smaller in photographs and in person. Sometimes removing a piece makes more difference than adding one.



Easy refresh ideas:

- Update hardware: Replace dated cabinet and drawer handles across kitchens and bedrooms.
- Refresh existing furniture: Repaint, restain or reupholster pieces that are structurally sound.
- Layer in new details: Use a large rug, fresh cushions, throws and warm lighting to update the overall scheme.
- Check the layout: Remove bulky or unnecessary furniture that blocks walkways or makes rooms feel smaller.
- Keep it cohesive: Make sure new and existing pieces work together rather than replacing items individually without considering the overall scheme.



"Furnishing a property should involve more than simply replacing broken or tired-looking items. It requires a site survey to assess what can be refreshed, repaired or replaced. The best results come from considering the property as a whole, ensuring every decision supports its use, presentation and long-term value."

*- James McNeill,
Associate Director, InStyle Direct*

A CASE STUDY: HOW WE HELPED A SINGAPOREAN LANDLORD REFRESH THEIR UK PROPERTY REMOTELY

A Singapore-based investor needed to refresh their UK apartment remotely after their daughter decided to move in and use it as a student home when the existing tenancy ended. The furniture we originally supplied lasted for more than ten years across multiple tenancies, and when the client needed a refresh with a more personal scheme, we adapted to that with bespoke pieces and a suitable furniture package to reflect the client's taste.

We coordinated the refresh locally, including repainting the walls and ceilings, shampooing the carpets and installing the new furniture. Working with the concierge and letting agent kept disruption to a minimum, and the owner only needed to attend one site visit. The entire refresh was managed without them needing to be in the UK throughout the process.



"I would like to thank Mansi for the amazing help in redecorating the apartment. She's so easy to work with and highly professional. Thank you for your help and support . It's been a pleasure working with your team."

– Mr Chan , Singaporean overseas investor



A REFRESH, REPAIR OR REPLACE DECISION CHECKLIST

Not every decision needs a full assessment from scratch. Use this checklist as a quick first pass when working through furniture at the end of a tenancy, then return to the relevant section above for more detail on anything that needs a closer look.

Refresh	Repair	Replace
• Structurally sound with no safety issues • Looks dated but nothing is actually broken • Small cosmetic changes would bring it up to standard • Still fits the scale and style of the room	• Damage is cosmetic or minor • First time this particular fault has come up • Repair cost is clearly lower than replacement • Fire-safety compliance can be confirmed where required	• Structural damage a repair won't reliably fix • Same fault has already been repaired once before • Reached or passed its typical lifespan • Safety compliance cannot be confirmed • No longer matches the standard the property is let at

Before you decide, ask

- Does the standard of this furniture match the value of the property?
- Who is likely to be living here?
- Does it match the rental profile the property is aiming for?
- How long is the warranty, and how long should this realistically last?
- Would this decision hold up if it were checked again at the next tenancy?



BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Refresh, repair and replacement decisions should not be made in isolation. The strongest results come from looking at the property as a whole and considering how each choice affects its appearance, function and overall value.

A coordinated approach helps ensure that existing furniture is retained where it still works, suitable pieces are refreshed or reused, and replacements are introduced only where they will make a meaningful difference. This creates a more cohesive result while keeping the project aligned with the property's needs, intended use and available budget.



A successful refresh starts with assessing what can be retained, updated or replaced, creating a cohesive and well-presented space without changing more than necessary.





HOW INSTYLE DIRECT CAN HELP

Not everything that looks tired needs replacing. Sometimes a repair or refresh is all that's needed, while other pieces have simply reached the end of their useful life. The key is knowing the difference and making decisions that work for the property, the tenant and the budget.

At InStyle Direct, we can assess a property between tenancies and help you decide what genuinely needs attention, what can be refreshed or reused, and what is better replaced.

Our support can include:

- Furniture packages: Designed around the property, budget and target tenant
- Between-tenancy refreshes: Including furniture replacement, reconfiguration and styling updates
- Painting and decorating: To bring the wider scheme up to date
- Window dressings, accessories and dressing: To complete the look
- Coordinated refurbishments: When a property needs more than a furniture refresh

For overseas landlords, we can manage the process on the ground in the UK, working with agents, property managers and other suppliers so the property can be prepared without the owner needing to be there for every stage.

Need a second opinion?

If you're between tenancies and not sure what needs replacing, our team can carry out a site visit and talk you through what needs attention, what can wait and what could be reused elsewhere in your portfolio.

[Book a showroom appointment](#)



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