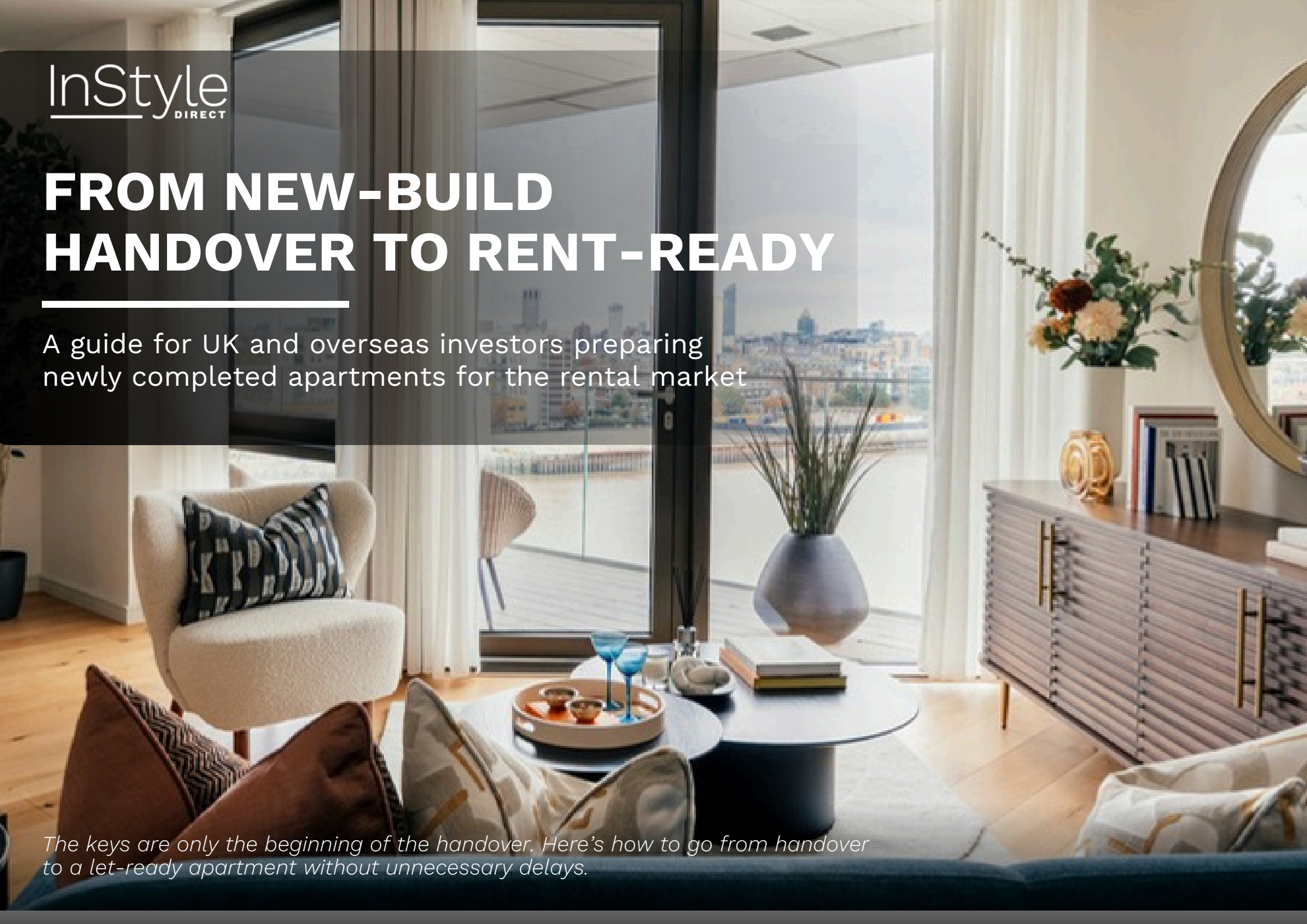
InStyle DIRECT

FROM NEW-BUILD HANDOVER TO RENT-READY

A guide for UK and overseas investors preparing newly completed apartments for the rental market



The keys are only the beginning of the handover. Here's how to go from handover to a let-ready apartment without unnecessary delays.

The market you are letting in



- £1,400 average UK monthly private rent in August 2026, up 3.8% in a year[1]
- 5.3 enquiries per rental home, the highest level for almost two years, as of September 2026[2]
- 4% to 5% rental growth by the end of 2026, by the Zoopla September report

Rents are still climbing, and tenants are competing for homes again. Zoopla's September 2026 report notes that the number of enquiries per listing has increased in almost two years, while the rental supply is trying to keep up.

For landlords, this is an opportunity to stand out. A well-presented, rental-ready property can make a stronger first impression, attract attention sooner and help you stay competitive in a busy market. For new-build investors, that means making the most of the period between receiving the keys and putting the property on the market.

Source:

1 ONS, Private rent and house prices, UK: September 2026
2 Zoopla, Rental Market Report September 2026







Introduction

A new-build apartment arrives clean, modern and completely empty. Getting the keys is an important milestone, but there is still plenty to do before it is ready for tenants.

Whether it's reporting snags, measuring windows, ordering and installing furniture or arranging building access, there are several moving parts to manage. Then come the final details, from window dressings and essentials to photography, inventory and handing the property over to your letting agent.

This guide takes you through the journey from new-build handover to rent-ready, with practical steps to help you avoid unnecessary delays and get your property ready for the rental market.

We also cover what the process looks like for overseas investors. If you cannot be in the UK for a handover, you can still manage the process smoothly with the right plan and the right people in place.

Already letting and looking to freshen up a tired property?

Our ***Refresh, repair or replace guide*** looks at what to update, repair or replace.

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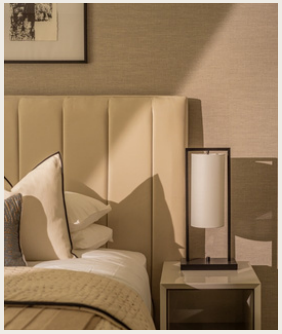




Understanding the developer's handover timetable

A completion date from the developer is only the starting point for your preparation. Once you know when the property is likely to be ready, you can work backwards and start planning everything that needs to happen before it goes on the rental market.

The most important date is the completion notice, rather than an estimated date in a sales brochure. Under the New Homes Quality Code, the notice period is usually expected to be at least 14 calendar days, giving buyers time to complete the necessary legal steps and arrange a pre-completion inspection.[3]

For an investor, this is when the wider preparation needs to come together. Snagging, furniture, window dressings, building access and installation all need to be considered alongside the completion process rather than left until the keys are in your hand.

Ask your developer about:

- The latest expected completion date and when the completion notice is likely to be served.
- How and when keys will be collected, and whether someone can collect them on your behalf.
- The managing agent's name and contact details.
- Building rules for deliveries, move-ins and lift bookings.
- Meter locations, utility information and anything not included in the standard specification.



The key takeaway: don't wait for the keys to start planning. The more you can arrange before completion, the easier it is to move from handover to a rental-ready property.

Please note: Every development may have its own rules. Check the requirements with your developer or managing agent before arranging deliveries, lift bookings, installation or access.

Source:

3 New Homes Quality Board (NHQB), New Homes Quality Code, Part 2: Legal documents, information, inspection & completion.

Snagging and checking the condition of the property

A new-build apartment may look finished, but small issues can still show up at handover. For an investor, spotting them early matters. A leaking tap, faulty socket or door that does not close properly can become a problem once furniture, deliveries and tenants are involved.

Under the New Homes Quality Code, buyers can carry out a pre-completion inspection themselves or appoint a suitably qualified inspector. The NHQB provides a standard checklist for this. If you inspect the property yourself, keep in mind that the checklist was designed for professional inspectors, so you may miss issues.[4]

Your snagging checklist

Inside the apartment:

- Check walls, ceilings and paintwork for marks, cracks or uneven finishes
- Look at flooring, skirting boards, grout & silicone for damage or unfinished areas
- Open and close every door, window and cupboard
- Check handles, locks and hinges
- Test every light, switch and socket
- Run every tap and check water pressure and drainage
- Test the shower, bath and toilet
- Check radiators, heating controls and hot water
- Test extractor fans and the entry system
- Check kitchen appliances, where included
- Look for leaks under sinks and around plumbing
- Check built-in storage, shelves and fittings



Source:

4 New Homes Quality Board (NHQB), New Homes Quality Code, Part 2: Legal documents, information, inspection & completion.



Snagging and checking the condition of the property

Before you leave

- Take clear photos and videos of every room
- Photograph any snag with enough detail to show the issue
- Record meter readings
- Keep a copy of the snagging list you send to the developer
- Check what has been agreed for any outstanding work

The NHQB says snags and defects should generally be resolved within 30 days, wherever possible. If you cannot attend the inspection yourself, a suitably qualified professional can carry it out and provide a report and photographic record.[4]











Measuring and reviewing the layout

Reviewing the floor plan is a fundamental step. The dimensions provided by the developer help you understand the size of the property, but they do not tell you whether your furniture will actually fit.

Once you have the keys, measure the apartment yourself. This is particularly important before ordering larger pieces or arranging delivery.

Then think about how each room will work for the tenant. A studio may need a sofa bed, while a one-bed apartment with a small alcove might work better with a desk than a dining table. In an open-plan space, create clear areas for eating, working & relaxing.

Also check what is actually included in the specification. Developers should provide information about items that are not included but might reasonably be expected, such as floor coverings. Don't assume flooring, blinds or lighting are finished until you have checked.

What to measure

- ☑ Room lengths, widths and ceiling heights
- ☑ Window sizes for curtains and blinds
- ☑ Door widths and corridor turns
- ☑ Lift dimensions and access points
- ☑ Positions of sockets, radiators and TV points
- ☑ Built-in storage and any fixed features



Pro Tip: Measure the route too, not just the room: A sofa or wardrobe might fit perfectly once inside the apartment but still not make it through the entrance, corridor, lift or a tight turn.

Choosing furniture around the target tenant and expected rent

Start with the property's purpose, then the tenant, then the furniture.

Furnishing for yourself or for tenants?

If you are buying the apartment as your own home, comfort, personal taste and how you expect to use the space can guide your decisions.

If you are preparing it for tenants, the priorities are different. Think about who is likely to rent the property, what they will expect at that price point and how the furniture will perform between tenancies. In London, that often means durable furniture, neutral finishes, practical storage and comfortable pieces that work for the space rather than a particular owner's taste.

Furnish for your target tenant.

Furniture priorities	Furniture priorities	Furniture priorities
Professional renter	Convenience and easy move-in	Comfortable, sturdy sofa and bed, practical storage
Corporate relocator	Ready-to-live-in quality	Complete furnishing, window dressings, good lighting
International renter	Quality and a polished finish, ready-to-move convenience	Cohesive design, quality furniture, useful storage
Budget-conscious renter	Value and practicality	Durable, easy-care furniture and essential pieces



Choosing furniture around the target tenant and expected rent



Set your furnishing budget in line with expected rental income.

The average UK private rent was £1,400 a month in August 2026, up 3.8% year-on-year, according to ONS.[5] Zoopla reported an average new-let rent of £1,385 a month in September 2026.[6] These are UK-wide figures, so they are only a starting point. Your local market, postcode, property size and condition will determine what tenants are prepared to pay.

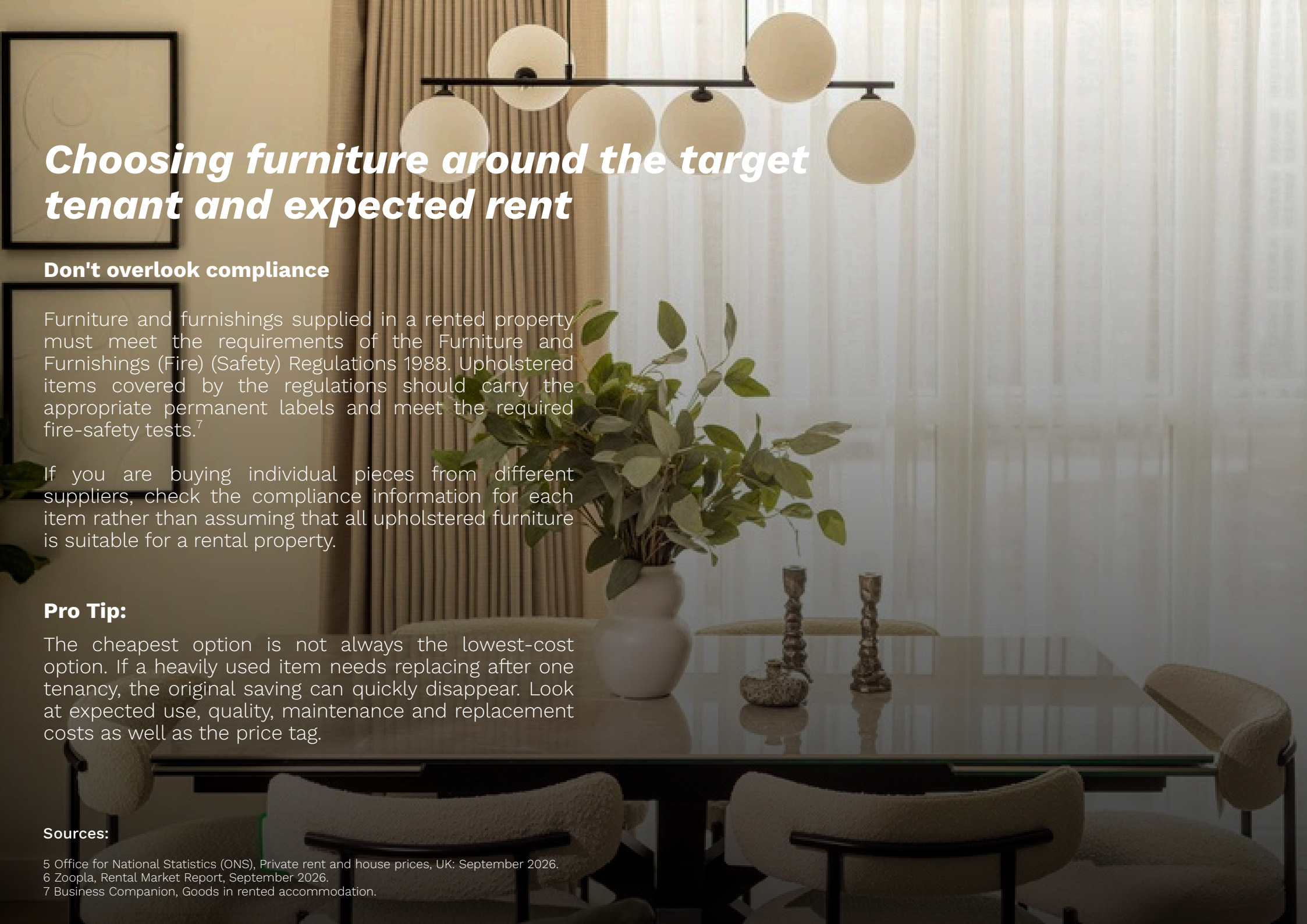
The aim is not to spend as much as possible on furniture but to spend where it improves the property, supports the rent you are targeting and is likely to hold up to regular use.



Think beyond appearance

A rental property needs to work in real life as well as in photographs. Consider the following:

- **Durability:** Can furniture handle regular use and cleaning?
- **Storage:** Is there enough useful storage for the likely tenant?
- **Comfort:** Are the bed, sofa and dining furniture comfortable enough for everyday use?
- **Flexibility:** Could the layout work for different types of tenants?
- **Maintenance:** Can individual items be repaired or replaced without disrupting the whole scheme?
- **Presentation:** Does the furniture make the apartment look spacious, considered and ready to move into?



Choosing furniture around the target tenant and expected rent

Don't overlook compliance

Furniture and furnishings supplied in a rented property must meet the requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. Upholstered items covered by the regulations should carry the appropriate permanent labels and meet the required fire-safety tests.[7]

If you are buying individual pieces from different suppliers, check the compliance information for each item rather than assuming that all upholstered furniture is suitable for a rental property.

Pro Tip:

The cheapest option is not always the lowest-cost option. If a heavily used item needs replacing after one tenancy, the original saving can quickly disappear. Look at expected use, quality, maintenance and replacement costs as well as the price tag.

Sources:

5 Office for National Statistics (ONS), Private rent and house prices, UK: September 2026.
6 Zoopla, Rental Market Report, September 2026.
7 Business Companion, Goods in rented accommodation.

Window dressings, lighting & essential household items

Window dressings can enhance the look and feel of a room while providing privacy and helping to control natural light. Full-length curtains or well-fitted blinds can complement the furniture and bring the room together. Measure after snagging, as window repairs or adjustments can affect what will fit.

Lighting: Check what the developer has fitted. If a room only has ceiling lights, consider adding floor or table lamps where appropriate.

Essentials: A furnished let needs more than furniture. Agree the list with your letting agent, and think about:

- Kitchen basics such as pans, crockery, cutlery, a kettle & a toaster
- Bins, an iron and board, and a clothes airer
- A shower curtain or screen, bath mat and toilet brush
- Mattress protectors and pillows
- Spare keys and door fobs

Safety alarms: Landlords must provide smoke alarms on each storey used as living accommodation and a carbon monoxide alarm in any room used as living accommodation where there is a fixed combustion appliance, with gas cookers excluded from this requirement.[8] Check the alarms are working and record this as part of your inventory.

8 GOV.UK, Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms: requirements for landlords and tenants.



Delivery access, lift bookings and building restrictions

Furniture needs to work with the apartment's layout, but it also needs to work with the building. A sofa may fit perfectly in the living room and still be impossible to get through the entrance, around a tight corridor or into the lift.

New-build developments can have their own rules for deliveries, including permitted time slots, loading areas, lift bookings and access requirements. Check these with your managing agent or concierge before placing your furniture order.

Know the building rules before you book delivery. Check things like:

- ☑ Who can make the booking? The owner, agent or furniture supplier?
- ☑ When can deliveries arrive? Check permitted days and hours.
- ☑ Does the lift need to be booked? Find out how long you can reserve it for.
- ☑ Is anything required beforehand? This could include a deposit, insurance certificate or building protection.
- ☑ Where can the delivery vehicle stop? Check loading and parking arrangements.

Measure the entrance, and routes not just the room

Check the entrance, lift and tightest corridor turns before ordering larger pieces. Beds, wardrobes and large sofas are the first items to check. If access is restricted, flat-packed or sectional furniture may be easier to deliver.

For overseas owners: Make sure someone local can meet the concierge, oversee the delivery and deal with any problems on the day. If you cannot be there, agree in advance who will manage access and delivery on your behalf.

Installation, waste removal and final styling

Once snagging and any decorating are complete, the apartment can move into its final preparation. Keeping the work in the right order helps avoid damaging newly finished surfaces or having to repeat work.

Finish the repairs: Complete snagging, decorating and any other work before furniture arrives.

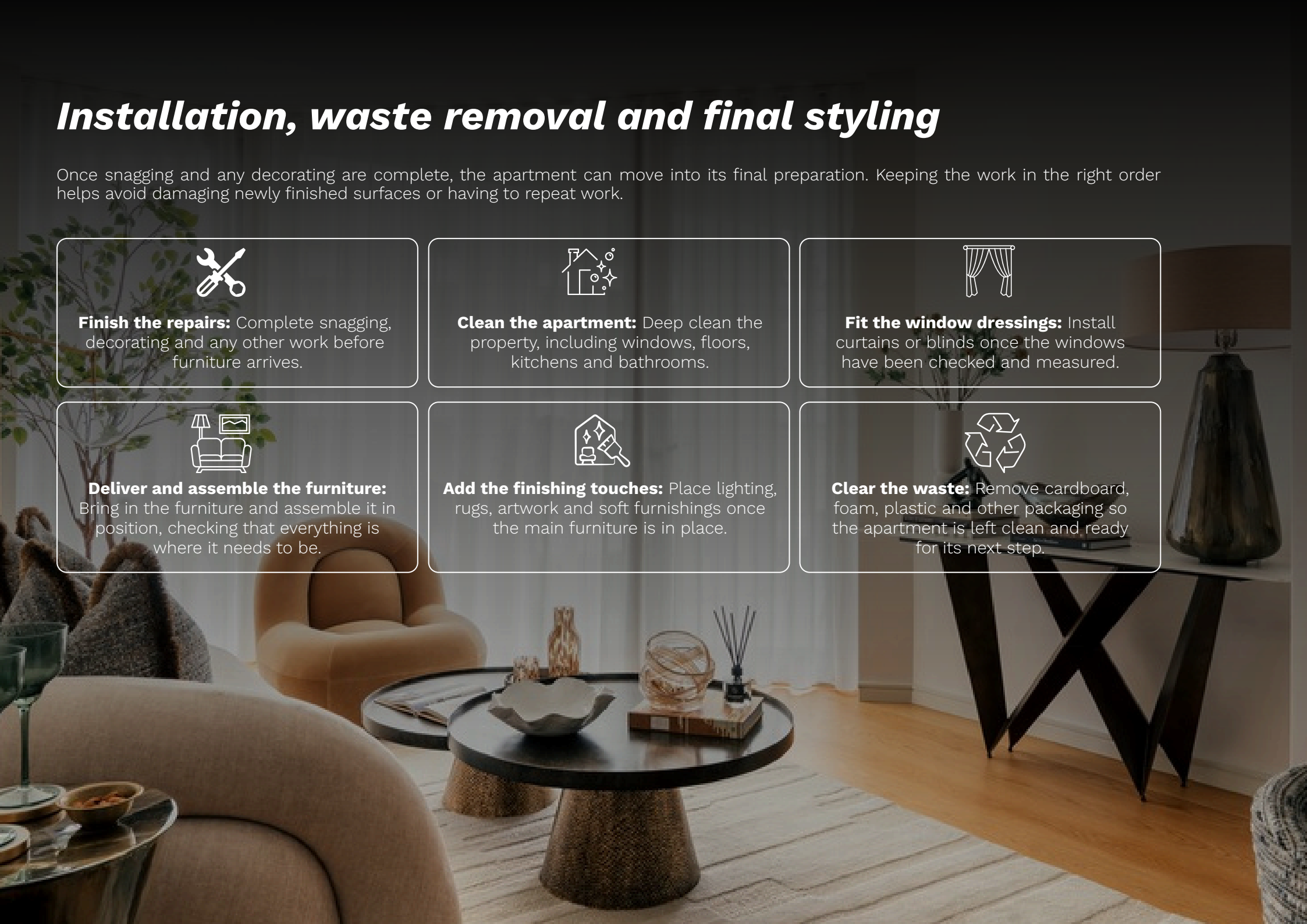
Clean the apartment: Deep clean the property, including windows, floors, kitchens and bathrooms.

Fit the window dressings: Install curtains or blinds once the windows have been checked and measured.

Deliver and assemble the furniture: Bring in the furniture and assemble it in position, checking that everything is where it needs to be.

Add the finishing touches: Place lighting, rugs, artwork and soft furnishings once the main furniture is in place.

Clear the waste: Remove cardboard, foam, plastic and other packaging so the apartment is left clean and ready for its next step.



Installation, waste removal and final styling











From installation to photography

This is where having one team manage the final stages can make things simpler. At InStyle Direct, our end-to-end service covers everything, right from furniture delivery and installation, waste removal and final styling, with complimentary photography also available to help get the property ready for marketing.

Pro Tip: *Once everything is in place, make the beds, position lamps, hang mirrors and artwork, and add cushions and throws where appropriate. The aim is to leave the apartment clean, complete and ready for photography and viewings.*

Photography, inventory and letting-agent handover



Make the first impression count

For many tenants, photography is their first introduction to a property. With so many rental listings online, strong photography can help a property stand out and encourage prospective tenants to look closer. Photograph the property once the furniture, window dressings and styling are complete and before the tenant moves in. Capture each room clearly, show the layout at its best and highlight features that matter to the listing.



Create a clear inventory

Record the condition of the property and its contents before the tenancy starts. Include dated photographs of:

- Each room and its finishes
- Furniture and appliances
- Meter readings
- Keys and fobs
- Fire-safety labels on upholstered furniture
- Any existing marks, damage or unfinished work

Prepare an agent's handover pack

Before the property is marketed, bring together the documents, information and access details your letting agent will need.

Photography, inventory and letting-agent handover

Property and safety documents

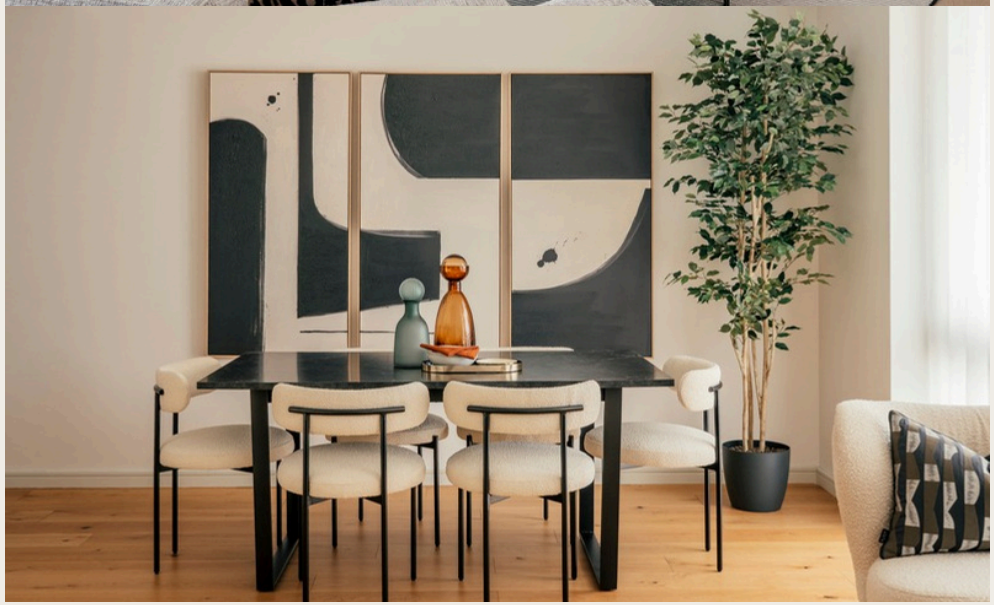
- **EPC:** GOV.UK confirms that landlords must provide an Energy Performance Certificate for the property.[9]
- **Gas safety record:** where the property has gas equipment.
- **Electrical safety documentation:** including the relevant inspection and test records.
- **Alarm information:** confirm that required smoke and carbon monoxide alarms have been fitted and tested.
- **Building and managing-agent details:** including relevant access and contact information.

Property handover details

- **Keys and fobs:** including any spare sets.
- **Meter readings:** taken before the first tenancy.
- **Appliance manuals and warranties:** check where provided and keep a record.
- **Developer warranty and snagging information:** including details of any outstanding work.
- **Inventory and photographic record:** showing the property's condition before the tenant moves in.

Please note: The exact documents and requirements will depend on the property, tenancy and location. Always check the latest requirements with your letting agent, local authority and relevant government guidance before the property is let.





Source:
9. GOV.UK, Renting out your property: Landlord responsibilities.

A suggested preparation timeline

There is no single timeline that works for every new build. Developer dates, building rules, snagging, furniture availability and access can all affect the schedule. But it's important to stay prepared when the handover happens, so use this checklist as a planning guide and adjust it to your property's circumstances.

When	What to do
8–12 weeks before expected completion	Get the latest completion update from the developer. Check building and delivery rules. Agree your target tenant and expected rent with your letting agent. Start planning furniture, window dressings and any other items you will need.
4–6 weeks before	Confirm your furniture and window dressing requirements. Arrange your snagging inspection. Confirm how keys will be collected and who will manage the property if you cannot attend.
Once the completion notice comes	Confirm the completion date. Arrange the pre-completion inspection. Book delivery and lift access where possible. Make sure everyone involved has the latest date and access information.
Completion day	Collect the keys, take meter readings and check the property. Photograph the condition and report any snags to the developer.
After completion	Complete any outstanding snagging or works. Measure windows and confirm final furniture dimensions. Arrange cleaning, window dressings, furniture delivery and installation.
Once the apartment is ready	Complete the final styling, remove waste and check that the property and required documentation are ready for marketing.
Before the first viewing	Photograph the finished property, complete the inventory and hand over the keys, documents and property information to your letting agent.



Where delays can happen

Developer dates can move. Snags can take longer than expected. Building access may need to be booked in advance, furniture can go out of stock and documents may not be ready when expected.

For overseas owners, handover without being there

The UK remains an established destination for international property investors, with London in particular attracting buyers from around the world. For overseas owners, however, buying the property is only part of the process. Getting a newly completed apartment ready for tenants from another country comes with its own practical challenges.

A market with global appeal: London's international business, education and cultural appeal continues to attract professionals, students and families from around the world. For investors, this creates an opportunity to own property in a market with an established rental sector.

The challenge is managing it from afar: The handover process can involve developers, managing agents, snagging teams, delivery companies, installers and letting agents. When you are overseas, coordinating all of this remotely can make even straightforward decisions more difficult.

You may need a dedicated on-ground team to:

- Collect and check the keys
- Attend the property and report any snags
- Measure rooms and windows
- Arrange building access and lift bookings
- Receive and oversee furniture deliveries
- Coordinate installation and waste removal
- Prepare the property for photography and marketing
- Hand over keys and documents to the letting agent





For overseas owners, handover without being there

How InStyle Direct supports overseas investors

Preparing a property from another country does not have to mean managing every part of the process yourself. InStyle Direct brings design, furnishing, delivery and installation together under one service, with a team that can manage the practical details on the ground while keeping you updated remotely.

One service, managed remotely: From the initial consultation and furniture selection through to delivery, installation, styling and waste removal, we coordinate the process so you do not need to be onsite.

Experience with London properties: Our team brings more than 20 years of experience across property furnishing, interior design and refurbishment, with a strong understanding of the practical requirements of London properties.

In-house delivery and installation: Our own delivery and installation teams manage the logistics, helping keep communication between suppliers, installers and the property team in one place.

Support across time zones: We understand that overseas owners may be working across different time zones. Our project managers keep communication clear and can coordinate the practical decisions needed to keep the property moving towards completion.

From handover to rental-ready: Whether you need a complete furniture package or support with specific parts of the process, we can help take the property from an empty new-build to a finished home ready for photography, viewings and its first tenant.

How a one-stop service can help

Getting a new-build property ready for its first tenant involves more than choosing furniture. There are measurements, design decisions, window dressings, deliveries, installation, styling and final preparation to coordinate.

Managing each part separately means more suppliers, more communication and more opportunities for something to be missed.

How InStyle Direct can help

We bring the key parts of the process together, giving you one team to manage the journey from an empty apartment to a property ready for the rental market.

From handover to rental-ready

Whether you are preparing one apartment or a wider portfolio, our role is to make the process simpler. We can help you plan what is needed, coordinate the work and get the property ready for its next stage, without you having to manage every detail yourself.

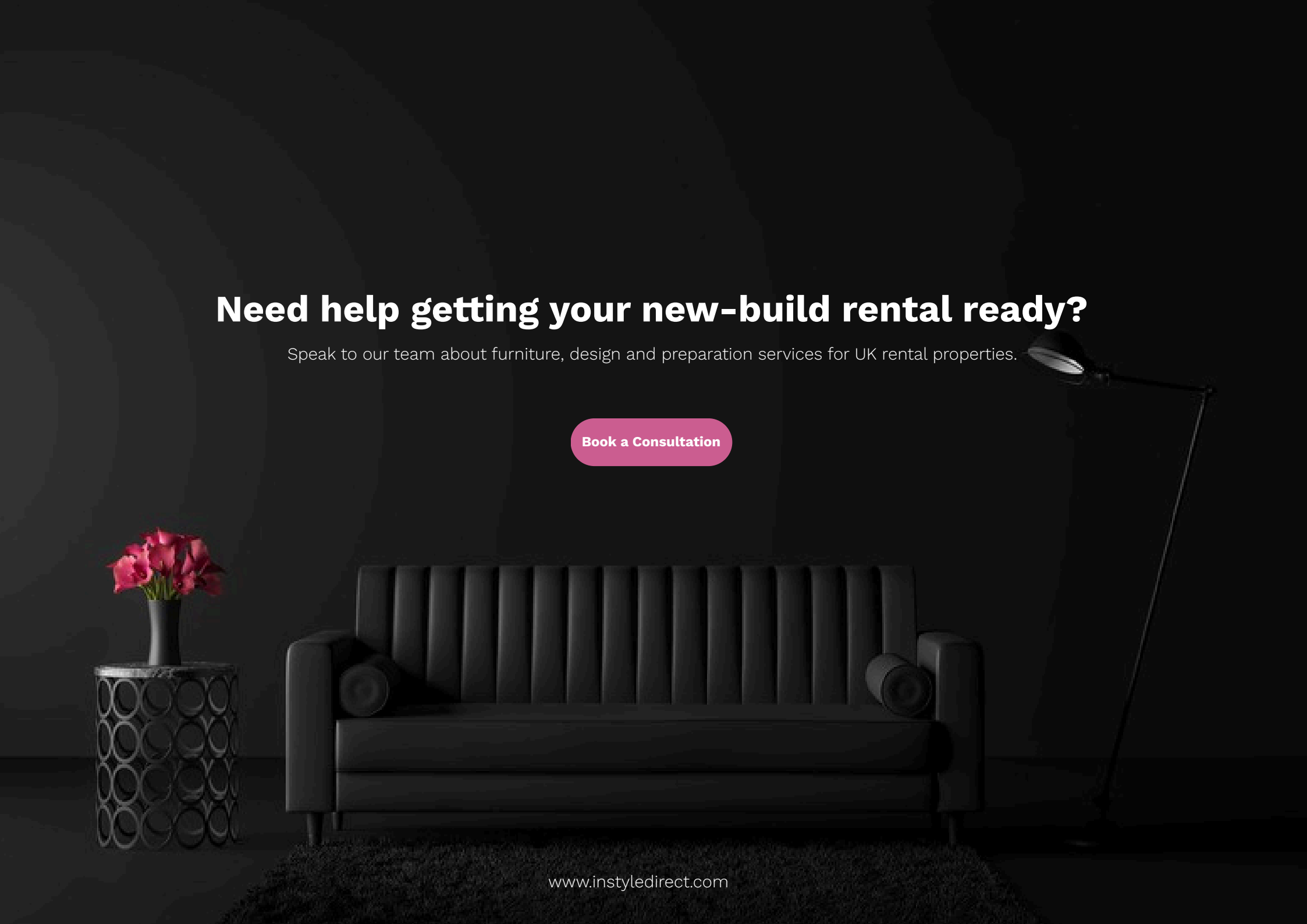
Furniture packages:
Design-led furniture packages tailored to the property, budget and target tenant, with options for different property types and rental strategies.

Interior design and refurbishment:
If the property needs more than furniture, our design and refurbishment teams can help with everything from individual updates to a more complete transformation.

Window dressings and finishing touches:
Made-to-measure curtains and blinds, accessories and styling help bring the finished property together.

Delivery, installation and waste removal:
Our in-house teams manage delivery and installation, with waste removal included as part of the final preparation.

A single point of contact:
Rather than coordinating separate furniture suppliers, installers, designers and other contractors, you have one team overseeing the process and keeping everything moving in the right order.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