

InStyle DIRECT

The void-period furnishing plan

Preparing a rental property between tenancies

Void periods carry a cost, and last-minute preparation can add avoidable expense. Here is how to inspect, repair, refresh and relaunch a property during a limited void period, with fewer avoidable delays along the way.

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The market you are *letting in*

£1,406

Average UK monthly private rent in September 2026, up 3.8% year-on-year[1]

19%

Of households in England rent privately, rising to 28% in London[2]

5.3

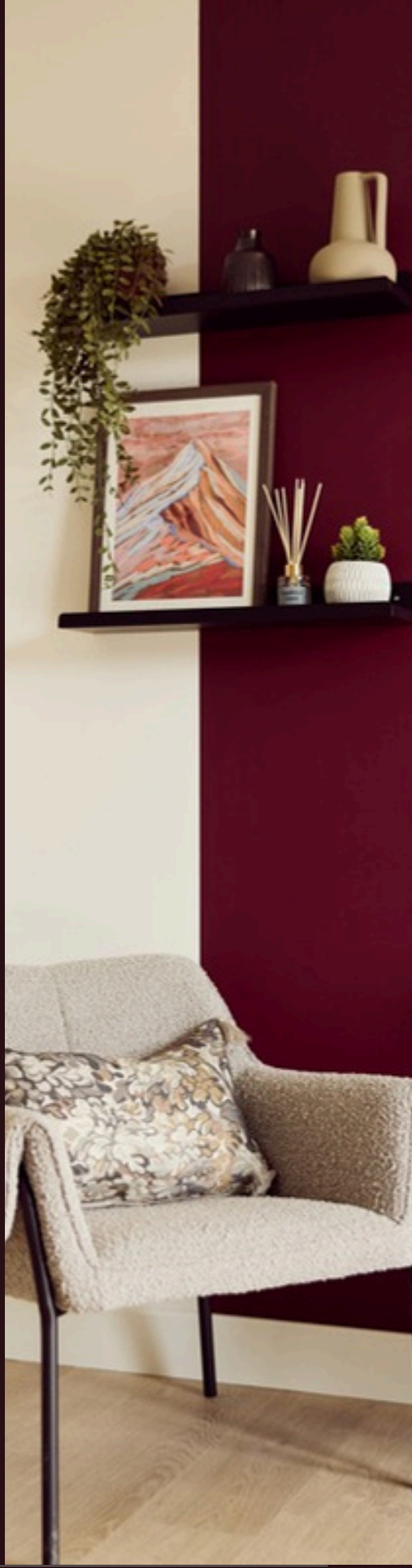
Average enquiries per rental listing in September 2026, the highest level in almost two years[3]

25%

Fewer rental homes available than before the pandemic[3]

20 days

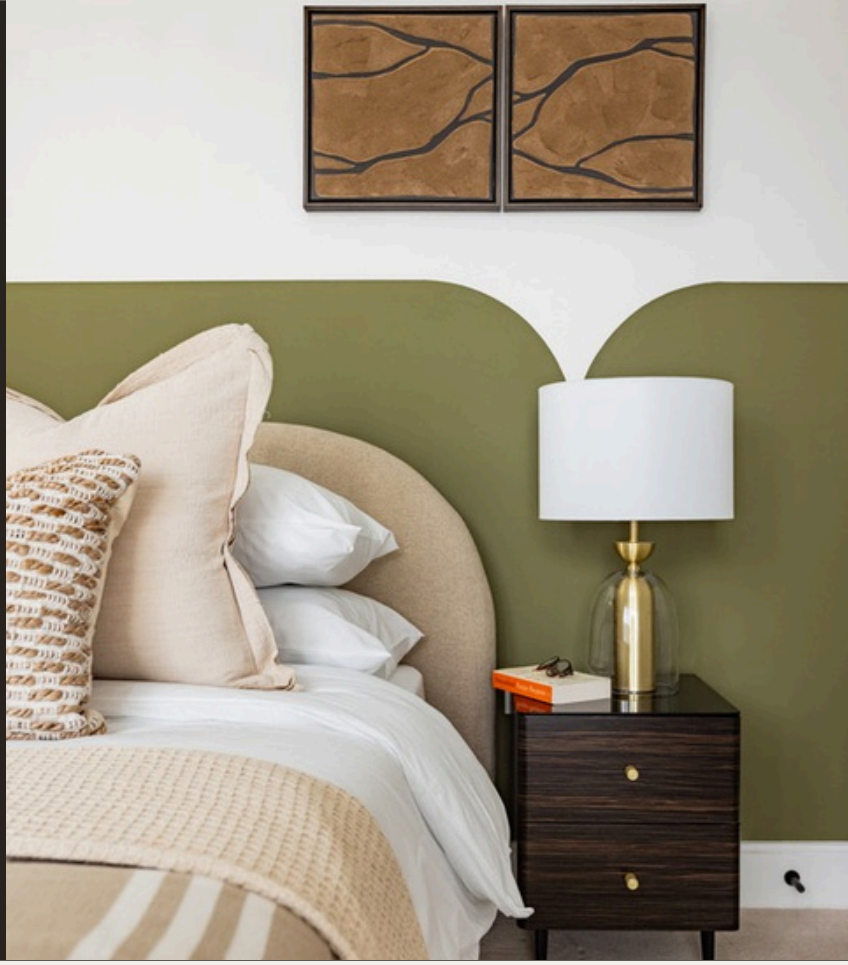
Average time taken to find a tenant in early 2026, compared with 13 days at the 2022 market peak[4]



Sources

1. ONS (2026). Private rent and house prices, UK: October 2026. September estimates provisional.
2. MHCLG. English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Profile of households and dwellings.
3. Zoopla (2026). Rental Market Report: September 2026.
4. Zoopla (11 March 2026). Competition for rented homes falls to lowest level in six years.

What the market means for your void



Renting is a mainstream way to live in England, and competition for good homes is building again. Zoopla reports that supply has started to fall while demand rises, particularly in London.[3] ONS figures show how much the picture varies by location and property type. The average rent in London reached £2,338 in September 2026, while the average for flats and maisonettes across the UK was £1,371.[1]

Those averages hide a lot of local detail, so treat them as a starting point. What they do tell you is that a well-prepared home competes better than a tired one, and that every week of vacancy has a real cost.

A typical let still takes a few weeks, which means a void period is normal rather than a sign that something has gone wrong. The goal is not to promise a particular letting time. It is to remove the avoidable delays that sit inside the time you control.

Sources

1. ONS (2026). Private rent and house prices, UK: October 2026. September estimates provisional.

3. Zoopla (2026). Rental Market Report: September 2026.

A clear plan between tenancies



The tenant has handed back the keys, the property is quiet, and the clock has started. For most landlords and property managers, the next few days decide whether the home reaches the market ready or limps there late.

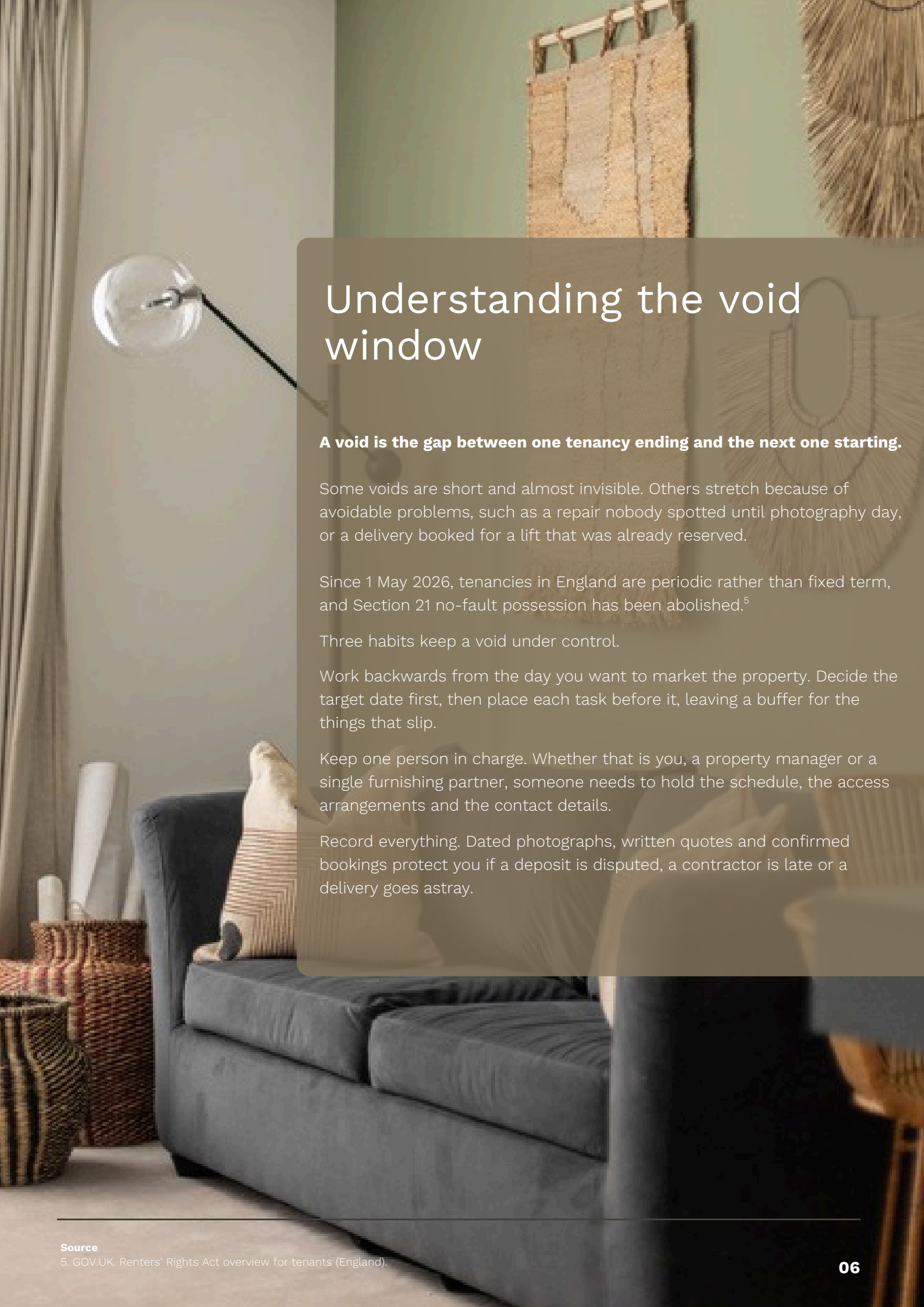
A void period rewards planning. Inspections, repairs, cleaning, decorating, furniture decisions, deliveries, inventory and photography all depend on one another. Book them in the wrong order and a freshly cleaned flat gets dusty again, or a sofa arrives before the painter has finished. Book them well and each step makes the next one easier.

This guide walks through the whole sequence. It covers the first inspection, how to separate urgent work from work that can wait, which furniture can stay, how to coordinate trades, how to replace what is missing or damaged, and how to prepare for the inventory and photography. It closes with a seven-day plan and a fourteen-day plan you can adapt to your own property.

Every property is different, and delays can happen with trades or stock availability. These timelines are intended as a guide rather than a guarantee of how quickly your property will let.

For advice on what to update, repair or replace, read our detailed guide.

VIEW NOW



Understanding the void window

A void is the gap between one tenancy ending and the next one starting.

Some voids are short and almost invisible. Others stretch because of avoidable problems, such as a repair nobody spotted until photography day, or a delivery booked for a lift that was already reserved.

Since 1 May 2026, tenancies in England are periodic rather than fixed term, and Section 21 no-fault possession has been abolished.[5]

Three habits keep a void under control.

Work backwards from the day you want to market the property. Decide the target date first, then place each task before it, leaving a buffer for the things that slip.

Keep one person in charge. Whether that is you, a property manager or a single furnishing partner, someone needs to hold the schedule, the access arrangements and the contact details.

Record everything. Dated photographs, written quotes and confirmed bookings protect you if a deposit is disputed, a contractor is late or a delivery goes astray.

Source

5. GOV.UK. Renters' Rights Act overview for tenants (England).

The initial inspection



The first inspection sets the tone for the whole void. When done carefully, it gives you an accurate list of what needs to happen. Done in a hurry, it leaves surprises for later.

Where possible, arrange a pre-departure visit while the tenant is still in the property. Furniture, damp patches and wear are far easier to assess when you can see how rooms are used. Then carry out a full walk-through on checkout day, with the original check-in inventory in your hand. Give at least 24 hours' notice for a routine inspection and agree access with the tenant.

What to bring

The previous inventory and photographs, a torch, a phone or camera, a tape measure, a notebook or checklist app, and a moisture meter if you have one.

Inspect room by room

☐ Walls, ceilings and paintwork for marks, cracks, scuffs and signs of damp or mould

☐ Flooring, skirting boards, grout and silicone for damage, staining or lifting

☐ Doors, windows, locks, handles and hinges for correct operation

☐ Check lights, switches and sockets for normal operation and visible damage; refer electrical concerns to a qualified professional.

☐ Taps, showers, baths and toilets for leaks, drainage and water pressure

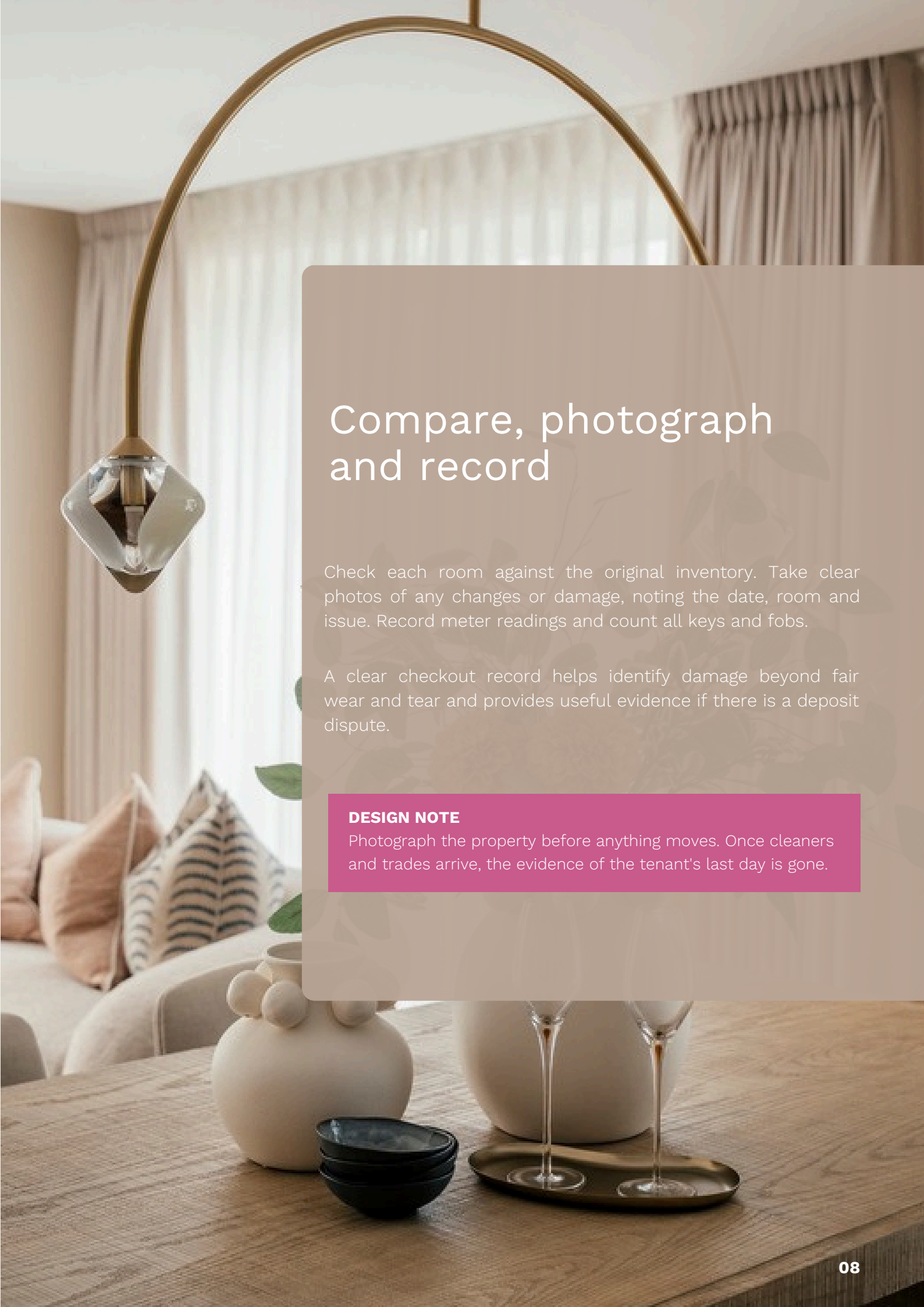
☐ Radiators, boiler controls and hot water

☐ Kitchen appliances, extractor fans and ventilation

☐ Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

☐ Windows and window dressings for damage, dirt and fit

☐ Furniture and soft furnishings for condition, stains, odours and missing items



Compare, photograph and record

Check each room against the original inventory. Take clear photos of any changes or damage, noting the date, room and issue. Record meter readings and count all keys and fobs.

A clear checkout record helps identify damage beyond fair wear and tear and provides useful evidence if there is a deposit dispute.

DESIGN NOTE
Photograph the property before anything moves. Once cleaners and trades arrive, the evidence of the tenant's last day is gone.

Identifying urgent and non-urgent work



Not every issue deserves the same speed. Sorting the list into tiers stops small cosmetic jobs from delaying the things that genuinely hold up a let.

Priority	What belongs here	When to act
Urgent	Safety and compliance items, leaks, heating or hot water faults, electrical faults, unsafe furniture, broken locks	Address immediately; complete required work before occupation
Letting-critical	Items that affect appearance, comfort or function on viewing day, such as damaged flooring, stained mattresses, marked walls and broken appliances	Within the void, before cleaning and photography
Non-urgent	Minor cosmetic wear, items that do not affect safety or presentation, and upgrades that suit a longer project	At a planned later date, with tenant agreement and suitable access



Safety and compliance come first

Before a new tenancy begins, make sure your property meets the required safety standards and all certificates are up to date.

The main checks include:

Gas safety: An annual check of landlord-provided gas appliances and flues by a Gas Safe registered engineer. Give new tenants the record before occupation. [6]

Electrical safety: Inspection and testing of the fixed installation by a qualified person at least every five years, or sooner if the report requires. Complete required remedial work. [7]

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC): Where minimum energy efficiency rules apply, a rating of at least E or a valid registered exemption is required. An EPC is generally valid for ten years unless replaced by a newer certificate. [8]

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms: At least one smoke alarm on each storey used as living accommodation, and a carbon monoxide alarm in living accommodation containing a fixed combustion appliance, excluding gas cookers. [9]

Landlords must also check that all required alarms are working on the first day of a new tenancy. Keep records of these checks and make sure certificates are valid before tenants move in. [9]

Sources

6. GOV.UK. Private renting: Your landlord's safety responsibilities (gas).
7. GOV.UK. Electrical safety standards in the private and social rented sectors: guidance.
8. GOV.UK. Domestic private rented property: minimum energy efficiency standard.
9. GOV.UK. Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations: guidance.

Allow time for repairs and replacements



Looking ahead: the Government has confirmed a policy to raise the minimum standard to EPC C or equivalent from 1 October 2030, with exemptions. The current minimum remains E where the rules apply; check the latest requirements when planning improvements. [10]

Allow time for repairs and replacements

Some jobs are easier to complete than others. Repainting a wall may only take a day, while replacing a carpet could involve measuring, ordering and arranging installation.

Identify jobs that need materials or specialist trades as early as possible, so they don't delay the next tenancy.

If you're unsure whether an item needs repairing, refreshing or replacing, read our Refresh, Repair or Replace: A Landlord's Guide.

Source

10. DESNZ (2026). Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: government response.



Deciding what furniture can remain

Furniture is often the biggest variable in a void. Some pieces are in good shape and only need a clean. Others are worn, unsafe or simply out of step with what tenants expect. The skill is knowing which is which, and deciding quickly.

Four questions for every piece

Is it safe?

Covered upholstered furniture and furnishings must meet the applicable Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations. Check permanent labels where required and retain supplier evidence. Mattresses and bed bases have different labelling provisions. If compliance cannot be established, obtain advice before reusing the item. [11]

Is it clean?

A professional clean will lift many stains and odours, but some will not shift. Mattresses with staining, odour or sagging rarely recover.

Is it sound?

Check frames, joints, drawer runners and hinges. A wobbling chair or a sagging sofa base will not improve once a new tenant moves in.

Is it suitable?

Consider who is likely to rent the property now. A dated scheme that suited the previous tenant may not support the rent you are aiming for.

Source
11. Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, Schedule 7; read with 2025 amendments.

A practical furniture decision guide



A simple decision guide

Item	Often worth keeping if	Often worth replacing if
Sofas and armchairs	Frames are sound, covers are clean and applicable compliance evidence is available	Cushions or upholstery are beyond economical repair, or compliance cannot be established
Mattresses	They are clean, supportive and odour-free	They are stained, sagging or worn
Beds and headboards	Structures are solid and finishes are intact	Joints or fixings are damaged
Tables, desks and storage	Surfaces are intact and fittings work	Surfaces are chipped or swollen, drawers or doors fail
Curtains and blinds	They fit, hang well and clean up easily	They are faded, torn, shrunk or the wrong size
Small appliances and kitchenware	Everything works and is complete	Items are missing, damaged or unsafe

A good way to think about this is to ask whether the cost of repairing and cleaning an item is close to the cost of replacing it. If it does, replacement usually makes more sense, because a new piece also resets the wear clock for the next tenancy.

Think about the next tenant, not the last one

Under the Renters' Rights Act, tenants can request to keep a pet, and landlords cannot unreasonably refuse. Choose durable, easy-to-clean fabrics and finishes. Keep the furniture and décor consistent too, as a well-coordinated room looks better in photographs. [5]

The InStyle Direct furniture care guide explains how to look after furniture between tenancies, which can extend the life of the pieces you decide to keep.

Sources

5. GOV.UK. Renters' Rights Act overview for tenants (England).

11. Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, Schedule 7; read with 2025 amendments.

Coordinating cleaning, decorating and installation



The order of work matters as much as the work itself. Dust from sanding, paint on a new sofa and delivery marks on a clean floor are all avoidable, as long as the sequence is right.

The sequence that works for most properties

01 Repairs and compliance checks come first, because they need access and may reveal further work.

02 Decorating follows repairs, with walls, ceilings, woodwork and any flooring changes completed before furniture arrives.

03 A deep clean comes next, covering floors, windows, kitchen, bathrooms, appliances and inside cupboards.

04 Window dressings go up once windows have been checked, repaired and measured.

05 Furniture is delivered and assembled in position, with the room layout already decided.

06 Styling and a light final clean follow, with lamps, rugs, artwork, cushions and throws added at the end.

07 Waste is cleared, including packaging, foam, cardboard and old furniture.

Access, measurements and buffers



Lock in access and bookings early

Access and delivery arrangements can cause avoidable delays. Confirm who holds keys, who can let trades in and whether the building has rules for deliveries and lift use. Flats often need lift bookings, permitted time slots and loading arrangements, and some buildings ask for insurance details or a deposit. Keep each booking in writing, with the date, time, access arrangement and a contact number.

Measure before you order

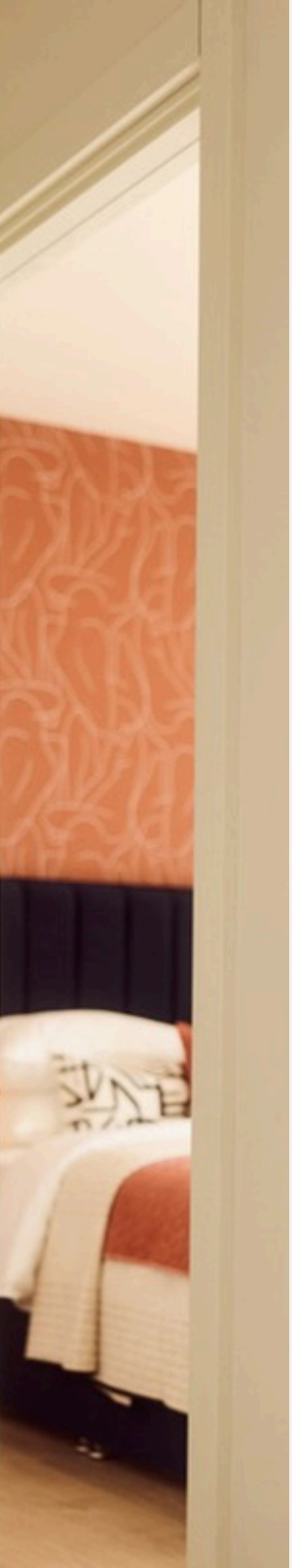
Measure windows and rooms early, recheck dimensions after any relevant work, and confirm the delivery route for furniture. A large sofa that fits the living room can still fail at a narrow corridor or lift. If access is tight, flat-packed or sectional furniture is often easier to deliver.

Leave a buffer

Build at least one spare day into the schedule. Paint takes time to dry, stock can shift and trades overrun. A realistic buffer helps protect the intended viewing date.

DESIGN NOTE

Where possible, use one coordinated team for the final stages. Fewer handovers between suppliers means fewer gaps for things to fall through.



Replacing missing or damaged items

Once the inspection is complete, you will have a clear list of what is gone, broken or past its best. The next task is turning that list into a single, well-timed order.

Audit against the inventory

Check every item on the previous inventory. Mark each item as in good condition, requiring attention or missing. Then add anything a tenant would reasonably expect that was never listed, such as a bin, a clothes airer or a full set of keys.

Remember the essentials

A furnished let works best when the small items are covered as well as the big ones. Agree the list with your letting agent, and consider kitchen basics, bins, an iron and board, a shower curtain or screen, bath mat, toilet brush, mattress protectors, pillows and spare keys or fobs.

Do not forget light and privacy

Window dressings and lighting influence how a room looks in photographs and how it feels on a viewing. If a room relies on a single ceiling light, a floor or table lamp can make a big difference. Made-to-measure curtains and blinds usually have a lead time, so order them early.

Lead times and lifetime cost



Think about lead times and compliance

Order items with the longest lead times first. Where you are buying pieces from different suppliers, check the fire safety information for each upholstered item rather than assuming it is compliant. [11] Aim for a cohesive look, because a coordinated scheme photographs better and often feels more premium than a patchwork of replacements.

Look at lifetime cost, not just price

The cheapest option is not always the lowest-cost option. A heavily used item that needs replacing after one tenancy can wipe out the saving. Consider durability, ease of cleaning and replacement cost alongside the price tag.

For landlords who would rather decide once, a furniture package can replace a long shopping list with a single coordinated order. Our landlord resource hub brings together guidance on budgets, packages and furnishing choices.

Source

11. Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, Schedule 7; read with 2025 amendments.

Preparing for inventory and photography



Before photography, make sure the property is clean and well presented. Plan marketing and tenant handover as separate milestones.

Get the property ready for photography

Take photos after cleaning, furnishing and styling are complete. Open curtains, switch on lights, make the beds, tidy surfaces and remove any packaging. Use natural daylight where possible and make sure every room is shown clearly.

Complete the inventory

Record the condition of each room, including furniture, appliances and any existing damage. Include dated photographs, meter readings, keys and fobs, and applicable fire-safety labels or supplier evidence for upholstered furniture. [11]

Share the inventory with the tenant at the start of the tenancy so both sides have a clear record.

Source

11. Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, Schedule 7; read with 2025 amendments.

Prepare the handover documents



Prepare this folder for your agent before handover. Check the EPC position before marketing: if no valid certificate exists, commission one before the property is advertised.

☐ Gas safety record, electrical report and EPC, supplied to tenants within the applicable legal deadlines.

☐ Alarm-test records, including confirmation that required alarms work on the first day of the new tenancy.

☐ All keys and fobs

☐ Meter readings

☐ Appliance manuals and warranties

☐ Building and managing agent contact details

☐ Completed inventory and photographs

Check with your letting agent or local authority if any additional documents are required.



The time needed to prepare a rental property depends on the work involved. Here are two suggested schedules, depending on whether your property needs a simple refresh or more extensive updates.

The seven-day express refresh plan

Best for properties that need cleaning, minor repairs, decorating touch-ups and some furniture updates.

Day 1	Inspect the property, list required work and order supplies.
Day 2	Complete safety checks and urgent repairs.
Day 3	Carry out decorating and minor repairs.
Day 4	Deep clean and confirm deliveries.
Day 5	Deliver and install furniture and window dressings.
Day 6	Complete styling, remove packaging and tidy up.
Day 7	Complete the inventory, take photographs and hand over to the letting agent.

Illustrative schedule, not a guaranteed turnaround. Confirm availability before Day 1 and allow contingency. First-day tenancy checks remain separate.



TURNAROUND PLANNER

The fourteen-day extensive refresh plan

Best for properties needing more decorating, new flooring, furniture replacement or made-to-measure window dressings. Confirm bespoke lead times in advance; made-to-measure items may require more than fourteen days.

Day 1-2	Inspect the property, get quotes and order materials.
Day 3-4	Complete safety checks and urgent repairs.
Day 5-7	Carry out decorating and minor repairs.
Day 8	Deep clean the property.
Day 9-10	Fit window dressings and confirm deliveries.
Day 11	Deliver and install furniture.
Day 12-14	Complete styling and final cleaning. Prepare the inventory and take photographs. Complete the handover and pass documents and keys to the letting agent.

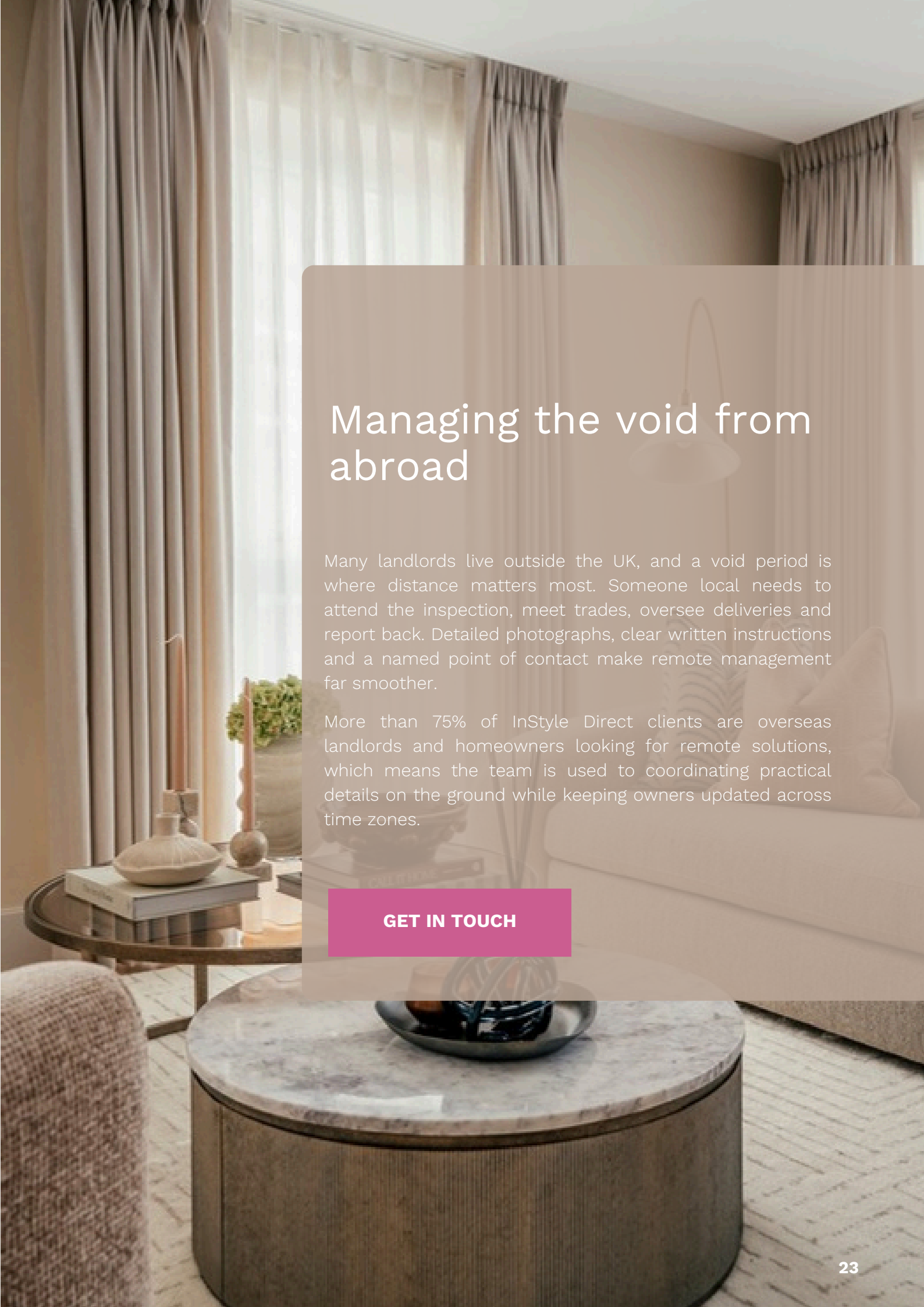
A note on timings These schedules are planning guides, not guaranteed turnaround times. Allow extra time for delayed deliveries, specialist trades and made-to-measure items. Confirm bookings and order anything with a longer lead time as early as possible.

Where delays happen



Most void delays are predictable. Knowing where they hide makes them easier to avoid.

Common delay	A practical way to reduce it
Problems found late	Complete a thorough inspection on Day 1 and test everything that can be tested
Missing or expired certificates	Check gas, electrical, EPC and alarm records before the tenancy ends
Unavailable trades	Book as soon as you know the property will be vacant, and ask for firm dates
Delayed furniture or materials	Order early and measure as soon as repairs are confirmed
Building delivery restrictions	Confirm requirements and bookings before ordering furniture
Work done in the wrong order	Complete repairs before cleaning, furnishing and styling.
Unclear responsibilities	Assign one person or one team to manage the schedule and access.

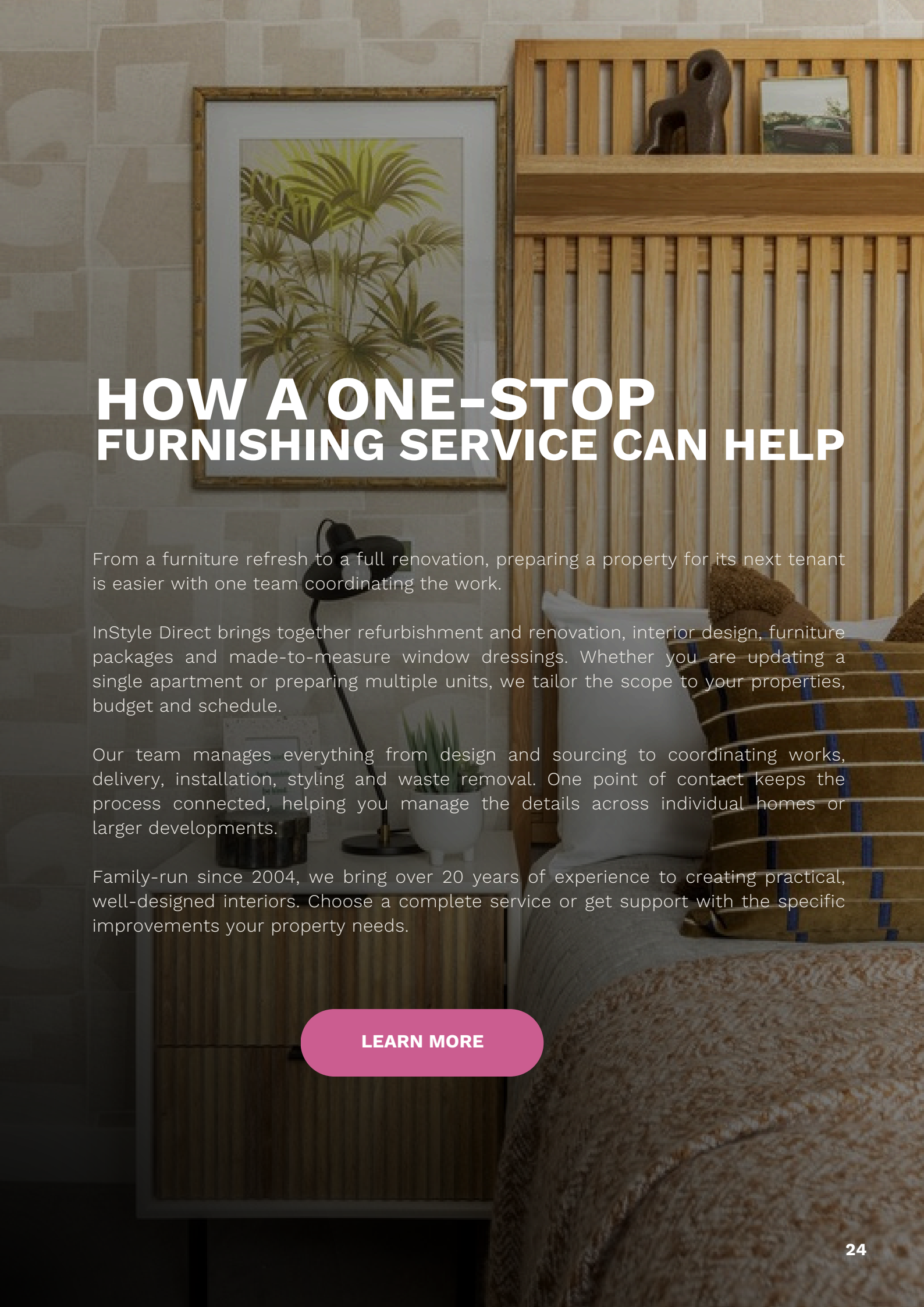


Managing the void from abroad

Many landlords live outside the UK, and a void period is where distance matters most. Someone local needs to attend the inspection, meet trades, oversee deliveries and report back. Detailed photographs, clear written instructions and a named point of contact make remote management far smoother.

More than 75% of InStyle Direct clients are overseas landlords and homeowners looking for remote solutions, which means the team is used to coordinating practical details on the ground while keeping owners updated across time zones.

GET IN TOUCH



HOW A ONE-STOP FURNISHING SERVICE CAN HELP

From a furniture refresh to a full renovation, preparing a property for its next tenant is easier with one team coordinating the work.

InStyle Direct brings together refurbishment and renovation, interior design, furniture packages and made-to-measure window dressings. Whether you are updating a single apartment or preparing multiple units, we tailor the scope to your properties, budget and schedule.

Our team manages everything from design and sourcing to coordinating works, delivery, installation, styling and waste removal. One point of contact keeps the process connected, helping you manage the details across individual homes or larger developments.

Family-run since 2004, we bring over 20 years of experience to creating practical, well-designed interiors. Choose a complete service or get support with the specific improvements your property needs.

LEARN MORE



Your next tenancy starts with the right preparation

Whether you need a complete furniture package or a few finishing touches, we're here to help make the process simpler.

Talk to our team about your property.

BOOK A FREE DESIGN CONSULTATION

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