

LHA as of April 15

shared £314 Right move £375

1 bed £588 Right Move £625

2 bed £724 Right Move £775

3 bed £822 Right Move £895- £950

A minimum of £50 to be added

Private tenants and those forced to look to rent privately in Bath, particularly those on low to average income- are unfairly discriminated against by the Landlords and Letting Agents in Bath

For a tenant looking for a property to rent in Bath at the current time, the lowest prices of 3 bed family homes on the outskirts are between £895 and £950. I must stress that this price is by no means representative of the astronomical rent expected in the vast majority of private lets locally, most are far far higher. Not only is the Local Housing allowance limited to the equivalent of £822 pcm but at the time of researching this on Right Move there were only 2 that were advertised for families even close to the LHA marker (albeit £70 short). The rest of the properties being advertised for single professionals or students sharing.

For whatever reasons, families stuck in a cycle of renting privately can expect to only have security for the first 6 months of their tenancy. Tenants have expressed to me (and I have personal experience) that after this period the rent will immediately and incrementally escalate, pricing you out of the property or the buy to let landlord may sell up. By which time Letting Agents will also -at the landlords behest no doubt – have added another £20, £30 or even £50 to the value of their properties. The LHA cap may slightly alter to the tenants favour as scant recompense but in most cases our wages will remain static despite this - and food and bills will have risen.

Of course this is not even the highest of concerns I have heard, to be in the lofty position to not be able to afford your rent without making huge sacrifices to your basic nutritional and wellbeing needs and essentials in the first place, you must first be qualified enough that a Letting Agent will view you as suitable tenant material. The mandatory credit checks, bank statements and wage slips will immediately make it clear that you cannot afford the rent without Housing Benefit top ups. In many cases and for many Agents this means you will not even be considered for a property...Ever.

If you are desperate enough and many are, you will be asked to provide a guarantor who earns enough. Clearly if your mum is on a state pension or is not landed gentry you stall here.

If you get the guarantor there is still the little matter of providing them with 6 months rent in advance (as is becoming standard in local Letting Agents), 6 months or the many thousands of pounds expected from the hard up tenant will ensure, of course, that there isn't even the slightest risk to the landlords investment for the full, minimum tenancy term.

On top of this you will of course be expected to pay fee's amounting to many hundreds of pounds on top and a further month and a half's rent as a deposit. Just as an example, this is potentially £6920 if the lowest rent I found was an example.... Just for a basic home.

If you manage to find someone to lend you this amount then you can rest easy knowing your home is secure for the next 180 odd days. Your children can attend the school consistently, the loan shark will know where you are when he wants his repayments and potentially, you can relax temporarily before the whole thing starts again.

It would be interesting to know how many of the 5000 on the homesearch list are stuck in the family wrecking experience that is privately renting in Bath?

Would this panel and our council be willing to publicly accredit Letting Agents with fair, moral and ethical practices. Could we in any way reward those agents who accept deposit bonds from the likes of Swan Advice and other charities. Could we in any way enforce a cap on the unaffordable rents and could we highlight the problems faced by people in our city in such a way that would encourage landlords of decent, reasonably priced properties to bypass the agents and let through Homesearch on long term leases.

The situation for many people in our fair city is untenable, depressing and unfair.