



Valuation Office  
Agency

# Update from VOA Rent Officers

Welcome to our ninth VOA Rent Officers eUpdate, which covers:

- the work of VOA Rent Officers,
- a day in the life of a rent officer,
- a special feature from the Office for National Statistics on the upcoming development of the Private Rental Market Statistics, and
- what events you can find us at for the rest of the year.

VOA Rent Officers e-Update

Issue 9 / Nov 2023

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## Valuation Office Agency Rent Officers – A few facts:

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**1** VOA Rent Officer Team

**5** Local Housing Allowance Categories

**10** Hubs in England

**107** Rent Officers\*

**135** members of staff nationally\*

**152** BRMA's

**3,014** Property inspections\*\*

**24,012** Fair Rent Valuations\*\*

**88,146** Housing Benefit Valuations\*\*

**484,700** pieces of lettings data\*\*

\* indicates as at 17th October 2023

\*\* indicates figures from April 2022 to March 2023



For many agents and landlords, their only contact with VOA Rent Officers is when they're asked to help provide information about rent levels. However, that's only one aspect of a Rent Officer's job. For example, did you know that Rent Officers are what's called 'statutory officers'? They are appointed as a result of the Rent Acts, and there's a rich history behind their role in the private rented sector. The following is the first of a 'Did you know...!?' series about the diverse roles of VOA Rent Officers.

## Fair Rent - Did you know...!?

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Fair Rents are a form of rent control, generally for tenancies which started prior to 15th January 1989. Pre-1989 most properties were let in a much more basic state than the modern assured shorthold tenancies – properties were generally bare floors, no curtains, no white goods, and some were even let without hot water, a bathroom, internal toilet, or central heating.

With regulated tenancies, repairing obligations differed from today's Assured Shorthold Tenancy – in addition there was greater security of tenure.

Rent Officers perform a quasi-judicial statutory role which involves much more than just valuation – they first must establish that they have jurisdiction to deal with the registration. Both tenant and landlord then have the opportunity to present their case for what the Fair Rent should be, and it is then for the Rent Officer to use their judgement in coming to a valuation. The property may be inspected as part of the registration process.

The Rent Officer values the property at what they judge a landlord could achieve in a broadly balanced

market. A fair rent is the maximum amount of rent that a landlord can charge rather than the rent they have to charge. Rent Officers maintain an online public register of fair rents.

The Rent Acts (Maximum Fair Rent) Order 1999 can effectively cap the Fair Rent at a lower figure than the Rent Officer determines.

A Rent Officer can also register a fair rent for agricultural workers who continue to live in properties provided by their employer after they've finished working for them, if certain rules are satisfied. This may happen even if they finish work after 15th January 1989 and is allowed for in the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976.

Tenant or landlord can apply for a re-registration every two years, although some do not submit applications at this time.

Rent Officers registered over 24,000 fair rents in the 2022/23 year, and we expect the same volumes 2023/24 year.

If you want to find out more, visit

[Valuation Office Agency: Rent Officer Handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rent-officer-handbook)



## A day in the life of a rent officer...

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Rent officers are usually allocated patches for which they carry out Housing Benefit casework, Fair Rent casework and letting information collection.

Dealing with Fair Rent casework can be a challenge because cases have differing degrees of complexity and there is always something new to learn.

At any one time, a Rent Officer will be dealing with all three areas of work. Time spent on each activity can fluctuate depending on the volume of casework.

Rent officers plan their own time and will look to capitalise on days out of the office, often combining inspections and Letting Agent visits to ensure their time is well spent.

**We hear from Tony Stansmore about the importance of visiting agents, talking to them about anything and everything, and making it personal – the results speak for themselves.**

I've been a Rent Officer now for many years – over that period many things have changed, but one thing has remained constant...the need to visit agents face-to-face is key to building a relationship, gaining trust and getting results. And it's also enjoyable.

The initial training focused on being persuasive and the skills that could help you gather information effectively. But to be effective needs a certain mindset and a really organised approach.



Preparation and planning is essential, as is having a cycle or routine. Planning whole days of agent visits and allowing time for Lettings Information data entry and casework between is efficient and gives a nice balance to the week/month.

Regular visits also help to keep the relationship going. I think of many of my agents as friends and I think it's fair to say they feel likewise about me. Making friends with the rest of the office also helps with continuity – should your main contact move on, others in the office will know you and give that reassurance to anyone new.

Each agent is different, and I recognise that. I work in the way that makes it easiest for them to provide us with the information, as I understand how important their data is for us to complete our statutory work.

Of course, over the last few years we've had to adapt our approach due to COVID, but never has it been more important to have that personal relationship with an agent, to be able to pick up the phone or send an email and still maintain the flow of LI. Obviously there were times when there weren't any new lettings and it's fair to say that even some of

my best agents weren't quite as responsive when I couldn't see them face-to-face. However, the majority did continue to help, even if overall numbers took a dip.

As restrictions eased, I was very keen to get back out to see my agents, abiding by all the precautions and being sympathetic to agent attitudes and protocols – it wasn't that easy at times, but it was still effective. Now that we are essentially back to normal, I've resumed my full schedule of regular personal visits and my collection figures have soon returned to pre-pandemic levels.

*“Each agent is different, and I recognise that. I work in the way that makes it easiest for them to provide us with the information...”*

## Transforming Private Rental Prices Statistics at ONS

ONS are undertaking a transformation of their private rental prices' statistics, this work includes:

- Making better use of existing data sources
- Improving methods

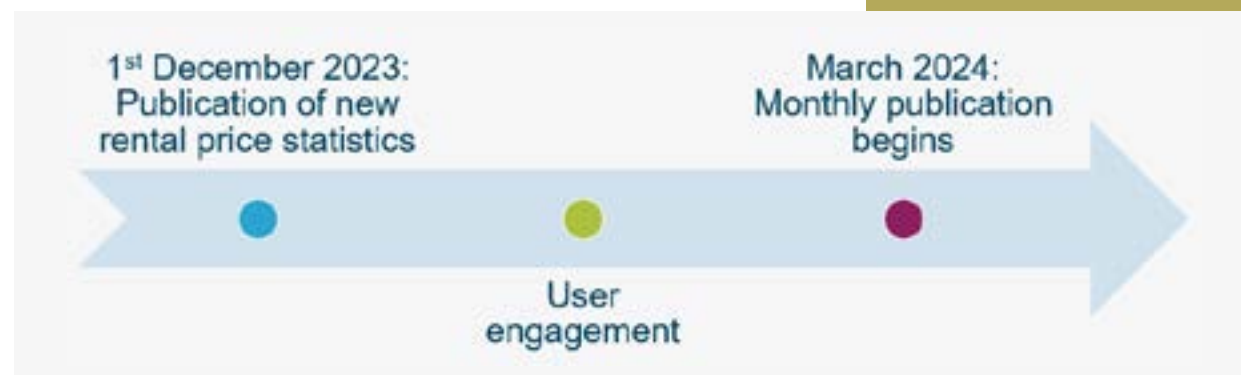
In future the ONS will produce a new, single, monthly publication that provides a more detailed insight into the rental market.

The new publication will publish private rental prices statistics comparable over time and down to lower geographic levels than currently available in the Index of Private Housing Rental Prices. The ONS aim for these measures to be available for the UK, its countries, English regions and local authorities.

The new publication will contain:

- an index of private rental prices
- annual rate of change
- average private rental price levels

- a breakdown of private rental prices by geography and bedroom category (studio, one bedroom, two bedrooms, three bedrooms and four or more bedrooms)



1 - 1st December 2023 - New rental Statistics produced. After this User engagement, in March 2024 monthly publication begins

If you would like to know more about this development work, please contact one of the Housing Market Indices Transformation team at ONS: [hpi@ons.gov.uk](mailto:hpi@ons.gov.uk)

We will be publishing further information and impact analysis on 1st December 2023, and holding a virtual event to showcase the work.

QR code to initial analysis



## Come and see us

If you want to talk to us about any of our work, we will be appearing at the following events:

When?	What?	Where?
<b>Thursday 23rd November 2023</b> 09:15 – 16:00	Propertymark Sussex Regional Conference	<b>Amex Stadium,</b> Village Way, Brighton, BN1 9BL
<b>Friday 24th November 2023</b> 08:30 – 17:30	Negotiator Conference	<b>Grosvenor House Hotel,</b> 86-90 Park Lane, London W1K 7TN
<b>Tuesday 30th November 2023</b> 09:15 – 16:00	Propertymark East Regional Conference	<b>Graduate Cambridge,</b> Granta Place, Mill Lane, Cambridge, CB2 1RT

More events to come in 2024.



## Keeping In Touch

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- Our website has a lot of information to help with any enquiries [Valuation Office Agency Rent Officers - GOV.UK](#)
- If you wish to contact us – details can be found at [Valuation Office Agency Rent Officers: Contact Us - GOV.UK](#)
- If you are a landlord with one or a few properties, you can complete our online form to [contribute details of rent levels](#).
- If you have a larger portfolio or are an agent, you may be able to contribute directly using your own software. We have brief instructions which can be used to generate a report from a variety of software providers. To discuss the easiest way for you to get involved, contact us by emailing [roli@voa.gov.uk](mailto:roli@voa.gov.uk).
- If you have any comments or feedback about this publication, please contact [roli@voa.gov.uk](mailto:roli@voa.gov.uk)

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- Also view our latest blogs at: <https://valuationoffice.blog.gov.uk/>





# THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED HELP

Sharing your rental data  
makes a difference

