

Lancaster Landlords: 8 Mistakes to Avoid When Letting Out Your Property



Are you thinking of letting out a property?

If you own a property in Lancaster that you're unsure what to do with but don't want to sell, especially if you've inherited it, a great way of using it as a source of extra income can be to rent it out.

However, there are a lot of potential traps that you might fall into as a landlord, which could end up costing you a lot of money.

In this guide, we'll cover some of the most common mistakes that landlords can make when renting out their properties.

Alternatively, you might also consider using a property management agency such as JDG to handle your property on your behalf. If you opt for our fully managed service, you won't have to worry about making any of these mistakes.



1. Not following up tenant references

One of the most important parts of any landlord's job is asking for and following up on the references provided by the tenant, ideally from their previous landlord and current employer. This way you will be able to build up a picture of what they will be like as tenants, in addition to gauging whether they're likely to be able to pay the rent. If you don't follow up the references, you could be letting someone into your property without really knowing what they're like.

It's worth noting that you don't have to do this yourself - we have a partnership with a professional referencing service and can provide this service for you as part of our property management or tenant finding packages.



2. Allowing Gas Safety Records to expire

If your property is supplied with gas, you must be able to supply tenants with a gas safety record confirming that all pipework, appliances and flues are maintained in a safe condition. The record must be supplied within 28 days of the check having been completed, or to any new tenant before they move in.

Checks must also be carried out on an annual basis so the property is always covered - if not, there could be severe legal penalties to pay. There are a lot to be aware of in terms of arranging gas safety checks and maintaining records, and of timings and ensuring that an engineer is legally registered and qualified to carry out an inspection.



3. Allowing the EPC to expire



Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) are required whenever a property is marketed on the rental or sales market. This contains information about a property's energy use (rating its energy efficiency from A to G) and typical energy costs, and recommendations about how to reduce energy use and save money. It is valid for 10 years, and is therefore easy to forget about - however, you can be fined if you don't have a valid EPC when you need one.

In rentals, you can only legally let your property out if it is a grade 'E' or above but make sure you keep an eye on the laws as they are due to change again soon!

You must find an accredited energy assessor to issue the Energy Performance Certificate - as with the gas safety check, this may be more easily handled and arranged by a letting agency such as JDG.

You can check if you already have an in-date EPC by looking at the EPC register:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>



4. Not inspecting the property



Tenants have the right to quiet enjoyment of the property, but you are entitled to visit the property at a reasonable time of day with 24 hours' notice in writing.

This is a right you should exercise every three months or so.

This can help to monitor the condition of the property, ensure it is being looked after and to help highlight any maintenance issues that need fixing.

As your relationship grows with the tenants and the property is being well looked after, you may leave more time between inspections.

5. Not being aware of new or changing legal responsibilities

When it comes to letting out a property, there are many different rules and legislation to be aware of. However, this legislation is constantly being updated, tweaked and changed. With this in mind, you need to always ensure that you're up to date with changes in legislation and the creation of new legislation, otherwise you could find yourself in risky territory. An agent can help to keep your property compliant.

Although it's extremely time-consuming to maintain your knowledge about the various legislation, this is part of your legal responsibilities as a landlord and an agent won't be able to help you at a later date if something has been missed.





6. Not protecting the tenancy deposit

There are a whole host of legal ramifications when you forget to protect the tenancy deposit - even if you do protect the deposit, you must ensure you've protected it in accordance of the rules of your chosen deposit scheme provider, and in the correct time-frame.

You also need to serve the correct information to your tenant and prove it was served. We can help you to ensure that this is done correctly.

7. Failing to deal with repairs and maintenance issues promptly and effectively

Things inevitably go wrong in properties of all kinds, and it's important that you ensure anything that goes wrong is resolved as quickly as possible.

The exact areas you are responsible for repairing and the areas the tenant is responsible for repairing should be clearly defined in a tenancy agreement, but the government states that in private rented accommodation, the landlord will always be responsible for:

- The property's structure and exterior
- Basins, sinks, baths and other sanitary fittings including pipes and drains
- Heating and hot water
- Gas appliances, pipes, flues and ventilation
- Electrical wiring
- Any damage they cause by attempting repairs.

If you don't resolve the issues you're responsible for, the tenant can complain to the local authority and will probably leave the property at the earliest opportunity, meaning you then have to go through the process of finding another new tenant.

We have clearly defined maintenance processes and a pool of trusted and capable contractors on hand. Our tenants have access to the Fixflo system to resolve any repairs or maintenance issues in an efficient and effective way.



8. Allowing rent arrears to accumulate

As a landlord, for the sake of maintaining a good relationship with a tenant, you may wish to try and be accommodating if they run into difficulties with paying rent. However, if months without rent payments start to pile up, you might find yourself out of pocket and having to resort to eviction procedures through the courts.

Any agreements or payment plans you do decide on should be confirmed in writing between parties just to make sure everything is completely clear.

At JDG we offer a Rent Guarantee package for landlords, which provides peace of mind. If something happens and your tenants stop paying rent, this can kick in to ensure your rent is paid each month and can also help to cover legal costs and other useful things.

This is just one of the many ways we can save you money and time by managing your property on your behalf.





It is important to bear these tips in mind to help ensure you have a stress free experience when letting your home. As always, an experienced letting agent can ensure everything is kept on top of!

If you would like to discuss renting out your home, moving to a managed package or buying a property to let, simply give our Lettings Manager, Josh, a call on 01524 843322. We're here to answer any questions you may have about the lettings process.



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