

# Lancaster Landlords: 8 Mistakes to Avoid When Renting Out Your Property



### Are you thinking of renting 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 rented out. 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.

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.

### **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. This is a right you should exercise every three months or so, otherwise you could find that tenants are abusing the property. For instance, they could be sub-letting it to somebody else without your knowledge, or using the property as a base from which to break the law.

### **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.

Although it's extremely time-consuming to maintain your knowledge about the various legislation, this is part of your legal responsibilities as a landlord.

### **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. 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.

At JDG we offer a Rent Guarantee package for landlords, which provides peace of mind. This means that you will always receive your rent, regardless of the tenant's circumstances. This is just one of the many ways we can save you money and time by managing your property on your behalf.

***If you would like to discuss your current EPC, or any issues related to letting your property, simply give our Lettings Manager, Josh, a call on 01524 843322. We're here to answer any questions you may have.***