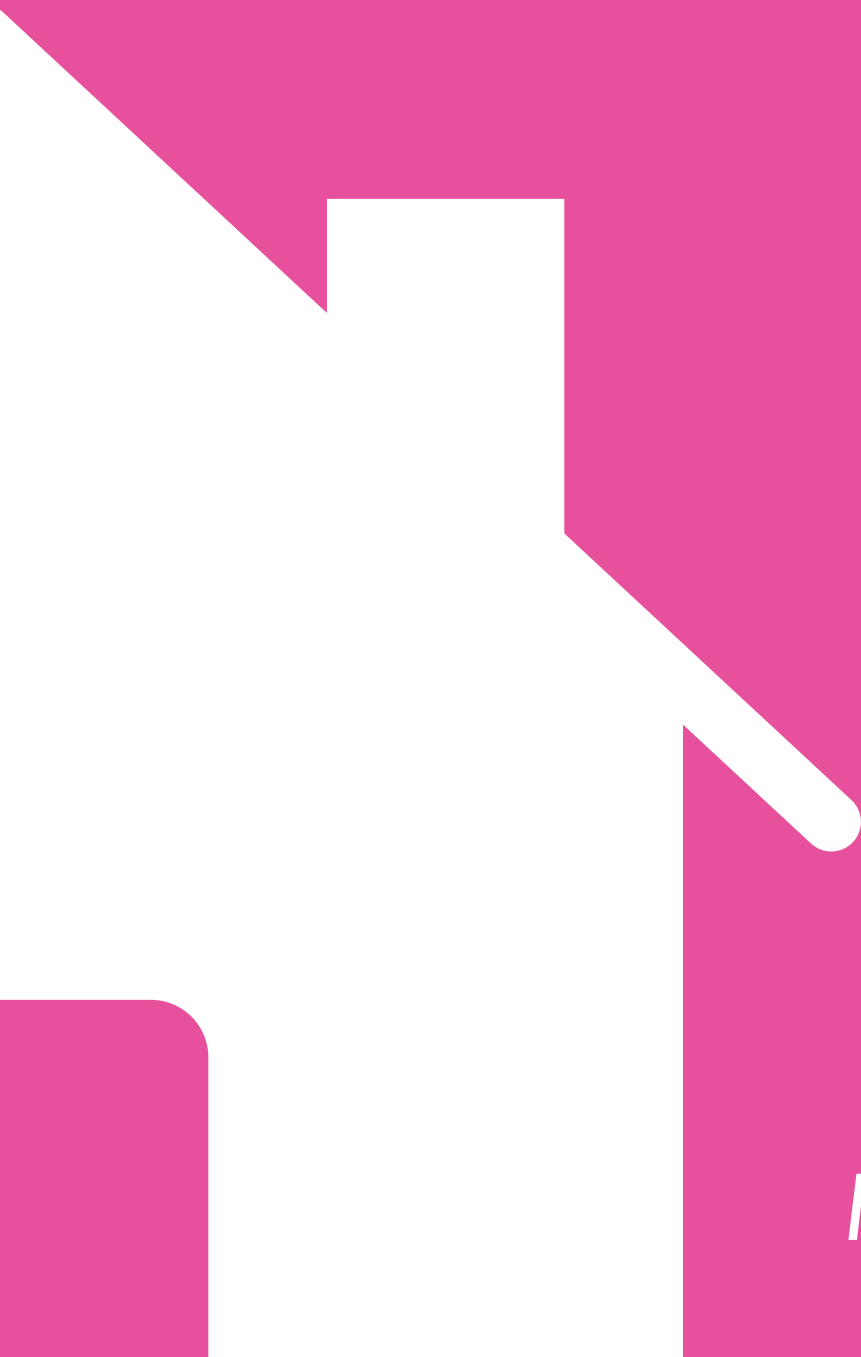


The Good Landlords Guide



MakeUrMove



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Introduction

The private rental sector has never been in the spotlight as much as it is right now; with a housing crisis looming over the UK, an often one-sided landlord narrative and the government making changes to rental legislation and tax.

The spotlight hasn't been very kind to landlords. Yes, it has highlighted genuine bad practice where it was needed, but it has also caused a stereotype of landlords that landlords and most tenants know not to be true.



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"Our research has shown that 92% of landlords own fewer than five properties, with more than half (53%) owning only one property"
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» The private rental sector has never been in the spotlight as much as it is right now.

Our research has shown that 92% of landlords own fewer than five properties, with more than half (53%) owning only one property. This demonstrates that most landlords aren't professional landlords, rather they are a mixture of people who have inherited properties, rented second homes out due to circumstance, or have become landlords due to the relaxed mortgage rules and the rise in buy-to-let.



"We carried out research with some of the 25,000+ landlords who have used MakeUrMove"

The policy of successive governments to sell off social housing whilst failing to replace it has also depleted the UK's rented housing stock, which is made up of 6 million properties in the private rental sector, being let out by 2 million landlords.

Only a small number of landlords are able to use volume buying power and economies of scale to reduce their costs, meaning many landlords operate on low margins. This puts landlords in a potentially perilous position, where even the smallest financial pressure can force a landlord to sell, face repossession or precipitate rental increases.

MakeUrMove was launched in January 2008 as the first national online letting agency and over the last decade we've worked with landlords from all over the country. We know that most landlords are the good guys and just need a little bit of a break, not to mention recognition for the important role they play in the UK housing market.

Let's face it, landlords are the backbone of the housing market; providing the mechanism through which most people establish their first home and by delivering the flexible housing capacity the economy needs for students, workers and families alike.

It's this background that motivated us to pull together a comprehensive guide for landlords; to provide valuable information on best practices and shine a light on the good work landlords do, whilst demonstrating not all tenant-landlord relationships are an everlasting battle.

We carried out research with some of the 25,000+ landlords who have used MakeUrMove and we joined forces with leading market research firm 3Gem to survey thousands of landlords to find out more about their perceptions of the changing housing market and landlords' role within it.

This whitepaper is comprised of both opinion and advice from MakeUrMove, plus insight from landlords across the UK, based on survey data.

We hope that you find the contents valuable and would love to hear your feedback.



Do Landlords Deserve The Bad Reputation?

The media would have the public believe that most landlords are driven by nothing but money and are in the habit of housing tenants in appalling conditions.

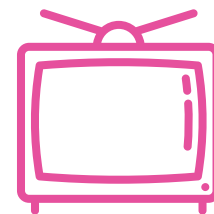
Over the past couple of years there has been various TV shows demonising landlords including 'Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords,' from Channel 5, as well as endless newspaper headlines about 'rogue landlords.' However, 65% of rental property owners don't feel rogue landlord TV shows accurately reflect their experiences and they claim these shows are 'sensationalism,' and that there are two sides to every story.

"Some landlords need exposing, but there needs to be balanced reporting. I still believe good landlords greatly outnumber rogues", answered one of our survey respondents, whilst another said; "these rogue landlords are the minority and make good TV. Not an accurate representation of us all."

So, who is right? The viewings hungry TV executives, or the landlords? Well, both are to a certain extent – bad landlords do exist, and some do keep their properties in bad condition. However, this media representation is unfair as most landlords want to be good landlords, in the same way that most businesses want and need to be good employers, or to be well-liked by their customers. MakeUrMove research shows that a huge 98% of landlords believe it's important to make their tenants happy. Unfortunately, all the good landlords out there don't make provocative news stories or entertaining TV programmes.

These negative landlord stereotypes are based on a handful of unprofessional operators and individuals. Overall, landlords are typical working people, trying to run a business, who pay their bills and get on in life – usually whilst working in another 'main' job at the same time.

Whilst there are media programmes that document the lives of bad tenants – with examples including Channel 5's 'Can't pay we'll take it away' – these don't tend to focus tenant behaviour too much. As such, badly behaving tenants don't seem to face as much criticism over their behaviour and the stories we hear are often one-sided. Whether it be late payment of rent, property damage or in the worst cases having to deal with eviction, it's fair to say that landlords have a lot working against them. This is before we even consider legislation that favours tenants, and the financial and regulatory changes faced by landlords.



"These rogue landlords are the minority and make good TV. Not an accurate representation of us all"

The Changing Regulatory, Legislative & Cultural Conditions

Landlords are operating in tougher conditions with each year that passes and have been affected by a range of regulatory, legislative and tax changes. Most landlords try their best to keep up with these changes. However, due to the nature of investment in the market, which is dominated by private individuals – and which is something that has come about due to successive government's housing and financial regulation policies – landlords are often left baffled, or simply find out when it's too late that they haven't complied with a crucial condition.

In the process of trying to regulate the market, the increased financial burden landlords face has resulted in the unintended consequence of rents increasing, thereby reducing the amount tenants can save and making it harder for people to buy their own home, which is something the government argues it's committed to.

The past couple of years have been particularly tough for the rental market; reform of the sector has seen landlords hit by a surcharge in stamp duty on new buy-to-let purchases, the loss of tax relief on mortgage interest and an overall crackdown by the Bank of England on obtaining buy-to-let mortgages.

Since April 2016, people buying a second residential property have had to fork out an extra 3% in Stamp Duty Land Tax. Since then, anyone buying an additional property for £40,000 or more has had to cough up the extra cash, this has affected people purchasing holiday homes, buy-to-lets and even main residences. The surcharge took effect from April 2016, but it was first announced in the Chancellor's 2015 Autumn Statement. Dubbed the "landlord tax", the surcharge was intended to disincentivise people buying up multiple properties in the midst of a housing affordability crisis. However, it has become clear that as house prices continue to rise, the measure has succeeded only in generating extra tax revenues for HMRC whilst doing little to take the heat out of the housing market.

Another blow was dealt to the rental sector with the withdrawal of tax relief for landlords. Previously, landlords could deduct mortgage interest and other allowable costs from their rental income, before calculating their tax liability.

From April 6th 2020, tax relief for finance costs will be restricted to the basic rate of income tax and relief will be given as a reduction in tax liability instead of a reduction to taxable rental income. The changes started to be phased in from April 2017 with the aim of making the tax system fairer by ensuring that landlords with higher incomes no longer receive the most generous tax treatment. However, it is thought that those who are currently below the higher rate threshold may end up getting pulled into the higher rate band as a result of their higher property profits.

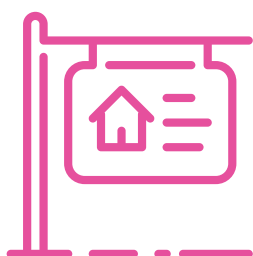
As mentioned already, only a small percentage of landlords have vast portfolios and the average landlord owns just one property, and often operates on minimal margins, meaning that whilst this legislation is aimed at a minority it could have serious consequences for many others.

In addition, a crackdown on buy-to-let mortgages has affected both would be landlords and property owners looking to expand their portfolio. Buying to let has been seen as one of the best investment options around since about 1997 and the majority of people who took advantage of these mortgages aren't greedy villains, rather people just looking to save for their retirement in an era where pensions have become less favourable and during a period of historically low interest rates.

There have been losers though; particularly the younger generation, many of whom are now finding it much more difficult to get on the property ladder.

Where does all this leave landlords and how does the future look for those in the rental sector?

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 "Financial pressure, specifically the impending tenant fees ban and the loss of tax relief on mortgages will force 41% of landlords to consider raising rents"



.....
 "75% of landlords say they would have to sell if they were making a loss, breaking even or not making enough profit"

Some have described these changes as an unfair assault on the rental industry, which other business sectors don't face. While we agree that the sector needs to be regulated, continued taxation and legislation changes could have a huge impact on smaller landlords and those 'accidental' landlords who have a rental property they may have either inherited or couldn't sell. They might struggle in the new environment, having potentially devastating and unforeseen consequences on the housing market.

Our research shows that financial pressure and costs, specifically the impending tenant fees ban and the loss of tax relief on mortgage will force 41% of landlords to consider raising rents. However, despite the stereotype of landlords as greedy and heartless, the majority are determined not to raise rents because they are concerned tenants will no longer be able to afford to live in their properties.

Our research also shows that 75% of landlords say they would have to sell if they were making a loss, breaking even or not making enough profit.

So, there are two outcomes; rising costs associated with the changing legislative and regulatory environment will result in either increased rents or landlords having to sell their properties. The worst-case scenario could be a housing market crash if landlords default on their mortgage payments or decide to cut their losses, causing misery to countless millions of homeowners who could find themselves plunged into negative equity in the short to medium term.

If landlords are forced into selling their property by systemic challenges and government meddling, it won't solve the current housing problem in the long term. In the short term there may be a small increase in supply, however only by creating more homes can the situation be improved for tenants, landlords and homeowners alike. The short termism of current policy is only likely to worsen an already bad situation.

What Would Happen Without Landlords & The Rental Market?

It's a simple fact that society needs landlords and a constant supply of rental properties. There are several reasons; the changing market for would be homeowners, the consistent decline in social housing, changing demographic pressures – including more single person households, starting families later, increased migration – as well as new education trends and an ever-increasing population.

For just a moment, imagine that the private rental market didn't exist; the only options for housing would be ownership or social housing. What would happen? Overcrowding would certainly become an issue for those stuck between not being able to afford to buy a property and still living with parents or relatives. This mainly affects younger buyers, many of whom have been completely priced out of the housing market.

Homeownership among millennials has collapsed, thanks to average house prices growing seven times faster than the incomes of young adults over the past 20 years. Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies revealed that just 27% of middle-income adults aged between 25 and 34 owned their own home in 2016; a significant drop from the 65% of the same group in the mid-nineties.



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Often landlords are blamed for this increase in house prices and they are an easy scapegoat. However, house prices rose at a time where asset prices increased internationally as a result of a number of changes including financial deregulation in the West, low interest rates, the liberalisation of the former communist countries and the rapid industrialisation and wage growth in the developing nations.

For the worst off in society, the severe lack of social housing would be stretched even further, resulting in illegal subletting, over-occupancy, and even homelessness. The number of new council homes per year peaked at well over 200,000 in the early 1950s but was already overtaken by private housebuilding in the 1960s. Stock then went into serious decline with the introduction of 'right to buy' in the 1980s – coupled with fewer social houses being built and the population rising, social housing stocks have never had a chance to recover.

The housing crisis in the UK is already severe, private landlords and their properties act as a buffer in many cases for people who are unable to get onto the housing ladder and for residents that local authorities are unable to house. That's not to say that landlords are solving the problem. In some parts of the country, in London for example, even the private rental market is overstretched and unable to accommodate everybody who is looking for a home.

Landlords are simply bridging the gaping gap in the housing sector but are now coming under more much pressure and scrutiny than others involved in the wider housing industry.

As mentioned, the increased amount of legislation and financial changes aimed at the private rental sector could result in many private landlords selling up, but who would they sell to? Homes would not suddenly become more affordable and plentiful. Homes would likely be snapped up by developers or bigger landlords and whilst the government and banks would benefit from a flurry of these transactions, the costs of these transactions would have to be recouped from tenants through rent increases. That's if those larger landlords wanted the 'surplus' homes; our research (below) already demonstrates that most landlords only own one property - and only a small per cent of landlords own more than a handful of properties - meaning there's unlikely to be enough larger property investors with the necessary resources to further invest in the market.

MakeUrMove Research



The Truth About UK Landlords

Having listened to the views of our customers, we wanted to gain further insight and check our customers weren't unrepresentative, so we teamed up with leading market research firm 3Gem to survey thousands of landlords.

This has enabled us to present a much more rounded set of results, that are independent to our business. However, we have found the results of the independent survey largely validated the insights we gained from our own customers.

The aim of the research was to gather snapshots in a couple of areas; landlord demographics, landlord feelings on how they are portrayed and to gain a perspective on where the market is heading, according to the people who know the best.

With two million landlords operating in the UK, everyone is likely to know a landlord. However, for most landlords it's a lonely business where lessons have to be learned through experience rather than through interactions with other people, as often happens in other business environments.

Hopefully, our data will also give you an understanding of how you compare and where you fit into the market.



34%

of landlords class themselves as 'accidental landlords'; people who became landlords out of necessity.

Why are people landlords?

People decide to let out a property for a variety of reasons. Our survey showed that 62% of landlords did so because they wanted to make an investment or build a property business. That still leaves nearly half of landlords who got into property rental for other reasons.

34% of respondents classed themselves as 'accidental landlords'; people who became landlords out of necessity or circumstance, rather than choice. Reasons for becoming an accidental landlord include splitting from or moving in with a partner, inheriting property or having to move away from an area. Inheritance seems to be one of the key reasons people let out their property; 16% of respondents only started letting out a property after they inherited a property. Many accidental landlords also ended up letting out their homes



» Inheritance seems to be one of the key reasons people let out their property.

after being unable to sell after the 2007/2008 'credit crunch'. These landlords are the most likely to only have one rental property, or even leave the sector once they are able to sell their property.

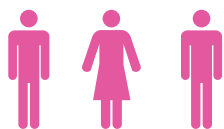
68%

of landlords said that they had been a landlord for less than five years.

Our survey data backs this up; many landlords often don't remain landlords for extended periods of time. Only 3% of landlords had been so for more than 20 years, whilst 68% of respondents said that they had been a landlord for fewer than five years. There are other reasons for this of course, cashflow issues being one of them. The average tenancy length in the UK is 18 months; many landlords cut their losses after two or three tenancies as they can't access funds to maintain property, either through void periods or when renovations are required. This isn't an issue for landlords with larger portfolios who often have cashflow and profits to deal with these circumstances.

Who are the landlords?

"Over half of landlords are male and 54% are aged 35-54"



43% of landlords live in a property they are paying a mortgage on.



"Younger landlords are more concerned about the impact of Brexit"



Landlord demographics are varied but over half are male and 54% of landlords are aged 35-54. Those who are younger are more likely to have become landlords through inheritance. 64% of landlords have experience of being a tenant as they have lived in rented property themselves, although only 7% still privately rent the property they live in. 47% of landlords now own the property they live in, whilst 43% of them are paying off their own mortgage.

As expected, most tenants living in rented accommodation are 'millennials'; people who reached young adulthood in the early 21st century. 59% of tenants are millennials aged 18-34.

Our survey data also showed quite a difference in the feelings of older versus younger landlords. Younger landlords are more likely to increase rents to compensate for increased regulations and taxations, whilst a third of older landlords are more likely to sell their rental property if red tape makes things more difficult or if they feel legislation favours tenants too much. The younger landlord may not be as phased by red tape due to the nature of the world they grew up in; one full of red tape and regulations. Older landlords may also be more financially secure than their younger counterparts; older landlords are more likely to already own their own home whereas a younger landlord may be in a more vulnerable position with an expensive mortgage of their own to pay. This could explain the difference in attitudes.

It was no surprise either that younger landlords are more concerned about the impact of Brexit than older landlords. It is still unclear exactly how Brexit will impact the rental market, but we don't necessarily think it's all doom and gloom. In fact, the private rental sector could benefit from Brexit in the short-term as people could be less inclined to buy or sell houses until they understand the full impact of Britain leaving the EU. This could see an increase in the number of people renting until there is a clearer picture of the implications of Brexit on the housing market.

For landlords not thinking about Brexit, here is food for thought; a decrease in numbers of European migrants could influence the private rental sector. The UK has a high number of renters who are non-British. The English Housing Survey of 2015/16 shows that nearly 25% of all rental properties are occupied by people not originally from the UK. If this collective were to leave following the EU departure, there would be a significant impact on the housing market.

It remains to be seen exactly what impact Brexit will have, but it's important the government puts plans in place to support landlords and tenants alike, and that landlords keep up to date with the current situation.

As well as Brexit worries, our research found that younger landlords are less likely than older landlords to declare their rental income as tax, and that they are more likely to not be paid rent or for damages by tenants.

38% of landlords feel like the government doesn't appreciate their role in bridging the gap in the housing market.

"Yorkshire landlords are more likely to be accidental landlords rather than investors"

38% of landlords feel like the government doesn't appreciate their role in bridging the gap in the housing market.

Furthermore, younger landlords also feel their contribution to society is valued but overall 38% of landlords still feel like the government doesn't appreciate their role in bridging the gap in the housing market.

A regional difference in landlord attitudes was also discovered; whilst most landlords do declare their income, landlords in London are most likely to declare their rental income on tax returns, they are the most likely to have more than 21 properties in their portfolio and indicated that they would increase rents due to tax, regulatory and legislation changes.



» London landlords are the most likely to have more than 21 properties in their portfolio.

Quite tellingly, London landlords are the most likely to experience additional people living in their rental property without permission. This could be attributed to the higher cost of living, higher property costs, the general shortage of property in London as well as the transient nature of work-life in the capital.

Yorkshire landlords seem to be quite relaxed; they are more likely to be accidental landlords rather than investors. Yorkshire survey respondents also didn't feel that TV shows exposing rogue tenants accurately reflect their experiences and they indicated that they tend to have better relationships with their tenants than landlords in other parts of the country.

Northern Ireland landlords were the least likely to understand the tax, legislative and regulative changes that would impact them, suggesting that the region needs better communication from the government on what will and won't affect them.

It also wasn't good news for East Midlands landlords; landlords in the region are the most likely to have experienced tenants not paying rent on time.

38% of landlords worry about being able to make expensive repairs to their properties.



47% of landlords have experienced tenants not paying their rent on time.



92% of landlords say they have a good relationship with their tenants.

What keeps landlords awake at night?

Landlords are people with a job to do, just like anyone else, but what were their worries and thoughts on being a landlord?

The top worry for landlords, by only a small margin, is meeting the cost of repair bills; 38% worry about being able to make expensive repairs to their properties. Again, this ties in with the fact that most landlords have low operating margins due to them not being large scale landlords. Similarly, 36% also worry about being able to meet their tax bills, undoubtedly related to the government removing mortgage interest tax relief.

Feelings on the current government also indicated concern, with many participants stating that they worried about what additional regulations and changes we might still see. The second biggest worry for landlords was problem tenants; 37% worry they'll experience an issue with a tenant. Others also mentioned that losing a long-term tenant was a worry for them.

With over one-quarter of landlords unclear about the government's changes in taxation and regulations, it's clear that money issues are high on the agenda; 41% of landlords believe they will have to increase rents following the government's proposed regulatory, tax and legislative changes. Our data suggests around 400,000 landlords believe legislation favouring tenants too much could force them to sell their rental properties. 46% of landlords also suggested that they would consider selling up if faced with rising costs, demonstrating the precarious position most landlords are in.

Our survey showed that a lot of landlords' fears aren't completely irrational, as we found that just like there are some bad landlords, there are bad tenants too. A huge 47% of landlords have experienced tenants not paying their rent on time, 26% have experienced tenants breaking things and refusing to pay to fix them, and 16% of landlords have experienced tenants refusing to leave at the end of a tenancy.

22% of landlords have also experienced extra people living in their property without their permission; likely due to the UK's current housing crisis. Tenants may be more likely to sub-let rooms or let friends/family share a property. Landlords also face paying for damages out of their own pocket too; 24% have experienced tenants leaving properties in with damage so extensive that it wasn't covered by the tenant's deposit.

Now for the good news...most landlords have positive experiences and relationships with their tenants, which explains why landlords have such strong feelings on rogue landlord TV shows or the media portraying them in a bad light.

92% of landlords say they have a good relationship with their tenants and 98% of landlords feel it's important to keep their tenants happy. This wouldn't be the attitude of the stereotypical and unpleasant landlord, it shows that most landlords care about providing a decent home for people. In fact, most landlords are also very relaxed about tenants settling in and making changes; 71% are happy to let tenants decorate. 96% of landlords also say that they would quickly fix or upgrade things in their property as required.

Landlord Tips

10 Tips For Keeping Tenants Happy

The majority (92%) of landlords own fewer than five properties, with over half (53%) of landlords only owning one property so, in theory, it shouldn't be such a big job to keep tenants happy. But being a good landlord takes time, effort and even expense, which can seem a lot to undertake considering that for most landlords, their rental property isn't their main source of income. Respondents to our survey who stated that they were in full time employment and were also a landlord, had a varied range of occupations including; taxi driver, customer service advisor, as well as amongst a range of other jobs, engineer and teacher.

Day jobs aside, the extra effort it requires to be a 'good landlord' is worth it in the long run, as a good landlord will be rewarded with the right type of tenants. Happy tenants are more likely to stick around for longer, meaning that you don't have to go to the trouble and expense of finding new ones.

So, what exactly can you do to ensure your tenants are happy?



1. Safety first

Safety is your priority when it comes to renting out a property. You have a legal obligation to ensure that your property is safe for people to live in, not doing so could have serious consequences from both your insurers, and in the most serious cases, the law. The major things to take care of is any gas or electrical equipment. These should be installed, serviced and checked by qualified engineers.

2. Inventory

An inventory is a list of the property contents and the condition they are in, plus a record of any other information relating to the appearance of the property. You can include photographs in your inventory to save having to describe existing damages in detail. Share the property inventory with new tenants to not only set expectations but to show that you are open and honest about the contents and condition of your property. Your tenant will feel reassured knowing that you aren't going to try and 'rip them off' when they try to move on.

3. Contact details

It's mandatory under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, that you should provide your tenant with your name and address, plus an address where the tenant can serve notice; the address must be a UK one. Beyond that, it's up to you what other contact details you provide. Email is more business-like and provides a written record of contact, plus any requests or complaints from tenants. Giving tenants your phone number is great as they will feel confident getting hold of you, especially in an emergency, but just be aware that phone calls can't be used as evidence should you find yourself in a situation where you need proof of what has been said.

4. Fix things

This may sound obvious, but you should aim to fix any property faults reported by your tenants as soon as you possibly can. Even small jobs such as a leaky tap or a squeaky door! You aren't living in the house and will therefore find it hard to imagine how irritating it is living with something that is broken or faulty. If you wouldn't put up with it in your own home, you can't expect your tenants to. If a repair can't be made immediately, at least give your tenant an estimation of when the work can be done; an informed tenant is a happy tenant.

5. Keep your distance

Once you have your initial paperwork and contracts sorted out with a tenant, take a step back and let them get on with their business. A tenant wants your property to feel like their home – not like they are living in someone else's property. Respecting boundaries is an important part of keeping your tenant happy and you should keep visits only to what is necessary. Remember that you must also give notice before entering the property.

6. Rent rises

Even in the current climate raising rents might spell disaster. If you face increased costs it can be tempting to pass them straight onto tenants but this move might be worse in the long run. If your tenant can't meet the new rent prices and decides to move out you will have the expense of looking for a new tenant and the property may be sat empty while you do so.

7. Consider pets

The British are a nation of pet lovers, so the chances are high that a tenant may want to find a home for themselves and an animal companion, but you would be correct to be wary of housing pets in your properties. Some animals can cause a lot of damage, so you would be forgiven for stating 'no pets'; but you could potentially be missing out on some great tenants. Instead, you could 'consider pets'; this would give you time to discuss the situation with a prospective tenant, how many pets they have and of what type they are. Use your judgement to come up with a fair response and if you accept a pet, ensure that you include the details in the tenancy agreement.

8. Landlord's scheme

Consider becoming an accredited landlord to make your tenants feel reassured and trust that you will be a good landlord. The National Association of Landlords offer an accreditation, which is worth achieving for both yours and your tenants benefit. There is also an additional incentive for you to become accredited for the sake of the private rent sector; the more accredited landlords there are, the more the government will believe that the sector can self-regulate and is aware of, and doesn't need, any further legislation.

9. Deposit

The law states that you should keep a tenant's deposit in an approved deposit scheme. There are three approved schemes that offer security for both tenant and landlord. Let your tenant know which scheme you use, how they can claim the deposit back at the end of their tenancy, an explanation of the purpose of the deposit and what to do if there is a dispute. Once the deposit has been received you're then required to lodge the money with your chosen scheme within 30 days of receipt. When the tenancy ends you are obligated to submit your intention for deposit release, within 10 days. Failure to comply with the law or even stalling on lodging a tenant's deposit can land you in trouble and could potentially result in a fine, so don't delay on sorting out a deposit as soon as you have it from your tenant.

10. Decorating

Our final tip to keep your tenants happy is to ensure that your property is kept in good condition and that you aren't stingy when it comes to new fixtures, carpets or decorating. Landlords should aim to create homes, not just make houses habitable. A comfortable property that looks like it is well cared for will also sell itself when it comes to finding a new tenant.



5 Tips For Attracting Tenants

One of the quickest ways to get your property in front of tenants is to place your advert on a major property portal, such as Rightmove and use an online letting agent. Traditional letting agents don't find tenants for you, the quality of your advert and the property portal used are key to finding a tenant quickly. An empty property is lost income, so speed is key when it comes to looking for a new tenant. Rather than waiting for a local agent to come to your property to take photos and write a description, which can take weeks, put your advert together yourself, use an online letting agent and get your property advertised within hours.

If you still aren't filling properties as quickly as you would like, it's worth looking at your advert and looking where it can be improved. Here are a few tips to help you create a perfect advert that will attract attention.

1. Take good photos

Photographs of your property are the most important feature when creating your property advert. Enquiries can be increased by around 80% for properties with a range of pictures, as opposed to listings with only one or two. Invest in some professional photographs rather than using your smartphone to take a few snaps – this is an area you shouldn't scrimp.

2. Price rent competitively

The rental price is important because a tenant wants to know if they are getting their money's worth. Look around and compare your property to other adverts on the market for local rentals. Using a search on Rightmove, you can extend from a ¼ mile radius and upwards from your postcode to find the price of other properties nearby. You can include recently let properties in your search results, as this can give you examples of what you need to achieve to let the property out.

3. Sell your location

Location is an important factor for the tenant when choosing which part of the country to live in, so it can be very beneficial to include different amenities and attractions in the local area. Things to consider are supermarkets and shopping centres. Having high-quality restaurants and bars nearby can help to boost the number of enquires in your advert and the price of your property. Transport is always something a tenant will consider when looking to rent, so including the different transport hubs close to your property can help a tenant decide whether they are interested.

4. Create a floorplan

A floor plan is always a good addition to your advert as it gives a tenant a detailed layout of the property. A tenant might be able to see the rooms in the pictures but without a floor plan, they cannot picture the order or position in which the rooms are situated. Another good reason to have a floor plan is that not everybody has one, so it can be the difference between you and your competition and can make your listing look that little bit smarter.

5. Detail furnishings

For landlords looking for short-term tenants such as students, the property must be furnished. A student at university or somebody only looking to stay for a period of months is going to need all the essentials of a home, and the more furniture and appliances are going to attract more tenants. It can help to throw some extras in like Sky TV or broadband. This can set your advert aside from the others and result in more enquires.

10 Tips For Maintaining Rental Property

Just about everyone takes care of the maintenance on their personal home; it's a matter of pride for most of us and there should be no difference when it comes to looking after your rental property. Little problems can quickly become big issues so try to stay on top of repairs and improvements when you can.

Whether you pay for a professional to undertake repairs and maintenance, or you are a fan of DIY, here are ten tips for keeping on top of property repairs:

1. Woodwork

Keep exterior wood in good condition by applying the appropriate treatments and repainting. Not only will this look much more pleasing, but it will save you any costly future repairs on rotten timber.

2. Gutters

Clean gutters on a regular basis to keep them free from leaves and debris. Blocked gutters can lead to water backing up in the overflow which could potentially enter the property or cause the gutters to become weakened and fall off.

3. Drainage

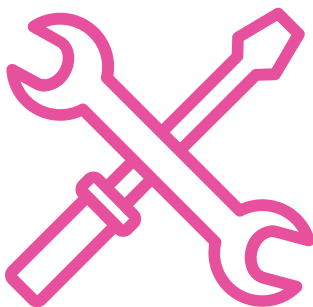
Ensure water is properly drained away from your property by checking that the soil around the edges of the building slopes away, rather than inwards. Blockages or piles of dirt can direct water the wrong way and into your foundations.

4. Windows & doors

Ensure that windows and doors are adequately sealed against water penetration and the elements. Water leaking in through a window can cause extensive damage so fix any holes that you find. Gaps in doors and windows can also make the property difficult to heat, which could result in mould issues.

5. Trees

Trees can be a nightmare for any property owner if they are left unchecked. If a tree becomes damaged, then have it removed immediately as a falling tree or large branch could cause damage to the property or injure the tenant. Also, check that tree roots are not growing too close to the property as this can interfere with the foundations over time.



6. Roofing

Replace roof tiles as soon as you are aware they are missing or have become damaged. A new roof can be a very expensive piece of work, so it's a good idea to keep an eye on your roof looking for any changes or damage.

7. Chimneys

If the property has working fires, you will need to schedule chimney inspections in once a year, as well as paying for them to be cleaned. A blocked chimney could lead to smoke or fire damage.

8. Heating

Depending on what sort of heating system your property has, it may need to be inspected each year. Gas boilers need an annual safety check and certificate and the appointment is a good time to discuss any repairs or ask about replacing older systems with something more efficient.

9. Cellars & basements

Cellars and basements usually have a fusty smell but check for standing water or walls leaking. A long-term investment would include damp proofing any cellars futureproofing them against water damage.

10. Electrics

Electrics don't need checking as often as gas systems, but it is reassuring to have a professional check all your wiring and ensure that everything is safe. This is especially important when purchasing a new property, which may have very old wiring.

Note: from April 1st 2018 it is required that private rental homes have a minimum energy performance rating of E on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The regulations have already come into force for new lets and renewals of tenancies, but existing tenancies have until April 1st 2020 to make the required improvements. If your property doesn't have an energy performance E rating, then remedy it immediately rather than leaving it until the last minute. You can work improvements into your regular maintenance and repairs to ensure your property meets the standard by 2020.

Eviction & Tips For Dealing With Problem Tenants

A bad tenant can end up costing far more than a few hours' sleep. Legal problems in evicting the tenant, the inevitable lost rent and the added expense involved in clearing up and getting the property ready for letting again. For landlords the ultimate nightmare is not being able to pay the mortgage because the tenant has stopped paying the rent.

When all attempts to resolve issues with a tenant have failed, eviction is the only real weapon in a landlord's arsenal. Understandably some new landlords may be reluctant to take this step.

To evict a tenant, you can go down one of two avenues. A Section 8 notice should be used if you want to regain possession of a property during a fixed term tenancy. You can serve a Section 8 notice if the tenant has violated the tenancy agreement. This includes rent arrears as well as causing damage to the property. However, you must be able to prove you have one or more grounds for possession, as laid out in schedule 2 of the Housing Act.

The judge will award a possession order if the rent is substantially in arrears. But for grounds such as neglect or damage the court has discretionary powers. You need to prove your case. Before issuing the Section 8 notice ensure you are compliant with the law. The court will throw it out if you have not served a valid notice. To be able to serve a valid notice you must ensure that the procedure at the start of the tenancy was done correctly, for example, you must be able to evidence the lodging of the tenant's deposit in a deposit scheme, and that you issued the tenant the prescribed information alongside necessary paperwork and certificates related to their tenancy.

The other means of eviction is a Section 21; often called a no-fault eviction as you don't need to provide the reason you want to regain possession of the property. You must give your tenant at least two months' notice in writing but the notice cannot end prior to the end of the tenancy. In other words, a Section 21 cannot evict a tenant during a fixed tenancy. As with a Section 8 notice, the same rules apply that the process must have been followed correctly right from the start of the tenancy.

The major issue facing landlords with any eviction is cost. Legal fees can rack up during the eviction process and there may also be the additional cost of bailiffs if the tenant will not vacate the property.



Of course, most tenants aren't a problem and eviction is the absolute last resort. The best way to avoid nightmare tenants is to do your due diligence right at the start. Here are five ways you can avoid a problem tenant to start with.

1. Reference service

MakeUrMove advise that you use a third party referencing service. A professional service will ensure that references are carried out quickly, thoroughly, and to a standard that will enable you to take out a rent protection policy as an extra precaution if needed. You can also ask for three months' worth of bank statements to ensure that the tenant is able to afford rent.

2. Landlord reference

References from previous landlords are worth their weight in gold so make sure you ask for them. If they won't provide a landlord reference, ask yourself why.

3. Instinct

Your instinct can be a powerful tool when it comes to finding a new tenant. It doesn't pay to be overly cautious, but if something feels 'off' about a prospective tenant, and they haven't passed all your other checks move onto the next person on the list.

4. Inventory & checks

Before the tenant moves in ensure that an inventory has been carried out and that the tenant signs and dates the document. Also make sure all your legal compliances are in place - Gas Safety Certificates, smoke alarms etc. And, of course, ensure you protect the tenant's deposit with a deposit protection scheme, and provide the evidence that you have done so.

You also need to supply the tenant with a copy of the property Energy Performance Certificates (EPC), Gas Certificate, and How To Rent Guide.

5. Keep in touch

To prevent problems arising during the tenancy keep in touch with your tenant and have your letting agent carry out regular inspections. However, ensure that contact is kept to a minimum and that you don't intrude on your tenant too much.

Conclusion

Our research has made it clear that there is a staggering difference between the public perception of landlords and how landlords view themselves and want to be portrayed. Most landlords aren't wealthy people looking to swindle the poor; they provide an important service, which in the current housing climate may be a sticking plaster solution, but it is a solution that's better than the alternatives.

As The Home of Good Landlords, MakeUrMove encourages landlords to tighten up how they operate by looking after tenants, keeping their properties in good order and making good choices when it comes to selecting tenants.

A good long-term tenant who pays their rent on time is every landlord's dream; if you follow the tips in our guide and manage your rentals well, then your properties will speak for themselves and tenants will stick with you for longer.

With regards to the concerns over finances and legislation changes, unfortunately, it looks like landlords, especially those in the buy-to-let market, are going to have to tighten their belts and hang on for a while. As recommended, joining a landlord's scheme such as the National Association of Landlords is a good measure to send a message to the government that no more regulations are needed and that most landlords are capable of self-regulating.

If you are concerned about finances and your future in the private rental market, then making sure that you're a good landlord and hanging onto the best tenants should be your priority. Therefore, it's important that landlords professionalise themselves;

you are a business and should be operating as a business would. Many landlords don't identify as a business because they either don't make much of a profit or only own one rental property. Even with just one property under your belt, you are still providing a service to your tenant as well as to society. An increase in professionalism could soften governmental and public feeling towards the private rental sector.

This isn't to say that just landlords need to improve; the government need to approach housing issues with a sensible and long-term strategy. We believe there should be more regulation in the rental sector, but it should be done in the right way with a long-term plan, consultation with landlords and in a way that won't spring unforeseen financial hardship on landlords, simply adding more fuel to an already struggling housing market. The government also has a job to communicate changes to landlords in an understandable way; the removal of tax relief is just one example of legislation change where nobody other than property and financial experts could understand the impact the changes would have. The average accidental landlord or pension investor couldn't understand if they were affected or not.

About MakeUrMove

MakeUrMove is the original national online letting agent. Since 2008 we have successfully helped tens of thousands of private residential landlords from all over the UK by connecting them with hundreds of thousands of tenants and aiding them through the letting, tenancy and property management process.

We are an award-winning technology driven company and have led the pace of innovation in the rental property sector, driving down costs for both landlords and tenants alike.

Through our user-friendly dashboard, landlords can easily access a broad spectrum of products and services to make managing their property and tenancies really simple. These include:

Property advertising

Rightmove Featured Listing | Viewings Packages | Professional Photography | Floorplan

Legal & compliance

EPC Testing | Electrical Safety Certificate | Tenancy Documentation | Gas Safety Certificate

Tenancy management

Tenant Check-in- Tenant Check-out | Inventory | Inspection

Property management

Rent Collection | Rent Protection | Full Management



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