

Advice for Private Landlords – Drug Production

Rented properties are often a convenient way for criminals to hide drug production from the public.

As a letting agent or private landlord you have a legal and ethical responsibility to help protect the communities in which we live.

The penalties of turning a blind eye could be severe:

Under the misuse of drugs act 1971 a landlord or property manager can receive a maximum of 14 years in prison and/or a fine if they allow the production of controlled drugs in their property. This legislation could also lead to the property itself being forfeited.

Landlords can also be prosecuted for money laundering offences under the proceeds of crime act.

The cost implications of drug manufacturing or supply can be huge for landlords as it can take a long time for properties to be made safe for habitation which in turn leads to loss of rental income.

In some cases, if a premises is associated with the unlawful production, consumption or supply of Class A drugs, the Police or the Local Authority may apply for a Closure Order, more commonly referred to as a Crack House Closure (what's this?)

Cannabis Farming:

Many properties in the past year, predominantly in the private rented sector have been discovered to be growing in some cases massive amounts of Cannabis.

How to spot a cannabis factory:

- Strong, Pungent smell coming from the property
- Electrical wiring being tampered with
- Powerful lights left on in the property
- Windows being blacked out
- Sudden jumps in the cost of electricity bills
- Large amounts of bin bags full of leaves etc thrown away
- Rewiring of electrics to bypass circuitry

Spotting signs of production of other drugs:

The production of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine (crystal meth, Ice), amphetamine (speed, wiz), LSD (acid, trips) and MDMA (Ecstasy) is incredibly dangerous. Whilst most of the chemicals to make the drugs are readily available, the process of the manufacturing are extremely volatile and often produce carcinogenic fumes.

The signs to look out for include:

- Large amounts of chemical products
- Coffee filters
- Boxes of red matches
- Stripped battery cases
- Cold and allergy medicines containing Ephedrine or Pseudoephedrine
- Strong or unpleasant chemical smells
- Chemistry equipment such as glass flasks and reactors.

Is there anything that a landlord can do to deter drug production in their property?

Yes, here are some examples of things to be aware of:

- Check references of the tenant
- Be suspicious if a prospective tenant is willing to pay months of rent in advance, or above the going rate, particularly in cash
- Never accept rent in cash – ask for bank account details
- Be suspicious if a tenant never allows you access to the the property, or certain rooms or area of the property
- Ask applicants to provide photographic ID
- Be suspicious if the tenant puts deadlocks or alarms on internal doors or has tried to reinforce external doors.

Signs of Drug Dealing

Any responsible landlord or property manager should remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the police immediately. Look out for signs of:

- Frequent anti-social behaviour at or near the address
- Obvious signs of drug dealing taking place at the property such as visitors calling all hours of the day and night, small “grip seal” clear plastic bags, digital or more traditional weighing scales on display, large amounts of cash and/or lists of customers
- Drug paraphernalia such as needles or bags of leaves discarded outside the address.