

A growing problem

A landlord's guide to keeping illegal drugs out of rented properties



Warwickshire
POLICE

Safer Neighbourhoods

Don't turn a blind eye

A landlord's guide to keeping illegal drugs out of rented properties

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

Warwickshire Police works hard to target those organised gangs operating illicit drugs laboratories in rental accommodation across the county.

As a letting agent or a private landlord, you have a legal and ethical responsibility to help protect and preserve the communities in which we live. Don't let your property be used to front criminal activity. The penalties are 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 to take place in rented accommodation. Under this legislation there is also the potential for a premises to be seized or forfeited.

Landlords can also be prosecuted for money laundering offences under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

At best for landlords, the cost implication can be huge and it takes time for premises to be cleared and made safe for future tenants. This in turn could result in loss of earnings. The property may even need to be demolished.

This booklet contains important information and advice about the detection and dangers of secret/hidden drugs laboratories. We all have a responsibility to ensure drug trafficking and manufacturing is detected and prevented.

The cost of drug activity

Rental properties

Drugs can wreck communities. As a landlord you could end up paying a high price for allowing a property you own to be used for drug production. **This could result in:**

- Losing access to your premises for good, or a long period of time
- Considerable cost of clearing up and making premises safe for future tenants to live in
- Loss of rent/income
- Damage to business or personal reputation
- Potential reduction in property value
- When selling the property, having to disclose to future buyers that the premises has been used for the production of controlled drugs.

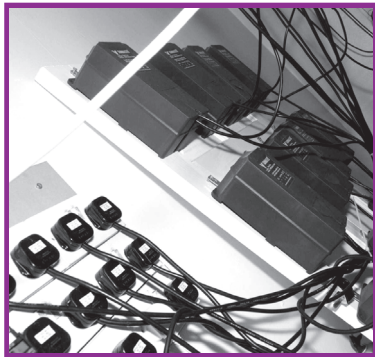


Signs of drug activity

How to spot a cannabis factory

If you suspect your property is being used in the production of cannabis, look out for signs of:

- A strong, pungent smell coming from the property
- Electrical wiring that has been tampered with
- Beware of booby traps. Electrical wiring may have been rigged up to door handles etc.
- Powerful lights left on in the house throughout the night
- Windows blacked out
- A sudden jump or increase in the cost of electricity bills
- Scuffed paint or wallpaper
- Large quantities of bin bags, full of vegetable material, thrown away
- Rewiring efforts or bypassed circuitry.



Signs of drug activity

Production of other types of drugs

The production of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine (ice, crystal meth), amphetamine (speed), LSD and MDMA (Ecstasy) is incredibly dangerous.

Most of the chemicals required to make these drugs are readily available, but it is the process involved in producing them which is extremely volatile. The gases released during the making of methamphetamine are so toxic that they are extremely carcinogenic and are often used in chemical warfare.

When drug production has taken place in a premises it can take months for that property to be cleaned and made safe for human habitation. The cost of cleaning up an illicit drugs laboratory can be huge.

These laboratories have been found all over the country: in rented property, caravans and even holiday homes. Productions can be smallscale and may not necessarily take over a whole house or apartment.

They can be set up using everyday household appliances found in most kitchens. **The signs to look out for include:**

- Large amounts of chemicals products
- Coffee filters
- Boxes of red matches
- Stripped battery cases
- Ephedrine or pseudoephedrine based medicines (cold or allergy medicines)
- Strong or unpleasant chemical smells such as ammonia
- Chemistry equipment such as glass flasks, chemical reactors etc.

Deterring drug production in rental properties

Landlords and letting agents should consider the below advice when letting out rented premises:

- Be wary of any prospective tenant 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
- Never accept tenants without checking references and backgrounds first
- Be suspicious if a tenant never allows you access to the property or refuses you entry to certain rooms or areas of the property
- Has the tenant asked to meet you away from the property to pay rent, or to discuss anything about the accommodation?
- Has the tenant put deadlocks or alarms on internal doors or made attempts to install fortifications on the exterior of the property?

Also ensure that you always:

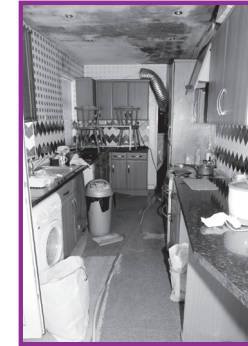
- Ask applicants to provide photographic identification
- Check a prospective tenant's current address
- Check a prospective tenant's rental history
- Obtain contact telephone numbers of all tenants and their car registration numbers.



Signs of drug dealing

Any responsible landlord or property manager should remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity at a rental property 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. In particular, visitors calling during all hours of the day and night
- Drug paraphernalia (such as needles or bin bags full of vegetable matter, etc) left outside the address.



Remember, this can happen in a property you rent out. Between June 2009 and June 2010, 121 cannabis factories were discovered in Warwickshire.

What to expect from the police.

Remember! If you suspect drug production is taking place at an address then get out, stay out, and contact the police immediately.

Warwickshire Police treats all reports of drug activity very seriously, and will act upon information received.

Delivering the right service, first time



- **Emergency** - if there is a crime in progress or life is at risk, call **999** or **112** (the European emergency number).
- **Priority** - if the matter is urgent or a local policing priority, but not an emergency, call **01926 415000**.
- **By appointment** - if your call is not an emergency or a priority, call 01926 415000 to make an appointment.
- **Advice and information** - Not sure what service you need? Call 01926 415000 and we will provide the right response or direct you to the right organisation.

Many matters can be discussed with your Safer Neighbourhoods Team.

For contact details visit

www.safer-neighbourhoods.co.uk

Drug Treatment Services - If you have any concerns about an individual's use of drugs or want to find out about the services that are available in your area, please contact Cranstoun Community Drug Agency on 01926 885176 or visit

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/drugs



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