

Many private landlords in the UK lack the knowledge, skills and support needed to provide decent homes for renters

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Many private landlords lack the knowledge, skills and support needed to provide decent homes for renters, a new study has found.

The U.K. Collaborative Center for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) study, by Dr. Jennifer Harris and Professor Alex Marsh at the University of Bristol, is based on a survey carried out with more than 1,000 landlords and on 68 in-depth interviews with landlords, letting agents and experts. The study covered the whole of the U.K. It adds to the limited body of research that has been carried out from the perspective of landlords.

The study looked at landlords' behaviors and practices which affect tenants' ability to make a home in the sector. These include making sure the property is in a good state of repair, selecting tenants, and complying with relevant laws and regulation. Most owners do not pursue landlordism as a professional business and manage a small number of properties alongside their normal day jobs.

Very little research has been carried out from the perspective of landlords. This is the final project carried out as part of the collaboration between CaCHE, the TDS Charitable Foundation and the SafeDeposits Scotland Charitable Trust.

Dr. Jennifer Harris said, "Many landlords want to be good landlords and believe themselves to be so, but the definition of good can vary. Regulators must take an active role in educating and supporting landlords to provide decent homes for tenants."

Steve Harriott, on behalf of both the TDS Charitable Foundation and the SDS Charitable Trust, said, "This report provides important insights into the role which landlords play in the U.K.'s private rented sector and in particular their needs for advice and information, which is better tailored to their particular circumstances. It will provide food for thought for lettings agents, membership bodies, suppliers and [policy makers](#) who all want to raise standards in the private rented sector. We very much hope that this will trigger and inform fresh debates as to what needs to be done over the coming months and years."

The research suggests many landlords do not know how to manage their property finances effectively. Only 30% were calculating monthly cashflows and many did not have any money set aside for repairs (21%) or voids or turnovers (47%). Even minor repairs may become an issue if they have not been budgeted for and may become increasingly important as the cost-of-living crisis deepens. More than half of landlords (59%) said they had recently experienced challenges relating to the costs of repairs and maintenance. This can lead to delays for tenants and ultimately risks to health and safety.

Many landlords said they relied on tenants to report issues with the property (76%). Only 46% adopted a more scheduled approach to ensure the property is kept in good condition. Letting agents said that increased demand for housing and difficulties in accessing the sector, means that tenants are often reluctant to complain or "rock the boat." 46% of landlords said they had faced challenges with tenants not reporting issues. This can make minor problems more costly and difficult to address.

There have been significant recent to the law governing private renting and further changes are proposed in each of the country of the U.K. However, landlords often do not understand their legal rights and responsibilities. 70% of surveyed landlords said it was difficult to keep up with the changes to law and 60% said the changes to the law were not clearly communicated. Only 41% felt it was the responsibility of the individual landlord to make sure they are up to date.

A lack of understanding or awareness of the law means that personal preferences and beliefs will often guide decisions. 89% of landlords said the main criteria they used to assess the physical condition of their rental property was if they would be happy living there themselves. A smaller proportion cited legal frameworks (58%). However, personal standards can vary, and certain issues may not be identified from inspection but

only become apparent if living in the property over a period of time.

A lack of understanding of their role also means that landlords may not know what to do when something goes wrong. Landlords' practices were often directed towards minimizing risk. Our research shows that landlords are adopting a range of informal and formal means of assessing tenants at the point of application, and increased demand for [housing](#) is allowing them to introduce more criteria and be choosier. This can make it more difficult for tenants to access the rental market and risks discrimination.

For those that lack the time, knowledge or skills needed to manage property effectively, one option is to use a letting agent. However, our findings show that landlords experiences with letting agents can vary greatly, with many reporting problems or issues with their services.

The study concluded with a series of recommendations to improve the advice, information and training provision provided to landlords.

More information: Understanding landlord behaviour in the private rented sector in the UK: [housingevidence.ac.uk/publicat ... ed-sector-in-the-uk/](https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/understanding-landlord-behaviour-in-the-private-rented-sector-in-the-uk/)

Provided by University of Glasgow

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