# landlord wins £17,000 rent repayment claim after valid licence application revealed



Legal specialists at Landlord Licensing & Defence have recently highlighted a notable victory for landlords in a rent repayment case that underscores the importance of valid licence applications. The case revolved around an £17,000 claim initiated by the activist group Justice for Tenants, which argued that a landlord operating in Lewisham was unlicensed. However, upon investigation, it became clear that the landlord had submitted a valid licence application years prior, thereby entitling them to legal protection under the Housing Act 2004, despite the council's failure to issue a final licence.

Desmond Taylor, the casework director at Landlord Licensing & Defence, emphasised the implications of this case by stating, “They came for £17,000 and left with nothing but a lesson in the law." His remarks bring to light a critical point regarding landlord accountability and bureaucratic inertia. Taylor noted that the responsibility falls squarely on the local authority when delays occur. “If a licence is duly applied for and the local authority sits on its hands,” he explained, “that’s their failure, not the landlord’s.” This perspective challenges the narrative often portrayed by tenant advocacy groups that landlords are entirely at fault when issues arise related to licensing compliance.

The case also sits within a broader context of Rent Repayment Orders (RROs), which are designed to compensate tenants residing in unlicensed properties. Such orders aim to recover rents from landlords who flout licensing regulations, illustrating a push towards holding landlords accountable for upholding tenant rights. However, as this latest case demonstrates, landlords do have robust defences available when they comply with the licensing process. According to various legal experts, valid licence applications serve as a complete defence against such claims, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the law that is not always considered by tenant advocacy groups.

In Lewisham, the local council has been proactive in rolling out three licensing schemes aimed at raising the standard of rental properties within the borough. These include Mandatory Licenses for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), Additional Schemes, and Selective Licenses, all of which require landlords to meet specific standards and conditions. These schemes not only enhance tenant safety but also impose significant penalties for non-compliance, including fines of up to £30,000 and potential revocation of licences for serious infractions.

While the council champions its efforts to protect renters, including emphasising enforcement actions against non-compliant landlords, there is contention regarding how effectively these measures are implemented. Recent cases, such as that of a landlord in Lewisham who was ordered to repay £10,538 due to their negligence, showcase the challenges in enforcing these regulations. This case involved a landlord who delayed their application for an HMO licence despite being informed of the requirements, leading to a significant reduction in the RRO claim against them.

Justice for Tenants, which played a pivotal role in the £17,000 claim, argues for the importance of RROs as a tool for tenants to reclaim compensation for living in unlicensed properties. They stress that such measures not only discourage landlords from neglecting compliance but also aim to address the poor living conditions that some tenants endure. The group provides support for tenants navigating the complex RRO process, highlighting the significance of legal avenues available to those affected.

Ultimately, the recent dismantling of the claim against the landlord in Lewisham raises critical questions about the balance of responsibility between landlords and local authorities. While tenant advocacy groups continue to push for stricter enforcement and improved conditions, this case serves as a reminder of the legal protections available to landlords, particularly when they make a genuine effort to comply with licensing requirements. As this legal landscape evolves, both tenants and landlords will need to remain vigilant regarding their rights and obligations under the law.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 3, 4, 5
3. Paragraphs 5, 6
4. Paragraphs 4, 5
5. Paragraphs 6
6. Paragraph 5
7. Paragraphs 4

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.landlordtoday.co.uk/breaking-news/2025/05/labour-councils-bureaucratic-cock-up-exposed-by-legal-team/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.landlordadvice.co.uk/rent-repayment-order-defence-hmo-licensing/> - This article discusses how tribunals assess Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) and the defences available to landlords. It outlines factors such as the extent of the breach, financial gain, tenant conduct, landlord's compliance with other legal obligations, and the period of non-compliance. The piece also details potential defences, including the 'reasonable excuse' defence, lack of knowledge of licensing requirements, procedural errors in the RRO application, and having a licence application in progress. Case law examples are provided to illustrate these points.
3. <https://lewisham.gov.uk/articles/blogs/how-were-standing-up-for-renters-rights-in-lewisham> - Lewisham Council's blog post highlights their efforts to protect renters' rights through the introduction of three licensing schemes: Mandatory Licenses for HMOs, Additional Scheme License for HMOs, and Selective Licenses. These schemes require landlords to meet minimum standards for repairs, property condition, and fire safety. The council emphasizes enforcement actions against landlords operating without a license or failing to meet terms, with fines up to £30,000 and potential revocation of licenses for serious or repeated breaches.
4. <https://www.justicefortenants.org/rent-repayment-orders-compensation-for-living-in-an-unlicensed-property/> - Justice for Tenants, a non-profit tenant advice service, explains Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) and their role in compensating tenants living in unlicensed properties. The article outlines the purpose of RROs, including compensating tenants, removing extra money made by landlords breaking the law, punishing landlords, deterring future breaches, and compensating tenants for poor conditions. The organization offers assistance with RRO applications, covering tribunal fees and providing representation.
5. <https://www.landlordzone.co.uk/news/lackadaisical-landlord-to-repay-tenants-ps10-538> - A landlord in Lewisham, London, was ordered to repay three tenants £10,538 after they successfully applied for a Rent Repayment Order (RRO). The landlord, Guldeep Mankoo, was criticized for a 'lackadaisical' approach to maintenance and repairs. Despite being alerted to the need for an HMO license in January 2023, Mankoo delayed the application until April 2023. The tribunal reduced the original RRO claim of £17,563 by 40% due to the landlord's acceptance of the offence.
6. <https://cms.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/housing/private-tenants-and-landlords/landlords/selective-licensing> - Lewisham Council's page on selective licensing outlines the requirements and consequences for landlords. Non-compliance with licence conditions is a criminal offence, leading to substantial fines and potential revocation of the licence. The council encourages reporting of unlicensed properties or breaches, providing contact details for reporting and emphasizing the importance of compliance to ensure tenant safety and well-being.
7. <https://www.ardenslaw.com/rent-repayment-orders/> - Ardens Solicitors provides information on Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) in England, allowing tenants to claim back up to 12 months' rent if a landlord has committed specific offences under the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The article lists relevant offences, including failure to comply with improvement or prohibition notices, breach of a banning order, and operating an unlicensed property. It also details the application process, tribunal fees, and the firm's services in assisting with RRO claims.