

A person wearing a grey suit jacket is holding a black folder with gold zippers. They are also holding a set of keys in their left hand. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a framed picture on the wall and a potted plant.

Enforcement, penalties and Rent Repayment Orders (RROs)

What landlords need to understand before May 2026

David Astburys

This is the part most landlords miss

Most commentary focuses on the headline changes. The bigger shift underneath is **enforcement**.

As the Renters' Rights Act reshapes the private rented sector, the system becomes more process-led. Standards matter more, repeat issues are treated more seriously, and **penalties can escalate quickly** when steps are missed.



What "enforcement" actually means

Enforcement is what happens when rules are not followed and a tenant, council, tribunal, or redress body has a clear route to act.

In a more structured system, risk often comes from process gaps, missing paperwork, unclear timelines, and inconsistent records, not just obvious "rogue landlord" behaviour.

Why it's more relevant under the RRA

The Act raises the standard across the private rented sector. That makes missed steps easier to spot and easier to challenge.

That matters because:

- Tenants will have clearer routes to raise issues
- Councils have stronger confidence and powers to enforce
- Repeat issues are treated more seriously
- Financial penalties can escalate quickly

Compliance stops being admin and becomes a **financial risk**.

→ Turn over: Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) and the financial downside



Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) and enforcement

A Rent Repayment Order (RRO) can require a landlord to repay up to 2 years' rent in certain cases where specific housing-related offences are proven.

This is **why RROs matter**. They are not a small fine. They can be a major hit to income if your process is not watertight.

In this landscape, it becomes less about what you meant to do and more about what you can prove quickly, with a clear paper trail.

The direction of travel

Enforcement in the PRS is strengthening. The system is becoming more structured and outcomes are increasingly evidence-led.

In practice, that means more **accountability**, more **scrutiny**, and bigger **financial downside** when steps are missed.

Common issues that can trigger action:

Unlicensed HMOs

Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice

Failure to comply with a Prohibition Order

Illegal eviction / harassment

Continuous breach of certain tenancy reform requirements

The financial risk

Civil penalties can be significant, and repeat issues are treated more seriously than one-off mistakes. Depending on the breach and circumstances, penalties can range from thousands to tens of thousands of pounds, with higher levels applying where offending is repeated.

Alongside civil penalties, RROs can create a much larger downside, up to 24 months' rent in qualifying cases.

Want a quick sense-check before May?

Adam Ray leads our Renters' Rights Act conversations with landlords across North London.

No obligation. Bring **one question** or your **full setup**.

Book a 10-minute chat with Adam



Enforcement at a glance: where landlords get caught out

| Breach | Points to note | Penalty/Downside |
|--|--|--|
| Unlicensed property (licensing breach) | Often surfaces after complaint or inspection. Late licensing still creates risk. | Civil penalty risk, can also open RRO route in qualifying cases (up to 24 months' rent). |
| Failure to comply with Improvement Notice | Deadlines matter, you need proof of action taken and completion. | Civil penalties, escalates if repeated or ignored. |
| Failure to comply with Prohibition Order | High-risk category. Continuing to let can be serious. | Higher enforcement risk, potentially significant financial penalties. |
| Illegal eviction / harassment | Shortcuts, pressure tactics, unlawful entry, service cut-offs. | Severe consequences, may include prosecution and/or RRO claims. |
| Continuous breach of tenancy reform requirements | Patterns matter. Informal handling without evidence creates risk. | Higher penalties for repeat issues, plus increased scrutiny. |

None of these issues are rare, and most don't start as "serious breaches". They usually come from missed steps, informal handling, or gaps in record-keeping that only become visible when something is challenged.

The common thread is not intent, it's evidence. In an enforcement-led system, outcomes depend on whether your file stands up when it's reviewed.

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