

UK short-let setup checklist

Before you commit to a property

1. Check permission, not just demand

Confirm the lease, lender and insurance terms allow your proposed use. Check planning requirements and local licensing or registration rules with the relevant council. Requirements differ across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

2. Build a realistic operating model

Estimate nightly rate, occupancy and seasonal changes. Include channel commissions, cleaning, linen, utilities, maintenance, insurance, financing, tax and replacement reserves. Test a lower-occupancy case before committing.

3. Review safety and compliance

Arrange a property-specific fire-risk assessment and check the relevant rules for gas, electrical safety, alarms, emergency information and maximum occupancy. Use competent professionals; this checklist is not a compliance certificate.

4. Decide what you will operate yourself

Assign responsibility for guest communication, pricing, maintenance, cleaning, laundry and out-of-hours incidents. Name a backup person and agree escalation rules.

5. Plan the guest journey

Write clear pre-arrival directions, check-in instructions, house rules and checkout guidance. Test your locks and access codes with someone who has never visited the property.

General guidance, not legal, tax or investment advice. Verify current rules for your location.

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Before you take the first booking

6. Make cleaning and linen repeatable

Create a room-by-room turnaround checklist, photo standards and an inventory. Agree linen quantities, laundry turnaround, quality checks and a plan for urgent same-day changeovers.

7. Connect your booking channels

Check calendar synchronisation, payment rules, cancellation terms and rate settings. Run a test reservation and cancellation. Make sure the same room cannot be sold twice.

8. Automate only after the process is clear

Start with booking confirmations, reminders, self-check-in instructions and cleaning notifications. Give every automation an owner and a manual fallback; test failures as well as the happy path.

9. Check the property as a guest

Test Wi-Fi, hot water, heating, lighting, sockets and noise. Check that photographs match the current property, and confirm your pricing covers the actual standard you are offering.

10. Review the first month

Track occupancy, average nightly rate, net revenue per stay, turnaround cost and maintenance issues. Use guest feedback to improve the operation before adding more properties.

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