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A Peterborough landlord has pleaded guilty to illegally evicting his tenant after he changed the locks to his property.

In May, landlord Jeffrey Reeve, 43, travelled to the property in Tanglewood, Werrington and changed the locks to the front door while the tenant was not at home. When the tenant returned he found that he could not access his home and all of his possessions had been locked inside.

With nowhere else to go, the tenant had no option but to sleep outside wearing only shorts and a thin jumper. This resulted in him requiring hospital treatment for the effects of exposure.

Following a complaint, the city council's Housing Enforcement Team investigated the case.

Mr Reeve initially claimed that the occupier of the Tanglewood property was a lodger and therefore was not illegally evicted. The council's investigation determined that Mr Reeve was residing in Middlesex and the occupier did in fact have exclusive use of the home and was not sharing the accommodation with his landlord – making him a tenant.

Yesterday (22 November) at Peterborough Magistrates' Court, Mr Reeve was given a 12 month conditional discharge and ordered to pay costs and a victim surcharge totalling £145.

Gareth Brighton, senior prevention and enforcement officer said: "There is a clearly defined legal process for evicting a tenant that involves written notice and if necessary, obtaining a Court order. In this case, the landlord chose to disregard the law and the tenant suffered substantially as a result.

"Our investigation was able to establish evidence of an illegal eviction and in such cases the council will pursue a prosecution under the relevant legislation."