

A BRIEF PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 ('the Act') marks the biggest shake-up in housing law for a generation. After years of campaigning by tenant groups and a lengthy passage through Parliament, the Act introduces sweeping changes to the private rented sector ('PRS'). The Act will have significant consequences on the 11 million private renters and 2.3 million landlords in England.

Whether you are a tenant wanting to understand your new rights, or a landlord trying to get to grips with your updated obligations, this guide breaks down what the Act means in practice. Please note that whilst we have attempted to summarise the most important amendments, this is such a large wholesale change to the law that it has not been possible to include details of all amendments. If anything is unclear, or you are unsure of your rights or responsibilities, please get in touch.

PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

The Act completed its passage through Parliament on 22 October 2025 and received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025. The Act is not in force in its entirety. The government published a separate timeline outlining [plans for implementation](#) on 13 November 2025.

The Act's provisions will be brought into force in three phases.

Phase 1 came into force on 1 May 2026. Broadly speaking, Phase 1 covered the implementation of the new tenancy regime.

Phase 2 will be implemented from late 2026. It will introduce a database of PRS properties which will bring together key information for landlords, tenants and councils. Phase 2 will also see the introduction of a Landlord Ombudsman for the PRS to improve dispute resolution between landlords and tenants.

Phase 3 will focus on raising standards of housing through the extension of Awaab's Law and a Decent Homes Standard to the PRS. The timescale for implementing these changes will be subject to future consultation.

PHASE 1

Phase 1 was implemented on 1 May 2026.

Phase 1 brought about the following changes, which are discussed further below:

- Replacement of all Assured Shorthold Tenancies with Assured Periodic Tenancies in the PRS.
- Abolition of section 21 'no-fault' evictions.
- Reform of section 8 possession grounds in the PRS.
- Limitation of rent increases to once per year.
- Bans on rental bidding and rent in advance.
- Prohibition of discrimination against renters who have children or who receive benefits.
- Requirement that landlords consider tenant requests to rent with a pet.
- Strengthening of local council enforcement and rent repayment orders.

Abolishment of fixed term assured tenancies and assured shorthand tenancies

On 1 May 2026, all Assured Shorthand Tenancies ('ASTs') were automatically converted into Assured Periodic Tenancies ('APTs').

Assured tenancy agreements no longer have a fixed end date. They continue on a rolling, periodic basis. The period reflects rent periods and is usually monthly but can be shorter, such as weekly or fortnightly.

These changes apply irrespective of how the tenancy agreement has been labelled. Landlords can no longer create ASTs or fixed-term tenancy agreements, and those landlords purporting to do so may be the subject of enforcement action by the local authority which can include receiving a financial penalty of up to £7,000.

The Act does not apply to lodgers or other licensees because lodger arrangements are formed via a licence agreement, which is not an assured tenancy.

Section 21 possession claims

Section 21 allowed landlords to evict tenants for no reason (known as 'no-fault' evictions). Landlords can no longer issue section 21 notices (even in cases where there is a break clause in a tenancy agreement predating May 2026).

If the landlord served a section 21 notice before 1 May 2026, and still wishes to act upon it, they must issue possession proceedings within six months of serving the notice and, in any event, **no later than 31 July 2026**. If proceedings are not issued by that date, any section 21 notice that has been served will no longer be enforceable. Any landlord who served a section 21 notice before 1 May 2026 but who has not yet brought legal proceedings should do so without delay and certainly before the six-month period or 31 July 2026, whichever is earlier.

Grounds for possession

Tenants can end a tenancy at any time by giving two months' notice provided that the end date of the tenancy aligns with the end of a rent period.

Landlords will now always need a legal reason to evict tenants. This is called a "ground for possession". Landlords must give a section 8 notice of seeking possession, employing one or more of the permitted grounds for possession.

As before, grounds for possession are either mandatory or discretionary.

Landlords must respect the relevant notice periods applicable to the respective grounds. If the incorrect procedure is used, landlords may be guilty of harassing or illegally evicting their tenants and face significant financial penalties.

The notice period will usually be four months if the tenant is not at fault (e.g. where the landlord wishes to sell the property or to occupy the property themselves) but is shorter if the tenant is at fault. For instance, ground 8, the mandatory ground for serious rent arrears – if three months of rent arrears have accrued (increased from the previously required two months) – requires a notice period of only four weeks. A list of the grounds for possession with their respective notice periods can be found [here](#).

Certain grounds cannot be used during the first 12 months of a new tenancy, for example occupation of the property by the landlord or their family and sale of the property. Where a tenant is at fault – such as where a tenant commits antisocial behaviour, is damaging the property or falls into significant rent arrears – landlords can give notice using the relevant grounds at any point in the tenancy. If the landlord uses the moving in and selling grounds, they will not be able to market or re-let their property for 12 months after using the moving in or selling grounds.

To obtain possession, once a landlord believes a ground applies, they must serve a section 8 notice on the tenant and, if the tenant does not leave the property voluntarily within the relevant time period, they must make a claim for possession through the

courts. This is where delays become a real issue, given the well-documented backlogs. [Recent MOJ statistics](#) show that it has been taking over six months for landlords to repossess properties once they have brought a claim.

Additional important changes relating to possession claims:

- if a tenant owes three months of rent because they have not received Universal Credit, they will not be liable to eviction because benefits will not be counted when a tenant owes rent
- if a tenancy deposit has been paid but not protected or returned to the tenant, that is now a complete defence to a section 8 possession claim.

Students

Student lettings of premises that are not purpose-built student accommodation were converted into APTs on 1 May 2026, in line with the general changes to the tenancy regime highlighted above.

However, a new possession ground – ground 4A – is available which allows landlords to terminate student APTs in multiple occupation between 1 June and 30 September inclusive in each year. It is worth noting that ground 4A cannot be used to terminate student tenancies where the tenant is not living in a house in multiple occupation. No special ground for possession exists in these circumstances.

For tenancies granted after 1 May 2026, to use ground 4A, the landlord must have given written notice to the tenant before the start of the tenancy warning that the landlord might use ground 4A. Additionally, landlords should be aware that they cannot rely on ground 4A if the tenancy is agreed more than six months before its commencement date. For instance, many students often try to find properties to rent in the Christmas period for the following academic year in September. In such a case, ground 4A could not be relied upon.

Changes to rent

Landlords must follow the revised section 13 procedure and provide the tenant with a notice detailing the proposed rent increase at least two months before it is due to take effect. Rent increases are limited to once per year (not within the first year of a new tenancy). Tenants can challenge the proposed rent increase in the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) ('the Tribunal') which will determine what the market rent should be. The application to the Tribunal costs £47.

Rental bidding is banned. Landlords, and any letting agent, must publish the proposed rent for the property in any advert. They cannot ask for or accept an offer that is higher than this. Any landlords or letting agency encouraging rental bidding may find themselves on the receiving end of a complaint to the local authority who may then issue a significant civil penalty.

Landlords also cannot ask for large amounts of rent in advance. The landlord can only request one month's rent in the time between the parties signing the tenancy and its commencement.

Removing barriers to renting

Landlords cannot do anything which makes it less likely, or harder, for a person with children or in receipt of benefits to rent their property.

Outright prohibitions on pets are banned. The landlord must consider any written request and cannot be unreasonably refused. The landlord must respond in writing to the tenant's written request within 28 days. The tenant can make a complaint to the landlord or start court proceedings if they believe the landlord's refusal is unreasonable.

Local authority enforcement

In addition to existing obligations, the Act introduced new obligations that landlords must respect, some of which have been canvassed above. Enforcement is split into two categories: breaches and offences.

Landlords can receive a financial penalty of up to £7,000 if they do one or more of the following (*breaches*):

- Claim to let the property on a fixed-term tenancy instead of a rolling tenancy.
- Claim to end a tenancy verbally or require a tenancy to be ended verbally.
- Fail to give a tenant written notice that a specified ground might be used where this is required by law (e.g. ground 1B, sale of dwelling-house after rent to buy agreement).
- Failed to give a written statement of terms containing the information required by regulations by 31 May 2026.
- Failed to give existing tenants an information sheet which tells them about changes made by the Act.
- Use a possession ground in section 8 notice, 'purported' notice of possession or claim form when there is no reasonable belief that a possession order will be granted by the court on that ground.
- Try to end the tenancy using a 'notice to quit' or notice of possession that is not compliant with section 8 (although enforcement action will not usually be taken if it is clear that, but for a simple mistake, it would have been a valid section 8 notice).

Landlords can receive a financial penalty of up to £40,000 as an alternative to prosecution if they do one or more of the following (*offences*):

- Relet or remarket a property with the 12-month no relet and remarketing restricted period after using statutory grounds for possession 1 or 1A, unless all reasonable steps not to were taken or an exception applies.
- Knowingly or recklessly use a ground for possession despite knowing that a court would not order possession on it, resulting in the tenant leaving within four months without an order for possession being made.
- Commit a breach within five years of a previous offence.
- Commit a breach within five years of receiving a financial penalty for a previous breach that has not been withdrawn.
- Continue to commit a breach for more than 28 days after receiving a financial penalty for that breach that has not been withdrawn and is not the subject of an ongoing appeal.

Local authorities have increased powers to investigate breaches/offences, obtain information and enforce the new provisions in the Act. They can impose fines on landlords or anyone acting on their behalf, including letting agents. The local authority needs to be satisfied on the balance of probabilities of breaches concerning discrimination against prospective tenants in the lettings process and rental bidding but beyond a reasonable doubt that any other breach or offence has taken place before they take action.

Local authorities must first gather evidence and give the landlord notice that they will issue a fine. The landlord has 28 days from the day the notice is issued to make written representations. The local authority will take these written representations into account and will decide whether to issue a final civil penalty notice.

If the local authority issues a final notice, the landlord may appeal to the Tribunal within 28 days to challenge the decision to issue the fine or the amount of the fine.

Rent repayment orders

The Act has also strengthened the rent repayment order (RRO) regime. Tenants, and even local authorities, can apply to the Tribunal within two years of the landlord committing a housing offence to obtain an RRO. An RRO requires a non-compliant landlord to repay rent to a tenant or local authority.

The Act has expanded the number of offences that can trigger an RRO, the cap on repayment has been doubled from 12 months' rent to 14 months' rent, and RROs can now be made against super landlords in rent-to-rent arrangements.

PHASE 2

Beginning in late 2026, Phase 2 of the Act will see the introduction of the PRS Database and the PRS Landlord Ombudsman. Phase 2 will be split into two stages.

Stage 1 of Phase 2 will be the rollout of the Database for landlords and local councils. Landlords must sign up to the PRS Database and they will be required to pay an annual fee. Future regulations will dictate what is required but, as a minimum, the Database will require the landlord's contact details, details of the property and safety information including gas, electric and energy performance certificates.

Stage 2 of Phase 2 will see the establishment of the PRS Landlord Ombudsman. The Landlord Ombudsman scheme will be mandatory for PRS landlords who will be required to fund the service. The Ombudsman will provide a redress service for tenants and will support landlords with tools, guidance and training on handling tenant complaints.

12 to 18 months before implementation, the government will choose a scheme administrator to oversee the new Ombudsman service. Once the service is ready for delivery landlords will be required to be members of the new service, which is currently estimated to be in 2028.

PHASE 3

By 2035, a Decent Homes Standard (DHS) will be implemented across the PRS. This will ensure that all PRS properties meet a minimum standard of housing quality. Local authorities will have powers to take enforcement action if PRS properties fail to meet the DHS.

The government consulted on this between 2 July and 12 September 2025 and is currently considering the consultation responses. The government will confirm the standards and implementation timeline in due course.

Following consultation, the government plans to require all PRS properties to meet Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards of EPC C by 2030.

The government has already begun to implement some elements of the DHS. It has already reviewed the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and, from 23 June 2026, the HHSRS had its first significant update since it came into force in 2006. The underlying risk-based approach has not been changed but an updated assessment and scoring process, amalgamating similar hazards to reduce the potential hazards from 29 to 21, has been introduced.

At the same time, the government has brought in local authority powers to issue immediate civil penalties of up to £7,000 for landlords failing to take reasonably practicable steps to address category 1 hazards. Local authorities were already under a duty to take enforcement action in relation to Category 1 hazards and could already

take action to force landlords to carry out repairs or to carry out emergency works themselves but the ability to impose a civil penalty is new.

Finally, Awaab's Law, which requires social housing landlords to make homes safe within prescribed timeframes when certain hazards exist, will be extended to the PRS. While the legislative framework exists to extend the application of Awaab's Law to the PRS (in sections 60 and 61 of the Act), this requires the passing of further regulations. There is no set implementation date for Awaab's Law in the PRS as the government wishes to undertake further consultation. Awaab's Law is expected to be extended to the PRS from 2027.

Although Phase 3 may appear to be some time away, as the government counsels in its guidance, landlords should commence works earlier wherever feasible. This will ensure landlords keep on top of their obligations and avoid any enforcement action.

CONCLUSION

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 has made significant changes to the private rented sector. It has fundamentally reshaped the relationship between landlord and tenant.

It is important that landlords carefully respect the provisions of the Act that have taken effect in Phase 1, and prepare for the changes that will come in due course with Phases 2 and 3.

The prudent approach, whether you are a landlord managing a portfolio or a tenant navigating unfamiliar ground, is to understand where your rights and obligations now lie and to take advice before disputes arise rather than after.

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