House of Commons

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Housing Conditions in the Private Rented Sector

Fourth Report of Session 2026–27

HC 42

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

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Summary

The government is taking welcome steps to raise the standard of privately rented homes over the next decade. Overall, our view is that the Renters' Rights Act and other reforms to raise standards constitute a proportionate package of measures that are likely to improve housing conditions for tenants. However, the effectiveness of these measures depends largely on how well they are implemented and enforced. The government needs to take further, complementary steps to protect the most vulnerable tenants at the lowest end of the market.

Private landlords will not need to comply with the new Decent Homes Standard until 2035. The government's impact assessment assumes that most landlords will not carry-out the necessary work until shortly before the standard comes into force. The government must introduce incentives to encourage landlords to upgrade their homes sooner and strengthen the deterrent against breaches of the standard. The government should begin rolling out Awaab's Law (see Box 1) in the private rented sector this year to ensure that legal timescales for landlords to resolve hazards are fully in place across the private rented sector by the end of 2028/29. Overall, our view that is that the government has taken proportionate steps in the final design of the new minimum energy efficiency standard that will deliver benefits for tenants without adversely impacting supply. However, we are concerned that the effectiveness of the new standard, and the public's confidence in it, will be undermined if local authorities are not adequately resourced to enforce it.

Too much onus remains on individuals to take action against their landlord, either through to courts, by contacting their local authority or soon by approaching the ombudsman for redress. Stronger, more proactive regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector (PRS) by local authorities is critical if the government is going to improve conditions for tenants. In addition to the New Burdens funding that has been provided so far, the government must conduct and publish a full assessment of the resources and powers currently available to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector.

Fees landlords will need to pay to register on the new Private Rented Sector Database must provide sustainable, predictable and sufficient ring-fenced funding to enable local authorities to deliver a much-need increase in regulatory activity. The costs of regulating standards should be borne by

all landlords. A portion of the fees provided to local authorities should be used to fund proactive interventions designed to tackle unintentional non-compliance among landlords.

The government must also take further steps to remove barriers that inhibit the uptake and effectiveness of selective licensing (see Box 5) schemes that enable local authorities to proactively and strategically target resources at tackling poor housing conditions locally. This includes increasing the maximum duration of selective licensing schemes to 10-years and ensuring local authorities can set licence conditions requiring landlords to improve the physical condition of their properties. This kind of strategic intervention can help protect the most vulnerable tenants, who may struggle to advocate for themselves and make use of the new rights and protections the government is introducing.

The government needs to be much more ambitious in its plans for the Private Rented Sector Database to act a tool to drive up standards. Good landlords letting out safe, decent homes should be able use the database to demonstrate this and differentiate themselves from their competition. Giving landlords the ability to voluntarily self-certify that their homes meet the new Decent Homes Standard should incentivise early adoption and help achieve a more gradual, sustained improvement in the quality of homes over the next decade before the standard comes into force. Reducing unintentional non-compliance among landlords should be one of the core objectives of the new database. For tenants, the database must not only provide them with a more comprehensive picture of the condition of homes and the fitness of their prospective landlord, but also guidance about their rights and a means of reporting issues.

The government's reforms to the PRS are likely to play out differently across different places and parts of the market. However, the evidence we have received does not suggest that these measures will have a substantial adverse impact on supply. The government needs to complement these reforms with measures to give greater protection to renters at the lowest end of the market, who are more vulnerable to rent increases and other potential unintended consequences. With many renters already struggling to afford their rent, retaliatory rent increases could act as a form of economic eviction. We are not currently convinced that stricter measures to stabilise rents would be a proportionate step to mitigate this risk. The government's immediate priority must be to ensure the protections that are in place against above-market rent increases through the First Tier Tribunal are functioning effectively. We remain of the view that the government should unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance and ensure it matches at least the 30th percentile of market rents to protect households on lower incomes.

Doing so will help reduce the risk of rent increases leading to households at the lowest incomes being displaced into poorer accommodation or made homeless.

Poor conditions in the PRS are symptomatic of the country's wider housing crisis, especially the lack of social and affordable housing. We will be assessing the government's long-awaited long-term housing strategy to see how effectively it presents a credible plan to address the drivers of poor housing conditions.

Introduction

Growth of the private rented sector

1. There were 4.7 million households living in the private rented sector (PRS) in 2024/25.[1] The PRS in England grew rapidly during the early 2000s, doubling in size.[2] Since 2013/14, the proportion of households privately renting has been relatively stable at around 1 in 5 households, making it the second most common tenure after home ownership.[3] The sector's growth has been attributed to a variety of factors, including the deregulation of the private rented market in the late 1980s, greater access to credit through Buy-to-Let mortgages in the 1990s and greater demand for more flexible types of housing.[4] However, the lack of social housing and affordable housing to buy has also forced more people to rent privately.[5] We heard that for many people renting is a necessity.[6]

2. The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, in 2023, pointed out that as the sector expanded it became clear that many tenants were living in "suboptimal conditions" that the market "seemed incapable of correcting", thereby leading to greater calls for regulation to tackle this "market failure."[7] They pointed out that because deregulation, at least in part, helped the sector to grow, a key feature of debates around the regulation

1 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Chapter 1: Profile of households and dwellings, December 2025

2 House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, The Private Rented Sector, First Report of Session 2013–14, HC 50, July 2013, para 1; Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Private rented sector, Fourth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 440, 19 April 2018, para 3

3 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Chapter 1: Profile of households and dwellings, December 2025

4 Communities and Local Government Committee, The Private Rented Sector , First Report of Session 2013–14, HC 50, 18 July 2013, para 1; The New Economics Foundation, A Modern System for Fair Rents: How to mark private renting affordable, May 2026, p.3; UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.9

5 House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, The Private Rented Sector, First Report of Session 2013–14, HC 50, July 2013, p.1

6 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights

7 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.17

of the sector has been a concern to avoid reversing the sector's growth.[8] There have been a series of interventions over this period to address poor standards in the private rented sector.[9]

The private rented sector in England

Landlords and letting agents

3. There are around 2.3 million landlords in England.[10] These range from large institutional landlords, with large numbers of properties and dedicated property management teams, through to smaller landlords who may let 1–2 properties.[11] Kate Markey, Chief Executive of the Nationwide Foundation, described the country as a "nation of small landlords."[12] Most landlords, 8 in 10, only have a small number of properties, while 45% only own one.[13] People may become landlords for a multitude of reasons but most view their role as a long-term business or investment.[14] Smaller landlords, however, tend to rent their properties alongside other forms of employment.[15] A large share of tenancies are with landlords letting multiple properties. Nearly half of all tenancies (49%) are let by landlords with five or more properties.[16]

Sub-markets

4. The PRS is diverse with a series of sub-markets.[17] These range from markets for corporate lets (e.g. properties let to companies not individuals) and luxury properties through to those that cater for housing benefit claimants or those eligible for temporary accommodation.[18] Our predecessor

8 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.17
9 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, pages 17–18
10 Historic Renters' Rights Act becomes law, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 27 October 2025
11 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), paras 14.1–14.3
12 Q84 [Kate Markey]
13 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 7.1
14 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights
15 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 7.1
16 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Private Landlord Survey 2024: main report, December 2024
17 House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, The Private Rented Sector, First Report of Session 2013–14, HC 50, July 2013, p.6; Rugg, J and Rhodes, D (2008) The private rented sector: its contribution and potential. Research Report. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York York.
18 Rugg, J and Rhodes, D (2008) The private rented sector: its contribution and potential. Research Report. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, York.

Committee noted in 2013 that the higher end of the PRS market is likely to regulate itself, whereas other parts of the market may require greater government intervention to ensure properties are of an acceptable standard.[19] The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence has pointed out that "some landlords are willing to switch between the mainstream PRS and short-term letting, or towards the HMO subsector and then back again, in search of financial returns."[20]

5. The overwhelming majority of private landlords see it as their responsibility to provide tenants with a home that is safe and comfortable.[21] Most tenants are satisfied with the quality of the home, although some degree of disrepair is common.[22] Unintentional non-compliance can be an issue, especially among smaller landlords who do not operate in a 'business like' manner (see Chapter 4). However, there also shadow, illegitimate parts of the private rented market, in which rogue landlords and other parties knowingly violate standards and legal protections.[23]

6. The shadow market intersects with the mainstream private rented market. Research has pointed to the existence of slum landlords who may let out properties informally (e.g. with rent paid in cash and without a tenancy agreement).[24] A study of migrant workers in Great Yarmouth, for example, found that most workers had "informal, cash-based renting situations, without tenancy agreements or any proof they were paying rent."[25] Researchers have commented that slum landlords may let properties, often to vulnerable tenants, that are in "very poor condition, with no intention of

19 Communities and Local Government Committee, The Private Rented Sector , First Report of Session 2013–14, HC 50, 18 July 2013, para 6

20 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.8

21 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

22 The English Housing Survey in 2024/25 found that 66% of private renters were satisfied with their tenure. The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that its 'Voice of the Tenant' survey found that 57% of renters rated the condition of their homes as either good or excellent. They added, however, that 64% of tenants surveyed experienced one or more problems with their property over the last 6 months. See TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), paras 3.1 & 3.3 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025: private rented sector - pre-Renters' Rights Act overview, May 2026

23 X. L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York, pages 23–24

24 . L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York, pages 23–24; Professor Catherine Barnard (Professor of EU Law at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge); Dr Fiona Costello (Research Associate at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge) (HCE0010)

25 Professor Catherine Barnard (Professor of EU Law at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge); Dr Fiona Costello (Research Associate at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge) (HCE0010)

attending to essential maintenance or repairs."[26] To maximise the rental income, such landlords also seek to rent properties as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which they then overcrowd.[27] Researchers have also suggested that problems in the shadow market are unlikely to be resolved by using measures designed to enhance tenants' rights because this market is made up of landlords who "operate with no respect for rights" and "highly marginalised tenants" less likely to exercise them.[28]

The changing needs of tenants

7. The PRS is increasingly accommodating people in need of a more stable, secure home. This includes those more vulnerable to the risks from living in poor conditions, such as older people and children.[29] For example, the number of people over 65 who privately rent has been increasing. Older renters are often on low-incomes and at a greater risk of fuel poverty and the health risks posed by poor housing.[30] The Housing and Ageing Alliance told us that the number of older people living in the PRS is expected to increase four-fold by 2040.[31] More families are now privately renting than 25 years ago too; around a quarter of children now live in the private rented sector, up from 8% in 2000.[32] Just over 30% of those living in the PRS in 2024/25 were estimated to have a long-term illness or disability.[33]

8. Housing costs are a struggle for many households living in the PRS, but especially those on the lowest incomes who often spend almost half their income on rent.[34] We heard that the PRS is accommodating many people who would have been eligible for social housing in the past.[35] Some sub-markets specialise in providing accommodation for housing benefit claimants, those eligible for temporary accommodation, asylum seekers

26 X. L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York, p.15
27 X. L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York, p.15
28 X. L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York, p.6
29 Housing and Ageing Alliance (HCE0036); Barnardo's (HCE0070)
30 Housing and Ageing Alliance (HCE0036), p.6
31 Housing and Ageing Alliance (HCE0036), p.6
32 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Under pressure: The affordability challenges facing private renters, April 2026
33 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Housing Survey 2024–25, Chapter 1: Profile of households and dwellings annex tables, Annex Table 1.3: Demographic and economic characteristics.
34 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Under pressure: The affordability challenges facing private renters, April 2026
35 Generation Rent (HCE0053)

and other migrants.[36]Barnardo's, a children's charity, told us that families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) are particularly reliant on privately rented accommodation because they are ineligible for various sources of state support.[37] [38]

Our inquiry

9. We launched our inquiry into housing conditions in England in July 2025. This inquiry is looking at the prevalence and severity of poor housing conditions as well as the steps the government is taking to address these problems. Since our inquiry launched, we have published reports on conditions in social housing and in temporary accommodation.[39] We have also written to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about the quality of newly built homes.[40]

10. The aim of this report is to set out the scale of the challenge facing the government, so we have a benchmark against which to assess the government's progress over the remainder of this parliament as it begins to implement reforms to improve the quality of the private rented sector.

11. We have received almost 100 written submissions, much of which focuses on the private rented sector. Our inquiry has heard from tenants, landlords, letting agents, trade bodies, trade unions, professional bodies, charities, campaigners, community and renter's unions, local authorities, think-tanks, academics and other experts. This report is also informed by:

- two oral evidence sessions in November 2025.
- a visit to Bristol, where we heard from the local council and other stakeholders about the challenges with their local private rented market.

36 Rugg, J and Rhodes, D (2008) The private rented sector: its contribution and potential. Research Report. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York , York.

37 Permission to enter or stay in the UK can include a no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition. This prevents people from being able to access state support, including housing assistance. See Public funds, UK Visas and Immigration, last updated 9 April 2025

38 Barnardo's (HCE0070)

39 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector, Fourth Report of Session 2024–26, HC 1154, February 2026; Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Housing Conditions in Temporary Accommodation, Fifth Report of Session 2024–26, HC 1831, April 2026

40 Letter from the Chair to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning dated 20 May 2026 concerning new build homes.

- a public engagement event in December where we heard directly from people living in the PRS and from local authorities responsible for regulating and enforcing standards in their local private rented markets.

12. We are grateful to everyone who has engaged with us during our inquiry so far.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025

13. The timing of our inquiry has come at a point of a major transition for the sector. The Labour's Party's manifesto in 2024 included a commitment to "overhaul the regulation of the private rented sector" to give tenants stronger legal rights and protections and raise standards.[41] On 17 July 2024, the King's Speech set out the government's intention to bring forward a Renters' Rights Bill to deliver on its manifesto commitments.[42] The Bill built on reforms contained in the previous government's Renters (Reform) Bill.[43]

14. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025.[44] The 2025 Act is intended to create a fairer, safer, high-quality private rented sector, with measures designed to tackle the poor quality of housing in the PRS and empower tenants to raise concerns. One of the government's objectives is for all tenants to have a home that is decent, safe and secure.[45] The government is implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025 in phases, the first of which came into effect on 1 May 2025.[46] More information on the government's timeline for implementing the Act is set out in Box 1.

41 The Labour Party, Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024, June 2024, p. 56 and pages 79–80

42 Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and His Majesty King Charles III, The King's Speech 2024, July 2024; The Prime Minister's Office, King's Speech 2024: background briefing notes, July 2024, pages 68–70

43 House of Commons Library, Renters' Rights Bill 2024–25, CBP 10106, October 2024, p.22

44 Renters' Rights Act 2025, UK Parliament, last updated 27 February 2026

45 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Renters' Rights Bill Impact Assessment, November 2024, p.1

46 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector, November 2025

Box 1: Implementation of the Renters' Rights Act 2025

On 15th November 2025, the government published a roadmap setting out its approach to implementing the provisions in the Act. The first phase included the introduction of a new tenancy regime and stronger rights and protections for tenants. The remaining provisions of the Act are due to be introduced over two subsequent phases.[47]

- Phase 1: New tenancy regime and rights for tenants (1 May 2026).
- Phase 2: a new redress scheme and a Private Rented Sector Database (beginning in late 2026).
- Phase 3: new standards and legal protections to improve conditions (up to 2035).

On 1st May 2026, the government introduced a new tenancy regime and new rights for tenants that are designed to give them greater security. This included the abolition of Section 21 notices that landlords could use to evict tenants if they raised concerns.[48] The abolition of Section 21 notices is designed to tackle retaliatory evictions.[49] To tackle unjustified rent increases, landlords can now only raise the rent once a year and must give tenants 2-months' notice before doing so. Tenants can challenge rent increases that are above market rate.[50] More detail on these measures is set out in Chapter 3.

47 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector, November 2025

48 Landlords are now required to give tenants a reason to leave the property, known as grounds for possession. Previously, under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, landlords could repossess their properties without the need to find fault on the part of the tenant. These were referred to as no fault evictions. Landlords using assured shorthold tenancies were able to do this by serving tenants with a Section 21 notice. See Renters' Rights Act overview for tenants, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 1 May 2026; House of Commons Library, Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England), Number 7328, December 2022, p.25.

49 The House of Commons Library has explained that the term retaliatory eviction refers to situations in which landlords serve tenants a notice to evict them (e.g. a Section 21 notice), after tenants have requested repairs. Fear of being served with a Section 21 notice has prevented tenants from raising concerns about the condition of their home and exercising their rights. See House of Commons Library, Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England), Number 7328, December 2022, p.24; Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

50 Renters' Rights Act overview for tenants, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 1 May 2026

In the second phase, the government will introduce a new Private Rented Sector Database (PRS Database) and a new ombudsman service, which landlords will be required to join.[51] The database is intended to be a resource for tenants (e.g. to make more informed choices), landlords (e.g. understand their obligations and demonstrate compliance) and local authorities (e.g. target enforcement activity).[52] The government plans to begin rolling out the database later this year, while the new ombudsman is due to be running by 2028.[53] The government has said that the ombudsman will have powers to "compel landlords to issue an apology, provide information, take remedial action, and/or pay compensation."[54]

As part of phase 3, the government plans to introduce a suite of reforms to raise the standard of homes in the PRS and give tenants greater legal protections against hazards. These reforms will be introduced at different points over the next decade. The government plans to:

- apply a new Decent Homes Standard (DHS) to the PRS from 2035. This will act as a new minimum standard of quality that private landlords will need to comply with (see Box 3).[55]
- require all private landlords to ensure their homes meet higher minimum energy efficiency standards from 2030 (see Box 4).[56]
- introduce regulations that allow tenants to take legal action against their private landlord if they fail to investigate and resolve hazards within set timeframes. These regulations are collectively known as Awaab's Law, after the death of Awaab

51 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector, November 2025; House of Commons Library, Renters' reform in England: What's happening and when?, May 2026

52 House of Commons Library, Renters' reform in England: What's happening and when?, May 2026

53 House of Commons Library, How to complain about rented housing in England, December 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector, November 2025

54 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Guide to the Renters' Rights Act, November 2025

55 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026

56 Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: government response, January 2026

Ishak, a 2-year-old boy who died of a serious respiratory condition caused by prolonged exposure to mould in his parent's home.[57]

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 has extended and strengthened the powers available to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the PRS, but also places new duties on them.[58] This includes a general duty on local housing authorities to enforce landlord legislation in their area and provide reports to the Secretary of State.[59] The government has committed to fully fund the additional net costs on local authorities that arise from the new duties imposed on them by the Renters' Rights Act 2025, in accordance with the New Burdens doctrine.[60] The government has so far provided £60million in New Burdens funding to be shared between local authorities. This includes an initial £18.2 million that was provided in 2025/26 and a further £41million delivered for this financial year.[61] To help provide funding for local authorities, the government has also increased and extended the use of civil penalties.[62] Local authorities can use the income from CPNs to help fund their activities.[63] Also, the Act allows income from fees for the new PRS Database to be transferred to local authorities (see Chapter 5).[64]

57 Courts and Tribunals Judiciary Service, Awaab Ishak: Prevention of future deaths report, November 2022
58 Renters' Rights Act 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Guide to the Renters' Rights Act, November 2025
59 Explanatory notes to the Renters' Rights Act 2025, para 737
60 PQ 32068 [Private Rented Housing: Standards] answered on 5 March 2025
61 Councils backed with millions to take on rogue landlords, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 14 April 2026
62 PQ 32068 [Private Rented Housing: Standards] answered on 5 March 2025
63 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Guide to the Renters' Rights Act, November 2026
64 Explanatory notes to the Renters' Rights Act 2025, paras 545–546

1 The state of the private rented sector

The prevalence and severity of poor conditions in the private rented sector

15. The quality of homes in the private rented sector (PRS) has improved over the last 20 years.[65] The sector provides many people with a safe, decent, and comfortable home. Even though some degree of disrepair is common, most tenants are satisfied with their home.[66] However, this is not the case for a substantial minority of renters. The English Housing Survey has consistently found poor housing conditions to be more prevalent in the PRS than in other tenures.[67] Common issues include leaks, difficulties heating homes, serious problems with damp and mould and disrepair (e.g. windows, doors, roofs or walls in need of repair).[68]

Decency

16. The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) is used as a national benchmark for the quality of homes across different tenures, including privately rented homes.[69] In 2006, just under half of homes in the PRS were estimated to fail the DHS. The latest English Housing Survey estimated that just over 1 in 5 privately rented homes (22%) fell below this standard in 2024/25, a

65 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex tables, January 2026

66 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029) and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025: private rented sector - pre-Renters' Rights Act overview, May 2026

67 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex tables, January 2026

68 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 3.3

69 The Decent Homes Standard only applies to social housing, but is used a national benchmark of quality for other tenures. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCE0056), para 1.1

higher rate than in other tenures.[70] This equates to over 1 million homes.[71] Concerningly, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government told us there has been no significant improvement since the pandemic.[72] The actual number of privately rented homes that are estimated to fall below the DHS has increased from 2020/21 to 2024/25.[73] The Fabian Society has argued that much of the decline in the rate of non-decent homes is due to the sector's growth, rather than improvements to properties within it.[74] Just over 1.2 million homes in the sector were estimated to fail the DHS in 2006 compared to almost 1.1 million in 2024/25.[75]

Hazards

17. The prevalence of serious hazards, known as Category 1 hazards, is also estimated to be higher in the PRS, although the rate has fallen over time.[76] Common hazards include falls, excess cold, damp and mould, and

70 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex table 1.4 Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024 , January 2026

71 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex table 1.4 Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024 , January 2026

72 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCE0056), para 1.2

73 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex table 1.4 Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024 , January 2026

74 Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025, p.19

75 The rate of non-decent homes in the private rented sector has consistently fallen over the last 20 years. However, as the sector has grown, the actual number of non-decent homes has fluctuated. For example, in 2006 just over 1.2 million privately rented homes were estimated to fail the DHS. This number had increased to 1.4 million by 2011. The actual number of non-decent homes in the sector then continued to decrease until 2020. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex table 1.4 Non-decent homes, by tenure, 2006 to 2024 , January 2026

76 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, English Housing Survey 2024/25 Chapter 1: Housing quality, January 2026

overcrowding.[77] Landlords are legally required to keep their homes free from hazards.[78] Despite this, the English Housing Survey estimated that 10% of dwellings in the PRS have a Category 1 hazard.[79]

Box 2: Case study of poor housing conditions

We were informed of the case of an old Grade II listed house in multiple occupation (HMO) in Great Yarmouth that was used to house eight migrant workers from Europe, mainly from Lativa and Lithuania. Each resident had a self-contained room, but shared bathroom facilities. The property had no internet, no communal areas and only limited facilities for cooking. There was no central heating too. Instead, each person had a small, plug-in heater. We heard that the property suffered from "significant damp and mould." The downstairs bathroom had black mould. There was a crack in the only window in the bathroom, which prevented the window from being opened. This crack also meant the room was "very cold." We were told that "green moss grew on the inside of the windowpane." An electric heater channelled with a wire under the door was used throughout the winter to heat the room. We heard that part of the property was still a building site that was sectioned off by a cardboard 'do not enter' sign on the back stairs leading up to the area. One tenant who had lived in the property for ten years said that this had been the case for as long as they had been there. One of the workers had a leak in her ceiling on the third floor, which led to her belongings becoming wet when it rained.

Source: Professor Catherine Barnard (Professor of EU Law at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge); Dr Fiona Costello (Research Associate at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge) (HCE0010)

77 The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is a risk-based system that environmental health officers use to assess the severity of hazards. The HHSRS contains 29 hazards. Officers will, for example, use the system to determine the likelihood of falls at different parts of a property, such as on the stairs. Analysis of the common hazards in the PRS is based on analysis by the Building Research Establishment in 2023. See Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Operating Guidance, February 2006 and Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 2

78 House of Commons Library, Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England), Number 7328, December 2022, pages 17–20

79 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Chapter 1: Housing quality, January 2026

Cold homes

18. The energy efficiency of homes in the PRS has improved over time. However, only around half of privately rented dwellings have an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) rating of Band C or higher - the government's benchmark for an energy efficient home.[80] Homes that fall below this standard can be difficult, and expensive, to keep warm.[81] We have heard of homes so cold people could see their own breath when they were inside.[82] As well as being uncomfortable, living in a cold home can exacerbate financial pressures on households and negatively impact their health.[83] Failing to heat homes sufficiently can contribute to the development of damp and mould.[84] Private renters are more likely to live in fuel poverty than those living in other types of housing.[85] We were informed of a case where a mother with a young child struggled to heat her privately rented home, due to problems with the heating system. The mother explained that:

> Basically, the property that I am in doesn't have any sufficient heating system. I have storage heaters and panel heaters which cost me too much financially to heat the property. I already pay around, over £400 a month on my electric … Its huge and in the winter its around £80-£90 a week to supply the electric because it's so cold. I've got a little boy who's just turned 8 so obviously over that period of time I need to have the heating system on. But we have now resorted to using oil radiators, due to the fact that the heating system has just become financially uncontrollable.[86]

Damp and mould

19. The prevalence of damp and mould is also higher in the PRS than in other tenures. Around 10% of privately rented homes in 2024/25 were estimated to have a damp and mould problem.[87] However, tenants tend to report a much higher incidence of damp and mould.[88] The Citizens Advice told us that they found that 75% of private renters have lived in a home with damp, mould

80 House of Commons Library, Energy efficiency of UK homes, April 2026 p. 20
81 UK100 (HCE0063)
82 People's Health Trust (HCE0019)
83 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
84 National Retrofit Hub (HCE0020); Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
85 UK Government, Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England, 2026 (2025 data), March 2026, p.37; UK100 (HCE0063)
86 University of Liverpool, University of Sheffield, University of Cambridge, University of Sheffield, University of Sheffield, SPHR, Cornwall Council, UCL, University of Liverpool (HCE0027)
87 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Chapter 1: Housing quality, January 2026
88 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

or that is excessively cold.[89] Damp and mould is sometimes so extensive that it has spread throughout someone's entire home or large parts of it.[90] Tenants often remain living in these conditions for a long time. During our engagement event in December, most of the private renters we spoke with had lived with persistent damp and mould in their homes.[91] Citizens Advice added that almost half of renters living in damp, mouldy or cold homes reported doing so for over a year.[92] This is partly because landlords failed to take sufficient steps to resolve the problem. We heard from a woman with a young baby who was forced to move because of persistent damp and mould in her one-bedroom flat that her landlord failed to rectify. The landlord put a dehumidifier in the kitchen and repeatedly painted over the mould. Unable to find any other affordable properties locally she was forced to move out of the area, away from her family.[93] Citizens Advice told us that 14% of renters reported that living with damp and mould had made a respiratory problem of theirs worse.[94] Nye Jones, Head of Campaigns at Generation Rent, told us of a renter who:

> moved into a home, paying £1,250 a month, which was more than half her salary, in south London. The damp and mould was so bad that she got eczema around her eyes, could not breathe and had to sleep in the living room. She kept complaining to the landlord. Eventually, after just four months, the landlord issued her with a section 21 (see Box 1).[95]

Overcrowding

20. Overcrowding in the PRS has fluctuated over time but has risen over the last few years.[96] The latest English Housing Survey in 2024/25 estimated that 286,000 homes in the PRS were overcrowded, around 6% of the sector.[97] Generation Rent told us that "sharing bedrooms, particularly by

89 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
90 Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); People's Health Trust (HCE0019)
91 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082)
92 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
93 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082)
94 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
95 Q76 [Nye Jones]
96 Over the last 30 years, the rate of overcrowding in the PRS has been on an upward trajectory. This peaked in 2019/20 when the rate of overcrowding reached 6.7%. The rate subsequently fell to 5.1 in 2022/23, but has been rising since. In 2024/25, an estimated 6.1% of homes in the PRS were estimated to be overcrowded. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Chapter 1: Housing quality, January 2026 and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Headline Report: Housing Quality and Energy Efficiency: Annex Table 1.2: Overcrowding, by tenure, 1995–96 to 2024–25 , January 2026
97 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024–25 English Housing Survey Chapter 1: Housing quality, January 2026

older children and adults not in a relationship, is one way that households respond to unaffordable rent."[98] Barnardo's told us of a case of three young people who had lived in the care system that were forced to rent a one-bedroom flat together to avoid becoming homeless.[99] Rogue landlords may also deliberately overcrowd properties, such as HMOs, to maximise revenue.[100]

Accessibility

21. The accessibility of homes in the PRS has improved. However, the Centre for Better Ageing reported that only 14% of privately rented homes are sufficiently accessible to be visitable by most people.[101] The UK Housing Review reported that 1 in 3 people with a disability in the PRS are living in accommodation that is unsuitable - a higher proportion than in other tenures.[102]

Impact of poor housing conditions on tenants

22. Living in poor housing with some or all of the issues highlighted above can negatively affect people's lives in a variety of ways. Poor conditions, such as damp and mould, can cause or exacerbate physical health problems, such as respiratory conditions.[103] Living in homes in poor condition can also impact people's mental health. At our engagement event in December, we heard from one tenant that poor housing, coupled with the financial pressures of high rent, left them struggling physically and mentally.[104] Citizens Advice also informed us that "half of all renters affected by disrepair report experiencing stress or anxiety due to these issues, with 22% saying they suffer from depression as a result."[105] Poor conditions can exacerbate cost of living pressures, especially for households on low incomes, who may resort to cutting back on essentials or falling into debt.[106] A third of renters, for example, say that disrepair has led to an increase

98 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
99 Barnardo's (HCE0070)
100 X. L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York, p.15
101 Centre for Better Ageing, State of ageing report 2025, March 2025
102 Chartered Institute of Housing and University of Glasgow, 2026 UK Housing Review, March 2026
103 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
104 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082)
105 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
106 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

in their energy bills.[107] Citizens Advice told us of a case of a mother with children and a young baby who was getting into debt because of the cost of heating her home to a safe temperature. Her landlord had refused to fix a broken roof tile that was causing damp in the property.[108]

Drivers poor housing conditions

23. The prevalence of poor housing conditions in the sector is driven by a variety of factors. The UK has some of the oldest, poorest-quality housing stock in Europe.[109] This is a problem across all tenures, including the PRS. Just under a third of privately rented properties were built before 1919, a higher share than stock in other tenures.[110] We heard that such properties are more prone to damp and mould.[111] They are often less energy efficient too.[112] These properties are likely to fail the DHS and can be costly to repair and upgrade.[113]

24. There are various factors that affect the extent to which landlords invest in repairing, maintaining and improving their properties (See Chapter 4). These are influenced by the local housing market. The limited availability of affordable properties in areas of high demand can leave landlords with little financial incentive to make repairs and improvements because they can let out substandard homes fairly easily.[114] Nye Jones, Head of Campaigns at Generation Rent, told us that landlords have "easily been able to find tenants due to tenants' desperation to find housing."[115] The Renters' Reform Coalition argued that "fierce competition" for properties means tenants often "feel unable to leave their tenancy if their home is in disrepair."[116] In local markets where demand is lower, the costs of repairing and upgrading

107 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
108 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
109 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 4; Dr Hannah Charles (Academic Researcher at The University of Manchester) (HCE0026); Centre for Ageing Better (HCE0031)Bright Blue (HCE0034)
110 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Annex tables for English Housing Survey 2024 to 2025 headline findings on demographics and household resilience: Annex Table 1.6: Stock profile of dwellings, 2024, December 2025
111 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 4
112 Building Research Establishment (BRE) (HCE0071); Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 4
113 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050) Building Research Establishment (BRE) (HCE0071)
114 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The Policy and Politics of Improving Standards in the English Private Rented Sector, July 2025, p.3; Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 7; The Health Foundation (HCE0007); UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023
115 Q78 [Nye Jones]
116 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 7

properties may be less financially viable.[117] The impact of regulatory changes are likely, therefore, to play out differently at a local level (see Chapter 6). We heard that poor conditions tend to be concentrated at the lower-end of the private rented market.[118] Tenants who may struggle to find another property that they can afford may be less likely to complain, due to a fear that their landlord may increase their rent or evict them if they do (see Chapter 3).

25. Tenants and landlords often lack awareness and understanding of the legal requirements concerning the quality of privately rented homes. This can lead to unintentional non-compliance among landlords, especially smaller landlords who may be less likely to operate in a 'business-like' manner (see Chapter 4). For example, the TDS Charitable Foundation told us that "the majority of landlords (76%) have a largely reactive approach to repairs, where they rely on tenants to report issues."[119] Tenants often tolerate poor conditions because they are reluctant to complain against their landlord or escalate problems. This may be due to a lack of awareness of their rights or not knowing who to turn to for support.[120] Tenants often wish to remain on good terms with their landlords and want to avoid rocking the boat or being viewed as problem tenants.[121] However, an imbalance of power between landlords and tenants has also prevented tenants from complaining due to a fear their landlords retaliate by evicting them (See Chapter 3).

26. Many of the drivers of poor conditions in the PRS are symptomatic of wider pressures on the UK's housing system, particularly the short supply of social homes and affordable homes to buy.[122] Long-term pressures on the housing system, such as the UK's ageing population, also create challenges that the government needs to respond to, such as the growing population of older people living in the PRS. The Nationwide Foundation told us that "issues in the wider housing system need to be addressed to create a more balanced PRS in the long term."[123] They added that:

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117 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.26; UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The Policy and Politics of Improving Standards in the English Private Rented Sector, July 2025, p.3

118 Crisis (HCE0015)

119 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 13.4

120 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 5.3; Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)

121 Independent Age (HCE0054); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037)

122 Letter from the Nationwide Foundation to the Chair dated 11 November 2025 concerning standards in the Private Rented Sector

123 Letter from the Nationwide Foundation to the Chair dated 11 November 2025 concerning standards in the Private Rented Sector

without an adequate number of new social homes, people will continue to be pushed into poor quality, often unaffordable, rented homes. The awaited National Housing Strategy will therefore be vital in taking a holistic view of the housing sector and ensuring a long-term approach to improving the quality, availability and affordability of the PRS alongside access to other housing types and tenures.[124]

27. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the government's plans to raise the standard of homes in the privately rented sector over the next decade. While most renters are satisfied with their homes, a substantial minority of private renters are living in homes that are sub-standard. Poor conditions in the private rented sector are symptomatic of the country's wider housing crisis, especially the lack of social and affordable housing.

28. **RECOMMENDATION**

We urge the government to publish the long-awaited long-term housing strategy by the end of September 2026. We will be assessing whether the strategy addresses the drivers that contribute to poor housing across the country, including in the private rented sector.

124 Letter from the Nationwide Foundation to the Chair dated 11 November 2025 concerning standards in the Private Rented Sector

2 Raising standards

Decent Homes Standard (DHS)

29. By 2035 private landlords will need to ensure their properties meet a new minimum standard: the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). Since 2001, the current DHS has acted as the minimum standard of quality for social homes.[125] In the PRS, landlords are already required to ensure their homes are free from hazards, fit for human habitation and comply with specific legal obligations (e.g. on gas and electrical safety and energy efficiency).[126] However, unlike social housing, there is no national minimum standard of decency, or quality, that applies to homes in the PRS.[127] The previous Conservative Government in 2022 committed to legislate to introduce a legally binding DHS that private landlords would need to comply with.[128] This formed part of the then Conservative Government's mission to halve the number of non-decent homes in rented sectors by 2030, while delivering the greatest improvements in "lowest performing areas."[129]

30. In July 2025, the government launched a consultation on reforms to the DHS that included plans to apply it to the PRS.[130] The government's response to the consultation was published in January 2026, alongside details of the new standard.[131] More details on the new standard are set out in Box

125 The then Labour Government in 2000 set a target to "bring all social housing into decent condition" by 2010. This target was supported by a programme to deliver the necessary improvements called the Decent Homes Programme. A new standard of decency, the Decent Homes Standard, was set to establish the standard social homes should be improved to. See House of Commons ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Decent Homes, Fifth Report, HC 46-I, May 2004, paras 3–5 and See National Audit Office, The Decent Homes Programme, HC 212, January 2010

126 House of Commons Library, Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England), Number 7328, December 2022

127 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes, July 2025

128 Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, A fairer private rented sector, August 2022, section 2.1

129 HM Government, Levelling Up the United Kingdom, February 2022, p. 121

130 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes, July 2025

131 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes: government response, January 2026

3. The government's intention is for the DHS to act as a common standard for privately and socially rented homes.[132] Landlords will have until 2035 to ensure the homes they rent out meet the standard, after which they may be subject to enforcement action if their properties fail to comply (see Chapter 5 for more information on the regulation of the private rented sector).[133]

Box 3: The new Decent Homes Standard

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 gives the Secretary of State powers to set regulations specifying the DHS requirements that qualifying residential properties (e.g. privately rented homes) must meet.[134] Once the regulations have been set, the Act places a duty on private landlords to ensure properties meet these requirements.[135] The government published details of the new standard in January 2026. To comply homes will need to:

- be free of the most dangerous hazards (Criterion A), specifically category 1 hazards covered by the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS).
- be in a reasonable state of repair (Criterion B).
- provide core facilities and services (Criterion C), including kitchens and bathrooms with adequate space and layout.
- provide thermal comfort (Criterion D). To be considered decent, a property must also comply with the government's new minimum energy efficiency standard that is due to come into force in 2030 (see Box 4).
- be free from damp and mould (Criterion E). Homes will fail the standard if landlords have not resolved damp and mould.[136]

The Act allows for the DHS requirements to be split into two categories: Type 1 requirements and Type 2 requirements. Local authorities would have a duty to enforce Type 1 requirements and a power to enforce Type 2 requirements.[137] The government's intention is for local authorities to have a duty enforce breaches of Criterion

132 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 8
133 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, paras 69–73
134 Renters' Rights Act 2025, para 684 &685
135 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 69
136 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, paras 10–54
137 Explanatory notes to the Renters' Rights Act 2025, para 684

A (Type 1). For other breaches of DHS requirements, the government plans to give local authorities the power to take enforcement action (Type 2), but they will not be under a legal duty to do so.[138] The government has said this two-tier approach will "support local authorities to prioritise the issues that present the greatest risk to tenants."[139]Local authorities will also have discretion about whether to take enforcement action to deal with instances, for example, in which homes cannot comply (e.g. due to planning constraints).[140]

31. The government's decision to apply the DHS to privately rented homes is largely viewed by those we heard from as a positive step that will help improve the quality of homes in the sector.[141] One of the key benefits is that the new standard, once introduced, will provide tenants and landlords with a clear benchmark that privately rented homes must meet.[142] This will put tenants in a better position to raise concerns about poor conditions, especially now stronger protections against retaliatory evictions (e.g. the abolition of Section 21 notices) have come into effect.[143] The University of Bath suggested that over the long-term the DHS could help professionalise landlords in the sector and lead to better landlord-tenant relationships, with fewer disputes.[144] The government's changes to simplify the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS) should also make it easier for landlords to understand if their homes comply.[145] However, the effectiveness of the new standard rests heavily on how well it is implemented and

138 Explanatory notes to the Renters' Rights Act 2025, para 684

139 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 73

140 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 79

141 Barnardo's (HCE0070); Centre for Ageing Better (HCE0031)Generation Rent (HCE0053); Shelter (HCE0068)Crisis (HCE0015); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Independent Age (HCE0054); People's Health Trust (HCE0019); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057); The Health Foundation (HCE0007); University of Bath (HCE0012); Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003); Goodtime Okara (Lecturer in Law at University of Plymouth) (HCE0004)

142 Crisis (HCE0015); Shelter (HCE0068); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003)

143 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)

144 University of Bath (HCE0012), para 3.3

145 New regulations to simplify the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) came into effect on 23 June 2026. The National Residential Landlords Association told us that the previous system was highly technical to the point it prevented well-intentioned landlords from identifying hazards in their properties, without the need for local authority intervention. They told us "a clearer, more accessible HHSRS would enable good landlords to ensure they are meeting required standards effectively." See National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), paras 5.4–5.5

enforced.[146] This includes ensuring that tenants and landlords are aware of the new standard and understand what it means in practice.[147] Tenants, for example, will need to know what to do if their property fails the DHS.[148]

Implementation

32. Just under half of all homes in the PRS (48%) are estimated to require some work to bring them up to the new standard.[149] This equates to around 2.4 million homes. In many regions over half of PRS homes will need to be upgraded.[150] Modelling by the Building Research Establishment estimated it will cost £26.5 billion, in total, to bring the remaining privately rented homes up to the new standard. However, a large proportion of the total costs stem from requirements that landlords already need to meet.[151] The costs per property vary substantially. The BRE estimated the median cost of bringing affected properties up to the new standard at just under £5,000 (£4,921).[152] Yet the costs of bringing some properties up to the required standard are likely to be considerably higher.[153] The new standard will also introduce ongoing costs on landlords.[154]

33. Landlords and lettings agents have expressed some concerns about how the standard is applied to the sector. Propertymark told us that the DHS "must be tailored to the needs of the PRS and fit the different types of

146 Barnardo's (HCE0070); Centre for Ageing Better (HCE0031)Generation Rent (HCE0053); Shelter (HCE0068)Crisis (HCE0015); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Independent Age (HCE0054); People's Health Trust (HCE0019); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057); The Health Foundation (HCE0007); National Retrofit Hub (HCE0020); University of Bath (HCE0012); Renters' Rights London (HCE0066); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003)

147 Citizens Advice (HCE0038); National Retrofit Hub (HCE0020); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 22

148 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029)

149 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, EHS Briefing: Modelling a new Decent Homes Standard, January 2026

150 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, EHS Briefing: Modelling a new Decent Homes Standard, January 2026, figure 4

151 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, EHS Briefing: Modelling a new Decent Homes Standard, January 2026

152 The BRE has estimated the median cost of meeting the new standard in the private rented sector is £4,921. However, the estimated average total cost per dwelling is much higher at £9,277 per non-decent dwelling. These costs include the costs of meeting landlords' existing obligations as well as the requirements of the new standard. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, EHS Briefing: Modelling a new Decent Homes Standard, January 2026 and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Decent Homes Standard: Final Impact Assessment, January 2026, para 171

153 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, EHS Briefing: Modelling a new Decent Homes Standard, January 2026

154 Propertymark (HCE0062), para 8

property that exist."[155] The Country Land and Business Association (CLA), which represents owners of land and property in rural areas, stressed that properties in rural areas are more likely to have been built before 1919, be classed as energy inefficient and be "heritage, listed or in a conservation area."[156] This means they are more likely to be considered non-decent by default.[157] The CLA called for a system of exemptions for "instances where failure to comply is outside of the landlord's control."[158] Rather than introduce a formal exemptions process, the government will give local authorities discretion to manage cases where there may be legitimate reasons why the properties in question cannot comply with the DHS.[159]

Timeline

34. The government has decided to give landlords until 2035 to comply with the new standard. The 9-year implementation period aligns with length of time social landlords had to comply with the DHS when it was first introduced.[160] The government also argued that bringing the new standard into force in 2035 will give landlords time to plan their expenditure in a "realistic way" as well as meet wider reforms, including other changes introduced by the Renters' Rights Act 2025.[161] However, the government is encouraging landlords not to delay works until the end of the implementation period.[162] Shelter warned there is a risk that landlords respond reactively to the deadline, waiting until the end of period to undertake the necessary work.[163] This is the ministry's assumption too. The ministry's final impact assessment assumes landlords will wait until at least the two years before the standard comes into force before making the necessary improvements, with the majority (60%) waiting until 2035 to do so.[164]

155 Propertymark (HCE0062), para 7
156 Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050)
157 Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050)
158 Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050)
159 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 79
160 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 57
161 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Decent Homes Standard: Final Impact Assessment, January 2026, para 87; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026, para 7
162 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Decent Homes Standard: Final Impact Assessment, January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The New Decent Homes Standard: policy statement, January 2026; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes: government response, January 2026
163 Shelter (HCE0068)
164 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, Decent Homes Standard: Final Impact Assessment, January 2026, para 169

35. The government's decision not to bring the new standard into force until 2035 has been heavily criticised by those advocating on behalf of renters.[165] Generation Rent told us it is "extremely concerned" that waiting until 2035 to introduce the standard will leave "renters in vulnerable situations for far too long."[166] Crisis argued this deadline will mean there is "at least another decade of disparity in standards" between privately and socially rented homes.[167] ACORN, a community union, suggested the government should bring the deadline for the new DHS forward to align it with the introduction of the new minimum energy efficiency standard, as both will require landlords to upgrade their homes.[168] Others agreed with this.[169] The Renters' Rights Coalition has stated that:

> It is obvious that until the law forces them to, many landlords will refuse to address these problems - as they have for years. The government's lack of urgency gives those landlords a green light to continue profiting from rotten homes, and will have real consequences for the health and wellbeing of millions of tenants.[170]

36. There have also been suggestions that the government should phase-in aspects of the standard sooner, such as protections against hazards and disrepair. Shelter, Crisis and others recommended a phased approach, in which parts of the standard are introduced sooner to provide interim protections before the full standard comes into force.[171] The government argued that a phased approach is already implied in the way the DHS is structured, partly because protections against Category 1 hazards already exist (Criterion A) and stronger minimum energy efficiency standards (Criterion D) will come into force in 2030.[172] However, with most landlords likely to wait until between 2033 and 2035 to complete the work, the rate of progress under this government risks falling below the previous government's target to halve the rate of non-decent rented homes by 2030.[173]

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165 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Crisis (HCE0015); Q80 [Anny Callum]; Q80 [Nye Jones]; Shelter (HCE0068);Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 21

166 Generation Rent (HCE0053)

167 Crisis (HCE0015)

168 Q79 [Anny Callum]

169 Q80 [Nye Jones]; Independent Age (HCE0054)

170 Government delays new standards for rented homes to 2035, Renters' Reform Coalition, 28 January 2026

171 Shelter (HCE0068); Crisis (HCE0015); Generation Rent (HCE0053)

172 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes: government response, January 2026, para 296–297

173 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 21

Enforcement

37. We heard very clearly that the extent to which the DHS raises the quality of homes in the sector depends heavily on how well this standard is enforced.[174] A major aspect of this is the approach local authorities take towards regulating standards in their private rented markets (see Chapter 5). However, questions have been raised around the duties and powers on local authorities to enforce the DHS and whether landlords will have the option to self-declare compliance on the PRS Database.

Duties and powers on local authorities

38. Shelter and the Health Foundation both argued that a duty on local authorities to enforce the Decent Homes Standard should apply not just to Criterion A (see Box 3).[175] Shelter, for example, told us that under the government's plans tenants will see "little change" in the way their rights are enforced because Criterion A overlaps with existing duties on local authorities to take enforcement action if they identify Category 1 hazards.[176] The Health Foundation argued that there "should be no differentiation between type 1 and type 2 requirements, and that local councils should have a duty, rather than simply a power, to enforce all [DHS] requirements."[177]

Self-declaring compliance

39. The government plans to begin rolling out the new PRS Database later this year (see Box 1). Part of the role of the database is to allow landlords to demonstrate their properties comply with legal requirements.[178] Regulations will be introduced setting out the information that landlords will be required to make available to the public on the database. The government expects that this will include information on property standards (e.g. relevant safety certificates).[179] It will be an offence for landlords to knowingly or recklessly provide false information suggesting that they meet these requirements.[180]

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174 Barnardo's (HCE0070); Centre for Ageing Better (HCE0031)Generation Rent (HCE0053); Shelter (HCE0068)Crisis (HCE0015); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Independent Age (HCE0054); People's Health Trust (HCE0019); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057); The Health Foundation (HCE0007)

175 The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Shelter (HCE0068)

176 Shelter (HCE0068), para 50

177 The Health Foundation (HCE0007)

178 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Guide to the Renters' Rights Act, November 2026

179 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the private rented sector, November 2025, para 16; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Guide to the Renters' Rights Act, November 2026

180 Explanatory notes to the Renters' Rights Act 2025, para 629

40. In its consultation on applying the DHS to the PRS, the previous government proposed that landlords should be required to self-declare that their homes comply with the standard and face a penalty of up to £30,000 if they do so falsely.[181] The government has not yet specified if landlords will be expected to self-declare that their properties comply with the DHS and, if so, when the database will allow them to do so.[182] The National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) is in favour of giving landlords the ability to self-declare compliance. They told us the database should include a signed declaration from landlords that they comply with the DHS.[183] Citizens Advice suggested that the introduction of the DHS provides a way for those landlords who already comply to highlight that their properties do so.[184] However, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health argued that self-declarations are "unlikely to be an effective indicator of compliance" and are not a substitute for inspections.[185] Shelter was unclear how compliance with the new DHS will be measured. They told us the government should consider how local authorities could use the database and their new investigatory powers to monitor and enforce landlord self-declarations.[186]

41. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the government's decision to apply the new Decent Homes Standard to privately rented homes. The government has a difficult balance to strike between the need to deliver better homes to tenants quickly while allowing landlords the time they need to upgrade their homes. Regrettably, the ministry's impact assessment assumes that landlords are likely to wait until shortly before the standard comes into effect in 2035 before upgrading their properties. With over 1 million privately rented homes estimated to be below the existing Decent Homes Standard, we are concerned that many renters will be waiting a long time for their homes to be improved. The government should establish incentives to encourage landlords to upgrade their homes sooner.

181 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities, A Decent Homes Standard in the private rented sector: consultation, July 2025

182 The government has indicated that landlords, as a minimum, will be required to provide some information the condition of the property, such as certificates covering gas and electrical safety and energy efficiency. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the private rented sector, November 2025, para 16

183 National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039)

184 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

185 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 51

186 Shelter (HCE0068)

42. **CONCLUSION**
The effectiveness of the government's plans to apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector rests on how effectively local authorities enforce this standard. We are disappointed that the government only plans to place a duty on local authorities to take enforcement action when Criterion A is breached. This fails to provide sufficient additional protection to tenants. A stronger deterrent could act as an incentive for landlords to ensure their properties comply with the new standard.

43. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the government place a duty on local authorities to take enforcement action against any breach of the new Decent Homes Standard, not just breaches of Criterion A. This will act as a stronger incentive for landlords to comply.

44. **CONCLUSION**
The new Private Rented Sector Database provides a useful mechanism for landlords to proactively demonstrate that their properties comply with existing and upcoming standards, including the Decent Homes Standard. This is not a substitute for strong, proactive enforcement. However, we are of the view that the database could provide a useful mechanism to drive up standards, especially as the Act includes provisions designed to deter landlords from providing false information.

45. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the new Private Rented Sector Database allows private landlords to self-declare that their properties comply with the new Decent Homes Standard at the earliest opportunity. Using the database in this way would allow landlords who already comply to differentiate themselves from their competitors and encourage early adoption among others. To deter landlords from falsely declaring compliance, local authorities should be supported to use their powers to investigate landlords' self-declarations and take enforcement action against landlords who falsely declare compliance, especially if they do so knowingly and continuously. The database should also provide an easy mechanism for tenants to report self-declarations they suspect are false.

Minimum energy efficiency standards

46. The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 set minimum energy efficiency standards for the private rented sector.[187] Between 7 February 2025 and 2 May 2025, the government consulted on amendments to these regulations.[188] From 1 October 2030, private landlords will be required to ensure their homes meet a higher minimum energy efficiency standard, unless they have a valid exemption in place (see Box 4).[189] Only the most energy inefficient properties (e.g. homes with an Energy Performance Certificate of Bands F or G) fail this standard.[190] The Building Research Establishment has pointed out that properties that fall below the current standard are likely to constitute a serious Category 1 hazard, due to the health risks tenants living in these homes are exposed to.[191] Despite these health risks, we have heard concerns that local authorities have often failed to check if landlords are complying with these standards and take enforcement action against breaches.[192] The Building Research Establishment have suggested that "councils need more support to monitor and understand the current and potential energy performance across the private homes in their area."[193]

187 The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015

188 Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes in England and Wales: Domestic Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, February 2025

189 Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: government response, January 2026; PQ 1268 1 [Insulation: Private Rented Housing] answered on 13 April 2026

190 Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015

191 Properties with an EPC of bands F or G are typically older homes that were built before 1930s, with limited or no insulation, single glazed windows and older inefficient heating systems. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) have pointed out in "health and safety terms, virtually all EPC F and G banded homes are identified by the English Housing Survey as posing a serious (Category 1) hazard because they can expose residents to risks of cold-related cardiac, respiratory and even mental health problems." Homes with an EPC of Band E include properties typically built between 1960s and 1980s with some improvements. They may have basic insulation, including some cavity wall insulation. Most of the windows may be double glazed, but not all. They typically have a standard boiler and some temperature controls. Even homes with a Band E rating are likely to constitute a Category 2 hazard, according to the BRE. See EPC Certificate UK, EPC Rating E—Minimum Standard for Rental Properties, April 2026; EPC Certificate UK, EPC Ratings Explained—The A to G Scale, April 2026; Building Research Establishment, Progress on energy efficiency in England and priorities for the Warm Homes Plan, February 2025, p.7

192 Reapit (HCE0055); Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights

193 Building Research Establishment, Progress on energy efficiency in England and priorities for the Warm Homes Plan, February 2025, p.8

Box 4: Minimum energy efficiency standard for privately rented homes

The government's new minimum energy efficiency standard will be underpinned by wider reforms to Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) that are used to indicate the energy efficiency of properties. These certificates contain a variety of information. However, the current primary indicator of a home's energy efficiency is the Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) that measures the energy costs of the property.[194] The government has proposed to make changes to EPCs, so they provide a more comprehensive picture of a building's performance.[195]

Under the government's reforms, EPCs for domestic properties will need to display four headline metrics that provide an indication of a building's energy costs (e.g. the financial impact of their buildings energy efficiency), fabric performance (e.g. the thermal efficiency of the building), heating system (e.g. the efficiency and environmental impact of the source of heating used) and smart readiness (e.g. potential of the building to integrate smart technologies).[196]

The government's new minimum energy efficiency standard takes a dual metric approach. All privately rented properties will need to meet a minimum Band C level rating on fabric performance, unless they qualify for an exemption.[197] Landlords will then have the ability to choose between meeting minimum levels of performance on either the heating system or smart readiness metric.[198] The government has prioritised improvements in fabric performance to deliver a reduction in demand for heat, which is designed to deliver energy bill savings and reduce fuel poverty.[199] Landlords with an EPC of Band C or above under the current EER metric before 1 October 2029 will not be required to meet the new standard until their EPC expires.[200]

194 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime, March 2026
195 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime, March 2026
196 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Reforms to the Energy Performance of Buildings regime, March 2026
197 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026, p.7
198 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026, p.7
199 PQ 124368 [Insulation: Private Rented Housing] answered on 26 May 2026
200 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026, p.7–8

The *Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015* includes exemptions designed to ensure the standard is fair and proportionate.[201] There is a cost cap of £3,500 on the amount landlords are expected to invest to comply with the standard.[202] Properties are eligible for an exemption from the regulations once this cap has been reached. Following its consultation, the government has decided to cap the cost landlords will be expected to invest at £10,000. Once this cap has been reached, landlords will be eligible for a 10-year exemption, during which they can continue to let the property.[203] The government also plans to increase the exemptions available to landlords.[204]

Councils will be able to issue fines of up to £30,000 per breach for each property that fails to comply.[205] The government has suggested that councils will be able to use the forthcoming PRS Database, alongside existing databases (e.g. the Energy Performance of Buildings Register and the PRS MEES Exemptions Register) to check if properties in their area comply.[206] Landlords can also be fined for registering false or misleading information on the PRS MEES Exemptions Register.[207] The government, however, has not decided to require letting agents and online property platforms to only advertise compliant properties.[208]

47. The government expects a third of properties in the sector will be upgraded to the new standard by 2030 before rising to around half once exemptions for properties that already have an EPC of Band C or above before 1 October 2029 come to an end.[209] The government has estimated that the average

201 The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015
202 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Domestic private rented property: minimum energy efficiency standard - landlord guidance, May 2026
203 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026
204 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026
205 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026
206 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026
207 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026
208 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026
209 Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes in England and Wales: Final stage impact assessment, January 2026, para 96

cost of meeting the new standard will be around £5,400 per property.[210] Some privately rented properties are likely to be costly to bring up to the new standard. We heard that landlords could pass these costs on to tenants through rent increases or may choose to exit the market if the level of investment is unviable. The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that 38% of private landlords planned to fund these upgrades through rent increases, although many also indicated plans to sell all (17%) or at least some (15%) of their properties.[211]

Cost cap and exemptions

48. There is some debate over the final design of the new standard, especially the cost cap and exemptions the government has set. Following its consultation, the government has decided to introduce a series of measures to manage the cost impact of the new standard on landlords. The government has reduced its proposed investment cap from £15,000 to £10,000 and included a broader range of exemptions designed to mitigate the adverse impact of the new standard.[212] The government has said that these measures are "intended to be proportional to help manage the burden placed on landlords and the impact on the rental market, whilst still delivering improved, warmer, cheaper to heat homes for private rented sector tenants."[213] Landlords and lettings agents are supportive of the changes the government has made.[214]However, Generation Rent and the Renters' Reform Coalition have pointed out that these changes mean a large proportion of homes will be exempt from fully complying with the new standard.[215]

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210 Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes in England and Wales: Final stage impact assessment, January 2026, para 87; UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026

211 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights

212 UK Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: Government response, March 2026

213 PQ 1139 8 [Energy: Private Rented Housing] answered on 25 February 2026

214 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England; EPC C plans: Government cuts landlord spending cap and pushes back 2028 deadline, NRLA, 21 January 2026; Cost cap for landlords reduced and EPC timescale pushed back as energy department listens to CLA concerns, Country Land and Business Association, 21 January 2026; Warm Homes Plan sets 2030 energy efficiency deadline for the PRS, Propertymark, 22 January 2026

215 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2026, p.8; Many renters 'left in the cold' by warm homes plan, Renters Reform Coalition, 21 January 2026

49. Although they are in favour of an even lower cap, those representing landlords and letting agents have suggested that the government's decision to cap the costs at £10,000 is more realistic than its previous proposal.[216] The Country and Land Association (CLA) suggested that £15,000 was "simply too high for landlords to absorb."[217] However, campaign groups have suggested that the government's decision will exempt a large amount of properties from having to fully comply with the standard.[218] The Renters' Reform Coalition commented that the government's decision "means many tenants stuck in some of the worst insulated homes will - quite literally - be left in the cold, as their landlords won't be required to bring them up to EPC C."[219]

50. Generation Rent has called on the government to "actively review" the impact of the cost cap to make sure the energy efficiency improvements landlords are making result in a "material difference" for renters on low incomes.[220] They also suggested that the government could instruct landlords with multiple properties to use the total amount of their combined cost cap to upgrade the energy efficiency of their properties.[221] For example, if a landlord owned two properties and one only required a £5,000 investment to comply with the new standard while other required an investment of £15,000, the landlord could bring both homes up to standard by directing £5,000 worth of the investment not used on the first property improve the second.[222]

51. The government has also introduced another exemption - a Property Value Adjustment Exemption - for properties under £100,000, which will cap the investment cost at 10% of the property value before properties can qualify

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216 EPC C plans: Government cuts landlord spending cap and pushes back 2028 deadline, NRLA, 21 January 2026; Cost cap for landlords reduced and EPC timescale pushed back as energy department listens to CLA concerns, Country Land and Business Association, 21 January 2026; Warm Homes Plan sets 2030 energy efficiency deadline for the PRS, Propertymark, 22 January 2026

217 Cost cap for landlords reduced and EPC timescale pushed back as energy department listens to CLA concerns, Country Land and Business Association, 21 January 2026

218 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2026; Many renters 'left in the cold' by warm homes plan, Renters Reform Coalition, 21 January 2026

219 Many renters 'left in the cold' by warm homes plan, Renters Reform Coalition, 21 January 2026

220 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2025, p.15

221 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2025, p.9

222 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2025, p.9

for a 10-year exemption.[223] The NRLA supports this exemption.[224] They wrote to us last year emphasising that it is "vital" that the costs landlords are expected to invest reflect "regional variations in house prices and rental values across the country."[225] They warned that without a "graduated approach" there is a risk of placing a "disproportionately higher financial burden on landlords in lower-value areas."[226] Generation Rent, however, argued that a "particular problem with this is that low value homes tend to be in the north of England and parts of Wales where fuel poverty rates are higher."[227]

Impact on rent affordability

52. There is a risk landlords pass the cost of upgrading the energy efficiency of their properties on to tenants through rent increases. Generation Rent told us that tenants are not protected from unjustified rent increases when landlords have used government grants targeted to help poorer households to improve their properties.[228] Others have raised a similar concern.[229] Tenants can challenge above-market rent increases at the First-Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). Generation Rent recommended that the First-Tier Tribunal "decision process should be amended so that, where retrofit work is funded via a government grant or loan, that value is seen as added by the tenant, not the landlord."[230] They also recommended that the government should extend Rent Repayment Orders to breaches of the minimum energy efficiency standard to allow tenants to reclaim a portion of rent from their landlord when their homes fail to comply.[231]

223 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes: government response, January 2026
224 EPC C plans: Government cuts landlord spending cap and pushes back 2028 deadline, NRLA, 21 January 2026
225 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England
226 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England
227 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2025
228 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2025
229 Shelter (HCE0068), para 58; Independent Age (HCE0054)
230 Generation Rent, Raising standards, not rents: Making energy efficiency work for private renters, February 2025, p.14
231 Generation Rent (HCE0053)

53. **CONCLUSION**
We welcome the government's decision to introduce stronger minimum energy efficiency standards that private landlords will need to comply with from 2030. This will help to lift households out of fuel poverty and reduce their exposure to the health risks of living in a cold home. Overall, our view that is that the government has taken proportionate steps in the final design that will help ensure the new standard delivers benefits for tenants without adversely impacting supply. However, we are concerned that the effectiveness of the new standard, and the public's confidence in it, will be undermined if local authorities are not adequately resourced to enforce it.

54. **RECOMMENDATION**
The government must ensure local authorities are adequately resourced to ensure landlords comply with the new standard. More detail on this is set out in Chapter 5.

Awaab's Law: legal timeframes for landlords to resolve hazards

55. The government plans to introduce regulations that will set timescales for private landlords to address serious hazards. These regulations are commonly known as Awaab's Law, after the death of Awaab Ishak.[232] The government is currently in the process of rolling out Awaab's Law to social housing.[233] The ministry told us it is "carefully considering" how to apply Awaab's Law to the private sector in a way that is "fair, proportionate and effective for both tenants and landlords."[234] The ministry does not anticipate that Awaab's Law will add new obligations on landlords to make repairs. Rather they expect that the regulations will clarify the timescales for addressing hazards and the processes landlords need to go through to make sure hazards are resolved properly.[235] No date has been set for when these protections will be applied to the PRS, but the government plans to consult on its approach to before doing so.[236]

232 Awaab Ishak was a 2-year-old boy who died from a respiratory condition caused by prolonged exposure to mould in his parent's social home. Even though Awaab's parents lived in social housing, the coroner in his case noted that the same issues apply to the private rented sector too. See Courts and Tribunals Judiciary Service, Awaab Ishak: Prevention of future deaths report, November 2022
233 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector, Fourth Report of Session 2024–26, HC 1154, February 2026, p.19
234 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCE0056), para 13.1
235 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCE0056), para 13.2
236 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCE0056), para 13.1

56. Serious hazards are more prevalent in the PRS than other sectors. Tenants can live with problems, such as damp and mould, for a long time before the issues are resolved (see Chapter 1). Much of the evidence we received supports the government's intention to apply Awaab's Law to the PRS.[237] Crisis told us that Awaab's Law will be a positive intervention because it introduces "proactive, timebound approach to tackling hazards."[238] However, Shelter was very clear that Awaab's Law simply adds timescales for steps landlords should already be taking to make sure their homes are safe.[239] The Renters Reform Coalition, Shelter and others have called for Awaab's Law to be introduced in the PRS as soon as possible.[240]

57. While landlords and letting agents are generally in favour of Awaab's Law, parts of the sector are likely to better placed to comply than others.[241] The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that the extent to which landlords will be affected by Awaab's Law is likely to be influenced by the type of stock they hold, including the age, condition and location of their properties.[242] For landlords who are already maintaining high standards, we heard that Awaab's Law is likely to have a minimal impact.[243] However, the TDS Charitable Foundation told us landlords with "deferred maintenance" on their properties are more likely to face "significant costs and operational pressures."[244]

58. We heard that some landlords may struggle to resolve hazards fast enough due to difficulties accessing tradespeople.[245]Unlike social landlords, many landlords in the PRS do not have their own in-house repair and maintenance teams. Around half of landlords already struggle to access tradespeople and other contractors.[246] Larger, institutional landlords are likely to be less affected than smaller landlords with 1–2 properties.[247] Landlords in rural

237 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Crisis (HCE0015) Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057); The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)
238 Crisis (HCE0015)
239 Shelter (HCE0068), paras 62–63; Q79 [Deborah Garvie]
240 Shelter (HCE0068), para 65; Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 27
241 National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), paras 7.1–7.4; TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), paras 14.1–14.5; Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050), p.3
242 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 14.4
243 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 14.5
244 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 14.5
245 National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050)
246 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 14.4
247 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), paras 14.1–14.3, National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), para 7.3; Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050), p.3

areas may also struggle to resolve hazards within the timescales set for similar reasons, but also due to the added difficulty of finding specialists with knowledge of traditional buildings.[248]

59. If the regulations are working effectively, Awaab's Law should incentivise private landlords to be more proactive in repairing and maintaining their properties.[249] For example, the majority of landlords currently rely on tenants to contact them to raise issues and often do not set aside money for repairs and maintenance (see Chapter 4). Generation Rent suggested that the law should encourage landlords to address hazards before they rent out their homes.[250] However, Awaab's Law puts the onus on tenants to take legal action against their landlords through the courts if they fail to resolve hazards within the timescales set.[251] Tenants may not make use of these rights because they are not aware of them or where to go for support.[252]

60. The TDS Charitable Foundation suggested tenants will need to be educated on Awaab's Law, so they are aware of these new rights and feel confident to use them.[253] Research by the Tenancy Deposit Service found just under 1 in 5 renters (18%) escalated complaints to a local authority or a redress scheme when landlords or letting agents failed to address their concerns. This was partly due to a lack of awareness about the redress available, but also out of a fear of retaliation.[254] Difficulties accessing legal aid and advice may also deter tenants from taking legal action against their landlord.[255] The Renters' Reform Coalition and the London Renters Union have called for the government to give tenants the right to pause rent payments in cases where there are serious hazards and disrepair.[256]

61. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the government's decision to apply Awaab's Law to the private rented sector. While landlords are already required to keep their homes free from serious hazards, Awaab's Law will strengthen this protection by establishing clear timeframes landlords need to meet to make their homes safe. We are disappointed, however, that the government has not yet committed to a clear timeframe for introducing these protections.

248 Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050), p.3
249 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Propertymark (HCE0062), para 9; TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 13.5
250 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
251 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), paras 13.6; Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 57
252 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 13.7
253 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 13.8
254 Crisis (HCE0015)
255 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 28; Shelter (HCE0068), paras 45–46
256 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 28

62. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the government should begin rolling out Awaab's Law in the private rented sector this year to ensure that these legal protections are fully in place across the private rented sector by the end of 2028/29.

3 Empowering tenants

63. A lot of the protections that exist against poor conditions put the onus on tenants to take action against their landlord if their complaints are not resolved, either by contacting their local authority or by taking legal action.[257] One of the problems with the PRS has been an imbalance of power between landlords and tenants, which can deter tenants from pursuing such actions.[258] Citizens Advice found that around a third of renters (34%) living in poor conditions had not raised concerns out of a fear their landlord may evict them or increase their rent.[259] Our predecessors in 2018 concluded that:

> There is a clear power imbalance in the private rented sector, with tenants often unwilling to complain to landlords about the conditions in their homes for fear of retaliation. In our view, consumer rights are meaningless without the guarantee that tenants will be able to use them in practice without fear of retaliation. Tenants need further protection from retaliatory eviction and rent increases, and other forms of harassment, so that they are fully empowered to pursue complaints about repairs and maintenance in their homes when they need to.[260]

64. The government expects that reforms introduced as part of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 will improve housing conditions because tenants will be "more empowered to raise issues."[261] The Act includes provisions to provide tenants with stronger rights and greater security of tenure as well as better access to information through the PRS Database and an alternative to pursuing complaints through the courts (see Box 1). We heard that provisions within the Renters' Rights Act 2025 should give tenants greater

257 House of Commons Library, Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England), Number 7328, December 2022, p.31

258 House of Commons Library, Housing conditions in the private rented sector (England), Number 7328, December 2022, p.31; Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Private rented sector, Fourth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 440, 19 April 2018, para 25

259 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

260 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Private rented sector, Fourth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 440, 19 April 2018, para 25

261 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Renters' Right Bill Impact Assessment, November 2024, p.3

confidence to complain and escalate matters.[262] This is particularly the case with the abolition of Section 21 notices (see Box 1). However, introducing new rights and protections for tenants is only part of the solution. We have heard examples where the effectiveness of new legislation has been undermined by tenants' lack of awareness and understanding of their new rights.[263] Tenants' awareness and understanding of the 2025 Act remains limited.[264]The government extended its communications campaign to tenants in April.

Retaliatory rent increases

65. We heard that tenants may continue to fear that landlords will retaliate with a large, unaffordable in-year rent increase that essentially acts as a form of economic eviction.[265] Fear of a retaliatory rent increase already prevents tenants from escalating complaints when issues have not been resolved.[266] Nye Jones, Head of Campaigns at Generation Rent, said that "revenge rent hikes as an eviction process will become a thing."[267] Others share this concern.[268] We have received examples of tenants being subject to very large increases.[269]

66. There are protections designed to tackle unfair rent increases. Landlords are only permitted to increase the rent once a year and must give tenants two months' notice before doing so (see Box 1). Tenants can also challenge rent increases that exceed market rates using the First-tier Property Tribunal. However, there are doubts as to whether this route will adequately protect tenants.[270] Generation Rent recommended that the government:

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262 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 13; University of Bath (HCE0012), para 1.1

263 The Nationwide Foundation pointed out that a study of tenancy reform in Scotland conducted between 2019 and 2024 found that even after renters receive new rights they often do not know about these rights or "believe that they have more power," and therefore "remain fearful of challenging poor practice and seeking help." See Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)

264 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights; Reforming renters' rights is not enough. Renters have to know about it, Inside Housing, 27 April 2026; People and renters are positive about the Renters' Rights Act but, beyond 'no-fault' evictions, knowledge of reforms is low, Ipsos MORI, 11 May 2026

265 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 10; Shelter (HCE0068), para 43; London Renters Union (HCE0077)

266 The TDS Charitable Foundation found that the "main barrier to tenants making complaints was fear of a retaliatory rent increase." See TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 5.3

267 Q72 [Nye Jones]

268 Shelter (HCE0068), para 43; Generation Rent (HCE0053)

269 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Independent Age (HCE0054)

270 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Q72 [Nye Jones]

Monitor use of the tribunal system of determining rent increases, and take steps to bolster protections for tenants if landlords are using unaffordable rent increases to force tenants to move out, or raising the rent after grant-funded improvements that cancel out energy bill savings.[271]

First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)

67. One of the problems is that tenants' awareness of the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) is low. Nye Jones, Head of Campaigns at Generation Rent, for example, told us that "nearly seven in 10 renters either have never heard of, or know very little about, the tribunal."[272] There are concerns that tenants may struggle to navigate the tribunal system and find it difficult to provide evidence to demonstrate that rent increases are unjustified.[273] In February 2023, our predecessors pointed out that one of barriers to determining if an increase in rent is justified is a lack of "easily available and reliable information on market rates in an area, broken down by type of property."[274] Without this data, the tribunal is reliant on evidence, such as listings on Zoopla or Rightmove, submitted by tenants and landlords.[275] They asked the government to explore ways of improving the provision of public data available on local market rents, including whether information on local rents could be collected via the PRS Database.[276]

68. There are also concerns about the capacity of the tribunal to cope with an increase in cases that may arise from the 2025 Act. Our predecessors in 2023 described the tribunal as "time-consuming" and "resource-intensive," due to the process involved in determining if a rent increase is justified, which can involve an inspection of the property.[277] Inside Housing, in November 2025, reported that the Ministry of Justice does not record the time it takes for the tribunal to consider tenants' appeals against rent increases. David Smith, a property lawyer, told the magazine that "if ministers are serious about wanting their reforms to work, they need urgently to measure, and publish in full, baseline data on the

271 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
272 Q72 [Nye Jones]
273 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Independent Age (HCE0054)
274 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Reforming the Private Rented Sector, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 624, 9 February 2023, para 123
275 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Reforming the Private Rented Sector, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 624, 9 February 2023, para 123
276 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Reforming the Private Rented Sector, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 624, 9 February 2023, para 128
277 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Reforming the Private Rented Sector, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 624, 9 February 2023, para 126

performance of the tribunal now."[278] The Minister of State for Housing and Planning recently informed the House that "suitable arrangements are in place for monitoring data relating to rent increase challenges in the Residential Property Tribunal" and that the justice system "will be supported with appropriate funding to ensure that the courts and tribunals have the resources and capacity they need to handle the workload that implementation of the Act will generate."[279] To help manage demand on the tribunal, the government has longer-term plans to introduce an "alternative body or mechanism" to make initial rent determinations.[280] However, the government has not set out when this will be introduced and operational.[281]

Rent stabilisation measures

69. Rather than relying on the First-Tier Tribunal, there have been calls for the government to introduce rent stabilisation measures to protect tenants against the risk of economic evictions. For example, Generation Rent, Shelter and others would prefer the government to cap annual in-year rent increases based on the CPI or wage growth, whichever is lower.[282] Shelter described rent stabilisation as a necessary precondition for tenants' security of tenure.[283] Shelter, for example, argued that:

> With nothing to tether rents to CPI or wage growth (the market rate being out of reach for so many), landlords intent on evicting their tenants without a valid reason will be free to engineer one by forcing those who complain into arrears. So, fear of a large annual rent increase (justified by the landlord to recoup money spent on repairs or improvements), could deter tenants most at risk of homelessness from enforcing their rights or reporting a failure to meet the DHS.[284]

70. Rent stabilisation measures are a form of rent control. There is evidence of rent controls leading to unintended consequences. The UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence's systematic review into the impact of regulatory reform of the private rented sector noted that some regulatory changes, such as strong rent controls, could be seen as "sufficiently

278 Rent tribunals could be overwhelmed by Renters' Rights Act without reforms, lawyer warns, Inside Housing, 24 November 2025
279 PQ 1255 3 [Rent: Appeals] answered on 24 April 2026
280 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the private rented sector, November 2025
281 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the private rented sector, November 2025
282 Shelter (HCE0068), para 43; Generation Rent (HCE0053); London Renters Union (HCE0077); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 12; Independent Age (HCE0054)
283 Q83 [Deborah Garvie]
284 Shelter (HCE0068), para 43

burdensome as to precipitate disinvestment."[285] However, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has argued that milder rent controls, including measures to stabilise rents, have been in place across parts of Europe for decades.[286] Others have made a similar point.[287] The IPPR's view is that such schemes demonstrate that rent controls can be effective, if designed carefully and introduced alongside a complementary set of wider policies (e.g. to mitigate potential downsides such as a loss of supply).[288] The government has been very clear that it does not support the introduction of rent controls, including rent stabilisation.[289] The government has also rejected calls to devolve powers to allow local areas to set rent controls.[290] The Minister for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook MP, told the House in April 2026 that while rent controls cover a broad range of potential policies, the government's view is that there is "sufficient international evidence" attesting to the "potential detrimental impacts" of such measures.[291] Minister Pennycook explained that the government's view is that rent controls could:

> […] make life more difficult for private renters, both in terms of incentivising landlords to increase rents routinely up to a cap where they might otherwise not have done, and in pushing many landlords out of the market, thereby making it even harder for renters to find a home they can afford.[292]

71. **CONCLUSION**

The abolition of Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 will go long way to give tenants greater confidence to complain about poor housing conditions without the worry that their landlord will evict them. However, tenants are still vulnerable to the risk of a retaliatory rent increase that they cannot afford. With many renters already struggling to afford their rent, retaliatory rent increases could act as a form of economic eviction. We are not currently convinced that stricter measures to stabilise rents would be a proportionate step to mitigate this risk, due to the potential consequences this could have on the supply of affordable properties.

285 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.41
286 Institute for Public Policy Research, High Housing Costs in the Private Rental Sector: the case for action, May 2026
287 London Renters Union (HCE0077)
288 Institute for Public Policy Research, High Housing Costs in the Private Rental Sector: the case for action, May 2026
289 PQ 782 0 [Rents: Regulation] 20 October 2025
290 PQ 64 3 [Private rented housing] answered on 8 June 2026
291 Rent Control: Evidential Basis Volume 783: debated on Monday 13 April 2026
292 PQ 782 0 [Rents: Regulation] answered on 20 October 2025

72. **RECOMMENDATION**
The government's immediate priority must be to ensure the protections that are in place against above-market rent increases through the First-Tier Tribunal are functioning effectively. Tenants must have confidence that the tribunal will settle challenges quickly and accurately. To support the effectiveness of the First-tier Tribunal, we recommend that:

a. the government accelerate the establishment of a new body or mechanism to make initial rent determinations;

b. require landlords to include current advertised rents and rent histories on the private rented sector database; and

c. conduct an initial review of the performance of the First-Tier Tribunal to be published by 1 May 2027 to assess if these protections are working effectively.

Seeking redress

73. If a landlord or letting agent fails to resolve complaints about disrepair, tenants can currently contact their local authority to request an inspection (see Chapter 5) or seek redress through the courts.[293] Tenants often struggle to access legal support. The government is increasing the rates of legal aid for housing cases.[294] However, there are concerns that tenants will continue to struggle to access legal aid and support due to a lack of provision in many parts of the country.[295] Generation Rent has told us that "access to justice has been eroded substantially since 2010, with fewer firms taking on legal aid cases."[296] This point was echoed by others.[297]Shelter recommended that the government should "reduce the administrative burden on legal aid providers for disrepair cases by bringing them fully back into scope for legal aid."[298]

74. The evidence we have received largely supports the creation of a new PRS Ombudsman, as an alternative route for tenants to seek redress.[299] To reduce the cost and stress of tenants taking action against their landlord,

293 House of Commons Library, How to complain about rented housing in England, December 2025
294 PQ 1200 9 [Legal Aid Scheme: Eligibility] answered on 16 March 2026; Historic increase in legal aid to support most vulnerable, Ministry of Justice, 29 November 2024; Ministry of Justice, Civil legal aid: Towards a sustainable future, consultation response, July 2025
295 Shelter (HCE0068), para 45; Generation Rent (HCE0053)
296 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
297 Shelter (HCE0068); Dr Jo Wilding (Associate Professor in Law at University of Sussex) (HCE0005); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), p.22
298 Shelter (HCE0068), para 46
299 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037)

Generation Rent argued that the new Ombudsman must be a "viable alternative to the court system," with "substantial penalties" for landlords who either fail to comply with decisions or have "repeated complaints upheld for similar offences."[300] However, there is a need for more clarity about how the new ombudsman will interact with local authorities, the courts and other bodies.[301] The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health told us that it is "unclear who will take the lead if a tenant complains to both the ombudsman and the local authority."[302]

75. **CONCLUSION**
We welcome the creation of a new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman. If implemented well, we are confident that the new ombudsman will provide an effective alternative route for redress. However, the government needs to provide further clarity on how the new ombudsman will interact with other parts of the regulatory system, especially local authorities.

76. **RECOMMENDATION**
In its official response to this report, we request that the government provide more information about how the new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman will interact with local authorities and the courts.

Better information

77. Later this year, the government plans to begin rolling out the new PRS Database (see Box 1). Part of the role of the database is to provide information to tenants to allow them to make better informed decisions.[303] The government has said that, as a minimum, the database is expected to include the landlord's contact details, basic information about their property (e.g. address, type of property, number of bedrooms and whether it is furnished) and safety information (e.g. gas, electric and energy performance certificates).[304]

300 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
301 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 47; National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), para 4.8
302 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 47;
303 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector, November 2025
304 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the Private Rented Sector, November 2025, para 16

78. While the database is likely to be a useful tool, we heard that there is an opportunity for the government to be more ambitious by using the database to inform tenants about their rights and empower them with information they can use to drive up standards. The New Economics Foundation, in July 2025, argued that the database will only have a marginal impact if it is designed as a simple register.[305] We have heard that the database should also contain information on the condition of the property, including hazards that have been identified and remedied, the accessibility of the property, the current advertised rent and rent histories, enforcement actions and formal complaints, and eviction notices.[306] For example, data on the rents landlords charge could be used to provide more robust data on market rates, which would help support the First-tier Tribunal and provide a more accurate way of setting Local Housing Allowance rates (see Chapter 6).[307] Generation Rent suggested that requiring landlords to record eviction notices on the database would enable local authorities to monitor eviction patterns.[308] Beyond the provision of information, the New Economics Foundation suggested that the database could function as a platform to educate tenants on their rights and enable to them to report concerns.[309] However, in designing the database the government does need to balance the benefits of transparency with potential risks to privacy. The New Economics Foundation argued that:

> Renting a home involves trust and financial commitment and tenants have a right to know whether a landlord has a history of legal disputes, unsafe housing conditions, or code violations. A functional public-facing version of the database would allow tenants to verify that a landlord is registered, legally compliant and has no major infractions, without revealing personal data such as a landlord's home address.[310]

305 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.4
306 Crisis (HCE0015); Generation Rent (HCE0053); Building Research Establishment (BRE) (HCE0071); Centre for Ageing Better (HCE0031); Independent Age (HCE0054)
307 Crisis (HCE0015); Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Reforming the Private Rented Sector, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 624, 9 February 2023
308 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
309 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.4
310 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.27

79. **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the creation of a private rented sector database. The private rented sector database provides an opportunity to empower prospective and existing tenants with comprehensive information on the fitness of landlords and the quality of the privately rented homes as well as educate tenants on their rights and enable them to report concerns. While we do not wish to delay the rollout of the database, our view is that the government should be more ambitious on the role this database can play. We would like to see further information and functionalities added over time.

80. **RECOMMENDATION**

The government must ensure that the private rented sector database includes, as a minimum, information on the condition and accessibility of privately rented properties, including details of previous enforcement actions, and the current rent and rent histories. Following the initial rollout, we recommend that the database is developed to provide tenants with guidance on their legal rights and enable them to report concerns to their local authority.

Limitations

81. We heard that one of the limitations with the regulatory system, even after the Renters' Rights Act 2025, is that much of the onus still rests with individuals to take action against their landlord.[311] The Chartered Institute of Housing argued that the while the Act "removes the risk of retaliatory eviction if a tenant wishes to take enforcement through the courts" it "does not go any further to address the other reasons why they might not to do so."[312] As already noted, tenants may still refrain from complaining for a variety of reasons. This could be because they fear that their landlord may retaliate by increasing the rent instead or because they are worried about their ability to pay legal costs. It could simply be that they wish to remain on good terms with their landlord and do not wish to rock the boat.[313]

82. There are also tenants in vulnerable situations in shadow parts of the market, who rogue landlords may have deliberately targeted.[314] Professor Catherine Barnard and Fiona Costello told us that the government's reforms,

311 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003)

312 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), para 10.1

313 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Independent Age (HCE0054)

314 X. L'Hoiry, G. Page, L. Parton, J. Rugg & G. Antonopoulos (2025), Criminal landlords and the shadow private rented sector in England, University of York.

such as the introduction of new rights for tenants, are "out of sync with the reality of rented accommodation for many migrant workers," who they found often had no tenancy agreement and paid cash to their landlord.[315] Ashlea Birch, Neighbourhood Manager Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Housing) at Manchester City Council, told us that "for all the introduction of new powers and everything, that bottom end that is hidden does not complain, and it still won't complain."[316]

83. Many households spend a large share of their income on rent. This is particularly the case for those on low-incomes, including households in receipt of benefits.[317] Poor conditions are concentrated at the lower end of the market. Households in receipt of benefits often have very limited alternative affordable options locally. For example, Crisis, in collaboration with Zoopla, found that between April and October 2024 only 2.5% of listings were affordable on Local Housing Allowance rates (see Box 6).[318] Barnardo's, a children's charity, told us that it is concerned low-income households may struggle to find good-quality accommodation due to a lack of support for housing costs through the benefits system.[319] Researchers have pointed out that "even when aware of their formal rights, tenants can be conscious of their limited housing market options and take a correspondingly cautious approach to their landlord."[320]

84. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) suggested that relying on individuals to complain is unlikely to "deliver significant improvements."[321] The CIH suggested that only a "small fraction of those affected are likely to pursue legal action through to its conclusion."[322] Even if litigation is successful, the CIH questioned the impact this would have on conditions in the wider market.[323] Their view is that "ultimately, individual enforcement is only ever a poor substitute for strategic action," especially the use of more proactive regulatory tools such as selective licensing (see Chapter 5).[324] Tenancy reforms in Scotland provided tenants with access to a the First-Tier Tribunal (Housing and Property Chamber) to seek repairs. However,

315 Professor Catherine Barnard (Professor of EU Law at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge); Dr Fiona Costello (Research Associate at EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge) (HCE0010)
316 Q184 [Ashlea Birch]
317 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Under pressure: The affordability challenges facing private renters, April 2026
318 Crisis and Health Equals, How affordable private rents can help tackle health inequalities and homelessness, March 2025
319 Barnardo's (HCE0070)
320 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The Policy and Politics of Improving Standards in the English Private Rented Sector, July 2025, p.7
321 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), para 10.2
322 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), para 10.2
323 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), para 10.3
324 Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), para 10.6

research conducted by Indigo House and the Nationwide Foundation found that tenants' awareness of their ability to seek redress if landlords failed to comply with the new Repairing Standard was low.[325] The Nationwide Foundation pointed out that repairs only comprised 4% of all applications to the tribunal.[326] They told us that:

> Tenants living in poor housing conditions in Scotland expressed that they wanted repairs carried out, and compliant landlords pointed to the need for much more enforcement of existing laws, especially in the lower end of the market where tenants are more vulnerable to criminal landlords. This issue could be addressed if councils were supported to carry out targeted, proactive enforcement in this segment of the PRS, which would remove the reliance on reporting by tenants who we know fear to report or are not aware of their rights.[327]

85. **CONCLUSION**
The government is taking positive steps through the Renters' Rights Act 2025 to empower tenants. While we support the Renters' Rights Act 2025, we are concerned too much onus remains on individuals to take action against their landlord, either through to courts or soon by approaching the ombudsman for redress. This approach risks neglecting the most vulnerable tenants, especially those at the lowest end of the market where poor conditions are concentrated and vulnerable tenants who may be targeted by rogue landlords seeking to exploit them. For this reason, we are in favour of stronger, more proactive regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

86. There have been concerns about the readiness of the court system to cope with increased demand following the Renters' Rights Act 2025.[328]There are already delays in courts processing possession cases.[329] The Ministry of Justice, including HM Courts and Tribunals Service, have been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure

325 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)
326 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)
327 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)
328 Renters' Rights Act could worsen court delays without proper funding, The Guardian, 10 May 2026; Court delays leave landlords waiting over a year for justice, Propertymark, 30 March 2026; Courts unprepared for Renters' Rights Bill as possession delays worsen, National Residential Landlords Association, 16 May 2026; Rent tribunals could be overwhelmed by Renters' Rights Act without reforms, lawyer warns, Inside Housing, 24 November 2025
329 Court delays leave landlords waiting over a year for justice, Propertymark, 30 March 2026

the court system has the capacity to cope.[330] There have been calls for the government to publish metrics that will be used to assess the courts' ability to meet new demands following the Act.[331]

87. **CONCLUSION**
We are concerned that the effectiveness of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 could be undermined if courts are not ready and sufficiently resourced to cope with the new demands for housing cases.

88. **RECOMMENDATION**
We recommend that the government publish the metrics it will use to assess whether the courts are coping with the new demands placed on them by the Renters' Rights Act and regularly report on their progress.

330 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Implementing the Renters' Rights Act 2025: Our roadmap for reforming the private rented sector, November 2025, para 37

331 PQ 121 5 [Rents: Appeals] tabled on 23 June 2026

4 Supporting landlords

89. The overwhelming majority of private landlords see it as their responsibility to provide tenants with a home that is safe and comfortable.[332] However, there are a variety of reasons why some landlords may legitimately struggle to comply with the standards the government is introducing (see Chapter 2). These include the:

- **costs of the complying with the new standards and difficulties accessing tradespeople**.[333]Larger landlords are likely to be better placed to comply than those who own just one or two properties because they are more likely to have dedicated in-house teams and can spread costs across their portfolios.[334]
- **type of properties landlords own**. The Country Land and Business Association, which represents owners of land, property and businesses in rural areas, told us that rural properties may also be more difficult to bring up to the government's new standards because they tend to be older, less energy efficient and are "more likely to be heritage, listed and in a conservation area."[335] Access to tradespeople is even more of an issue in rural areas. This is partly down to a lack of locally skilled tradespeople and partly because older properties often require more specialist skills.[336]
- **difficulties staying up to date with changes to the law**. The Nationwide Foundation pointed out that landlords may fail to comply because of a lack of knowledge of their responsibilities or an unintentional misunderstanding of them.[337] The TDS Charitable Foundation also told us that its national landlord survey found that

332 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
333 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), paras 10.4–10.6; Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050); Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England; Propertymark (HCE0062), para 9; National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039)
334 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039)
335 Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050), p.2
336 Country Land and Business Association (CLA) (HCE0050), p.3
337 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)

over a fifth of landlords "struggle to keep up with changes to the law affecting their rental properties" and that 41% of landlords feel that changes to the law and regulations are not clearly communicated.[338]

90. The professionalism of landlords varies. Amateur landlordism has been highlighted as a key challenge in raising the standard of homes.[339] The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that "many landlords operate small portfolios and do not have a "business like" approach towards managing their property."[340] According to the TDS Charitable Foundation such landlords are at a "heightened risk of enforcement action" from local authorities.[341]Most landlords operate reactively, relying on tenants to raise issues before they make repairs.[342] Around 20% of landlords do not regularly inspect their properties.[343]Landlords may treat the income they receive from rent as a source of everyday spending to the extent that they would be worried about the need to urgently spend money on significant costs like replacing a boiler.[344] Dr Jennifer Harris from the TDS Charitable Foundation told us that one in five landlords "do not set money aside for repairs."[345] The TDS Charitable Foundation pointed out that "sudden, time-bound repair obligations could cause financial strain, particularly if rental income is low or mortgage rates are high and if insufficient money is set aside for repairs and maintenance."[346]

91. The TDS Charitable Foundation argued that the government should "clarify where responsibility will lie for ensuring landlords are properly educated on their new and changing requirements."[347] They added that if this responsibility rests with local authorities then the government needs to consider how to allocate sufficient funding for councils to carry out informal activities to support landlords to comply.[348]

92. As noted, the government plans to begin rolling out the new Private Rented Sector Database later this year. The Nationwide Foundation told us that the database provides a useful way in which training and guidance can

338 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 11.0–11.1
339 Marshall, M., Hincks, S. and Ferrari, E. (2022) Lessons from last time: a review of evidence on the first decent homes programme in the social and private rented sectors. Report. Northern Housing Consortium, Sunderland.
340 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.8
341 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.8
342 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 13.4
343 Q110 [Dr Harris]
344 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The Policy and Politics of Improving Standards in the English Private Rented Sector, July 2025
345 Q110 [Dr Harris]
346 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 14.3
347 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 7.3
348 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 7.4

be communicated to landlords.[349] This has been echoed by others. The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that one of the key objectives of the database should be to reduce "inadvertent non-compliance by educating landlords."[350]

93. There have also been suggestions of ways local councils could proactively support landlords to comply with standards.[351] The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has introduced a voluntary scheme, the Good Landlord Charter, which provides a way for landlords to prove they are meeting high standards.[352] Cornwall Council told us of a similar scheme locally with the Cornwall Residential Landlords Association.[353] The Nationwide Foundation recommended that the government should provide more funding and capacity to support such innovations.[354]

94. **CONCLUSION**

Most landlords recognise their responsibility to provide tenants with a safe, decent and comfortable home. The government nationally and locally has a role to reduce unintentional non-compliance by educating landlords about their legal responsibilities and supporting them to adopt more professional practices. Nationally, the forthcoming Private Rented Sector Database has the potential to be a useful tool to reduce unintentional non-compliance by providing guidance and training to landlords about their legal responsibilities and encouraging them to undertake works that will ensure their properties meet the required standard. There is also a role for local authorities and strategic authorities to proactively support landlords to ensure their properties meet required standards.

95. **RECOMMENDATION**

The government must ensure that the private rented sector database provides a useful tool to educate and better inform landlords about their role and responsibilities and encourage them to adopt more professional practices. The database must include information and guidance to landlords on their responsibilities. Over time, the database should be adapted to notify landlords of the introduction of new standards and steps they can take to comply.

349 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)
350 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 6.2
351 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025
352 About us, Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter, accessed on 16 June 2026
353 Q185 [Joe Roberts]
354 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022)

96. **RECOMMENDATION**

The government should provide local authorities and strategic authorities with a ring-fenced portion of the fees from the Private Rented Sector Database to support them to adopt initiatives, such as the Good Landlords Charter, that help tackle unintentional non-compliance among landlords.

5 Regulation and enforcement

97. A very clear message to our inquiry is that the effectiveness of the government's reforms to raise standards and empower tenants depends on the extent to which these new standards and protections are enforced.[355] The National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) told us that "landlords who bring the sector into disrepute will continue to operate under the radar without strong enforcement."[356] Others made a similar point.[357] Renters' Rights London told us the risk non-compliant landlords being detected is low and existing laws are "easily flouted."[358]

98. Local authorities' regulation and enforcement of standards in their local private rented markets needs to be substantially upgraded to tackle poor housing conditions.[359] Strong enforcement is needed not only to tackle poor housing conditions but also to provide a meaningful deterrent against rogue landlords operating in the market.[360] Those we heard from have emphasised the importance of local authorities taking a proactive approach, rather than relying on tenants to complain.[361] Local authorities lack the funding and staff, however, to inspect properties and enforce standards.[362]

355 The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); London Renters Union (HCE0077); Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003); Goodtime Okara (Lecturer in Law at University of Plymouth) (HCE0004); University of Bath (HCE0012); Crisis (HCE0015); People's Health Trust (HCE0019); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029)

356 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England

357 The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Renters' Rights London (HCE0066)

358 Renters' Rights London (HCE0066)

359 London Renters Union (HCE0077)

360 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 18

361 Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Independent Age (HCE0054); Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067); Local Government Association (LGA) (HCE0069); Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003); People's Health Trust (HCE0019); Housing and Ageing Alliance (HCE0036); Goodtime Okara (Lecturer in Law at University of Plymouth) (HCE0004)

362 The Health Foundation (HCE0007); University of Bath (HCE0012), para 1.2; Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

99. The ministry sets the overall regulatory framework governing the private rented sector in England. Local authorities have a fair degree of autonomy over how they regulate their local private rented markets and a variety of investigative and enforcement powers to enable them to do so.[363] The Renters' Rights Act extends the powers available to local authorities but also places new burdens on them (see Box 1). The way local authorities regulate their local markets is shaped by a variety of factors from the resources available to them through to the level of political support locally.[364] We heard that other local pressures, such as demand for temporary accommodation, can influence how local authorities choose to regulate their local markets.[365]

100. Previous select committees and other public bodies have highlighted wide disparities in the performance of local authorities.[366] The level of inspection activity has been found to vary significantly between councils: the National Audit Office, in 2021, found some councils inspected a large proportion of properties in their local market, whereas others conducted "almost no inspections."[367] Our predecessors in 2018 were of the view that enforcement was "far too low in the vast majority of local authorities" and that this "strongly" suggested that vulnerable tenants were "being left without the protection to which they are legally entitled."[368] The then Public Accounts Committee in April 2022 described local authorities' enforcement of the sector a "postcode lottery."[369] Much of the evidence we have received suggests this problem still exists.[370]

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363 National Audit Office, Regulation of private renting, HC 863, December 2021, para 1.4

364 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights

365 London Renters Union (HCE0077)

366 Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Reforming the Private Rented Sector, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 624, 9 February 2023; Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Private rented sector, Fourth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 440, 19 April 2018; House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Regulation of private renting, HC 996, 13 April 2022

367 The National Audit Office, Regulation of private renting, December 2021, para 13

368 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Private rented sector, Fourth Report of Session 2017–19, HC 440, 19 April 2018, para 84

369 House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Regulation of private renting, HC 996, 13 April 2022, p.3

370 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039); Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England; London Renters Union (HCE0077); Renters' Rights London (HCE0066); Building Research Establishment (BRE) (HCE0071)

Provision of local authority regulation and enforcement in England

101. Unfortunately, we have heard that local authorities often remain largely reactive, relying on tenants to complain before they intervene or inspect properties.[371] Some local authorities operate proactively, regularly inspecting properties and making widespread use of their licensing and enforcement powers. However, this is not the norm. Data from Freedom of Information (FOI) requests indicates that a disproportionate number of inspections under the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS) are carried out by a small number of local authorities.[372] For example, FOI data reported by the NRLA found that half of all HHSRS inspections between 2021 and 2023 were carried out by 20 local authorities, while a substantial minority of councils (16%) were unable to provide inspection figures.[373] Others have reported similar trends.[374] Local authorities' use of discretionary licensing powers is also limited. Only a relatively small proportion of local authorities have selective and/or additional licensing schemes in place.[375]

102. Most local authorities have an enforcement strategy to help guide their decisions about what action to take.[376] Councils interpret their role and responsibilities differently. Some councils put a greater emphasis on upholding the law and adopting a hardline when it is breached, whereas others stress the importance of making sure the use of their powers is proportionate.[377] Joe Roberts, Head of Building Control, Compliance & Housing Quality at Cornwall Council, told us that tough enforcement powers are helpful to tackle criminal operators. However, he suggested that the use of strong enforcement powers, such as prosecutions, are not necessarily an indicator of effectiveness.[378] Local authorities often prefer to intervene

371 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025; TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 5.1

372 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England; Two-thirds of English councils have not prosecuted a single landlord in past three years, The Guardian, 16 November 2025

373 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England

374 London Renters Union (HCE0077)

375 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.32

376 Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, Local authority enforcement in the private rented sector: headline report, June 2022

377 Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, Local authority enforcement in the private rented sector: headline report, June 2022

378 Q181 [Joe Roberts]

informally or in a light-touch manner, at least to begin with.[379] Others have criticised local authorities' use of such light-touch approaches.[380] The London Renters Union, for example, told us they often find local authorities "failing to uphold the rights of tenants," with local authorities often acting as "mediators rather than regulators."[381] The London Renters Union added:

> Complaints are often ignored entirely. Where councils do communicate with a landlord, they are often reluctant to escalate from communication with a landlord towards enforcement action, such as issuing an improvement notice or a fine or prosecution. It is therefore often cheaper for landlords to break the rules than follow them, giving landlords a green light to break the law.[382]

103. Local authorities' until recently have not had to publicly report on the use of their enforcement powers. However, FOI data indicates that very few complaints have led to any form of formal enforcement. Using FOI data, *The Guardian* in November 2025 found that less than 2% of complaints between 2022 and 2024 resulted in "formal enforcement of any kind."[383] The use of civil penalty notices and prosecutions is very low in many local authorities. The NRLA told us that between 2021 and 2023 nearly half of all local authorities had not served a civil penalty notice, while almost 70% served "just five or fewer."[384] More recent data reported by *The Guardian* showed a similar pattern.[385] The use of prosecutions has been heavily concentrated in a relatively small proportion of councils. *The Guardian*, for example, found that between 2022 and 2024 two-thirds of councils did not prosecute any landlords, while a handful of councils, including Enfield, Newham, Camden, Liverpool, Sheffield and Rotherham, prosecuted more than 30. Very few landlords who have been prosecuted have been banned.[386]

104. The postcode lottery of local authority regulation has a direct impact on tenants. We have heard of local authorities ignoring complaints from tenants or taking a long time to respond.[387] The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman told us it receives complaints about delays in

379 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.30
380 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Q85 [Anny Callum]
381 London Renters Union (HCE0077)
382 London Renters Union (HCE0077)
383 Two-thirds of English councils have not prosecuted a single landlord in past three years, The Guardian, 16 November 2025
384 National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), para 4.12
385 Two-thirds of English councils have not prosecuted a single landlord in past three years, The Guardian, 16 November 2025
386 Two-thirds of English councils have not prosecuted a single landlord in past three years, The Guardian, 16 November 2025
387 London Renters Union (HCE0077); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 4.5; LGSCO (HCE0060)

councils carrying-out inspections under the HHSRS.[388] In one case, a complainant waited 7 months for the local authority to inspect the property, when the council's internal target was to respond within two weeks. During this time, the complainant's property continued to deteriorate and new problems emerged.[389] The TDS Charitable Foundation pointed out that tenants have "often faced long delays or a lack of communication" after seeking help from their local council.[390] They added that "in more serious cases, councils failed to carry out inspections despite ongoing and hazardous conditions in the property. This eroded confidence and led to issues remaining unresolved."[391] Others have echoed these concerns.[392]

105. Local authorities' use of informal or light-touch approaches can leave tenants waiting a long time for problems, such as hazards and disrepair, to be rectified. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman informed us of a case in which tenants complained to their local council about disrepair in their home, including damp and mould. The local authority inspected the property and served the landlord with an improvement notice. It then took the landlord 9 months to complete the necessary remedial works, during which time the family, with young children, continued to live with Category 1 and Category 2 hazards in their home.[393]

106. The ministry has been collecting data from local authorities on their regulation of the sector on a voluntary basis, including their inspection and enforcement activity. The government plans to move towards a mandatory data collection process to help build a "clearer national picture of enforcement activity and inform policy refinement."[394] There have also been calls for local authorities to report regularly on their enforcement activity.[395] The NRLA told us that the government should require local authorities to

388 LGSCO (HCE0060)
389 LGSCO (HCE0060)
390 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 4.5
391 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 4.5
392 London Renters Union (HCE0077); Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England; LGSCO (HCE0060)
393 LGSCO (HCE0060)
394 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Data collection strategy to support monitoring in the private rented sector and the evaluation of the Renters' Rights Act 2025, May 2026
395 National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), para 4.14; London Renters Union (HCE0077); Q116 [Timothy Douglas]

publish annual reports on their enforcement activity.[396] They argued that this would help "facilitate and support the sharing of best practice" and ensure "councils are fully accountable for the work they are doing."[397]

107. **CONCLUSION**
We are disappointed to hear a postcode lottery of local authority regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector has persisted for many years. Far too many local authorities are failing to protect tenants and provide a meaningful deterrent against rogue landlords. While local authorities should continue to have discretion over the way they regulate their local private rented markets, the government must do more to ensure councils are held accountable for their performance.

108. **RECOMMENDATION**
The government must require councils to publish annual reports on the regulation and enforcement of their local private rented markets, including information on their inspection and enforcement activity. Doing so will enable better scrutiny and accountability of local authorities' activities and responsibilities in each area.

Barriers limiting the effectiveness of local authority regulation and enforcement

Limited capacity and capability within local authorities

109. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health told us that local authorities are "severely under-resourced" and "struggling" to cope with their existing enforcement duties, let alone the new duties imposed by the Renters' Rights Act 2025.[398] This issue is widely recognised.[399] Local authorities we heard from expect that demand on their services is due to go up, partly because of the new duties placed on them but also as more tenants become empowered to raise concerns (see Chapter 3).[400] Formal enforcement action can be very time consuming and resource-intensive

396 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England
397 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England
398 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 27;
399 National Retrofit Hub (HCE0020); TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 18
400 Q185 [Joe Roberts] Q184 [Ashlea Birch]; Q176 [James Wilson]

for local authorities.[401] A lack of suitably trained and experienced staff can constrain the ability of local authorities to respond to tenants' complaints in a timely manner, take formal enforcement or use other, more proactive interventions.[402] Severe staffing shortages, for example, have been cited by local authorities as the reason why they have failed to inspect properties or follow-up on enforcement actions (e.g. improvement notices) in a timely way.[403] We heard that Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council operates a waiting list, with a triage system to determine the priority of a case. Officers are only permitted to take on new cases when they have the capacity.[404]

110. Based on analysis from 2022/23 collected from 205 local authorities, the New Economics Foundation, in July 2025, found the average number of properties per enforcement officer was 3,319. Staffing levels and the size of officers' portfolios (e.g. the number of privately rented properties per FTE officer) vary widely, even between local authorities of similar sizes.[405] The New Economics Foundation reported that Birmingham had 22.4 FTE staff to cover 84,000 privately rented homes, meaning each officer was, on average, responsible for 3,750 properties. Manchester, in contrast, employed 32.8 FTE officers to cover 70,000 privately rented properties. Their officers were each responsible for around 2,100 properties. In Newham, a council that has invested heavily in its capacity, officers were responsible for around 687 properties each.[406]

111. Local authorities face substantial difficulties in the recruitment, training and retention of environmental health officers.[407] This is partly due to a lack of people joining the profession.[408] Bristol City Council referred to a national shortage of environmental health officers.[409] Attracting staff with the right skills can be a very challenging, especially in some parts of the

401 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0083)

402 LGSCO (HCE0060); Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, Local authority enforcement in the private rented sector: headline report, June 2022; The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.30–31

403 LGSCO (HCE0060)

404 LGSCO (HCE0060)

405 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); Letter from the Nationwide Foundation to the Chair dated 11 November 2025 concerning standards in the Private Rented Sector, The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025

406 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, pages 14–15

407 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Q176 [James Wilson]; Q180 [Joe Roberts]; Q180 [Ian Sanders]; Propertymark (HCE0062); Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 27

408 Q180 [Ian Sanders]; Propertymark (HCE0062)

409 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0083); Bristol City Council (HCE0080)

country.[410] It can take a long time to train people too.[411] For example, Ian Sanders, Principal Environmental Health Officer at Hull City Council, told us it has taken five years for one of his colleagues to train to become a qualified environmental health officer through an apprenticeship route.[412] The complexity of the legislation means people often specialise.[413] Once qualified it can be hard to retain people, due to competition from the private market.[414] Recruiting trained staff from abroad is not a quick option either.[415]

112. The Public Accounts Committee, in 2022, pointed out that the then Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) did not know the level of resource local authorities needed to ensure landlords comply with minimum standards and was "not proactive enough in supporting them to regulate effectively."[416] Since then, the government has begun to voluntarily collect data on local authority enforcement, including staffing levels, and has provided additional funding to local authorities to cover the estimated cost of the extra duties placed on them under the Renters' Rights Act 2025, in line with the New Burdens Doctrine (see Box 1).[417] The NRLA, the TDS Charitable Foundation and others have recommended that the government undertake, and publish, a full assessment of the resources local authority teams currently have, along with an estimate of the resources they will need to enforce the Renters' Rights Act 2025.[418]

113. **CONCLUSION**

We are concerned that many local authorities do not have enough suitability skilled staff to robustly regulate and enforce standards in their private rented markets. If not addressed this problem threatens to undermine the steps the government is taking to raise standards and the effectiveness of other reforms introduced by the Renters' Rights Act.

410 Q180 [Ian Sanders]; Q180 [Joe Roberts]; Q176 [James Wilson]
411 Q180 [Ian Sanders]; Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082)
412 Q180 [Ian Sanders]
413 Q180 [Ian Sanders]; Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082)
414 Q180 [Ian Sanders]; Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Propertymark (HCE0062), p.4
415 Q180 [Ian Sanders]
416 House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Regulation of private renting, HC 996, 13 April 2022, p.3
417 Councils backed with millions to take on rogue landlords, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Ministry of Justice, 14 April 2026; PQ HL29 [Renters' Rights Act 2025] answered on 21 May 2025
418 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 4.7; National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039), para 4.14

114. **RECOMMENDATION**
The government must conduct and publish a full assessment of the resources and powers currently available to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector, including the new duties placed on local authorities under the Renters Rights Act. The assessment should consider the resources that will be necessary to allow local authorities to adopt a more proactive approach to regulating standards.

Reliance on unpredictable sources of funding

115. We have heard that councils need a sufficient uplift in funding that is a more predictable and sustainable to enable them to effectively plan and scale-up their regulatory activity.[419] Through the Act, the government has said that it is "extending and increasing ring-fenced civil penalties to support a 'polluter pays' approach."[420] However, we heard concerns that the government was placing too much emphasis on income from civil penalties as source of funding.[421] Councils resolve most issues without resorting to punitive actions, such as civil penalty notices.[422] Even when civil penalties are issued, local authorities can find it very difficult to collect these.[423] Ashlea Birch, Neighbourhood Manager at Manchester City Council, told us that "CPN receipts are useful, but you cannot sustain a service on them."[424]The Renters' Rights Act 2025 also allows for income from the PRS Database to be transferred to local authorities (see Box 1). The government's long-term aim is now to use fees from the PRS Database to provide a "sustainable funding system" to support local authorities' regulation of the sector.[425] Much of the evidence we've received support this.[426]

419 UK100 (HCE0063); Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), p.1; Renters' Rights London (HCE0066), para 10.1; Faye Sanders (PhD Researcher at University of Bath) (HCE0003); University of Bath (HCE0012); Crisis (HCE0015); Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037); Shelter (HCE0068)
420 PQ 2020 [Private Rented Housing] answered on 27 May 2026
421 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 28; TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029); Local Government Association (LGA) (HCE0069)
422 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 28
423 National Residential Landlords Association (HCE0039); Q183 [James Wilson]; Q181 [Ashlea Birch]; Q182 [James Wilson]
424 Q176 [Ashlea Birch]
425 PQ 2020 [Private Rented Housing] answered on 27 May 2026
426 London Renters Union (HCE0077)

116. Landlords will need to pay a fee to register on the database, which is due to launch later this year.[427] The New Economics Foundation reported that in Scotland landlords pay fees every 3 years to register themselves and each of their properties. These fees are paid directly to local authorities. In Scotland, landlords with properties in one local authority pay £82 to register or £42 per local authority if they have properties in more than one area. There is an additional fee of £19 per property.[428] In Wales, registration fees are charged per landlord once every 5 years and are collected centrally. There are discounts for renewals and registering online.[429] The New Economics Foundation outlined that an annual fee would provide a more predictable source of revenue that aligns with other routine tasks landlords need to do (e.g. tax returns) and with the way local authorities set their budgets.[430] They estimated that an annual fee of £46.08 per property could increase enforcement capacity across the country by 233%.[431] An increase of funding to this degree would be sufficient to ensure no enforcement officer has a caseload of more than 1000 properties.[432]

117. **CONCLUSION**

Councils need sustainable, predictable sources of revenue to fund a much-need expansion of regulatory activity. In principle, our view is that the costs of regulating the private rented sector should be borne by all landlords, not just those who breach the law. We fully support the government's intention to use registration fees from the Private Rented Sector Database as way of funding local authorities' regulation of the private rented sector, although in practice it is possible that these costs could also be passed on to tenants. It critical that an increase in funding from landlords through fees comes with greater transparency and accountability over local authorities' performance.

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427 A government grant is being used to fund the initial cost of setting up the database. However, the government's intention is for the database to be self-funding and the government has not yet set out how much landlords will be charged to register. See The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, July 2025

428 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025,p. 34–35

429 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.34–35

430 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.35

431 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.5

432 Nationwide Foundation (HCE0022); The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the Database: How the Private Rented Sector Database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.5

118. **RECOMMENDATION**
The government must ensure the fees landlords need to pay to register on the Private Rented Sector Database are sufficient to fund a substantial increase in local authority capacity. The government should then use this income to provide an annual ringfenced amount to local authorities to help fund their regulatory activities.

Restrictions on local authorities' use of selective licensing

119. We have heard that selective licensing (see Box 5) is a useful tool local authorities can use to proactively and strategically target resources at the poorest quality housing.[433] There is evidence that selective licensing can be effective at improving housing conditions and supporting vulnerable tenants, although this depends on how schemes are implemented.[434] Yet, most local authorities have not used these powers.[435] We heard that the process to establish or renew a selective licensing scheme can be bureaucratic, resource-intensive and time-consuming.[436] While positive about the benefits of selective licensing, local authorities with experience of these schemes pointed out that they can be difficult to get up and running.[437] We have heard of examples where local authorities have had multiple failed attempts to introduce these schemes, partly due to local opposition from landlords.[438]With the new PRS database due to come into force later this year, Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the NRLA, told us that

433 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 34; Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), p.2

434 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, An Independent Review of the Use and Effectiveness of Selective Licensing, June 2019; Institute of Health Equity, Selective Licensing in Leeds, June 2025; The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025; Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025, p.58; Bristol City Council (HCE0080); Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0083)

435 The New Economics Foundation, Detailing the database: How the private rented sector database can support enforcement and drive up standards, July 2025, p.32; Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025, p.58

436 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025, p.58;Q188 [James Wilson]

437 Q188 [James Wilson]; Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082)

438 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Q188 [Ashlea Birch]

"selective licensing is not needed in its current form."[439] He argued that local authorities have a variety of other powers that they can use to regulate and enforce standards, without resorting to selective licensing.[440]

Box 5: Selective licensing

The Housing Act 2004 gives local authorities the power to establish selective licensing schemes in their areas.[441] Private landlords operating in an area subject to selective licensing must hold a licence from the local authority.[442] Local authorities can choose what licence conditions to set. However, these conditions must focus on the residential use of the property.[443] Local authorities can proactively inspect properties within these areas, without the need for tenants to have complained first.[444]

Local authorities can use selective licensing schemes to address problems caused by poor housing and a variety of other issues (e.g. deprivation, migration, crime or low housing demand).[445] Revenue from licence fees can be used to cover the costs of these schemes.[446] However, local authorities can only apply selective licensing to an area for a maximum of 5-years, after which they need to repeat the designation process.[447]

439 Q112 [Ben Beadle]
440 Q116 [Ben Beadle]; Q112 [Ben Beadle]
441 Local authorities can apply selective licensing to the whole of their local market or any part, or parts, of it. See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Selective licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities, last updated 16 December 2024
442 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Selective licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities, last updated 16 December 2024, para 4
443 House of Commons Library, Selective licensing of private rented housing in England and Wales, CBP04634, March 2023, p.14
444 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 34
445 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Selective licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities, last updated 16 December 2024, para 3
446 House of Commons Library, Selective licensing of private rented housing in England and Wales, CBP04634, March 2023, p.18; Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 35
447 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Selective licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities, last updated 16 December 2024, para 64; Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 39

The *Selective Licensing of Houses (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015* requires local authorities only to subject areas to a selective licensing designation if it contains a high proportion of privately rented properties.[448] A high proportion is taken to mean an area in which over 19% of properties are privately rented.[449]

120. The government has taken steps to make it easier for local authorities to implement selective licensing schemes.[450] On 23 December 2024, a new General Approval came into force, which allows local authorities to introduce schemes of any size without the need for approval from the Secretary of State. Before this, local authorities needed the Secretary of State's approval for schemes covering more than 20% of local privately rented stock or geographical area.[451]

121. Nevertheless, we heard that getting schemes off the ground is difficult and that there are a few obstacles that inhibit the effectiveness of selective licensing at tackling poor housing conditions.[452] These include:

- **the maximum duration of time for selective licensing schemes.** During the passage of the Renters' Rights Bill, the government rejected amendments to increase the duration of selective licensing schemes arguing that a "maximum scheme duration of five years strikes the right balance in giving local authorities time to make this assessment, while also ensuring that landlords are not by default subject to increased regulation for prolonged periods."[453] The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health argued that licensing is designed to deliver "large-scale improvements" that are "unlikely to be fully achieved within five years."[454] We heard that the designation process can be expensive and time consuming. Great Yarmouth Borough Council told us that it had taken them six months to reach a point of decision.[455] Some have called for the maximum duration of selective licensing

448 The Selective Licensing of Houses (Additional Conditions) (England) Order 2015
449 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Selective licensing in the private rented sector: a guide for local authorities, last updated 16 December 2024, para 13
450 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Housing Act 2004: Licensing of Housing in Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing of Other Residential Accommodation (England) General Approval 2024, 16 December 2024
451 PQ 776 3 [Landlords: Licensing] answered on 17 October 2025; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Housing Act 2004: Licensing of Housing in Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing of Other Residential Accommodation (England) General Approval 2024, 16 December 2024
452 Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee (HCE0082); Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057)
453 House of Lords Hansard, 14 May 2025, col. 2288..
454 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 39
455 Q188 [James Wilson]

schemes to be extended to 10 years, whereas others have called for these schemes to be made permanent.[456] The Fabian Society, for example, argued that schemes should only end when there is evidence to demonstrate they are no longer needed.[457]

- **restrictions on the use of licence conditions**. One of the problems with the legislation on selective licensing is that it prevents local authorities from setting licence conditions that require improvements to the physical state of licensed properties. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health told us this creates a "peculiar disconnect" in the legislation because local authorities are permitted use selective licensing schemes to tackle poor housing but "are not permitted to include in the licences themselves conditions requiring the physical state of the licensed properties to be improved."[458] Others have also advocated for local authorities to be able to use licence conditions to require improvements to the physical state of properties.[459]

- **the requirement to ensure selective licensing schemes cover a high proportion of privately rented properties in their area.** The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health have called for this requirement to be removed. They told us "it seems arbitrary for local authorities to be unable to establish such schemes without ensuring that the sector forms a high proportion of properties."[460]

122. There has been some debate over whether the new Private Rented Sector Database removes the need for selective licensing. The NRLA has warned that the new requirement for landlords to register themselves and their properties on the Private Rented Sector Database could lead to a duplication of effort, in places covered by a selective licensing scheme. They told us that the administrative burdens of collecting and processing information on landlords and properties to support these initiatives could divert local authority resources away from enforcement.[461] The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, however, is of the view that the database is likely to complement selective licensing, in part by making it easier for local authorities to identify unlicensed properties and target enforcement "where it is needed most."[462]

456 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067); Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025;
457 Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025, p.59
458 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 37
459 Fabian Society, Home Comforts: A plan to eradicate England's poor-quality rented housing, January 2025, p.59
460 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 41
461 Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England
462 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (HCE0067), para 50

123. **CONCLUSION**

Selective licensing remains a useful tool that local authorities can use to proactively target enforcement activity at areas with the poorest housing conditions. The new Private Rented Sector Database has the potential to complement selective licensing by helping local authorities to target their resources even more effectively at the areas with the poorest housing. More targeted enforcement can help protect the most vulnerable tenants, who may struggle to advocate for themselves and exercise their rights. It is right that local authorities can chose whether to introduce selective licensing schemes. However, we would like to see more local authorities making use of these powers. The government can help by removing barriers that inhibit the uptake and effectiveness of these schemes.

124. **RECOMMENDATION**

We welcome the government's decision to remove the need for local authorities to seek approval from the Secretary of State before establishing selective licensing schemes. The government needs to go further to remove further barriers that inhibit the uptake and effectiveness of selecting licensing. We recommend that the government should:

- extend the maximum length of time for selective licensing schemes to 10 years. Within this period, councils should be required to periodically review their schemes to ensure they remain effective and proportionate.
- allow councils to apply to selective licensing schemes regardless of whether the PRS makes up a significant proportion of local housing market or not.
- enable local authorities to set licenses conditions that require landlords to make improvements to the physical state of licensed properties.

6 Impact on the supply and affordability of homes

125. A key area of uncertainty is how the private rented market will respond to the measures the government is taking to raise the standard of privately rented homes and empower tenants to challenge poor standards. These reforms add compliance costs, administrative burdens and risks on landlords. Landlords may respond by passing these costs on to their tenants, selling their properties (e.g. by modifying their portfolios or withdrawing from the market completely) or repurposing their properties for another market (e.g. short-term lets). There is, therefore, the risk that these reforms exacerbate problems with the supply and affordability of privately rented homes. Based on the evidence from its landlord survey, the TDS Charitable Foundation told us that "investment in rental properties has outpaced divestment" and that they expect "landlords are more likely to respond to the evolving context with rent increases rather than property sales."[463]

Rent increases

126. One of the risks of raising the standard of privately rented homes is that landlords will pass some, or all, of the costs onto tenants through rent increases that households, especially those on low incomes, may struggle to afford. The Renters' Reform Coalition told us that landlords are likely to use the new requirements the government is imposing as an "unfair justification" to increase rents, at a time when rents are already high.[464] This is a worry that others share.[465] Shelter told us that upgrades to properties could have an adverse impact on existing tenants if landlords introduce "steep or unaffordable annual rent increases" to either recoup the costs of complying with the new regulations or to capitalise on the higher market rates their modernised properties can attract.[466]

463 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 10.14
464 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 11
465 Renters' Rights London (HCE0066), para 11.2; Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Independent Age (HCE0054); London Renters Union (HCE0077)
466 Shelter (HCE0068), para 56

127. Landlords commonly pass the increased costs of maintaining their property on to tenants. Dr Jennifer Harris, Head of Policy, Research and Social Impact at the TDS Charitable Foundation, told us that, among the 56% of landlords who said they increased their rent last year, the main reason for doing so was due to the increased cost of running and maintaining their properties.[467] Landlords do not always inspect their properties routinely. Around 1 in 5 landlords do not put money aside to repair and maintain their properties (see Chapter 4).[468] Dr Harris suggested that "these might be some of the landlords who, when faced with increased costs, will pass that on in increased rents."[469] The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that 38% of landlords they surveyed said they intended to use rent increases to cover the costs of complying with the new minimum energy efficiency standard (see Chapter 2).[470] Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the National Residential Landlords Association, told us that the ability of landlords to pass on the costs of upgrades on to tenants through rent increases is constrained by the market. He told us that "even if a landlord wants to fully offset all the costs that are out there, they will be precluded by other properties that are on the market."[471] The extent to which landlords pass on the costs of upgrades is likely to vary geographically.[472] For example, the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence noted that in areas of low demand landlords may need to absorb more of the costs because these cannot be passed on to tenants as easily.[473]

128. One study looked at the impact of the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 in Scotland on private rented markets either side of the border. The Act abolished fixed-term contracts and replaced them with open-ended tenancies, which shifted the "perceived risks and obligations for landlords."[474] Before the legislation was introduced, rents on either side of the border moved closely together and remained broadly aligned while the legislation was going through. After the legislation was introduced, rents in the Scottish border regions experienced a "sharper and sustained

467 Q110 [Dr Harris]
468 Q110 [Dr Harris]; TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 13.4
469 Q110 [Dr Harris]
470 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters' rights.
471 Q108 [Ben Beadle]
472 Q108 [Timothy Douglas]; UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023
473 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.26
474 Dr Cigdem Gedikli (Lecturer at Swansea University); Professor Robert Hill (Professor at University of Graz); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor at University of Birmingham); Dr Okan Yilmaz (Lecturer at Swansea University) (HCE0024), para 4

increase" compared to those across the border.[475] The researchers told us that landlords in Scotland may have responded to the change in regulations by "increasing rents to hedge against perceived long-term constraints, or in anticipation of new costs or risks" or may have chosen to exit the market, thereby placing an "upward pressure" on rents.[476]

129. We heard that one unintended consequence of the government's efforts to raise standards is that they fail to benefit, or could further disadvantage, the poorest households if rents are increased by landlords to offset rising costs. Shelter warned that "low-income households could be pushed from poor housing to poor housing, while only more affluent tenants and, ultimately, landlords, benefit from the modernised homes."[477] Citizens Advice made a similar point.[478] They told us that low-income households could end up being "pushed into lower quality and less professional "shadow" housing."[479] Shelter recommended that the government should limit rent increases on properties that have been recently upgraded, particularly if these improvements have been funded partly through government grants.[480] Shelter argued that this is necessary to avoid households on low-incomes "becoming trapped in a cycle of poor housing conditions and displacement."[481] Citizens Advice recommended that the government:

> must monitor the impacts of implementation and issue clear guidance that changes to properties as a result of regulation are not "upgrades" but necessary steps to make homes safe and liveable.[482]

130. We heard that the reforms the government is introducing could cause landlords to become more selective over who they rent to.[483] Dr Jennifer Harris, Head of Policy, Research and Social Impact at the TDS Charitable Foundation, told us that their surveys have found that landlords are reluctant "to continue to rent to housing benefit claimants because of perceived financial precarity."[484] She pointed out that the government's freeze of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate (see Box 6) means that the "amount of rent that tenants need to cover, in excess of what they

475 Dr Cigdem Gedikli (Lecturer at Swansea University); Professor Robert Hill (Professor at University of Graz); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor at University of Birmingham); Dr Okan Yilmaz (Lecturer at Swansea University) (HCE0024), para 6
476 Dr Cigdem Gedikli (Lecturer at Swansea University); Professor Robert Hill (Professor at University of Graz); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor at University of Birmingham); Dr Okan Yilmaz (Lecturer at Swansea University) (HCE0024), para 7
477 Shelter (HCE0068), para 57
478 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
479 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
480 Shelter (HCE0068)
481 Shelter (HCE0068), para 58
482 Citizens Advice (HCE0038)
483 Q108 [Ben Beadle]; Q107 [Dr Harris]
484 Q107 [Dr Harris]

are given in housing benefit, is becoming higher and higher."[485] Dr Harris suggested that the government's freeze of the LHA rate is probably main driver behind landlords becoming more risk adverse.[486] However, she also pointed out that landlords who focus on letting homes to those in receipt of benefits have been more likely to use risk mitigation strategies (e.g. asking for rent in advance) than landlords in other parts of the market. Half of landlords specialising in this part of the market asked for rent in advance compared to around a third of all landlords.[487] The Renters' Rights Act has removed this risk mitigation strategy from landlords, which Dr Harris suggested could also be a reason why landlords in this section of the market are becoming more risk averse.[488] Barnardo's reported that landlords are increasingly asking for a rent guarantor.[489] This can be a barrier to care leavers and other individuals who lack "strong family support" from finding properties.[490] They told us this requirement can leave people with "no choice but to live in low quality housing."[491]

Box 6: Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is used to set the maximum amount of housing support Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants can typically receive for privately rented homes of different sizes. It is not a benefit but a way of calculating housing support.[492] LHA rates have been repeatedly subject to freezes.[493] After a brief period of LHA rates returning to the 30th percentile of local rents, the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Liz Kendall MP, announced plans to re-freeze LHA rates from April 2025.[494] LHA rates remain frozen.[495] The freeze to LHA rates means that support for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants is not keeping pace with increases in private rents. Households need to cover the shortfall between their rent and the benefits they receive.[496] The UK Housing Review pointed out that the "freeze creates a shortfall between rents

485 Q107 [Dr Harris]
486 Q107 [Dr Harris]
487 Q107 [Dr Harris]
488 Q107 [Dr Harris]
489 Barnardo's (HCE0070)
490 Barnardo's (HCE0070)
491 Barnardo's (HCE0070)
492 House of Commons Library, Local Housing Allowance (LHA): Help with rent for private tenants, December 2023 p.4
493 Chartered Institute of Housing and the University of Glasgow, 2026 UK Housing Review, April 2026, p.98
494 Social Security, HCWS175, 30 October 2024
495 Statutory Review of State Pension and Benefit Rates: 2026/27, HCWS1101, 26 November 2026
496 House of Commons Library, Local Housing Allowance (LHA): Help with rent for private tenants, December 2023 p.10

and benefits of around £100 per month for an average property."[497] The proportion of properties that are affordable within the LHA rate decreases as rents rise.[498] This is a problem if landlords decide to increase rents to recoup the cost of repairs and upgrades, as low-income households may struggle to afford to pay more and have very few alternative affordable options available to them. With few properties to choose from, low-income households may refrain from complaining to their landlord (see Chapter 3). We have previously criticised the government's decision to re-freeze LHA rates on a couple of occasions arguing that this decision places more households at risk of homelessness and potentially in need of temporary accommodation (TA). The freeze also makes it difficult for councils to find a permanent home for households in TA.[499] We have called for the government to restore LHA rates to the 30th percentile of local rents.[500]

Impact on supply

131. The government's reforms may also affect the supply of homes in the private rented sector. In October 2023, the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence's systematic review ahead of the previous government's Renters' Rights Bill observed that part of the difficulty in deciding how to regulate the private rented sector comes from the fact that deregulation during the 1980s helped the sector grow. Therefore, the argument that more regulation will negatively affect the sector's growth has been an "integral feature" of debates over how they sector should be regulated.[501] Their review concluded with a "degree of confidence" that "non-price-control regulations do not appear to have any statistically significant influence on aggregate disinvestment in the private rented sector."[502]

132. The government's impact assessment of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 suggested the reforms are "unlikely to lead to a significant exit of responsible landlords from the market" because the added costs are

497 Chartered Institute of Housing and the University of Glasgow, 2026 UK Housing Review, April 2026, p.10

498 Chartered Institute of Housing and the University of Glasgow, 2026 UK Housing Review, April 2026, p.99

499 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Housing Conditions in Temporary Accommodation, HC 1831, April 2026, paras 93–94; Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation, HC 338, April 2025, para 88

500 Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Housing Conditions in Temporary Accommodation, HC 1831, April 2026, para 94

501 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.17

502 UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence, The impact of regulatory reform on the private rented sector, October 2023, p.6

unlikely to be enough to make investing in the sector "unprofitable."[503] Overall, the evidence we have received does not indicate that there will be a substantial adverse impact on supply across the sector, although properties at the lower-end of the market could be more affected.[504] The TDS Charitable Foundation told us that the percentage of landlords looking to buy outweighs the percentage looking to sell.[505] In 2025, the TDS Charitable Foundation found just under a quarter of landlords, 23%, said they had increased the number of properties they rent over the last year, up from 19% in 2024.[506]Most landlords (63%) made no changes to their portfolio, while the percentage who said they had sold properties remained largely flat.[507] The foundation told us that these trends "challenge the popular narrative of a landlord exodus."[508] Even so, they noted that regulatory changes are one of the main reasons landlords give for exiting the market and stressed that the government should ensure it considers the "cumulative impact of regulatory changes on landlord behaviour."[509] This point about the cumulative impact on landlords was echoed by others.[510] Timothy Douglas, Head of Policy and Campaigns at Propertymark, told us that the government has not conducted a review of the cumulative costs on landlords, including wider policy changes (e.g. mortgage interest relief changes and stamp duty on buy-to-let properties).[511]

133. These reforms are likely to play out differently in different parts of the market. Landlords may be more likely to leave the sector where income from rent is low compared to the costs of meeting the new standards. The TDS Charitable Foundation pointed out that financing upgrades to properties will be particularly difficult at the lower end of the market because the costs are likely to be greater (e.g. due to the extent of repairs and improvements needed to bring properties up to standard) and landlords may be constrained in their ability of recoup these costs through rent increase "due to the low incomes of tenants."[512] Findings from the foundation's landlord

503 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Renters' Right Bill Impact Assessment, November 2024, para 90

504 Q106 [Dr Harris]; TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.7; The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Crisis (HCE0015); Dr Cigdem Gedikli (Lecturer at Swansea University); Professor Robert Hill (Professor at University of Graz); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor at University of Birmingham); Dr Okan Yilmaz (Lecturer at Swansea University) (HCE0024), para 8; Chartered Institute of Housing (HCE0037), para 12.1; Citizens Advice (HCE0038)

505 Letter from TDS Charitable Foundation to the Chair dated 24 November 2025 concerning housing conditions and renters rights

506 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.1

507 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.2

508 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.2

509 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), para 15.5

510 Q89 [Ben Beadle]; Q111 [Timothy Douglas]

511 Q111 [Timothy Douglas]

512 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), 10.10

survey suggest that a higher proportion of landlords who focus on letting to tenants in receipt of housing benefit or Universal Credit (41%) or provide rental properties to local authorities (44%) say they are likely to sell their properties.[513] Dr Jennifer Harris from the TDS Charitable Foundation told us that "landlords who rent specifically to tenants in receipt of housing benefit are two and half times more likely to have sold their properties in the last year and the year prior showed a similar trend."[514]

134. We have also heard worries that the government efforts to raise standards and strengthen tenants' rights could lead to tenure flight, whereby private landlords choose to re-let or repurpose their properties for another market where they can make better returns, such as temporary accommodation. The Renters' Reform Coalition told us that landlords with homes in poor condition may move to a "different type of tenure to avoid their new obligations."[515] Campaigners have been strongly in favour of ensuring Awaab's Law and the Decent Homes Standard are extended to temporary accommodation - a step the government has already committed to do.[516] There have also been calls for the government to apply the same standard (or an equivalent standard) to accommodation provided by the Home Office and to short-term lets.[517] Generation Rent told us that it will be important that landlords do not view alternative uses for their property, such as holiday lets, as a simpler way to make money. They suggested that the government should give local authorities powers to license holiday lets to control their number.[518]

135. We heard from tenants and landlords alike that landlords who cannot provide tenants with a safe, decent home should not be in the market.[519] Charities, campaign groups and others are aware of the possibility that landlords may choose to exit the market, due the costs of complying with increased standards.[520] Crisis, for example, told us that landlords letting out non-decent homes at the lower end of the market may choose to exit, which could negatively affect supply. However, their view was that this risk is offset by the benefit of raising the standard of privately rented homes.[521]

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513 TDS Charitable Foundation (HCE0029), 10.12
514 Q107 [Dr Harris]
515 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057), para 24
516 Generation Rent (HCE0053); Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057)
517 Renters' Reform Coalition (HCE0057); Chartered Institute of Housing, CIH's response to MHCLG consultation on a reformed DHS for social and privately rented homes, September 2025
518 Generation Rent (HCE0053)
519 The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Crisis (HCE0015); Generation Rent (HCE0053); Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Q89 [Ben Beadle]; Letter from the National Residential Landlords Association to the Chair dated 19 November 2025 concerning further points on Housing Conditions in England
520 The Health Foundation (HCE0007); Crisis (HCE0015); Generation Rent (HCE0053)
521 Crisis (HCE0015)

We heard that having rogue landlords with substandard homes exiting the market could be positive if it improves the quality of homes and reduces the risks to tenants from poor housing.[522] When landlords exit the market their properties can be acquired by others (e.g. large, more professional landlords) who are better placed to meet higher standards.[523] Generation Rent told us:

> If negligent landlords cannot meet the new obligations, and decide to leave the sector by selling up, then the home will not disappear. It could for example be bought by a first-time buyer, or a landlord more willing to meet their obligations.[524]

136. **CONCLUSION**

Overall, our view is that the Renters' Rights Act and other reforms to raise standards constitute a proportionate package of measures that will improve housing conditions for tenants, without having a substantial adverse impact on supply. These reforms need to be a complemented by measures to give greater protections to renters at the lowest end of the market, who are more vulnerable to rent increases and other potential unintended consequences.

137. **RECOMMENDATION**

We remain of the view that the government should unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance and ensure it matches at least the 30th percentile of market rents to protect households on lower incomes. Doing so will help reduce the risk of rent increases leading to households on the lowest incomes being displaced into poorer accommodation or made homeless.

522 The Health Foundation (HCE0007)
523 Citizens Advice (HCE0038); Generation Rent (HCE0053)
524 Generation Rent (HCE0053)

Conclusions and recommendations

The state of the private rented sector

1. We welcome the government's plans to raise the standard of homes in the privately rented sector over the next decade. While most renters are satisfied with their homes, a substantial minority of private renters are living in homes that are sub-standard. Poor conditions in the private rented sector are symptomatic of the country's wider housing crisis, especially the lack of social and affordable housing. (Conclusion, Paragraph 27)

2. We urge the government to publish the long-awaited long-term housing strategy by the end of September 2026. We will be assessing whether the strategy addresses the drivers that contribute to poor housing across the country, including in the private rented sector. (Recommendation, Paragraph 28)

Raising standards

3. We welcome the government's decision to apply the new Decent Homes Standard to privately rented homes. The government has a difficult balance to strike between the need to deliver better homes to tenants quickly while allowing landlords the time they need to upgrade their homes. Regrettably, the ministry's impact assessment assumes that landlords are likely to wait until shortly before the standard comes into effect in 2035 before upgrading their properties. With over 1 million privately rented homes estimated to be below the existing Decent Homes Standard, we are concerned that many renters will be waiting a long time for their homes to be improved. The government should establish incentives to encourage landlords to upgrade their homes sooner. (Conclusion, Paragraph 41)

4. The effectiveness of the government's plans to apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector rests on how effectively local authorities enforce this standard. We are disappointed that the government only plans to place a duty on local authorities to take enforcement action when Criterion A is breached. This fails to provide sufficient additional

protection to tenants. A stronger deterrent could act as an incentive for landlords to ensure their properties comply with the new standard. (Conclusion, Paragraph 42)

5. We recommend that the government place a duty on local authorities to take enforcement action against any breach of the new Decent Homes Standard, not just breaches of Criterion A. This will act as a stronger incentive for landlords to comply. (Recommendation, Paragraph 43)

6. The new Private Rented Sector Database provides a useful mechanism for landlords to proactively demonstrate that their properties comply with existing and upcoming standards, including the Decent Homes Standard. This is not a substitute for strong, proactive enforcement. However, we are of the view that the database could provide a useful mechanism to drive up standards, especially as the Act includes provisions designed to deter landlords from providing false information. (Conclusion, Paragraph 44)

7. We recommend that the new Private Rented Sector Database allows private landlords to self-declare that their properties comply with the new Decent Homes Standard at the earliest opportunity. Using the database in this way would allow landlords who already comply to differentiate themselves from their competitors and encourage early adoption among others. To deter landlords from falsely declaring compliance, local authorities should be supported to use their powers to investigate landlords' self-declarations and take enforcement action against landlords who falsely declare compliance, especially if they do so knowingly and continuously. The database should also provide an easy mechanism for tenants to report self-declarations they suspect are false. (Recommendation, Paragraph 45)

8. We welcome the government's decision to introduce stronger minimum energy efficiency standards that private landlords will need to comply with from 2030. This will help to lift households out of fuel poverty and reduce their exposure to the health risks of living in a cold home. Overall, our view that is that the government has taken proportionate steps in the final design that will help ensure the new standard delivers benefits for tenants without adversely impacting supply. However, we are concerned that the effectiveness of the new standard, and the public's confidence in it, will be undermined if local authorities are not adequately resourced to enforce it. (Conclusion, Paragraph 53)

9. The government must ensure local authorities are adequately resourced to ensure landlords comply with the new standard. More detail on this is set out in Chapter 5. (Recommendation, Paragraph 54)

10. We welcome the government's decision to apply Awaab's Law to the private rented sector. While landlords are already required to keep their homes free from serious hazards, Awaab's Law will strengthen this protection

by establishing clear timeframes landlords need to meet to make their homes safe. We are disappointed, however, that the government has not yet committed to a clear timeframe for introducing these protections. (Conclusion, Paragraph 61)

11. We recommend that the government should begin rolling out Awaab's Law in the private rented sector this year to ensure that these legal protections are fully in place across the private rented sector by the end of 2028/29. (Recommendation, Paragraph 62)

Empowering tenants

12. The abolition of Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 will go long way to give tenants greater confidence to complain about poor housing conditions without the worry that their landlord will evict them. However, tenants are still vulnerable to the risk of a retaliatory rent increase that they cannot afford. With many renters already struggling to afford their rent, retaliatory rent increases could act as a form of economic eviction. We are not currently convinced that stricter measures to stabilise rents would be a proportionate step to mitigate this risk, due to the potential consequences this could have on the supply of affordable properties. (Conclusion, Paragraph 71)

13. The government's immediate priority must be to ensure the protections that are in place against above-market rent increases through the First-Tier Tribunal are functioning effectively. Tenants must have confidence that the tribunal will settle challenges quickly and accurately. To support the effectiveness of the First-tier Tribunal, we recommend that:

a. the government accelerate the establishment of a new body or mechanism to make initial rent determinations;

b. require landlords to include current advertised rents and rent histories on the private rented sector database; and

c. conduct an initial review of the performance of the First-Tier Tribunal to be published by 1 May 2027 to assess if these protections are working effectively. (Recommendation, Paragraph 72)

14. We welcome the creation of a new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman. If implemented well, we are confident that the new ombudsman will provide an effective alternative route for redress. However, the government needs to provide further clarity on how the new ombudsman will interact with other parts of the regulatory system, especially local authorities. (Conclusion, Paragraph 75)

15. In its official response to this report, we request that the government provide more information about how the new Private Rented Sector Ombudsman will interact with local authorities and the courts. (Recommendation, Paragraph 76)

16. We welcome the creation of a private rented sector database. The private rented sector database provides an opportunity to empower prospective and existing tenants with comprehensive information on the fitness of landlords and the quality of the privately rented homes as well as educate tenants on their rights and enable them to report concerns. While we do not wish to delay the rollout of the database, our view is that the government should be more ambitious on the role this database can play. We would like to see further information and functionalities added over time. (Conclusion, Paragraph 79)

17. The government must ensure that the private rented sector database includes, as a minimum, information on the condition and accessibility of privately rented properties, including details of previous enforcement actions, and the current rent and rent histories. Following the initial rollout, we recommend that the database is developed to provide tenants with guidance on their legal rights and enable them to report concerns to their local authority. (Recommendation, Paragraph 80)

18. The government is taking positive steps through the Renters' Rights Act 2025 to empower tenants. While we support the Renters' Rights Act 2025, we are concerned too much onus remains on individuals to take action against their landlord, either through to courts or soon by approaching the ombudsman for redress. This approach risks neglecting the most vulnerable tenants, especially those at the lowest end of the market where poor conditions are concentrated and vulnerable tenants who may be targeted by rogue landlords seeking to exploit them. For this reason, we are in favour of stronger, more proactive regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector. This is covered in more detail in Chapter 5. (Conclusion, Paragraph 85)

19. We are concerned that the effectiveness of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 could be undermined if courts are not ready and sufficiently resourced to cope with the new demands for housing cases. (Conclusion, Paragraph 87)

20. We recommend that the government publish the metrics it will use to assess whether the courts are coping with the new demands placed on them by the Renters' Rights Act and regularly report on their progress. (Recommendation, Paragraph 88)

Supporting landlords

21. Most landlords recognise their responsibility to provide tenants with a safe, decent and comfortable home. The government nationally and locally has a role to reduce unintentional non-compliance by educating landlords about their legal responsibilities and supporting them to adopt more professional practices. Nationally, the forthcoming Private Rented Sector Database has the potential to be a useful tool to reduce unintentional non-compliance by providing guidance and training to landlords about their legal responsibilities and encouraging them to undertake works that will ensure their properties meet the required standard. There is also a role for local authorities and strategic authorities to proactively support landlords to ensure their properties meet required standards. (Conclusion, Paragraph 94)

22. The government must ensure that the private rented sector database provides a useful tool to educate and better inform landlords about their role and responsibilities and encourage them to adopt more professional practices. The database must include information and guidance to landlords on their responsibilities. Over time, the database should be adapted to notify landlords of the introduction of new standards and steps they can take to comply. (Recommendation, Paragraph 95)

23. The government should provide local authorities and strategic authorities with a ring-fenced portion of the fees from the Private Rented Sector Database to support them to adopt initiatives, such as the Good Landlords Charter, that help tackle unintentional non-compliance among landlords. (Recommendation, Paragraph 96)

Regulation and enforcement

24. We are disappointed to hear a postcode lottery of local authority regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector has persisted for many years. Far too many local authorities are failing to protect tenants and provide a meaningful deterrent against rogue landlords. While local authorities should continue to have discretion over the way they regulate their local private rented markets, the government must do more to ensure councils are held accountable for their performance. (Conclusion, Paragraph 107)

25. The government must require councils to publish annual reports on the regulation and enforcement of their local private rented markets, including information on their inspection and enforcement activity. Doing so will enable better scrutiny and accountability of local authorities' activities and responsibilities in each area. (Recommendation, Paragraph 108)

26. We are concerned that many local authorities do not have enough suitability skilled staff to robustly regulate and enforce standards in their private rented markets. If not addressed this problem threatens to undermine the steps the government is taking to raise standards and the effectiveness of other reforms introduced by the Renters' Rights Act. (Conclusion, Paragraph 113)

27. The government must conduct and publish a full assessment of the resources and powers currently available to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector, including the new duties placed on local authorities under the Renters Rights Act. The assessment should consider the resources that will be necessary to allow local authorities to adopt a more proactive approach to regulating standards. (Recommendation, Paragraph 114)

28. Councils need sustainable, predictable sources of revenue to fund a much-need expansion of regulatory activity. In principle, our view is that the costs of regulating the private rented sector should be borne by all landlords, not just those who breach the law. We fully support the government's intention to use registration fees from the Private Rented Sector Database as way of funding local authorities' regulation of the private rented sector, although in practice it is possible that these costs could also be passed on to tenants. It critical that an increase in funding from landlords through fees comes with greater transparency and accountability over local authorities' performance. (Conclusion, Paragraph 117)

29. The government must ensure the fees landlords need to pay to register on the Private Rented Sector Database are sufficient to fund a substantial increase in local authority capacity. The government should then use this income to provide an annual ringfenced amount to local authorities to help fund their regulatory activities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 118)

30. Selective licensing remains a useful tool that local authorities can use to proactively target enforcement activity at areas with the poorest housing conditions. The new Private Rented Sector Database has the potential to complement selective licensing by helping local authorities to target their resources even more effectively at the areas with the poorest housing. More targeted enforcement can help protect the most vulnerable tenants, who may struggle to advocate for themselves and exercise their rights. It is right that local authorities can chose whether to introduce selective licensing schemes. However, we would like to see more local authorities making use of these powers. The government can help by removing barriers that inhibit the uptake and effectiveness of these schemes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 123)

31. We welcome the government's decision to remove the need for local authorities to seek approval from the Secretary of State before establishing selective licensing schemes. The government needs to go further to remove further barriers that inhibit the uptake and effectiveness of selecting licensing. We recommend that the government should:

- extend the maximum length of time for selective licensing schemes to 10 years. Within this period, councils should be required to periodically review their schemes to ensure they remain effective and proportionate.
- allow councils to apply to selective licensing schemes regardless of whether the PRS makes up a significant proportion of local housing market or not.
- enable local authorities to set licenses conditions that require landlords to make improvements to the physical state of licensed properties. (Recommendation, Paragraph 124)

Impact on the supply and affordability of homes

32. Overall, our view is that the Renters' Rights Act and other reforms to raise standards constitute a proportionate package of measures that will improve housing conditions for tenants, without having a substantial adverse impact on supply. These reforms need to be a complemented by measures to give greater protections to renters at the lowest end of the market, who are more vulnerable to rent increases and other potential unintended consequences. (Conclusion, Paragraph 136)

33. We remain of the view that the government should unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance and ensure it matches at least the 30th percentile of market rents to protect households on lower incomes. Doing so will help reduce the risk of rent increases leading to households on the lowest incomes being displaced into poorer accommodation or made homeless. (Recommendation, Paragraph 137)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 30 June 2026

Members present:

Florence Eshalomi, in the Chair

Mr Jonathan Brash

Lewis Cocking

Chris Curtis

Ashley Dalton

Mr Will Forster

Mr Gagan Mohindra

Sarah Smith

Housing Conditions in the Private Rented Sector

The following declarations of interests relating to the inquiry were made:

9 September 2025

Mr Gagan Mohindra declared an interest in that he previously worked as a finance leader in a local authority.

14 October 2025

Mr Lee Dillion declared an interest in that his spouse works for a social housing provider.

Florence Eshalomi declared an interest in that her constituency is covered by Lambeth and Southwark councils.

Andrew Lewin declared an interest in that he previously worked for a housing association (Clarion).

25 November 2025

Lewis Cocking declared an interest in that the freeholder of the block of flats in which he is a resident is a social landlord.

Sarah Smith declared an interest in that she is a private landlord.

14 April 2026

Mr Lee Dillion declared an interest in that he is a member of the APPG on temporary accommodation.

Draft Report (*Housing Conditions in the Private Rented Sector*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 137 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 7 July at 9.30am.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 9 September 2025

Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Director, Institute for Health Equity Q1–10

Dr Henry Dawson, Senior Lecturer in Housing and Public Health, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health; **Michael Erhardt**, Policy Lead, Disability Rights UK; **Millie Brown**, Deputy Director for Homes, Centre for Better Ageing; **Helen Garrett**, National Housing Data and Insights Lead, Building Research Establishment Q11–31

Tuesday 14 October 2025

Kwajo Tweneboa, Social housing activist and writer; **Richard Blakeway**, Housing Ombudsman, Housing Ombudsman Service; **Nic Bliss**, Campaign Director, Stop Social Housing Stigma Q32–50

Councillor Sarah King, Leader, Southwark Council; **Ian McDermott**, Chief Executive of Peabody and Chair, G15; **Craig Moule**, Group Chief Executive, Sanctuary; **Alistair Smyth**, Director of Policy and Research, National Housing Federation Q51–70

Tuesday 4 November 2025

Deborah Garvie, Policy Manager, Shelter; **Kate Markey**, Chief Executive, Nationwide Foundation; **Nye Jones**, Head of Campaigns, Generation Rent; **Anny Cullum**, Head of Politics, ACORN Q71–86

Dr Jennifer Harris, Head of Policy, Research and Social Impact, TDS Charitable Foundation; **Ben Beadle**, Chief Executive, National Residential Landlords Association; **Timothy Douglas**, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Propertymark Q87–116

Tuesday 25 November 2025

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive, Regulator of Social Housing; **Jonathan Walters**, Deputy Chief Executive, Regulator of Social Housing Q117–172

Joe Roberts, Head of Building Control, Compliance & Housing Quality, Cornwall Council; **Ashlea Birch**, Neighbourhood Manager (Environmental Health, Trading Standards & Housing), Manchester City Council; **Ian Sanders**, Principal Environmental Health Officer Private Housing (Environmental Health), Hull City Council; **James Wilson**, Head of Environment and Sustainability, Environmental Services, Great Yarmouth Borough Council Q173–188

Tuesday 27 January 2026

Dr Laura Neilson, CEO, Shared Health Foundation; **Joe Lane**, Deputy Director of Projects, Office of the Children's Commissioner; **Matt Downie**, Chief Executive, Crisis; **Christa Maciver**, Director of Campaigns and Social Change, Justlife Foundation Q189–201

Stephen Philpott, Director of City Housing Solutions & Support Services, Birmingham City Council; **Councillor Grace Williams**, Deputy Chair and Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration, London Councils; **Paul Kitson**, Corporate Director of Inclusive Economy, Housing and Culture, Newham Council; **Joseph Donohue**, Strategic Lead for Homelessness, Greater Manchester Combined Authority Q202–219

Tuesday 14 April 2026

Nigel Cates, Chief Ombudsman, The New Homes Ombudsman Service; **Chloe Fletcher**, Head of Policy and External Affairs, Chartered Institute of Housing; **Richard Smith**, Head of Standards, Innovation and Research, National House Building Council Q220–245

Steve Turner, Executive Director, Home Builders Federation; **Stephen Teagle**, CEO of Partnerships and Regeneration, Vistry Group; **Jennie Daly**, Chief Executive, Taylor Wimpey Q246–267

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

HCE numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	AA4AH	HCE0092
2	Absalom, Doctor Hannah	HCE0011
3	Anonymised	HCE0084
4	Anonymised	HCE0002
5	Barnard, Professor Catherine (Professor of EU Law , EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge); and Dr Fiona Costello (Research Associate , EU Migrant Worker Project, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge)	HCE0010
6	Barnardo's	HCE0070
7	Bouchinet, Denis	HCE0081
8	Bright Blue	HCE0034
9	Bristol City Council	HCE0080
10	Building Research Establishment (BRE)	HCE0071
11	Carslaw, Professor Nicola	HCE0006
12	Centre for Ageing Better	HCE0031
13	Charles, Dr Hannah	HCE0026
14	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	HCE0067
15	Chartered Institute of Housing	HCE0037
16	Citizens Advice	HCE0038
17	Clarion Housing Group	HCE0049
18	Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	HCE0050
19	Crisis	HCE0091
20	Crisis	HCE0015
21	Crisis; and Calderdale Council	HCE0088

22	End Fuel Poverty Coalition	HCE0041
23	Ericsson	HCE0035
24	European Centre for Environment & Human Health, University of Exeter	HCE0044
25	G15	HCE0078
26	Gedikli, Dr Cigdem (Lecturer, Swansea University); Professor Robert Hill (Professor, University of Graz); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor, University of Birmingham); and Dr Okan Yilmaz (Lecturer, Swansea University)	HCE0024
27	Generation Rent	HCE0053
28	Sarah Gibson MP	HCE0061
29	Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, University of Oxford	HCE0023
30	Groundswell	HCE0032
31	Habinteg	HCE0079
32	Habinteg	HCE0073
33	Home Builders Federation	HCE0009
34	Housing Ombudsman Service	HCE0052
35	Housing and Ageing Alliance	HCE0036
36	Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee	HCE0083
37	Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee	HCE0082
38	Hull City Council – Neighbourhoods and Housing	HCE0021
39	Independent Age	HCE0054
40	Justlife	HCE0013
41	Khan, Khadijah	HCE0090
42	King's College London	HCE0093
43	King's College London; Shared Health Foundation; and Autistica	HCE0018
44	LGSCO	HCE0060
45	Little, Melissa	HCE0076
46	Local Government Association (LGA)	HCE0069
47	London Renters Union	HCE0077

48	Maclaren, Miranda	HCE0089
49	Mineral Products Association	HCE0048
50	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	HCE0056
51	National House Building Council (NHBC)	HCE0045
52	National Housing Federation	HCE0046
53	National Residential Landlords Association	HCE0039
54	National Retrofit Hub	HCE0020
55	Nationwide Foundation	HCE0022
56	Nyamaah, Raphael	HCE0085
57	Okara, Goodtime	HCE0004
58	People's Health Trust	HCE0019
59	Portakabin	HCE0008
60	Propertymark	HCE0062
61	Rockwool UK	HCE0072
62	Reapit	HCE0055
63	Regulator of Social Housing	HCE0042
64	Renters' Reform Coalition	HCE0057
65	Renters' Rights London	HCE0066
66	Royal Insitution of Chartered Surveyors	HCE0043
67	Royal Institute of British Architects	HCE0058
68	Sanctuary	HCE0047
69	Sanders, Faye	HCE0003
70	Shared Health Foundation	HCE0014
71	Shelter	HCE0068
72	Social Workers Union	HCE0016
73	Southern Housing	HCE0065
74	Southwark Council	HCE0059
75	Switchee	HCE0075
76	TDS Charitable Foundation	HCE0029
77	The Almshouse Association	HCE0025
78	The Health Foundation	HCE0007
79	The Magpie Project	HCE0087

80	The New Homes Ombudsman Service	HCE0040
81	The Town and Country Planning Association	HCE0030
82	Trust for London	HCE0086
83	UK100	HCE0063
84	Umar, Dr Tariq	HCE0001
85	University of Bath	HCE0012
86	University of Liverpool; University of Sheffield; University of Cambridge; University of Sheffield; University of Sheffield; SPHR; Cornwall Council; UCL; and University of Liverpool	HCE0027
87	Vivid	HCE0017
88	Vermandel, Eva	HCE0074
89	Wilding, Dr Jo	HCE0005
90	Zhang, Dr Liyun (Research Fellow in Economics, University of Birmingham); Professor Oleksandr Talavera (Professor in Financial Economics, University of Birmingham); and Haonan Tian (PhD Candidate, University of Birmingham)	HCE0028

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

Session 2026–27

Number	Title	Reference
3rd	Appointment of the Chair of the Local Audit Office	HC 47
2nd	Affordability of Home Ownership	HC 41
1st	Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill	HC 40

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
5th	Housing Conditions in Temporary Accommodation	HC 1831
4th	Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector	HC 1154
3rd	Delivering 1.5 million new homes: Land Value Capture	HC 672
2nd	The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance	HC 514
1st	England's Homeless Children: The crisis in temporary accommodation	HC 338
7th Special	Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector: Government Response	HC 1853
6th Special	Delivering 1.5 Million New Homes: Land Value Capture: Government Response	HC 1781
5th Special	The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance: Government Response	HC 1355

Number	Title	Reference
4th Special	England's Homeless Children: The Crisis in Temporary Accommodation: Government Response	HC 979
3rd Special	The Finances and Sustainability of the Social Housing Sector: Government Response	HC 762
2nd Special	Disabled People in the Housing Sector: Government Response	HC 761
1st Special	The finances and sustainability of the social housing sector: Regulator of Social Housing response	HC 457