

# The long-awaited Renters Reform Bill is finally introduced into Parliament

19 May 2023

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After much delay and many false alarms, this Bill to overhaul the private rented sector in England was finally published this week.

The change which has grabbed all the headlines is the abolition of the 'no-fault' ground for possession, which enables a landlord to end an assured shorthold tenancy on two months' notice for any reason.

However, other important changes include:

- All tenancies must be periodic, so it will no longer be possible to tie a tenant in to a minimum term.
- New landlord grounds to end a tenancy if they wish to sell their property or move in a new family member and a quicker and easier process to evict tenants for anti-social behaviour and repeated rent arrears.
- A landlord will not be able to refuse consent unreasonably to a tenant's request to keep a pet.
- A landlord will only be able to increase rent once a year using the existing statutory process and a tenant will be able to challenge the increase in a tribunal.
- A new database of residential landlords and privately rented properties and a new compulsory Ombudsman scheme to investigate and determine tenant complaints.

Not many people would argue that vulnerable tenants need greater protection from unscrupulous landlords. However, there is a concern that some private landlords (already weary from the burdens of unfavourable tax changes, high interest rates and additional regulatory requirements) will decide that 'enough is enough' and look to sell up before the Bill becomes law. That in turn may lead to a shortage of decent homes to rent at affordable rents at exactly the time when they are most needed.

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