

## Update: White Paper – A Fairer Private Rented Sector published by government

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has published a White Paper – A Fairer Private Rented Sector – detailing the changes proposed under the Renters' Reform Bill which set out to protect private tenants' rights to a safe and secure rental home.

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Some of the key proposed changes are:

- A ban on 'no-fault evictions', preventing landlords from evicting tenants without providing a reason;
- Prevention of blanket bans on tenants receiving benefits or families with children; and
- A requirement for landlords to consider requests from tenants to allow pets in the rental home.

The ban on no-fault evictions, one of the most important proposals in the Renters' Reform Bill, follows a similar ban in Scotland for tenancies starting after 1 December 2017. It comes as the number of no-fault evictions in England, known as Section 21 notices, reached 227,000 over the past three years.

Polly Neate, chief executive of housing charity Shelter, described the bill as a "game-changer" that will "level the playing field" for private renters.

Although the details of how the ban will be implemented are not yet confirmed, landlords will likely be required to provide one or more "grounds for eviction" before they serve notice on a tenant and end the tenancy. It is likely that different notice periods will apply depending on the grounds relied upon.

Speaking for private landlords, Ben Beadle, chief executive of the National Residential Landlord's Association emphasised the importance of retaining the confidence of private landlords. Not doing so, he warns, could worsen the housing crisis. The White Paper seeks to address these concerns by proposing a private renters' ombudsman to streamline the process of resolving disputes, an improved process for recovering properties in reasonable circumstances (such as when tenants are persistently in arrears or exhibit antisocial behaviour) and a property portal to aid landlords' compliance with responsibilities.

Whether the government can strike a balance between tenants' rights and landlord confidence will depend on how these commitments are implemented in practice. However, the proposals are expected to be a welcome change for over 11 million people housed in the Private Rented Sector.

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