Landlords & tenants

Change is coming

Everything you need to know about the Renters' Rights Act

exeter property

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Decent homes standard
Decent Homes Standards to apply in PRS

Renting with pets
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Limitations in the way rent can be requested in advance

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This law will now apply to PRS in relation to damp and mould

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Even if using an agent, landlords must sign up

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Expanded Section 8 grounds and longer notice periods

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No discrimination against tenants with children or those on benefits

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All rental properties must meet a clear set of standards to ensure they are safe, secure and free from serious hazards. A minimum property condition benchmark will apply across the sector, giving tenants improved protection against poor living conditions.

Tenants will have the legal right to request permission for a pet, which landlords cannot unreasonably refuse. The landlord must either give or refuse consent in writing within 28 days of the date of the request from the tenant, although the landlord can ask for further information from the tenant, which the tenant must provide within 7 days. If the tenant doesn't provide the information, the landlord doesn't need to give or refuse consent.

Following the tragic and avoidable death of 2-year old Awaab Ishak due to prolonged exposure to mould in his social rented home, the Manchester Evening News, Shelter and the Ishak family led a campaign for 'Awaab's Law'. The RRA has now extended Awaab's Law to the PRS. This will ensure that all renters in England are empowered to challenge dangerous conditions and that all landlords must take swift action to make sure homes are safe.

Landlords or letting agents must not ask for, encourage or accept any pre-tenancy payment of rent. This means the landlord or agent cannot ask the tenant to make the first, or any other rent payment, until after the tenancy agreement is signed by both parties. Only once the tenancy has been signed, is it possible for the landlord/agent to ask the tenant to make the initial rent payment. The rent paid for the first rental period cannot be more than the usual monthly rent.

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From 1st May 2026, tenants now have flexibility to move in response to changing circumstances, for example after relationship breakdown, to take up a new job or when buying a first home. Two months notice needs to be given in every circumstance.

The RRA has introduced a transformative new tenancy system, ending section 21 evictions and fixed-term tenancies. This new tenancy system will provide tenants with greater security and stability, and empower them to challenge bad practice without fear of retaliatory eviction. Landlords also benefit, with more straightforward regulation and clearer, expanded possession grounds.

From 1st May 2026, the RRA will require landlords and letting agents to publish a proposed asking rent for the property. It also prohibits landlords or agents from asking for, encouraging or accepting any bids above this price. There is nothing in the Act preventing the landlord or agent from accepting a lower bid.

From 1st May 2026, rent increases in the private rented sector will be made using a revised Section 13 process. Landlords will be able to increase rents once per year to the market rate – the price that would be achieved if the property was newly advertised to let. To do this, they must serve a Section 13 notice, setting out the new rent and giving at least 2 months' notice of it taking effect.

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The RRA introduces a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman Service, which all private landlords in England with assured or regulated tenancies will be required by law to join, including those who use a letting agent. A fee will be charged to the landlord for joining. Tenants will be able to use the service for free to complain about a landlord's actions or behaviours.

From 1st May 2026, reforms under the Act will extend councils' powers to collect and retain revenue for future enforcement work from financial penalties against landlords who breach the rules. Initial or minor noncompliance will incur a civil penalty of up to £7,000 and serious, persistent or repeat non-compliance, will incur a civil penalty of up to £40,000, with the alternative of a criminal prosecution.

From 1st May 2026, the removal of the Section 21 notice means 'no fault' evictions are no longer possible, save in the specific circumstances set out in the reformed and expanded Section 8 notice provisions. All possession proceedings will need to be started using a Section 8 notice and the landlord will need to establish a Ground or Grounds for Possession. Under the Act, some grounds have been amended and some new grounds have been introduced.

Landlords and agents will continue to have the final say on who they let their property to, and can carry out referencing checks to make sure tenancies are sustainable for all parties. They can do this based on affordability, but not on the basis that the prospective tenant has children or is in receipt of benefits. The local authority can impose a civil penalty of up to £7,000 if the regulation is breached.