

The Renters Rights Act – Full Landlord & Tenant Guide



The Renters' Rights Act

The Renters' Rights Act represents the most significant reform of the private rented sector in decades. Its purpose is to provide tenants with greater security and clarity while ensuring that landlords operate with transparency, professionalism and accountability.

1. Ending Section 21 (“No-Fault” Evictions)

One of the cornerstone changes is the abolition of the widely used Section 21 eviction process. From the act's commencement:

- Landlords can no longer evict tenants simply by issuing a Section 21 notice without cause.
- All evictions must follow the Section 8 route, which requires one or more **specified legal grounds** (such as rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, landlord intention to sell, landlord/family move-in, property needing major renovation).
- Tenants gain increased protections from sudden displacement and can plan their housing more securely.
For landlords, this means a shift from discretionary termination to cause-based eviction — necessitating robust records, documented reasons for possession, and adherence to legal process.

2. Transition to Periodic Tenancies

The Act signals a move away from fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) toward **open-ended periodic tenancies** by default:

- Fixed-term tenancies can still be used, but renewals will often convert to periodic arrangements unless otherwise agreed.
- Tenants may end the tenancy by giving the required written notice (for example, two months) without penalty when the contract allows.
- Landlords must rely on the prescribed grounds under Section 8 rather than simply refusing renewal at the end of term.

3. Expanded Grounds for Possession (Section 8)

To protect landlords' legitimate interests, the law reinforces the grounds for possession:

Mandatory grounds (must grant eviction if proven)

- Serious rent arrears (e.g., 4+ months' unpaid rent)
- Anti-social or criminal behaviour by tenant or occupiers
- Landlord/family moving in
- Landlord intends to sell the property

Discretionary grounds (court may grant eviction)

- Persistent late payment of rent
- Breach of tenancy conditions (damage, untidy behaviour)
- Refusal of access for essential repairs
- Landlord intends to carry out major works and property cannot be lived in safely

4. Rent Reviews and Tenant Rights

- Rent can only be increased **once every 12 months**, unless the tenancy agreement allows shorter frequency.
- Landlords must give written notice of the proposed increase, including the amount, new rent and effective date.
- Tenants can challenge a rent increase that is unreasonably above market rate via the First-tier Tribunal.

5. Pets and Responsible Ownership

To address the growing need for pet-friendly rentals:

- Tenants now have a **right to request a pet**, and landlords cannot unreasonably refuse the request.
- Landlords may require tenants to take out pet insurance and include additional obligations in the tenancy agreement.
- Pet clauses must be fair, clearly communicated, and not used to unreasonably restrict tenants.



6. National Private Rented Sector Property Portal

The Act mandates a central digital platform where all private rental properties must be registered. Components include:

- Landlord and managing agent details
 - Safety certificates (gas, electrical, EPC, fire)
 - Property status and compliance information
 - History of tenancy and any enforcement actions
- Local authorities will access the portal for enforcement, inspections and compliance checks.

7. Mandatory Ombudsman and Dispute Resolution

All landlords and agents must join a **single national private rented sector Ombudsman**:

- Tenants can raise complaints that cannot be resolved directly with landlord/agent.
- The Ombudsman's decisions are binding on landlords/agents.
- Independent oversight ensures transparency and fairness in landlord-tenant relationships.

8. Enforcement & Penalties

Local authorities will be empowered to:

- Carry out proactive inspections using data from the property portal
- Issue civil penalties up to £30,000 (or more) for serious breaches
- Publish 'naming and shaming' lists of non-compliant landlords
- Suspend landlord licences or agency operations where appropriate



What Landlords Must Do Now

- Review your existing tenancy templates: ensure they allow cause-based eviction (Section 8) only and remove any reliance on Section 21.
- Create or update your documentation practices: keep full records of rent payments, access requests, repairs, tenant communications and reasons for possession.
- Prepare for transition to periodic tenancies: plan how you will convert fixed-terms or renewals, update your guidance to tenants.
- Review your rent review process: ensure annual reviews, written notices, and market evidence for increases.
- Update your pet policy: include formal request process, insurance requirement, and fair refusal criteria.
- Check your registration status: ensure your properties will be registered on the national portal and that all safety certificates are current.
- Join the national Ombudsman scheme and update your complaints handling policy.
- Audit your compliance readiness: summarise any gaps in safety certifications, tenant information, records, and remediation actions.
- Communicate with your tenants: provide a clear summary of how the new law affects their tenancy and what rights they now have.