




A Landlord's Guide to the Renters' Rights Act What Landlords Must Know



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Hello and welcome.

My name is James Carver, and I'm a Director at Carvers.

The Renters' Rights Act 2025, in force in England from 1 May 2026 – although with some provisions phased in – is the single biggest change to landlord-tenant law in a generation.

It introduces numerous new rules and responsibilities for private landlords.

We've produced this free guide to help you navigate the changes as smoothly as possible.

We'll explain what you must know and what action you should consider taking now.

We understand that this is a challenging time for landlords.

But, rest assured, as leading local independent agents, we're here to help and support you every step of the way.

If you need help with any aspect of letting or managing your rental property, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

James Carver MNEA ARLA
Director
Carvers



* Disclaimer: This guide is based on the latest government guidance at time of writing, but may be subject to change. This guide does not constitute legal or financial advice. Seek expert legal and financial advice if needed.

The new type of tenancy explained

The new tenancy type is perhaps the biggest single change for landlords under the Renters' Rights Act.

In the past, the Assured Shorthold Tenancy or AST was the main form of private residential tenancy. These typically lasted for 6 or 12 months. On expiry, they could either be renewed or they ended, and the tenant moved out.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies or any form of fixed period tenancy are not permitted under the Renters' Rights Act – except where statutory exemptions apply.

Under the new law, the standard form of private residential tenancy is a rolling periodic tenancy. These are likely to become known as Assured Periodic Tenancies or APTs.

Assured Periodic Tenancies last indefinitely until either: A tenant wishes to leave. Or a landlord evicts them using one of the new statutory grounds for eviction. (More details coming up.)

In effect, tenants who comply with their tenancy terms can remain in their home as long as they wish.

Tenants can generally end the tenancy by giving at least two months' notice, subject to statutory requirements.

Landlords can no longer end a tenancy without using one of the statutory reasons to do so. The so-called 'no fault' evictions route (also known as Section 21) is no longer permitted.

The new form of tenancy applies to both new and existing private residential tenancies. Existing Assured Shorthold Tenancies automatically convert to the new form of tenancy.

Effective date of these measures: 1 May 2026



A guide to some of the main new rules

The rules on taking rent in advance

Landlords and agents may not request more than one month's rent in advance.

Rent in advance can only be accepted once a tenancy agreement has been signed.

A refundable holding deposit (of up to 1 week's rent) and a refundable tenancy deposit (of up to 5 weeks' rent) may still be requested.

This is all subject to final regulations.



The rules on rent rises

The new law allows landlords to increase their rent once per year up to what is considered to be the market rent level.

Note that this is not the same as a rent control or cap.

Landlords must serve tenants with a Section 13 notice giving them two months' notice of the increase.

Tenants may appeal any rent increase they consider unfair to the First-tier Tribunal.

Market rent is the rent a property would earn if re-offered on the market. (Local letting agents are well placed to advise on current local rental levels.)

Rent review clauses in tenancies are not permitted.

The ban on rental bidding

In the past, tenants could offer more than the asking rent to secure the property they wanted. The new law forbids this.

The Renters' Rights Act prohibits landlords from accepting an offer to pay more rent for a property than the rent originally advertised.

The rent a landlord requires for their property must be clearly stated when advertising to let it. It cannot then be let at a higher rent.



A guide to some of the main new rules

This new rule makes it more important than ever to seek expert advice on setting an appropriate asking rent for a property.

The rules on discrimination

Landlords may not discriminate against tenants with children or tenants on benefits who want to rent their property.

This new rule prohibits stating that these types of tenants may not apply for a property, refusing to show it to them, or refusing to accept their application.

Landlords may still apply proportionate and objective affordability and suitability criteria.

Landlords can still decline applications from tenants who cannot afford the rent or who fail referencing checks.

Landlords can still decline applications if a property is unsuitable for a tenant. (For example, if there are insufficient bedrooms to accommodate a family with children properly.)

Information tenants must be given at the start of a tenancy

The new law requires landlords to provide certain key information about the tenancy to tenants in writing. This could be in the form of a formal written tenancy agreement.

The rules on pets

The new law gives tenants the right to request permission from the landlord to have a pet. This must be done in writing.

Landlords must issue a written decision within 28 days. They must have valid reasons to refuse the tenant's request.

It is not yet clear what valid reasons for refusal there might be.

However, current government guidance states that it is reasonable to refuse permission if the property is leasehold and the lease prohibits pets.



A guide to some of the main new rules

Converting existing tenancies

Under the Renters' Rights Act, existing AST tenancies automatically convert to the new form of tenancy.

In most cases, landlords will not need to issue a new agreement.

However, landlords with existing tenancies will need to provide tenants with a copy of the official government information sheet outlining the changes introduced by the Renters' Rights Act.

This information sheet is not yet available at the time of writing.

Selling a rental property

The Renters' Rights Act allows landlords to evict tenants and take possession of their property if they wish to sell it. (And also if they want to move into it themselves.) However, some special rules apply to doing this.

New tenancies benefit from a 12-month protected period under which the landlord cannot end the tenancy for this reason.

Tenants must be given 4 months' notice.

If this procedure is used, a significant restriction period is expected. (If, for example, there is a change of circumstances or the property does not sell.)

Special arrangements for student tenancies

The Renters' Rights Act includes a concession for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which are let to students.

These properties are homes let to at least three tenants forming more than one household with some shared amenities.

Unlike other tenancies, these may have a fixed expiry date aligned with the end of the academic year.

To benefit from this concession, the tenancy must not be agreed more than six months in advance of its start date. The parties must agree that this concession will apply, and four months' notice must be given to tenants.



Effective date of these measures: 1 May 2026

The rules on possession and eviction

The Renters' Rights Act introduces new rules governing when landlords can evict tenants and repossess their property. The government says that these will be fairer.

The major change is that tenants cannot be evicted without a reason. The so-called no-fault evictions route (known as Section 21) is no longer possible.

Tenants can be evicted only under one of the new statutory grounds and the new, reformed Section 8 process.

In introducing the Renters' Rights Act, the government said that these reformed grounds should make it easier for landlords to evict tenants. However, they could prove to be more complex, more costly and more time-consuming for landlords.

Section 8 grounds for eviction include anti-social behaviour, damage to the property, serious and persistent rent arrears, and, if a landlord wants to sell their property, amongst others.

These grounds for eviction include both mandatory and discretionary grounds. For mandatory grounds, a court must award possession if the ground is proven. For discretionary grounds, a court can consider whether eviction is reasonable or not, even if the ground is met.

To rely on these grounds, a landlord must serve a Section 8 notice on the tenant and provide the appropriate period of notice. (This can be 2 weeks, 4 weeks, 2 months or 4 months depending on the ground.)

Particular arrangements apply to eviction for rent arrears. Three months' arrears are expected to be required as mandatory grounds for eviction, and 4 weeks' notice must be given.

If the tenant does not vacate upon notice, landlords may need to initiate possession proceedings in court.

If a court hearing is held, supporting evidence of the grounds will be needed, and tenants may contest them.

Given that the eviction rules are new and complex, landlords would be well advised to take expert advice.

Effective date of these measures: 1 May 2026

The new enforcement and investigatory powers

Local authorities have always had the power to investigate and enforce many aspects of letting law. The Renters' Rights Act increases these powers.

Local authorities now have the power to enter any property which they believe is being rented out. If entry is refused, they can obtain a warrant from a court.

Local authorities are not required to inform a landlord of their intention to enter the landlord's property. They only need to inform them afterwards.

Local authorities have the power to enter any business premises used in connection with a rental property business.

They do not have the legal authority to enter a landlord's home if the landlord operates their business, in whole or in part, from home.

Local authorities have the power to ask for and seize documents relating to a rental business from any person who has them.

These new rules are subject to statutory safeguards and proportionality requirements.

Civil penalties

It has long been possible for local authorities issue civil penalties to landlords for breaches of the law. The Renters' Rights Act expands the range of offences for which they can be used and increases the number of offences to which they apply.

The standard civil penalty for initial breaches is £7,000, and the maximum civil penalty for continuing or repeated breaches is £40,000.

Local authorities can also conduct criminal prosecutions, which may result in an unlimited fine.

Rent repayment orders

It has long been possible for tenants to ask a court to order repayment of their rent if their landlord has broken certain rental laws.

The Renters' Rights Act widens the number of offences to which it applies. Tenants can also receive repayment of two years' rent rather than just one.

Effective dates of these measures: 27 December 2025 and 1 May 2026

Other measures coming soon

The PRS Database

The new law will introduce a Private Rented Sector Database.

This public database will contain the addresses of all privately rented properties, a description of each property, and the landlord's contact details. It will also include details of a property's gas and electrical safety certificates and EPC.

Landlords must register in the database, for which a fee applies.

This measure is not yet in force. The government is expected to launch the database in late 2026.

The PRS Landlord Ombudsman

The new law will establish a Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman service.

The ombudsman will provide a redress service for tenants with complaints. It will be able to order landlords to put things right or pay compensation.

Landlords will need to join the scheme, for which a fee applies.

This measure is not yet in force. The government is expected to release further information in late 2026.

The Decent Homes Standard

The Decent Homes Standard currently only applies to social rented homes. It sets down minimum standards they must meet.

The Decent Homes Standard is to be reformed and will also apply to the PRS.

This measure is not in force yet and is not expected in the short to medium term. The government has said it is unlikely to be introduced before 2035.

Awaab's Law

Awaab's Law currently only applies to social rented homes. It sets out rules and timescales that landlords must follow when dealing with hazards such as damp and mould.

The government has said it plans to introduce Awaab's Law into the private rented sector, but there is no date for this as yet.



Checklist – What landlords should do now

- Review your investment properties and your tenancies.
If you wish to sell a rental property, please note that new rules take effect from May 2026.
- Check your rent.
If you plan to raise your rent, first determine the current market rental value.
(Local letting agents are well placed to advise.)
- Ensure that tenants on existing tenancies have been issued with a copy of the official government information sheet.
- Check that your property's gas and electrical safety certificates and EPC are in date.
Book new checks if they are due to expire.
- Check that tenants' deposits are protected in a government-approved scheme.
As it is now, it is an offence and complicates the eviction process if they are not.
- Ensure your record-keeping is up to scratch.
The new law makes keeping accurate records more important than ever.
This should include all tenancy documentation, details of rents due and paid, safety certificates, complaints received and action taken, and maintenance carried out.
- Carry out a property inspection.
Resolve any maintenance issues or tenant concerns.
- Still unclear about what the Renters' Rights Act means for you?
Take expert advice wherever you need it.

If you need help with any aspect of letting or managing your property, please don't hesitate to contact us.

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Thanks for reading, and remember we're here to help you in any way we can.



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