

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE SCRUTINY PANEL - RENTERS' RIGHTS BILL BRIEFING PAPER

Community Connections



Renters' Rights Bill Overview

The Renters' Rights Bill aims to reform the rental market, strengthening protection for tenants while introducing new obligations for landlords. The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 11 September 2024 and is in its final stages of becoming an act. The bill is structured into 4 parts and is not significantly different from the proposed predecessor, the Renters' (Reform) Bill.

It is anticipated that The Bill will gain Royal Assent in November 2025 with secondary legislation being formed at a later date. Whilst The Bill is being finalised, we can be certain of a number of things:

1. We can expect early implementation of Part 1 and 4, and with this an expectation on Councils to be enforcing the commitments on eviction and tenant security straight away, using the considerable new powers to do this without delay. Relevant secondary legislation is anticipated 6 months post Royal Assent.
2. Coupled with the Government's determination to meet their election promises, there is a significant expectation, from the voluntary and not for profit sector organisations who support tenants, that Councils will universally use their new powers, and fulfil their new obligations, from day 1.

The Labour government's Renters' Rights Bill will:

- **Abolish section 21 evictions** - Moving to a simpler tenancy structure where all assured tenancies are periodic, providing more security for tenants and empowering them to challenge poor practice and unfair rental increases without fear of eviction. This will be implemented in one stage, giving all tenants security immediately.
- **Ensure possession grounds are fair to both parties** - Giving tenants more security, while ensuring landlords can recover their property when reasonable. The bill introduces new safeguards for tenants, giving them more time to find a home if landlords evict to move in or sell, and ensuring unscrupulous landlords cannot misuse grounds.
- **Provide stronger protections against backdoor eviction** - Ensuring tenants are able to appeal excessive above-market rents which are purely designed to force them out. Landlords will still be able to increase rents but only to market price for their properties and an independent tribunal will make a judgement on this, if needed.
- **Introduce a new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman** - Providing quick, fair, impartial and binding resolution for tenants' complaints about their landlord. This will bring tenant-landlord complaint resolution on par with established redress practices for tenants in social housing and consumers of property agent services
- **Create a Private Rented Sector Database** – Helping landlords understand their legal obligations and demonstrate compliance (giving good landlords confidence in their position), alongside providing better information to tenants to make informed decisions when entering into a tenancy agreement. It will also support local councils, helping them target enforcement activity where it is needed most. Landlords will need to be registered on the database in order to use certain possession grounds.
- **Give tenants strengthened rights to request a pet in the property** – The landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse. To support this, landlords will be able to require pet insurance to cover any damage to their property

- **Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector** - Giving renters safer, better value homes and remove the blight of poor-quality homes in local communities.
- **Apply ‘Awaab’s Law’ to the sector** - Setting clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which landlords in the private rented sector must take action to make homes safe where they contain serious hazards.
- **Make it illegal for landlords and agents to discriminate against prospective tenants in receipt of benefits or with children** – Helping to ensure everyone is treated fairly when looking for a place to live.
- **End the practice of rental bidding by prohibiting landlords and agents from asking for or accepting offers above the advertised rent** - Landlords and agents will be required to publish an asking rent for their property, and it will be illegal to accept offers made above this rate.
- **Strengthen local authority enforcement** - Expanding civil penalties, introducing a package of investigatory powers and bringing in a new requirement for local authorities to report on enforcement activity.
- **Strengthen rent repayment orders** - Extending them to superior landlords, doubling the maximum penalty from 12 months’ rent to 24 months and ensuring repeat offenders have to repay the maximum amount.

Imminent Powers and Responsibilities

Part 1 – Tenancy Reform

The Renters’ Rights Bill will introduce a tenancy system, ending the threat of arbitrary section 21 evictions, which uproot renters from their homes with little notice and minimal justification. The new tenancy system will provide tenants with greater security and stability and empower them to challenge bad practice without fear of retaliatory eviction. Landlords will also benefit, with more straightforward regulation, and clearer and expanded possession grounds.

Under Part 1 it becomes a **duty** for Housing Authorities to enforce provisions around:

1. The abolition of assured shorthold tenancies and other changes to assured tenancies
2. Changes to grounds for possession, including the abolition of section 21 evictions
3. New controls on rent increases and other rent issues
4. The pet provisions
5. A suite of new duties on landlords and contractors to give information
6. Changes to tenancy deposit requirements and tenant fees
7. The ban on discrimination relating to children
8. The ban on discrimination relating to benefits status
9. Soliciting rent above the advertised figure, including a ban on rental bidding
10. Limiting the amount of an annual rent increase

Part 1 also introduces amendments made to the Protection from Eviction Act 1977

- Financial penalties introduced as an alternative to prosecution, and the maximum penalty is £40,000

It also applies Awaab’s Law to the private rented sector, however, MHCLG are currently assessing how to introduce this into the private rented sector and as such this will be introduced at a later stage. Awwab’s Law will:

- Set timescales within which landlords must make homes safe when they contain serious hazards and empower tenants to challenge unsafe conditions.

Part 4 – Enforcement

Through the Renters' Rights Bill it becomes the **duty** of every local housing authority to enforce the landlord legislation in its area.

*Renters' Rights Bill
Part 4 – Enforcement
Chapter 2 – Enforcement authorities*

107 Enforcement by local housing authorities: general duty

- (1) It is the duty of every local housing authority to enforce the landlord legislation in its area.
- (6) For the purposes of this Part, a reference to taking enforcement action is a reference to –
 - (a) imposing a financial penalty, or
 - (b) instituting proceedings against a person for an offence, under the landlord legislation.

The Renters' Rights Bill will be underpinned by an effective, consistent and proportionate enforcement framework. Changes being brought in will extend Plymouth City Councils' powers to collect and retain ringfenced revenue for future enforcement work from financial penalties against landlords who flout the rules. To achieve this Councils, get a significantly increased suite of powers to impose Financial Penalties (Schedule 5), and Clauses 12-14 of Schedule 5.

Initial or minor non-compliance will incur a civil penalty of up to £7,000 and serious, persistent or repeat non-compliance a civil penalty of up to £40,000, with alternative options of a criminal prosecution.

Further, councils will get a range of new investigatory powers:

- Power of local housing authority to require information from relevant person
- Power of local housing authority to require information from any person
- Business premises: entry without warrant
- Power to seize documents following entry
- Suspected residential tenancy: entry without warrant
- Powers of accompanying persons
- New Offences of Obstruction

Part 4 will introduce mandatory quarterly reporting. Plymouth City Council are currently undertaking voluntary pilot returns to test system capacity to answer and are part of a working group to refine the questions to ensure their suitability. To date no reporting has been required regarding the management of the private rented sector. It is anticipated that mandatory quarterly reporting will commence in July 2026.

Parts 2 and 3

Parts 2 and 3 cover the Private Rented Sector Database and the Decent Homes Standards. These will be introduced later than Parts 1 and 4. It is currently anticipated that the Private Rented Sector Database is anticipated to have a phased roll out from the first quarter of 2027. A consultation on a new Decent Home Standard closed on 10th September 2025, which the Council provided a response. As the consultation focused on the quality of accommodation, the Housing Standards teams largely put together the response. Housing Solutions also contributed to the response due to the proposal the new Decent Home Standard will affect temporary accommodation. The consultation proposed a timeline of 2037 for its implementation.

Community Connections are one of a small number of Authorities in a working group supporting the development of the database. Plymouth has encouraged the inclusion of accessibility being a factor for landlords to include in their property details, this will support the development of an understanding into how our private rented sector is ready for an aging population with more people living with comorbidities. Additionally, we have been working with MHCLG on how data captured from landlords would support enforcement activity.

Local, Regional and National Engagement

Implementation of the Act will be far from easy, but we hope that working collaboratively nationally, regionally and locally it will support the additional burdens the Renters' Rights Bill presents in the planning, policy development, systems change, and new processes required.

Local - Community Connections are working with South West Landlords Association and Plymouth Homes 4 Lets (PH4L) to ensure we are maximising our engagement with the leading accreditation programme group in the region. Information is being shared throughout their members and non-members in respect of the Bill's progress, Plymouth City Council's progress in the planning and implementation and as the Bill progresses. Further training for landlords will be provided to ensure that they are up to date with the expectations placed on them. The Plymouth's plan section of this paper also details that there is a want for this engagement to grow with wider stakeholders, ensuring that we are working with landlords and tenant support groups.

Regional - Operation Jigsaw has been a funded national programme of work bringing together professionals from Housing Standards and Trading Standards. Meeting regionally the forum has become focused on the Renters' Rights Bill and its implications. Plymouth and Torbay have agreed to co-chair the regional meetings. The span is from Cornwall to the Forest of Dean. Community Connections are also a member of the Devon Private Rented Sector Forum bringing together key individuals from regions teams responsible for the private rented sector.

National - Community Connections are on one of the working groups in MHCLG focused on the development of the Property Portal and data collection refinement. Further they are engaged with MHCLG on other elements of the Bill's implementation.

Funding

New Burdens

There remains uncertainty surrounding what New Burdens Funding will look like (despite continual national requests being made). To date we have been informed that New Burdens Funding will arrive in 2025/26, and 2026/27, to fund the preparations and initial growth to meet the new duties. It is likely that this will come in a highly specified Section 31 grant.

Income

Provision for significant financial penalties for people breaching the provisions of the Act will be ring fenced for use in enforcing the Act or sent to the Government if not used for that purpose.

- a. This income will be problematic to manage as it will not normally arrive within the same Financial Year as it is levied.
- b. MHCLG will need to hear from local Finance teams.

Provision for funding for our enforcement duties will arrive at a later date, derived from a portion of the Database registration fees, which are being passed over to us by the Database provider.

Plymouth's Current Delivery

There is no provision within the Bill that instructs Councils which team or department will be expected to enforce any of its parts.

At the moment PCC generally have:

Housing Standards Team dealing with enforcement of much of the Housing Act 2004 as it relates to standards of living accommodation in the private rented sector.

Trading Standards Team dealing with property agents, redress schemes and client money protection.

Housing Solutions Team provide advice to tenants facing eviction and harassment but currently do not take legal action under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

Legal Team provide advice, support tribunals and court hearings, and where nonpayment of Civil Penalties occurs, work with the Housing Solutions Team to take action through the court for recovery.

Public Trust and Confidence

To maximise public trust and confidence consideration should be given to 2 principal areas:

- a. Civil action from tenant support bodies over a council's failure to effectively support their clients, and
- b. Publicity in relation to the information contained in mandatory reports to the Government which could highlight a council's lack of enforcement activity.

Overview of the Impact

The implementation of the Renters' Rights Bill extends beyond the current scope of existing structures, and resourcing levels, requiring a comprehensive and coordinated approach to ensure compliance and effective delivery. The scale and complexity of the legislative changes, ranging from tenancy regulations and enforcement mechanisms to landlord obligations and tenant protections, demand dedicated resource to oversee implementation, which should not be delayed pending new burdens announcements. Without a focused approach, there is a significant risk of inconsistent application, operational bottlenecks, and gaps in enforcement, which in turn will impact residents, landlords and interested parties further increasing the risk of tribunals and judicial review.

Scope and Current Resourcing

The Plymouth Report details that the private rented sector represents 22.7% of the 122,813 dwellings in the city, equating to approximately 27,878 dwellings.

Resources specifically focused on the management of housing standards is as follows.

1 x Housing Improvement Manager
2 x Technical Lead (Housing Improvement)
4 x Senior Community Connections Officer (HMO Licencing) – 100% funded via licencing fees.
4 x Senior Community Connections Officer (PRS)
1 x Community Connections Officer

Renters' Rights Bill – Plymouth Plan

A system-based approach is required to ensure that legislative changes are effectively embedded into operations with minimal disruption thus reducing the gap for errors to occur.

This following plan, whilst it will require development along the implementation pathway, provides a structure focused on preparation, cross-departmental collaboration, stakeholder engagement, resource growth, training, IT system readiness, and process change to enable a smooth transition and long-term sustainability of the new legal framework. The plan will initially focus on Parts 1 and 4 however it will be reviewed against parts 2 and 3 in time.

The Council have adopted a collaborative approach to the planning and implementation of The Bill with the Housing Standards team taking the lead. Communication and planning is underway with the Housing Solutions

team and Legal to establish their roles, processes and standard operating procedures to ensure the teams are ready and are compliant with the legislation from day 1. Further, we are leading the way regionally and nationally with our engagement with Trading Standards. Trading Standards recognise that there is space within The Bill in which they will operate. The Council are working with them to identify these areas and establish a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

Phase 1 Progress

Workstream	Task	Update
Strategic Preparation	Engage leadership to secure buy-in and funding	Strategic buy-in confirmed through CMT.
	Establish Legislative Change Taskforce	Communication with Housing Solutions, Legal, Finance and Trading Standards is ongoing.
	Map affected stakeholders	Complete.
Legislative Impact Assessment	Conduct a Gap Analysis comparing current policies and processes against new legal requirements.	Gap analysis complete. Work is ongoing to update existing policies, map new processes for new duties, resource levels are being assessed, IT systems are being reviewed, and a training programme is being devised.
	Develop an implementation framework with key milestones	Complete.
Resource Planning & Budgeting	Establish a new role in Community Connections Housing Standards – Strategic Programmes Lead – initial funding to be at risk pending new burdens announcement.	Complete. Strategic Programme Lead has been in place since June 2025.
	Define wider resource requirements. Gold standard has been set at 1 x Private Rented Sector Officer per 800 relevant properties. This equates to 34.4 officers, or 850% growth on the current operational resources focused on the management of the Private Rented Sector. We do not believe the current PCC budget, short term new burdens, and increased enforcement will see our resourcing figure achieve anything close to this level.	On hold – Resource levels are dependent on New Burdens Funding (currently unknown) and reserve budget.
	Consider new burdens allocation, Civil Penalty income, against resource requirements, training and new IT systems.	Ongoing – New Burdens Funding currently unknown.
	Establish a new Housing Standards – Private Rented Sector reserve budget to ensure monies are spent according to legislative requirements.	Complete

Phase 2 Progress

Workstream	Task	Update
IT Assessment	Audit existing IT systems for compatibility, compliance gaps and mandatory reporting requirements (of the 65 required reporting fields current assessments show only 6 are recorded in a reportable way currently).	Ongoing – System readiness is being managed throughout the Delta reporting pilot.

	Identify system updates, changes or replacements needed.	On hold – Dependent on above work.
	Ensure considerations are maintained throughout regarding data security, reporting, and automation enhancements.	On hold – Dependent on above work.
Training Strategy	Develop role-specific training programs to address regulatory requirements.	Ongoing – Some training needs have been identified to meet new duties, while others will come later The Bill gains Royal Assent.
	Use a mix of e-learning, specific external training, and workshops, whilst working with neighbouring authorities to ensure regional consistency and shared costs.	Ongoing – PCC have access to training resources and materials through Operation Jigsaw, which is being disseminated across the teams. Further training will be required once The Bill has gained Royal Assent.
Communication & Engagement	Establish a dedicated change management team comprising of Operational Managers and technical leads from affected teams.	Ongoing talks are being held with the relevant teams and staff
	Utilise existing external platforms to provide updates and seek feedback such as Staff Room, South West Landlords Association, Facebook, X, to keep people informed.	Comms on hold pending Royal Assent
	Work with MHCLG to ensure national communications are shared appropriately and tailored to local approach where required	Ongoing talks are being held with MHCLG to align with national comms that can be tailored locally
	Establish new ways of understanding and hearing tenant voice by working with Changing Futures and Community Builders.	Ongoing communication has been established.
	Strengthen relations with tenant voice groups to understand the changes in the Private Rented Sector.	On hold – Commencement to begin early 2027. This gives time for the Act to be established.
	Establish new relationships with city agents to understand their practices and approach to embedding changes.	On hold – Engagement with city agents will commence once Royal Assent occurs.
New Policy & Process Rollout	Adapt, update or where required create new policies and processes aligned to the legislative gap analysis.	Ongoing – The Civil Penalty, Electrical Safety and HMO Standards policies have all been reviewed and are being reviewed for an Executive Decision. These will need to be reviewed again upon The Bill receiving Royal Assent.
	Create clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) reflecting legislative updates.	New processes and procedures are being developed.
	Implement dashboards for real-time tracking and reporting.	On hold – Pending final Delta data reporting points.

	Build in Policy and process review periods to ensure that intention has aligned with implementation, and to consider outcomes such as tribunal findings.	Regular reviews will be held following Royal Assent and lead in time.
Process Change Implementation	Pilot new processes in controlled environments with teams prior to full rollout.	Ongoing – Taking part in pilots.
	Automate compliance checks and reporting where possible, utilising new technologies, AI and Power BI.	Ongoing – A member of staff is currently undertaking an apprenticeship in AI and Data Insights for Business Decisions.
Performance Monitoring & Compliance Audits	Redefine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to align to new Delta requirements.	On hold – Pending final Delta data reporting points.
	Work with Devon Audit Partnership to complete compliance reviews.	Early engagement complete.
	Build in reviews to the service plan to ensure continual development.	Ongoing.
Community Impact	Review monthly the level of people presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness to understand presentation reasoning.	Ongoing – Figures will need to be reviewed regularly over an extended period of time once the Act is in force to understand if it is having a positive impact on reducing homelessness in the city.

Key Risks & Mitigation Strategies

The current Key risk is that we have a significant level of change pending in the management of the private rented sector however we have no defined budget or timeline to work towards, other than parts 1 and 4 are imminent.

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
New Burdens Uncertainty	MHCLG have continually been asked to confirm new burdens funding to permit the preparation process to begin.
Implementation Time Line	No clear timeline has been given for the implementation. However, it is anticipated that there will be a 6 month lead time following Royal Assent
Resistance to change	Strong communication, stakeholder engagement, and leadership support
IT system failures	Early testing, phased rollouts, ensure that any new contracts come with support and update options.
Compliance gaps	Continuous monitoring, internal audits, and external reviews
Income	Continual review, Justice for Tenants providing legal capacity where required to ensure fines are recovered, reserve budget,
Resourcing	Widen the recruitment, understanding that all LA teams will be competing for resource, develop a comprehensive training programme.
Trading Standards	Trading Standards legislation is largely unchanged thus a thorough review of their involvement in the management of the private rented sector is required to ensure that all areas of legislation are monitored and acted upon.
Training period	Resource training, both internal and external can take 6-8months before an officer is qualified and competent