GS Homes

GS Homes Lettings

THE COMPLETE GUIDE FOR LANDLORDS: PREPARING FOR THE RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT



THE RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT

As a landlord in the UK, staying up to date with legislation is now critical. With the Renters' Rights Act coming into force from 1 May 2026, understanding the changes is key to protecting your property, staying compliant, and securing your rental income.

The Act brings major reform to the private rented sector, including the end of Section 21, new tenancy structures, and higher standards for property management and compliance.

This guide sets out what's changing, when it's changing, and what it means for you, so you can prepare with confidence rather than react at the last minute.

Why is the Renters' Rights Act Significant?

The Renters' Rights Act is widely regarded as a transformative milestone in UK rental legislation.

By addressing insecure tenancies, unsafe living conditions, and imbalances in landlord-tenant power dynamics, the Act aims to give tenants greater stability while holding landlords to higher standards.

These reforms will affect every landlord in England, irrespective of the size or type of their property portfolio. Understanding the changes is essential to avoid penalties and maintain compliance.



Key Changes at a Glance:

- Abolition of Section 21 "no-fault" evictions
- Introduction of Periodic Tenancies
- Updated Grounds for Possession
- Establishment of a Private Rented Sector Ombudsman
- Mandatory registration on the Private Rented Sector Database
- Tighter rules for rent increases
- Ban on rental bidding
- Enforcement of the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law
- Rent repayment orders with expanded tenant rights
- Tenants' right to own pets
- Harsher penalties for non-compliance

Now, let's dive deeper into each of these changes and what they mean for you as a landlord.



Changes coming into force on 1 May 2026

1. Abolition of Section 21 & Introduction of Periodic Tenancies

What is changing

From 1 May 2026, Section 21 “no-fault” evictions will be abolished. At the same time, fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies will be removed. All new tenancies will automatically become assured periodic tenancies, meaning there is no fixed end date. Tenancies will continue indefinitely unless the tenant gives notice or the landlord regains possession using a valid legal ground.

Implications for landlords

Landlords will no longer be able to rely on tenancy end dates to recover possession. Regaining a property will require careful use of the updated Section 8 grounds, supported by clear evidence. Planning ahead becomes more important, particularly where landlords may wish to sell, move back in, or deal with problem tenancies. Good record keeping and proactive management will be essential.

2. Updated Grounds for Possession & Longer Notice Periods

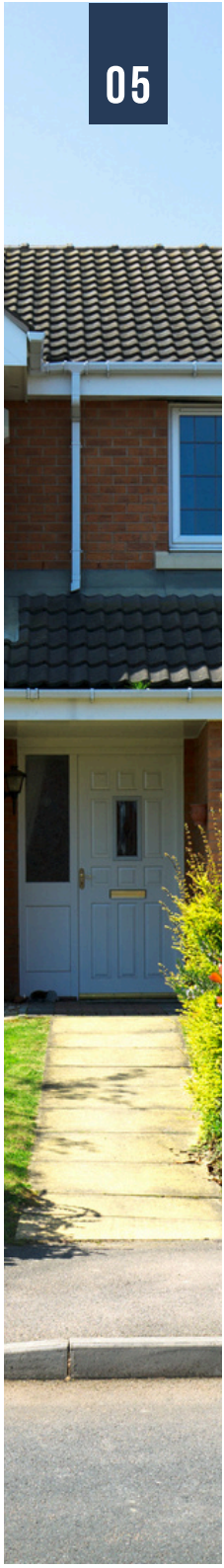
With Section 21 removed, Section 8 becomes the only route to possession. The grounds for possession have been reworked to balance tenant security with landlord needs. This includes revised grounds for rent arrears, selling a property, landlord move-in, and antisocial behaviour. Notice periods have also been extended in many cases.

Key Updates Include:

- Rent arrears: Landlords can only evict tenants with three months or more of unpaid rent, a stricter threshold than the current two months. Additionally, a four-week notice period will be required.

- Property sale or move-in: Landlords wishing to sell their property or move back in must now give tenants at least four months' notice. This option will not be available during the first 12 months of tenancy.

- Anti-social behaviour: Landlords retain the ability to evict tenants for serious anti-social behaviour, but the process requires thorough documentation to ensure swift action.



Implications for Landlords:

- Landlords will need to prepare more detailed evidence to support eviction cases, ensuring compliance with legal grounds.
- The extended notice periods may delay possession, requiring more strategic planning for property management.
- Maintaining clear records of tenant interactions and payments will become even more critical.

3. New Rules for Rent Increases



The Rent increases will be limited to once per year and must comply with market rates. Tenants can challenge any proposed increase they feel is unjustified.

How this works:

Rent increases must correspond with the prevailing market rate, and tenants will have the right to contest any perceived excessive hikes through a First-tier Tribunal. Rent increases cannot be applied retrospectively; if disputed, the adjustment will only take effect from the date of the tribunal's ruling.

Implications for Landlords:

- Landlords must provide evidence of market trends to justify increases.
- Any disputes could delay rent adjustments, emphasising the need for accurate market research.
- Rent increases cannot be backdated, which could affect revenue if tenants challenge them.

4. Ban on Rental Bidding

In a bid to Landlords and agents will no longer be allowed to request, accept, or encourage offers above the advertised rental price.

Implications for Landlords:

- Transparent advertising of rental prices becomes mandatory, requiring competitive pricing to attract tenants.
- Any breaches could lead to fines and reputational damage.

Landlords are required to advertise a set asking rent and are prohibited from accepting offers above this specified amount. Any efforts to request or accept higher rents may result in fines of up to £7,000, with additional penalties applicable if tenants report such practices.





5. Tenants' Right to Pets

Landlords will no longer be able to impose blanket bans on pets, although they may request pet insurance or set conditions.

While landlords can still impose certain conditions, such as requiring pet insurance, blanket refusals will no longer be allowed.

How this will affect landlords:

Landlords must evaluate pet requests individually, ensuring each decision is based on valid reasons. Unreasonable refusals may lead to tenant complaints being escalated to the Ombudsman or even legal proceedings. While concerns about potential pet-related damage persist, landlords can mitigate risks by requiring tenants to obtain pet insurance to cover any possible property damage.

Implications for Landlords:

- Case-by-case assessments of pet requests will be necessary, ensuring valid reasons for refusals.
- Allowing pets could increase the marketability of properties, attracting a wider tenant pool.

6. Enhanced Local Authority Enforcement Powers

.

What is changing

Local councils will gain stronger powers to investigate and enforce compliance with the Act, including the ability to issue civil penalties up to £40,000 for serious breaches and conduct targeted inspections based on database information.

How this will affect landlords:

Councils can impose fines for non-compliance with standards, registration, or other requirements without court involvement. They may also pursue banning orders for rogue landlords in extreme cases.

Implications for Landlords:

- Increased scrutiny means landlords must maintain high standards to avoid surprise inspections or penalties.
- Proactive compliance audits and record-keeping will help defend against enforcement actions.
- While raising sector standards, this could lead to higher operational costs for remedial works or legal advice.



7. Ban on Discriminatory Letting Practices

What is changing

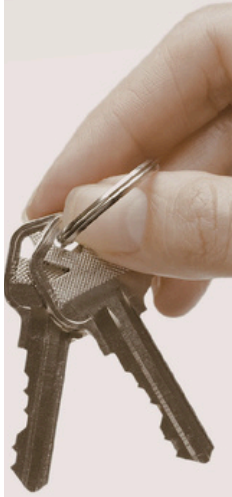
Landlords and agents will no longer be permitted to discriminate against prospective tenants based on receiving benefits, having children, or other protected characteristics. This aims to ensure fair access to housing for all eligible renters.

How this will affect landlords:

It will be illegal to refuse tenancies solely because applicants are in receipt of benefits or have dependent children. Blanket bans or discriminatory criteria in advertising or selection processes will be prohibited, with enforcement through fines and potential legal action.

Implications for Landlords:

- Landlords must adopt fair and objective tenant selection processes, potentially broadening the applicant pool.
- Compliance requires updating letting policies and training agents to avoid unintentional discrimination.
- Breaches could result in fines up to £40,000, emphasising the need for inclusive practices to mitigate legal risks.





8. New Written Information Requirements for Tenancies



From 1 May 2026, landlords must provide tenants with a prescribed written statement of terms and an information sheet detailing key tenancy rights, responsibilities, and protections before or at the start of the tenancy.

How this works:

The statement must include details on rent, deposit protection, notice periods, and dispute resolution options. Failure to provide this information could invalidate possession notices or lead to penalties.

Implications for Landlords:

- Landlords need to update tenancy agreements and processes to include the mandatory information, ensuring all new and converted tenancies comply.
- Accurate and timely provision of documents will be crucial to avoid delays in legal actions or fines.
- This promotes transparency but adds administrative burdens, requiring standardised templates for efficiency.

9. Special Provisions for Student Accommodation (Ground 4A)

From 1 May 2026, a new mandatory ground for possession (Ground 4A) will be available specifically for properties let to full-time students in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). This allows landlords to regain possession at the end of the academic year (typically between 1 June and 30 September) to re-let the property to a new group of students, provided certain conditions are met.

How this works:

- The property must be an HMO let to full-time students (or the landlord must have reasonably believed tenants would be full-time students when the tenancy began).
- Landlords must give written notice of their intention to use Ground 4A before or at the start of the tenancy (and within the first 30 days in some cases for existing tenancies).
- The ground cannot be used if the tenancy was agreed more than six months before it started.
- Standard notice periods and court processes apply, but this ground helps maintain the cyclical nature of student lets without relying on other eviction routes.



10. Rent Repayment Orders: Increased Penalties

Under the Renters' Rights Act, Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) will have a broader scope and stricter penalties. Non-compliant landlords could be required to repay up to 24 months of rent, doubling the current maximum of 12 months.

What's Changing with RROs:

- Landlords who fail to register on the Private Rented Sector Database, breach possession grounds, or violate other new regulations may face Rent Repayment Orders.
- Repeat offenders will be required to repay the full 24 months of rent to affected tenants.
- The timeframe for tenants to apply for an RRO will be extended, allowing claims up to 24 months after the offence occurred.
-

Implications for Landlords:

- Compliance with all legal obligations will be essential to avoid costly RRO penalties.
- Landlords must proactively maintain accurate documentation and evidence of compliance to defend against potential claims.
- Financial risks from RROs highlight the importance of staying updated on regulatory changes and meeting all requirements.

Measures being introduced at a later stage

Not all parts of the Renters' Rights Act will take effect on 1 May 2026. A number of measures are scheduled to be introduced later through a phased rollout. While these changes will not apply immediately, they remain a core part of the legislation and will still require preparation. Landlords should be aware that further requirements will follow after May 2026 and plan ahead to avoid being caught out as additional duties and enforcement powers come into force.

11. Private Rented Sector Database Registration (late 2026)

To improve transparency, all landlords will need to register themselves and their properties in a centralised database. This measure ensures that tenants, councils, and government agencies have access to accurate information about landlords and rental properties.

How the database works:

Landlords will be required to submit detailed information about their properties, such as adherence to health and safety standards, current rental rates, and compliance with relevant regulations. Failure to register could incur substantial penalties, starting with fines of up to £7,000. Persistent or repeated non-compliance may result in fines as high as £40,000 or even criminal prosecution.

Implications for Landlords:

- Registration is not a one-off task; landlords must regularly update property details, including compliance with safety and health standards.
- Unregistered landlords will face significant penalties, affecting their ability to serve possession notices.
- The database promotes accountability and could lead to more frequent inspections by local authorities.

12. Private Rented Sector Ombudsman (2028)

A major introduction under the Renters' Rights Act is the creation of the Private Rented Sector Ombudsman. This independent body will resolve disputes between landlords and tenants at no cost to tenants.

All landlords must register with the Ombudsman, who will have the authority to enforce binding decisions, including compensation, repairs, or compliance with documentation.



How the Ombudsman will work:

Tenants will have access to the Ombudsman service to raise complaints about their landlord's conduct, particularly in areas such as property management, disputes over rent, or issues with service standards.

The Ombudsman will be authorised to issue binding decisions, which may include instructing landlords to undertake remedial actions, pay compensation, or supply required documentation.

Implications for Landlords:

- Non-registration carries fines starting at £7,000, escalating to £40,000 for repeat offences.
- Dispute resolution will now involve an external authority, requiring landlords to prioritise resolving issues quickly to avoid formal complaints.
- The Ombudsman may mandate corrective actions, increasing the need for proactive and professional property management.

13. Decent Homes Standard & Awaab's Law (May not apply in full until 2035)

All private rental properties must now meet the Decent Homes Standard, ensuring safety, repair, and decency. Awaab's Law introduces strict deadlines for resolving serious health hazards like mould or damp.

What you need to know:

- Properties failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard may result in landlords receiving improvement notices, with local councils empowered to enforce necessary repairs.
- Under Awaab's Law, landlords will face strict deadlines to address health hazards such as damp or mould, with penalties including fines and potential Rent Repayment Orders for non-compliance.

Implications for Landlords:

- Landlords must proactively inspect and maintain properties to avoid penalties.
- Meeting these standards may require significant investment in property improvements.

Measures coming into force from 1 May 2026

- Abolition of Section 21 “no-fault” evictions
- End of fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies
- Introduction of assured periodic tenancies
- Section 8 becoming the only route to regain possession
- New rules and limits on rent increases
- Ban on rental bidding above the advertised rent
- Tenants’ right to request pets
- Increased enforcement powers and penalties for non-compliance

Measures being introduced later (phased rollout)

- Private Rented Sector Database and mandatory landlord registration
- Private Rented Sector Ombudsman and compulsory membership
- Enforcement of the Decent Homes Standard
- Extension of Awaab’s Law to the private rented sector
- Expanded Rent Repayment Orders
- Digitisation of the court system
- Government reviews and evaluations of the Renters’ Rights Act

Remember:

Deadline to issue the required information leaflet to existing tenants and notify student tenants of the potential use of Ground 4A is 31st May 2026.

WHAT SHOULD LANDLORDS DO NOW?

The Renters' Rights Act is poised to bring some of the most substantial reforms to the private rental sector in recent years. To safeguard your investments and adapt to these changes, landlords must take a proactive approach by understanding the new legislation and ensuring compliance.

Staying informed about upcoming updates is essential, and if you have any concerns or need tailored advice, don't hesitate to contact the team at GS Homes Lettings through our dedicated Landlord Advice Hotline.

Alternatively, you can book in a call with our lettings expert to run through any questions or worries you might have

