

Private Landlords Newsletter

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

WELCOME to the ninth edition of the Private Landlords Newsletter

The Renters' Rights Act

As a private landlord, staying informed about the latest legislative changes is crucial to ensuring compliance and fostering a positive relationship with your tenants. One of the most significant pieces of legislation to affect the Private Rented Sector is currently going through Parliament.

The Renters' Rights Bill aims to improve fairness, transparency, and security for renters, and as a result, it introduces several important changes for landlords like you.

Here's a concise overview of the key **proposed** provisions:

1. Abolition of Section 21 'No-Fault' Evictions

The Bill abolishes Section 21 notices, ending the ability to evict tenants without providing a reason. Landlords must now provide a valid reason for eviction, such as rent arrears, breach of tenancy agreement, or to allow them or their family to occupy.

2. Transition to Periodic Assured Tenancies

Fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies are replaced with periodic assured tenancies. Tenants can now give notice to end the tenancy at any time, with a minimum notice period of two months.

3. Rent Increase Regulations

The Bill prohibits the use of rent increase clauses and requires landlords to issue a Section 13 notice for rent increases. Rent increases are limited to once per year and must be capped at market levels.

4. Decent Homes Standard

A new Decent Homes Standard is being introduced, requiring landlords to ensure properties meet specific quality and safety standards. This includes addressing issues like damp and mould.

5. Private Rented Sector Database and Ombudsman Service

The Bill establishes a digital Private Rented Sector database and a new Ombudsman service to improve transparency and resolve disputes between landlords and tenants.

6. Ban on Rental Bidding Wars

Landlords are prohibited from accepting rental bids above the initial asking price, aiming to prevent bidding wars and ensure fair rental practices.

7. Protection Against Discrimination

The Bill bans discrimination against tenants based on factors such as having children or receiving benefits, promoting equality in the rental market.

8. Rent Repayment Orders

The use of Rent Repayment Orders is expanded, allowing tenants to claim back rent paid during periods when the property was unfit for habitation or when landlords failed to comply with legal obligations.

What Should You Do Next?

- **Review Tenancy Agreements:** Ensure your agreements comply with the new legislation.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date with local housing regulations and any amendments to the Act.
- **Seek Legal Advice:** Consult a legal professional to understand how these changes affect your specific circumstances.
- **Maintain Property Standards:** Ensure your properties meet good property standards to avoid potential penalties.



Online Applications for Licences for Houses in Multiple Occupation

As part of the Council's commitment to improving service delivery, the HMO licence application process will transition from a paper-based system to an online application process. This change will apply to any licences due for renewal after **1st April 2025**, as well as any new HMO licences from that date onward.

Staff will remain available to assist those who do not have access to the online system, encounter difficulties, or have any questions.

We have also taken this opportunity to review how the Council collects the licence fee. Going forward, in line with national guidance and other local authorities, Lancaster City Council will collect the fee in two parts.

- **Part 1** is the administration fee, which will be collected online when the application is submitted. The fee will be the same for all applications, and the application will not be processed without this payment.
- **Part 2** is the remainder of the licence fee, which will vary based on the specific circumstances of each application, such as the size of the property and any discounts or administrative fees that may apply. An invoice for the appropriate amount will be issued, and the licence will be granted upon receipt of payment

Further details will be sent when the system is online, but if in the meantime you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via Customer Services on (01524) 582000, or at publicprotection@lancaster.gov.uk

Lancaster City Council is holding an information session for items raised in this newsletter at:

Lancaster Town Hall on Monday 31st March starting at 6pm until 8pm.

We will outline what we know about the main provisions of the proposed legislation and there will be the opportunity for discussion. To book follow the link or email publicprotection@lancaster.gov.uk

<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/ENZY>

