

The Renters Manifesto



October 2023

Introduction

Organisations from across England and Wales have come together to write this **Renters Manifesto**, a call for political parties to **fix the housing crisis** and our **broken private renting system**.

The manifesto includes the changes needed to make this happen, and is based on **five key areas**.

Our five key areas

- **Security**
- **Standards**
- **Affordability**
- **Fairer private renting**
- **Homes for people not for profit.**



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Security

Ending unfair evictions

Renters are waiting for an **end to Section 21** no fault evictions which landlords can use to unfairly kick them out, denying them security in their homes.

When this ban happens, any **loopholes** which landlords could abuse (such as hiking rent to force a tenant out, or pretending they want to move in themselves) must be closed.

- Landlords should only be able to end tenancies in limited circumstances - requiring a high bar of evidence for their reasons (such as wanting to move family members in), with repercussions for abuse of this process. There should be **relocation payments** for tenants.
- When a landlord sells a home, it should be **sold with a sitting tenant** if they wish to stay.
- Tenants should always have a **right to defend themselves against an eviction**, with access to legal aid for their defence.
- **Lodgers and licensees** should have stronger legal protections against 'no fault' evictions.

Stamp out illegal evictions

Local councils must have a legal duty, and proper resources available, to **investigate and prosecute landlords** who illegally evict tenants.

Police forces must be **properly trained** on their responsibility to prevent illegal evictions, and should treat them as the **criminal offences** that they are, and not a civil matter.

Open-ended tenancies

All tenancies should be **open-ended for all tenants**, so they can leave when they need to and can expect to stay as long as they like.

In the exceptional circumstances where tenants are to be evicted through no fault of their own, **a fair notice period** of at least four months must be given so they have enough time to find a suitable new home.

Standards

Safe and decent homes

The **legal standards** around safety and quality should be the **same in all tenures**, including in temporary accommodation (as well as privately rented and social housing).

There should be a **free 'one-stop shop'** for tenants to raise any issues they are having with their landlord, so it is easier to exercise their rights.

It should be less profitable for landlords to break the rules than to follow them. Local councils should have the legal duty, and be properly resourced, to **massively increase inspections and enforcement action** against landlords who fail to make their homes decent and safe. This should include **finances, prosecutions and banning orders**.

Landlords should have a **legal obligation** to make **adaptations** to homes for **tenants with disabilities**, supported by an easily obtainable Disabilities Facility Grant.

Safe and decent Temporary Accommodation

Tenants in **temporary accommodation** should expect the **same standards** as those living in other tenures. This includes temporary homes that are of a good standard, and are **accessible for tenants with disabilities**.

Landlords and management companies providing temporary accommodation must be made **properly accountable** when it comes to the standards and the treatment of their tenants.

Tenants in temporary accommodation should be afforded the same dignity and security as other tenants - for example they should be allowed guests and not be subject to arbitrary curfews.

Landlord register

There should be **mandatory national registration** of all private landlords, agents, and rented properties. This should include information on ownership, details of gas safety, electrical safety and other required documentation, and any relevant convictions or history of enforcement orders concerning the landlord or the home. It should also include information on the amount of rent paid.

This register must be **free and publicly accessible**, so future tenants can use this to inform their choices, and it should be funded by a registration fee paid for by the landlords and agents. Tenants should be able to get rent back if their landlord has not registered.

The registration body should carry out random, non-intrusive inspections on registered properties to make sure they meet decent standards.

Affordability

Rent controls

An affordable home is increasingly out of reach for many, with **high rents** pushing more and more people into **financial hardship**.

Excessive rent rises are **driven by profiteering** by letting agents and landlords. The market isn't regulating itself; it is the **Government's responsibility** to make sure everyone can access an affordable home.

No one should have to spend more than **30% of their income on rent**. We need **rent controls that bring rents down and maintain them at this level**. Local incomes should be factored in when these controls are set, and they should be accountable to renters.

Green homes fit for the future, and an end to fuel poverty

All rented homes should be brought up to an Energy Performance Certificate **rating of C or above**. Local authorities must have a duty, and be properly resourced, to **enforce energy efficiency standards**.

Tenants must be able to **claim rent back on homes** that are not energy efficient. A regulator should carry out robust inspections to determine this, and to give tenants a clear path to reclaim this rent.

In the exceptional cases where landlords can evict tenants, any evictions should not be possible until properties are up to scratch.

Grants should be available to landlords to help them meet these targets, but this must come with protections for the tenants, who must see the benefit of these improvements.

For example, if a tenant pays rent with bills included, their rent should go down where energy saving measures have been introduced. Protections should include a freeze on evictions once the works have been completed, and a cap (linked to the grant amount) on rent increases, for a certain period.

A welfare system that supports safe, secure, affordable homes

Local Housing Allowance must be unfrozen and made immediately available to any tenant when they need to claim this.

It should be **raised so it matches rents**, and a system must be introduced to make sure it remains in line with rent costs.

There should be **no 'rent free weeks'** and gaps caused by Universal Credit, which lead to rent arrears.

Protections must be put in place to make sure that tenants who receive benefits (often women, families, or people with long-term conditions or disabilities), are **not discriminated against by landlords and letting agents**.

There must be a **cap on the amount of rent that can be asked up front**, to stop discrimination against benefit claimants and other lower income households.

Bidding wars must also be banned - the advertised price of a rental home should be the final price tenants are expected to pay.

A fairer private rental sector

Private renters to have control over their homes

Accessing Disabled Facilities Grants should be made **simpler to ensure tenants** can stay in their homes and get adaptations quickly, especially with the increasing number of elderly and disabled private tenants.

Tenants should have the **right to decorate their homes** and have pets. Cosmetic alterations and redecorating should not count towards deposit deductions.

Councils should be able to force landlords to make reasonable adaptations as a part of enforcement action.

End Discrimination in Renting

End **'Right to Rent'** and **nationality requirements** for social housing. There should be **no immigration checks** in licensing or enforcement regimes.

End policies which allow discrimination based on migrant status, disability, age, lone and parental status, receipt of benefits, or low income (such as 'No DSS'). Adopt policies to address inequality, and to support and protect disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

More **specific provisions** for LGBTQ+ people, those with mental health and learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, migrant communities, asylum seekers and marginalised racial or ethnic groups (including People of Colour, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people).

Councils should have a statutory duty and resources to **prosecute landlords and letting agents who discriminate**.

Renters' Right to Organise

Renters have a **right to join a union** and must not face retaliatory action from landlords for doing so.

Unions should be **consulted proactively** by the government, and given a seat at the table when making decisions that will affect renters.

Improve access to justice for private renters

Legal aid for housing cases should be **restored and extended** to cover legal costs challenging disrepair in court. Local support and advice on housing issues must be readily available for renters.

Homes for people, not profit

Public investment in public housebuilding

We need **government investment** in a huge public house building programme that should aim to **deliver 3.1 million council homes over 20 years**. Public funding for housing must be directed solely towards building council homes.

All public housing must be accountable, with **tenants democratically represented** in the governance of council and housing association homes.

Accessible homes should be an absolute priority when building new homes, to tackle the severe shortage of these and to move towards the aim of universal accessibility in all new homes.

End ‘Right to Buy’, with democratic public ownership of housing prioritised.

Building homes must be coupled with providing the community services and infrastructure which our communities need to thrive, such as doctors, schools, parks and other vital services.

Private Rented Homes Brought into Public or Tenant Ownership

There should be a clear commitment to giving **local authorities and community-led housing schemes first refusal** on private rented properties entering the market, to buy them back into public ownership.

Homes Not Assets

A decent home is the **foundation of a healthy life**. We must end the politics and culture which treats homes as an investment opportunity rather than something essential to housing people, and bring homes into democratic public ownership.

Mortgage rates and terms that currently encourage property speculation and must be changed.

Terms should **not be more favourable on buy-to-let mortgages** than on mortgages taken out by owner occupiers. The tax system should not encourage investment in property to rent and should discourage leaving homes empty, and practices such as land banking by developers.

Holiday lets and short term lets must be **licensed and limited** to ensure they aren’t forcing local people to move out of their communities. Instead permanent homes for people to live in communities and to stay in communities should be prioritised.

Organisations involved

Generation Rent

New Economics Foundation

London Renters Union

ACORN

Greater Manchester Tenants Union

