Shining a Spotlight on...

The Renters' Rights Act

The Renters' Rights Act is one of the biggest shake-ups to the private rental sector in decades. It came into force on May 1, 2026.

Are you compliant?

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Renters' Rights - Now in force

From 1 May 2026, the private rental sector in England changed significantly with the introduction of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 - one of the biggest reforms to residential tenancy law in decades. Wales and Scotland have different residential tenancy rules and are not covered by these changes. The Government is introducing the Act in stages, with the first stage now in force.

At its core, the Act is designed to give tenants more security and stability, improve standards across rental properties and create a more transparent and accountable rental sector. In practice, it shifts the balance slightly in favour of tenants, while pushing the sector towards a more professional footing.

The legislation has been years in the making, and parts of it are long overdue. Too many landlords have offered substandard homes and used the threat of eviction to silence legitimate complaints; that needed addressing. The Act lands alongside significant tax changes, increased compliance requirements and a proposed EPC C standard by 2030. Landlords need to be fully aware of the cumulative changes to remain compliant.

The Renters' Rights Act phases out Assured Shorthold Tenancies and Section 21 'no-fault' evictions, moving the system towards open-ended periodic tenancies. This is a fundamental shift in how the rental market operates.

From May 1st, possession will require one of the defined grounds under the updated Section 8 process. Rents can only be increased once a year through a formal Section 13 notice, and landlords must publish a fixed asking rent rather than inviting competing bids. Taking more than one month's rent in advance, or applying blanket bans on tenants with children or those receiving benefits, will no longer be permitted.

For tenants, the changes deliver stability. Open-ended tenancies remove arbitrary end dates, giving renters the ability to leave with two months' notice and stronger protections against rent increases that do not follow the proper process. The right to request a pet and the removal of blanket benefit bans address barriers that have locked people out of quality homes.

The wider market effect is already visible. The NRLA has reported that around 38% of single-property landlords say they are highly unlikely to remain in the sector by the end of 2026. That will tighten supply in many areas, and well-managed, well-presented rental homes will attract strong demand.

Landlords running compliant, professional properties and portfolios are well placed to benefit from the consolidation under way. The changes ahead reward professionalism, and for those who treat property as a business, the fundamentals remain strong.

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Renters Rights - Are you compliant?

Don't get caught out.

1. Know the rules

Read the official guidance on gov.uk and sign up for updates so you stay up to date with the new legislation. If a letting agent manages your properties, check that they are ensuring compliance.

2. Get your paperwork in order

Existing tenants whose tenancies are in writing must receive The Renters' Rights Act Information Sheet 2026, which is on the Government's website, by 31 May 2026, or landlords may face up to a £7,000 fine. New tenancies from 1 May 2026 require a written record of the key terms before signing: landlord name and address, rent amount and due date, deposit details, repair responsibilities and which bills the tenant pays. If you currently have a verbal agreement with a tenant, you must serve them a Written Statement of Terms by 31 May - this is a specific document, details of which are on gov.uk..
Keep proof that every document has been issued and when (see point 5).

3. Fix your rent increase process

Rent increases must be served via a Section 13 notice using the new Form 4A from gov.uk (form 4 is now invalid). Give at least two months' notice, no more than once every 12 months, and it must reflect local market rates. Tenants can challenge the increase at the First-tier Property Tribunal, so keep evidence of your calculations.

4. Review your advertising

Any property advertised must now show a fixed asking rent with no "offers above" wording and no more than one month's rent requested upfront - and that payment cannot be taken until all parties have signed. Refusing applicants because they receive benefits or have children is unlawful. Check your listings, agent scripts and any tenant-facing website now to ensure compliance.

5. Keep records for every property

Councils now have a legal duty to enforce under the Act, not just a power to investigate if a complaint comes in. They can demand documents from landlords, letting agents, banks and contractors. A first breach carries a civil penalty of up to £7,000. Repeat or continuing breaches go up to £40,000. Providing false information to the PRS database is a criminal offence with an unlimited fine. A digital folder per property covering safety certificates, EPC, deposit documentation, right to rent checks and a repair log is essential.

6. Student landlords?

For student landlords, if a tenancy began before May 2026, written notice must be given by 31st May to retain the right to regain possession under student grounds. Missing this deadline will remove the ability to reliably recover it in line with the academic cycle.

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Renters Rights - Safety Compliance

Safety Compliance Consequences.

This isn't new - safety certificates are a legal requirement. What's changed is the consequence.

From now on, courts will not grant possession orders where safety compliance is not current. An expired certificate does not just expose you to a fine - it can prevent or delay you from regaining your property entirely. Check these are valid and on file.

Gas Safety Certificate (CP12)

Required annually from a Gas Safe registered engineer, provided to tenants before move-in or within 28 days of the check.

Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)

Required every five years from a qualified electrician. Maximum penalty for non-compliance is now £40,000.

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

Minimum E rating currently required. A valid certificate must be provided before any tenancy begins. Future changes are expected to tighten standards and increase cost caps.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Working smoke alarms on every floor, CO alarms in any room with a fixed combustion appliance. Both must be working and tested on the first day of the tenancy. After that, tenants should test regularly, but landlords remain responsible for fixing faults.

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Navigating the Market

Michelle Niziol's Practical Take

Renters' Rights Act has arrived.
The Renters' Rights Act has arrived - and the impact is immediate.This is not a future change to plan for. The legal and operational expectations on landlords have already shifted, and the penalties for getting it wrong are significant.

Professionalism is no longer optional.
The Act raises the baseline for how rental property is managed - from documentation and compliance through to how properties are advertised and let. Landlords treating property as a business, with clear processes and records, are far better placed than those taking a more informal approach.

If you are struggling to meet the new requirements, act now.
Whether it's compliance, documentation or affordability, the right advice early on can prevent costly mistakes later. Waiting until an issue arises is no longer a viable approach.

The risk of getting this wrong has increased.
Fines, delays to possession, and increased scrutiny from local authorities are now part of the landscape. The landlords who will perform well are those who have already adapted.

For tenants, awareness is just as important.
The Act introduces stronger rights and protections, but these only work if they are understood and used.

Experienced advice matters most.
The Renters' Rights Act has added another layer of complexity to an already pressured market. Understanding compliance, pricing, legal obligations and long-term affordability now requires a joined-up view - not isolated decisions. The right advice helps you act early, avoid costly mistakes and make decisions with clarity, not guesswork.

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