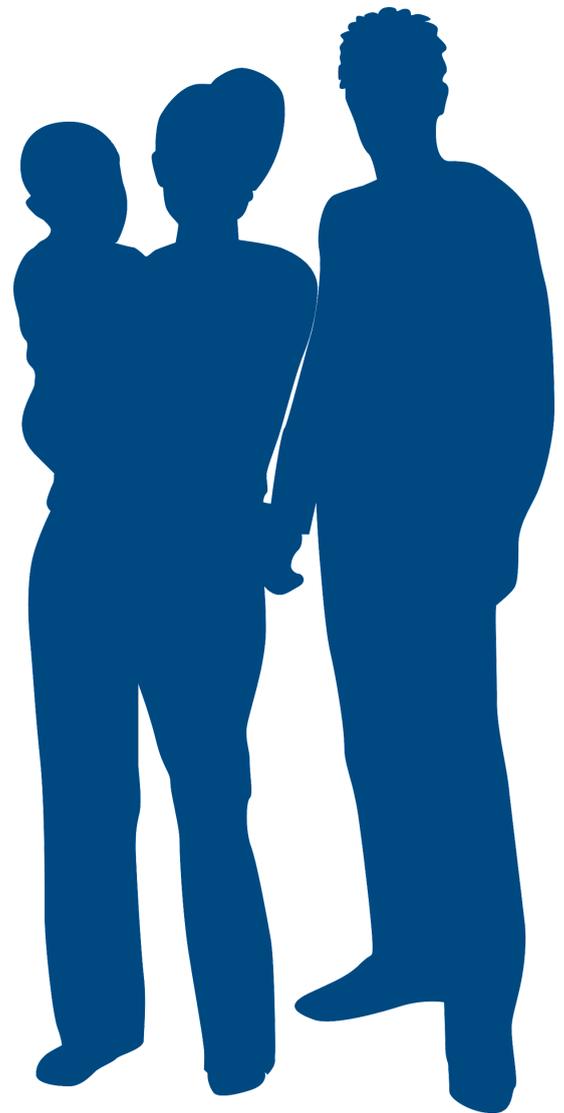


“As a renter, you never truly feel at home”

Tenants Voice
submission to the
Renters Reform Bill



**citizens
advice**

Julia Hamilton

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The Tenants Voice project

In 2019, Nationwide Foundation funded Citizens Advice to set up a panel of 700 renters from across England. The panel explored tenants' experiences over the past 2.5 years, through online surveys and qualitative interviews.

For the last 4 months, we've been exploring experiences of renting with a smaller panel of 9 renters from across England, representing a range of different demographics and tenancy lengths. Across 5 workshops, they shared their lived experiences and insights to help develop and shape policy asks for the Renters' Reform Bill.

All quotes and policy recommendations in this report are taken from these 5 workshops.

Introduction - what makes a house a home?

The Renters' Reform Bill was announced in 2019, when the UK government promised to improve renting with a once-in-a-generation bill that would create a "fairer rental market" in England.

Government has the chance to make lasting change to the private rented sector through meaningful reform. Specific policies being considered include abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, the introduction of a National Landlord Register (NLR), and improving standards for tenants through redress and enforcement.

Putting the views and insights of tenants at the heart of how these policies are designed and implemented, will be essential to ensuring these reforms make a significant impact for renters, by rebalancing the power between landlords and tenants.

To support this, this report brings together the views of the Tenants Voice Panel - 9 people from across England living in the private rented sector (PRS), representing a range of different demographics and tenancy lengths. Across 5 workshops, they shared their lived experiences and insights to help develop and shape policy asks for the Renters' Reform Bill.

Throughout the workshops, one theme came up time and time again - **security**.

"It's the **lack of security** that you have when renting...just because we're not privileged enough to be able to own homes doesn't mean we shouldn't be able to feel that **sense of belonging and security**."

Tenants often struggle to feel **settled** and **secure** in their properties. This can stop where they live feeling like their homes. Reasons for this include:

- **Evictions and rent rises:** The constant threat of evictions and rent rises mean that renters often don't feel able to raise issues about disrepair/maintenance, or challenge landlords when they aren't fulfilling their duties.
 - Many tenants couldn't afford to move if they were evicted or faced with rent increases. To avoid this, when there are issues, the panel told us they just "put up and shut up".
- **Short-term tenancies:** Tenants are often required to move every 6-12 months, sometimes because they're faced with unaffordable rent rises or evictions at the end of their tenancy agreements.

- New homes often mean new communities, which many struggle to integrate into. Having to move far away from where they've lived previously can be isolating and overwhelming for people.

"I think if I ever had to move somewhere further away I would be **completely lost** about making new friends, and the kids going to new schools, doctors, just different things...**I think it would just be completely overwhelming for all of us**"

- **No agency over their own space:** Tenants often can't personalise their properties, with some even prohibited from hanging photographs. This can stop the place they live in feeling like their home.
 - Landlords are often responsible for fixing things or organising repairs when there's an issue - but for tenants this can take a long time, and tenants tell us that they often don't get done at all.

Tenants highlighted what they saw as a **stark power imbalance between them and their landlords**. They felt they had few protections from eviction or rent rises, and were unable to push back in the face of issues in their properties. Instead, many opt to just "grin and bear it" and live in conditions that leave them unable to call their house a home. Several reported that this can have a serious impact on their wellbeing.

"In the long run, not being able to call a house a home or not having that one base would be **tough**...I've been renting for 10 years but I would think that, if I continue to do so for another 10 years, that feeling would never go away. **It would probably get worse.**"

"It's **very very difficult to feel like somewhere's your home** when, legally, **you're only protected in that place for 6 or 12 months**"



This report outlines the tenants' experiences and issues throughout their renting journey - including looking for a home, staying in a home, and when things go wrong in a home. Using these lived experiences, the panel responded to 3 policy proposals that are being considered as part of the Government's plans to improve private renting in England:

1. **A national landlord register (NLR)**
2. **Better access to redress**
3. **Abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions and reforming tenancies**

1. A national landlord register

“Finding a good landlord is more important than finding a good property”

A national landlord register (NLR) could help to empower tenants in the private rented sector, but it needs to be informative, accessible and effectively regulated.

The proposal put to the Tenants Voice Panel:

- At a basic level - a national landlord register (NLR) would be a record of who owns private rented properties in England - **a database of landlord and property details.**
- Proposals have been put forward for an NLR that goes further, including a **conditional register** - i.e. landlords must meet certain standards to register in the first place, and can be removed if they fail to meet these standards later; or a register that includes a record of the landlord's relevant history - e.g. deposit disputes with previous tenants and their outcomes.

On the basic concept of an NLR, the panel felt it could be a useful tool for tenants, helping to address the current power imbalance with landlords. It could do this by:

- **Enabling tenants to make more informed decisions:** Access to information in an NLR could put tenants in a stronger position when finding a new home - knowing more about who they're renting from and where they're renting before they sign a tenancy agreement.
- **Adding a level of accountability for landlords:** Even at a basic level, an NLR places a responsibility on landlords that doesn't currently exist - i.e. to register and comply with any fees or conditions.

“...having that available, where you can go and find that information and it's there - they can't lie or pull the wool over your eyes.”

But to be a useful tool that works for tenants in practice, the tenants believed it was essential that the NLR:

- Has effective regulation and oversight
- Includes information relevant to tenants looking for a new home
- Is meaningfully accessible to all renters

The panel's recommendations to ensure a national landlord register (NLR) is useful for renters:

1. An NLR needs independent oversight and regulation

Independent oversight of the information in the NLR would assure tenants it's accurate and up-to-date, and give them confidence to use it as a source of information when finding a new home.

If registration for the NLR was conditional on landlords meeting certain minimum standards, the panel agreed that this would need to be checked and verified by an independent body to be effective.

"I don't think it's any good just having a list of people who've got properties to rent. **Clearly there have to be some conditions**, and I think one of the conditions would be the **suitability of the landlord.**"

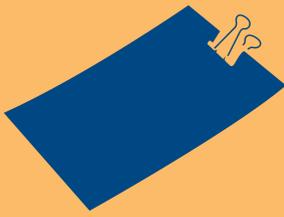
When viewing a property, everything is often presented nicely and potential tenants only have a short time to assess if it's in good shape or not. When they move in, tenants told us they often find problems that landlords weren't up front about prior to signing the contract. As a result, the panel felt that they wouldn't trust landlords to be honest on the register - independent oversight is essential.

This would ensure landlord accountability, and could help to improve housing conditions.

"I think **we have to have a lot of trust** really don't we? And that's quite hard...we're putting our trust in what the landlord's saying on the register, **and yet if we sign and go and view the property and find out it's not accurate, what happens then?**"

Further ideas the tenants shared for an independent oversight of the register included authorising an independent body to:

- Reimburse or compensate tenants if they move into a property based on false information in the NLR
- Continue in a regulatory oversight role and hold landlords accountable to the information in the NLR throughout tenancies
- Remove landlords if there were confirmed complaints made against them - e.g. a "3 strikes and you're out" policy
- Hand out fines if landlords are found to be acting fraudulently.



"I think the information on there, in order to make it correct, I think **there has to be a sanction** if a landlord misrepresents and acts fraudulently...**to incentivise people to do what they should be doing**"

"...landlords **need to be scared about the consequences** of not addressing issues properly and quickly"

2. An NLR should include relevant information about the landlord

When finding a new home, a reliable and responsive landlord came out as a top priority for the panel. Knowing more about the landlord would help renters choose properties and agreements that work best for them.

Information on the register could include:

- **The landlord's address:** This is basic contact information, and would help tenants know whether the landlord managing the property is local or not, which is useful for e.g. emergency repairs. While this is information that tenants are already entitled to, many have difficulty accessing it in practice.
- **How long they have been a landlord:** This could give insight into their level of experience.
- **How many properties the landlord owns:** The panel felt this could indicate how responsive the landlord is likely to be and what reporting issues might look like - e.g. if they're a larger landlord, they're more likely to have processes in place for issues or queries.

3. An NLR should include information about the property

Another top priority for the panel is having a property that meets their needs - one that is affordable for their budget, has good quality fixtures and fittings, and is safe to live in. Particularly in the context of the cost of living crisis, tenants need to know what costs on top of rent they can expect - including bills and costs arising from disrepair issues.

Information on the register could include:

- **Copies of existing key records:** e.g. the Gas Safety Certificate and Energy Performance Certificate, outlining the energy efficiency of the different parts of the property.
- **Current and past inventories:** As well as listing the main fixtures and furniture provided. This could also help identify disrepair issues, and help to ensure landlords adhere to their responsibilities.

“... that’s quite important at the moment, it can be expensive... all those kinds of things [e.g. energy performance information] can allow you to begin to understand, **is this place going to cost me a fortune?**”

4. An NLR should include verifiable information about previous tenant experiences

Information about previous tenants’ experiences would help renters make more informed decisions - this could include:

- Length of previous tenancies
- Deposit disputes
- Changes to rent
- Experience of communications with landlord, including responsiveness

It would be important to ensure that any information included was reliable and verifiable.



“Assuming renting is a market...the analogy I’ll always use with markets is supermarkets - cause we all know roughly what each one does and what you get in each one, cause we’ve got knowledge and information. **I think the market only ever really functions truly if you’ve got all the information to be an informed consumer.**”

“If you’re going on holiday you can find out how good a hotel is, but you can’t find out about a landlord - **I want to know if they deal with complaints fast, if they fix things to standard**, I want to know the star rating they’d get”

“**It adds a level of accountability where there isn’t right now** - if you do have that bad experience, it’s lost with you.”

5. An NLR needs to be easily accessible for all renters

To be effective, the panel felt that the NLR needs to be a tool that is meaningfully accessible for renters. To ensure this, it’s essential that:

- The NLR is **free** to access for tenants

- There's a link to the NLR on **all property listings** so that tenants know where to go to access the information they need
- Information about the NLR is given to all potential renters **when they view or ask about a property** - agents and landlords shouldn't make assumptions about someone's ability to find it
- A **telephone service** is provided for people who have limited or no access to the internet, or who need help understanding the NLR

"I think it's a really good idea, to have [a link to the NLR] in the same place as the listing - **it could be so simple...** if you make it into additional research, I think a lot of people won't be able to do that or...they'll have time pressures or they'll forget."

A national landlord register isn't a solution to most of the challenges renters face

While an NLR could help empower some tenants by providing more information when looking for a new home, the panel felt this wouldn't address some of the main issues renters face:

- **The landlord still holds most of the power once you move in:** An NLR would help address the power imbalance when looking for a home, but not when the tenancy agreement is signed. For example, it wouldn't protect tenants against new disrepair issues or 'no fault' evictions.
- **Many people would still have no choice:** While an NLR would provide useful information about a property and landlord, many renters would still be limited in where they can live due to e.g. rent prices or location. Access to the information in the NLR wouldn't be enough to prevent tenants in these circumstances from living in properties that are unsuitable, in disrepair or unsafe.

"Some people don't really know what they're looking for...and are just thinking "I need a home, this is what I've got to go with at this point... **I've just gotta take what I can get.**"

"For people with no income or people struggling...**they're still going to go for the cheapest one no matter what 'cause they've got no choice.**"

"it's good to know who's better or worse...but ultimately **there are some things that no-one should have to deal with** - there should be some basic standards that can be enforced by law."

2. Disrepair and a redress scheme

“The problem’s not going away...but the consequences of taking action are harsh and scary”

A disrepair redress scheme could be useful for tenants, but it needs to be transparent, proactive and effectively regulated.

The proposal put to the Tenants Voice Panel:

A disrepair redress scheme that all landlords would sign up to. The aim would be to **drive up standards in the PRS** with effective enforcement and redress mechanisms. This means that when something goes wrong with their landlord, it would be easier for tenants to get those problems resolved.

The panel felt that a redress scheme could be useful for tenants when they’re experiencing disrepair, and that it could help with the current imbalance of power between landlords and tenants. It could do this by:

- **Holding landlords accountable:** If repairs and essential maintenance aren’t resolved, landlords currently face few consequences. The panel felt that current redress options aren’t always accessible or useful for tenants. A redress scheme, if done well, could stop tenants living in unsuitable conditions by holding landlords accountable.
- **Making sure tenants access the support they’re entitled to:** Many tenants don’t access current support because of a lack of awareness and accessibility. An accessible redress scheme could help ensure all tenants get the support they need.
- **Driving up standards in the PRS:** A redress scheme could help improve overall standards of living for tenants.

However, government must make sure that it’s a useful tool for tenants. The panel felt that a redress scheme would need:

- Independent regulation and oversight
- Simple, transparent and accessible processes
- Proactive approaches to drive up standards in the PRS

The panel's recommendations to ensure a redress scheme is useful for renters:

1. A redress scheme would need to be implemented by an independent PRS regulator

Independent regulation would give tenants confidence in reporting disrepair to a reliable, impartial source of support.

The regulatory body should have enforcement powers to hold landlords accountable. Currently, tenants often rely on landlords meeting their obligations when it comes to disrepair. If they don't, there are rarely any consequences, and tenants are left to live in unsuitable conditions.

A redress scheme could help to hold landlords accountable by ensuring repairs are carried out to an acceptable standard. A suggestion raised by the panel was that this could be enforced through the use of **landlord deposits**.

If the landlord doesn't solve disrepair issues within a specified timeframe and to the standards required, the regulatory body could use this deposit to fund the repairs themselves.

"...it balances out the power a bit that way then - tenants often get their deposits used against them, so, equally, "bad" landlords should have it used against them too...**if you're a "good" landlord you've got nothing to worry about.**"

2. All renters should know about the redress scheme

Tenants don't always report issues with landlords not addressing disrepair. The panel felt that this was partly due to limited awareness of the support tenants can access.

Ensuring everyone knows about the redress scheme would be essential. Different approaches will be needed to make sure information reaches different groups of people. These groups include:

- **New tenants:** Landlords/letting agents should provide details of the scheme when renters sign new tenancy agreements.
- **People in long-term rentals:** Information about the scheme should be proactively sent to all renters in England.
- **Renters experiencing disrepair:** When tenants report any disrepair, landlords should provide details of the scheme.
- **People who have access needs:** The information should be available in multiple formats - including both paper and digital, as well as in a range of languages.

- **The general public:** Media coverage should be given to the scheme - for example through TV or social media advertising.

"I would hope that it would be accessible to everyone...maybe using TV adverts, you know like after Coronation Street...**something that's going to target a lot of people.**"

3. The redress scheme should use simple, transparent processes

The panel felt that current processes for challenging disrepair are too complicated. This can make renters feel too intimidated or distressed to access the support they need.

The process for reporting disrepair needs to be simple and transparent, to ensure it's a scheme that renters use. The regulatory body would need to provide specific information and support to achieve this, including:

- **Timescales** - like other redress schemes, tenants should be given timescales for both an answer and a resolution.
 - Different issues would require different times, and the timescales should be calculated based on the harm/potential harm caused by the disrepair.
- **Caseworkers** - when reporting disrepair, each tenant should be assigned a caseworker to take control of the case and be their point of contact.
 - This would avoid renters feeling like they're being "passed around from pillar to post".

The panel also felt that disrepair often goes unreported as, in past experiences, doing so doesn't solve the issue. More transparency in the processes could help tackle this.

"I think it's finding the way to remove that intimidation...it almost feels like **you, as a tenant, have to try and fight your way against the system.** It feels like a system's in place that's there for the landlord, and as a tenant, you don't know how to challenge it properly. I think there's a lot of intimidation around that."

4. Proactive processes to ensure everyone lives in decent homes

The panel felt that avoiding disrepair in the first place should be a priority. A new redress scheme - however accessible and simple - would still be catered towards people who have the time, energy and agency to seek that support. Reporting disrepair can be difficult and time consuming, and can cause stress for tenants.

"...you're thinking about your own wellbeing...and whether you want to cause more drama for yourself, more tension for yourself...you'll think, **'Well, can I have a**

relationship with my landlord after this? Will I have to leave the property?...do I even want that? Or do I put up and shut up?"

Avoiding disrepair in the first place, as much as possible, could be a way to tackle this. The panel felt this was particularly important for some more vulnerable tenants, who might not know when there's a disrepair issue, or be unable to report it.

The redress scheme should be given further powers to be able to help tenants proactively. This more proactive approach could be to provide:

- **Annual checks on all rental properties** - for some tenants, this could mean having someone round to do a full check-up of their home. For others, this could mean filling out a repairs and maintenance check-list to send to their landlord.
 - This would be particularly important for tenants in longer tenures.
- **Guarantees** - there could be guarantees that some items will be replaced after a specific, centrally defined number of years. This could avoid some serious, expensive and time-consuming disrepair issues, and make sure tenants are living in decent standard homes.

"...and that's all I want. I want someone to come round and point out the repairs - 'This needs doing', get somebody to come and double check it."

A redress scheme wouldn't tackle the biggest issues around disrepair

The panel broadly felt that disrepair in the PRS is under-reported because of the fear of retaliatory evictions or rent rises.

Many are already aware of current redress routes, but are reluctant to use them due to the lack of protections for tenants - without these, a new redress scheme would continue to go underused.

"I know all the routes but every time I put something in writing I worry I'm going to tip things over the edge."

"The ombudsman might say 'you've got to do X, Y, and Z,' - but then that doesn't resolve the issue that the landlord then sticks your rent up."

Without protections against rent increases and 'no fault' evictions, the power would still be imbalanced in favour of landlords.

"It's basically **you have to shut up or put up**, but if you do speak up you've got a fear of the consequences."

"It's like going to the police and you're reporting on them, just **too nervous to do it in case we get kicked out.**"

"You fear that **you'll possibly be left out on the street because of the complaints you've made** and so a lot of people just tend to put up and shut up. Or like I did, find somewhere new."



3. Evictions and tenancy models

“I just don’t know what I’d do if I got evicted”

While a redress scheme or NLR could help empower tenants in some situations, Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions lie at the heart of tenants’ issues.

“It’s that sense of the unknown as well...what’s tomorrow going to bring? ...**there’s no security, there’s no guarantee, that’s what’s always on my mind.**”

What are the panel’s concerns about section 21 evictions?

- **Lack of security:** The ability of landlords to evict tenants at any time with no reason means tenants often don’t feel secure in their homes.
- **Costs:** Gathering funds for a new deposit and a month’s rent up front is unmanageable for many renters.
- **Location:** Tenants often choose their property based on proximity to schools, work and family. If they can’t find a new property nearby, being evicted risks renters having to uproot their entire lives with consequences for their careers and children or other dependents.
- **Mental wellbeing:** Having the constant threat of evictions, and being forced to move home unexpectedly, can be tough for tenants.
- **‘No leg to stand on’:** With ‘no fault’ evictions a constant possibility, tenants often feel they have ‘no leg to stand on’ when it comes to reporting disrepair or challenging rent rises.

“It gives you, as the tenant, no kind of security at all - **you’re at the whim of the landlord** to just decide “well, actually, I just want the property back”... **you’d have to uproot your entire life for no reason.** You wouldn’t have to be given a reason.”

“It’s meant to be a safe place to come home to... I have kids so for me, especially a child with autism, **it’s his safe place** to go to - so it’s always that feeling that, you know, **could tomorrow be the day the landlord decides he wants to sell?**”

The proposal put to the Tenants Voice panel:

The government proposes to **scrap Section 21 'no fault' evictions** and **strengthen Section 8 'grounds for possession'**.

Removing Section 21 means there would need to be a **new tenancy model** to replace Assured Shorthold Tenancies - government are currently looking at what a new tenancy model could look like e.g. whether it would be open ended, or have some form of fixed term.

Landlords can also evict a tenant through Section 8 'grounds for possession'. These 'grounds' include things like if the landlord wants to move in to the property, or the tenant is in rent arrears.

Strengthening Section 8 would involve introducing new grounds for possession if the landlord wants to move a family member into the property, or to sell it. Some of these grounds could be subject to an accelerated possession procedure. This could mean landlords would be granted a possession order without a court hearing, and tenants wouldn't be able to challenge it.

The panel welcomed proposals to scrap Section 21 'no fault' evictions. However they were concerned that strengthened Section 8 evictions with no support for tenants or an appropriate new tenancy model could end up causing similar issues for renters.

"You won't get your Section 21 but you've still got to find somewhere to live and you've still got to find that expense for moving."

The new tenancy model must be flexible to both tenant and landlord needs

The panel were keen for the new tenancy model that replaces Assured Shorthold Tenancies to be more flexible to suit different tenants.

Tenancies with a fixed term or 'period of commitment' risk being too restrictive and unforgiving in the face of big life changes.

"If I did lose my job, or there was something out of my control that affected my income... I shouldn't be then held accountable for... rent for the duration of the tenancy, because it's not fair. That causes a lot of emotional and mental distress. You're not only panicking that you've lost your job, you're panicking that you're going to be held accountable for £7,000 worth of rent that you can't afford."

Indefinite tenancies would give tenants the option to leave their tenancies early if needs be. They could also deter large annual rent rises, which the panel report is common for people on 12-month contracts.

"I would rather have a **more relaxed approach** because, at the end of my tenancy, it's almost **used as an excuse to increase the rent** and also to secure me for another 12 months."

Notice periods should depend on tenants' circumstances

In the event of an eviction, the panel felt that landlords should be more flexible with notice periods. Allowing tenants enough time to find a new, appropriate property, and gather the funds needed for moving, would be key in reducing the negative impact of evictions.

For different households, this could mean different lengths of time - families that need to be close to schools could need more time than single people with remote jobs, for example. Tenants who are being evicted whilst in arrears might need longer to raise the money needed.

Landlords should ensure that tenants aren't evicted until they have a new rental property lined up.

"It's easier as a landlord to fill your property than for a tenant to find a new property. Because you're going to be looking... maybe for work or for children...**if they're going to evict you, you do need that time.**"

"If they've got rent arrears, they're not going to be able to find anywhere to live... the landlord's putting them in a worse situation... they might have lost their job, they might have become ill, they might have long COVID now. So **you've got to think about the bigger picture... there needs to be an understanding that we are human, and things do happen, and that it can be really hard going.**"

The possession process

The possession process must be accessible, supportive and empowering for tenants. Without ensuring an equal playing field, the power will continue to be imbalanced between tenants and landlords.

To ensure strengthened Section 8 grounds don't harm renters, the panel suggest that:

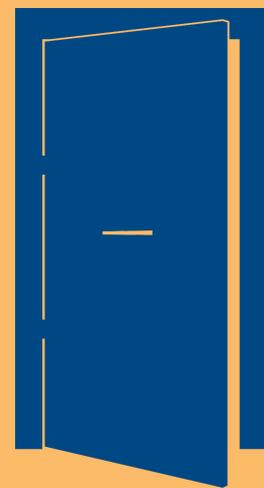
1. There's no accelerated possession procedure

The panel are concerned that introducing new Section 8 grounds that don't give the option for a court hearing would be too similar to Section 21 evictions, and continue to cause similar issues for renters. Not allowing renters to challenge evictions would skew the power imbalance further in favour of landlords.

"It's a fast track system for evictions, but it's also a **fast track to homelessness**. You're spitting these people out of these properties, but to where?"

"I'm sure that there would be a **direct correlation between this coming through and people being made homeless** that shouldn't be homeless."

"We understand that they may need to sell their properties for family circumstances, **but what about our own family circumstances and our own financial circumstances?** They're not really considered, and I think that they should be."



2. Support is provided during possession proceedings

The panel felt that currently tenants don't get enough support when they're served an eviction notice. To ensure that tenants are able to cope with eviction proceedings, the panel suggest that:

- **Information is made available for all:** When tenants are served eviction notices, many don't understand what's going to happen next and where to turn for support. Information should be provided about what renters options are and what the next steps will be.
- **More support is available to help tenants find new homes:** Finding a new, suitable home under time constraints can be tricky for some - especially those who need to be in a certain area for their children and jobs. This can be particularly stressful alongside court proceedings for evictions.

"...**having an idea of what the light at the end of the tunnel is**, as opposed to just panicking and thinking, 'Oh, my God. It's going to happen tomorrow. I'm going to be homeless in a week.'"

"We have to go searching through websites and asking friends and family, 'Please look out for houses, **please look for homes for us.**'"

3. Digital hearings should be optional

While digital hearings would be beneficial for some tenants, enforcing this for all would likely favour landlords.

If tenants are able to, and have the appropriate equipment and support, digital hearings could be less daunting for many renters.

"I think **for those who are capable** of doing it, I think it's actually a really good option. **I think it's a lot less confrontational, a lot less daunting.** Having these Zoom calls, you feel a lot of separation from the other person, the landlord... within the comfort of your own home, you could maybe have family members sat in the background who are there supporting you."

However, many tenants will be at a disadvantage - people with no laptops, smartphones or good quality WiFi will struggle, and it might not suit some people such as those with low digital literacy, or with learning disabilities. Giving renters a choice would be key in making sure digitisation doesn't further imbalance the power between landlords and tenants.



"I think [digitisation] would make the process easier, but **mainly for the landlords**, not so much the tenants."

"It is going to have to be a **case-by-case situation**. I don't think it's going to be a one-size-fits-all."

"It's quicker, but **is it more efficient for the landlords rather than the tenant?**... Is the landlord saying 'Well, this should be easy' because they don't have any contact with the tenant?"

What it would mean to give tenants more power and security

“From a firm base, you can grow”

If implemented robustly, tenants felt the reforms discussed in this submission could make a significant difference to their experience of renting - in particular those that protected them from the threat of eviction.

Ultimately, the panel felt that ending Section 21 - if done well - would make the biggest difference for tenants. With the feeling that an eviction could always be looming, renters struggle to feel secure in their homes. Increased security could help tenants better engage with redress mechanisms, and make more informed decisions when moving to a new property. This would help drive up standards throughout the private sector and build trust between tenants and landlords.

"Renting needs to stop being a dirty word - society sort of sees that as a failure...for some people, renting is their life and they shouldn't be made to feel bad about it. They're seen as failures and they shouldn't be."

Without the fear of evictions, tenants are more likely to speak up without worrying about losing their homes. This includes:

- **Raising concerns about disrepair**
- **Requesting essential household maintenance**
- **Challenging unmanageable rent rises**

If more tenants felt able to speak up, this might also help to improve and equalise tenant-landlord relationships.

“You don’t feel as though it’s necessarily a two-way relationship - the power in the relationship is not equal, is it? ... even though you’re [the tenant] required on a day-to-day basis to make sure the property stays in a good condition, **you haven’t got the power equally to then say “well you’ve [the landlord] not played your part in this”**”

“You feel like you’re a bit of a kid and you’ve gotta do as you’re told... I’ve got no choice, I can’t negotiate on this. If I don’t like it... I’ll give my 8 weeks notice and move out, and of course I can’t do that because then I’ll have to pay another £1500 up front, plus a month’s rent... **you get caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.**”

The increased security that would come with abolishing 'no fault' evictions and allowing tenants to stay in properties for longer would have many positive knock-on impacts for renters - including:

- **Increased financial security**
 - "...it helps people's financial health, because **you're not having to cough up all the time which you do when you move.**"
- **Improved mental wellbeing and reduced stress**
 - "It's **contrary to levelling up**, to have people unstable, financially unstable, mentally unstable, and worrying that they're gonna have to come up with a couple of thousand pounds every 6 months."
- **Stronger community connections**
 - "Are you ever gonna "level up" areas where people are having to [move regularly]? People are always moving, **they're not investing in neighbourhoods**...emotionally, financially, whatever it might be...it's contrary to what the government say they wanna do, to have people in those positions."

With **4.4 million households privately renting in England**, meaningful reform could have lasting impact on millions across the country - improving financial, emotional and community resilience, and helping renters feel more empowered about living in the private rented sector.¹

¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, English Housing Survey, 2020-21

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