Part 10 | Rent Repayment Orders

The Renters' Rights Bill Moves To Royal Assent

Consideration Of Amendments
Completed 22nd October

Royal Assent
Date TBC

The final chapter of our 10-part series looks at all aspects of the Renters' Rights Bill just as MPs agreed the final Lords amendments in Westminster, meaning the Bill is now set to receive Royal Assent and will become law.

The Bill's final debate on 22nd October was short, but not without its critics. Sir James Cleverley, Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government said:



The Government has committed to ending Section 21 evictions, but they must also ensure matching court reform so that the system works for both tenants and responsible landlords.

I fear the Bill in its current form will in some areas be counterproductive, and drive landlords from the market as well as putting up rents for tenants."

Sir James Cleverley | Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government



The Bill requires local authorities to play a much greater role in the private rented sector, but they lack the resources to do that.

Jeremy Corbyn | Independent MP

However, in passing the Bill to Royal Assent, the Minister for Housing, Matthew Pennycook MP said:



We promised to overhaul the regulation of our country's insecure and unjust private rented sector, and this Bill delivers on that commitment. It will empower renters by providing them with greater security, rights and protections, so that they can stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities and avoid the risk of homelessness. It will ensure that we can drive up the quality of private rented housing, giving renters access to good-quality and safe homes as a matter of course, and it will allow us to crack down on the minority of unscrupulous landlords who exploit, mistreat or discriminate against renters

Matthew Pennycook | Housing Minister

Rent Repayment Orders

It's a clear signal that reform isn't just about tenancy security, but about stronger enforcement too, ensuring the small minority who ignore their legal duties face hefty consequences.

With the Bill, Rent Repayment Orders are being expanded and strengthened, and with them, the risks to landlords who fail to follow key legal requirements.

Rent Repayment Orders already allow tenants to reclaim up to 12 months' rent if their landlord has broken specific laws. But under the new legislation, the list of offences will grow and the time window for claims will double. For agents, this means compliance needs to be watertight.

In this final infosheet in our Renters' Rights Bill series, we explain what's changing, how the new rules will work, and what agents should be doing now to protect their both their agency, and their landlords.



Lord Jamieson

We need to ensure that the consequences for landlords are proportionate to the harm caused and that tenants receive a fair outcome.



What's Changing?

Rent Repayment Orders are not new. They were introduced under the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to let tenants recover rent when their landlord committed certain offences, such as running an unlicensed HMO or carrying out an illegal eviction.

However, the Renters' Rights Bill goes several steps further.

Under the new regime:

- More offences will qualify, including misuse of possession grounds and failure to register on the new Private Rented Sector Database.
- The time limit for claims will increase from 12 to 24 months.
- The maximum repayment will double to 24 months' rent, with higher penalties for repeat offenders.
- Local authorities will be given greater enforcement powers, and tenants will have a clearer route to make claims directly through the First-tier Tribunal.

Put simply, the Bill transforms Rent Repayment Orders from a niche enforcement measure into a mainstream compliance tool, and that has major implications for both landlords and agents.

Current Vs New Regime

Feature	Current law	Rules under the Renters' Rights Bill
Claim limit	Up to 12 months' rent (or the rent paid during the offence)	Up to 24 months' rent (especially for repeat offenders)
Application deadline	Within 12 months of the offence	Within 24 months of the offence
Qualifying offence	• Unlicensed HMOs • Illegal eviction • Harassment • Violence to secure entry • Failing to comply with notices or banning orders	All current offences plus new ones linked to: • Database registration • Misuse of possession grounds
Who can apply	Tenant or the Local Authority	Tenant or the Local Authority – with clearer tribunal processes and easier access



Rent Repayment Orders remain one of the few enforcement mechanisms that are available directly to tenants. They are not just about recompense; they are about ensuring that landlords meet their legal obligations and that tenants are protected when they do not, and recompense is made.

Baroness Thornhill



With the forthcoming abolition of Section 21, criminal and unscrupulous landlords, who are the minority of landlords, might take a calculated risk that they can save money by unlawfully evicting or harassing their tenants, as they know how hard it is for tenants to enforce against them in the First-tier Tribunal. Rent repayment orders are realistically the only option for renters to enforce their rights without legal representation.

Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

How Does This Affect Letting Agents and Landlords

1

FINANCIAL RISK

Under the new rules, a single successful claim could cost a landlord two years' rent; if the tribunal believes the landlord acted deliberately or repeatedly, it can order the full amount to be repaid to the tenant.

2

ENFORCEMENT WILL BE A PRIORITY

Councils are being urged to use Rent Repayment Orders more actively; not just as punishment, but to deter poor-quality housing and repeat offenders. It's one of the ways the government wants to "professionalise" the sector.

3

REPUTATIONAL RISK

If a Rent Repayment Order is made against a landlord you manage properties on behalf of, even where the legal liability is with landlords - you can expect your agency to be drawn into questions about oversight, record-keeping, and tenant handling.

4

EXPECTATIONS WILL RISE

With Awaab's Law, Decent Homes reforms, and Renters' Rights Bill all raising standards, Rent Repayment Orders fit a broader pattern: Government and Regulators are tightening the net around non-compliance and poor management.



This Government view rent repayment orders as a critical part of ensuring higher standards and better compliance in the private rented sector; that is why we have significantly expanded them through the Bill.

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage



What Letting Agents And Landlords Should Be Doing Now

1

AUDIT LICENSING AND RECORDS

Check every property you manage for HMO or selective licensing requirements. Where a licence is needed, ensure it's in place and up to date. Missing paperwork or lapsed licences are the most common causes of Rent Repayment Order claims.

2

STAY AHEAD OF THE PRS DATABASE

The new Private Rented Sector database will become the main record of landlords and their properties. Registration failures or false information could trigger a financial penalty once the Bill takes effect. Make sure your landlords understand their responsibility to register accurately.

3

REVIEW EVICTION PROCESSES

Improper use of Section 8 grounds or failure to follow the new process will qualify as an offence which could result in a Rent Repayment Order. Make sure you train your staff on the new eviction processes and rules, and reinforce the importance of not taking shortcuts.

4

KEEP STRONG EVIDENCE TRAILS

Tribunals decide Rent Repayment Order cases based on evidence. Therefore, you should encourage your landlords to retain licences, inspection reports, emails, rent receipts, and repair logs for at least two years (ideally longer); and as an agent, you should do the same.

5

COMMUNICATE WITH TENANTS EARLY

Many claims start because tenants feel ignored. Having clear reporting channels and documented responses can stop issues before they escalate. Always respond to your tenants' concerns swiftly, and follow up in writing.

6

UPDATE YOUR TRAINING AND TEMPLATES

Include Rent Repayment Order awareness in staff inductions and training manuals. Review your management agreements and letters to landlords so they reflect the expanded liability under the Bill.

Looking Ahead

The Renters' Rights Bill represents the biggest shift in tenancy law for a generation – and Rent Repayment Orders are a clear example of how landlords will be held to account when things go wrong.

Agents who anticipate these changes now – by tightening their licensing, record-keeping, and tenant communication – will not only protect their clients but also demonstrate the professional standards our Bill is seeking to implement.



Our 10-Part Renters' Rights Special

Read the full series of info sheets – comprehensive guides to the changes we can expect in the Bill, including:

- Preparing For The Removal Of Section 21 Notices.
- Section 8 Notices | Expanded Grounds And Notice Periods.
- Rent In Advance | When It Is, And Isn't Allowed.
- Abolishing Fixed Term Tenancies | What You Need To Know.
- Increasing Rents Using A Section 13 Notice.
- Pets In Lets | Creating (And Protecting) Pet Friendly Tenancies.
- Students Lets | Your Definitive Guide.
- Renters' Rights Bill | Where Are We Now? Back In The House Of Lords.
- Decent Homes Standards And Awaab's Law.
- Rent Repayment Orders And Penalties.



BOX FROM THE LETTINGS HUB the home for lettings

At The Lettings Hub, we're always here to support you through the ever-changing lettings landscape. With the Renters' Rights Bill introducing new regulations, staying updated is crucial. That's why we offer a variety of resources to help you navigate these changes smoothly. From webinars and blogs to tailored guides, our platform is packed with expert insights. Be sure to follow us on LinkedIn and bookmark our Renters' Rights Hub for the latest updates, tips, and advice.

