Renters' Rights Act | Preparing For Assured Short-Term Tenancy Changes

The Renters' Rights Act introduces major reform to tenancy law in England, with the first phase due to take effect from 1st May 2026. While a lot of attention has focused on the end of Section 21 notices and the move to periodic tenancies, one of the most immediate operational impacts for letting agents will be the changes to tenancy paperwork.

From May, agents will need to ensure that tenancy agreements, supporting written information, and document processes are fully aligned with the new legal framework. The government is placing greater emphasis not only on the substance of tenancy terms, but also on the requirement for tenants to receive clear written information at the right time.



In this infosheet, we focus on the changes, including:

- Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) agreements.
- Tenancy documentation and written terms.
- The new government Information Sheet.

Plus, we share what agents should begin preparing now, ahead of 1st May deadlines.

Existing Tenancy Agreements Will Not Need To Be Re-issued

One key area of reassurance for agents and landlords is that the introduction of the new tenancy regime doesn't mean that existing agreements are to be replaced or re-signed on 1st May.

Current tenancies will continue in law, even where the written agreement refers to, for example, a fixed term. This is because the change is structural; the legal model underpinning assured tenancies is changing automatically - through legislation, rather than through issuing new documents to every single tenancy.

In practice, this means agents shouldn't be planning for a mass re-issue of agreements; instead, the compliance focus is on ensuring tenants receive the correct written information during the transition period, and that new tenancy documentation issued after May 2026 reflects the updated legal position.

All New Tenancies Will Be Open-Ended From May 2026



From 1st May 2026, the Renters' Rights Act introduces an automatic tenancy structure; all assured tenancies will operate on an open-ended periodic basis.

While agreements will still detail areas such as rental amount, responsibilities, and other key terms, the agreement will no longer be written on the assumption that a tenancy expires at the end of a fixed term.

This is one of the most important agreement-level changes introduced by the act; and for agents this means that current agreement templates which are built around fixed-term language and renewal cycles have to be reviewed. Your agreements must match the legal rules, that tenancies will continue unless ended through a Section 8 Notice.

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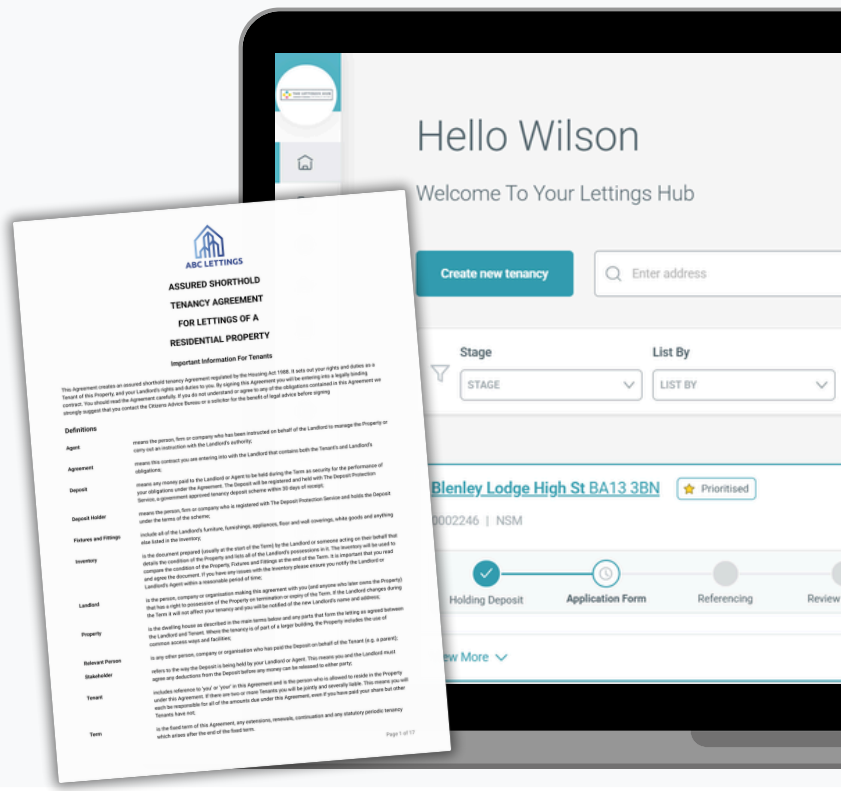

A New Duty To Provide Written Tenancy Terms Before Agreements Are Signed



A key change being introduced within the Act, is the introduction of a legal duty for landlords (and their agents) to provide tenants with specific written information about the key terms of the tenancy.

Confirmed by the government on 20th January, the new tenancy system will be supported by updated tenancy documentation requirements. This is designed to ensure tenants receive clearer written terms at the start of every new tenancy, from May 2026.

From 1st May, this written information must be provided:

- Before the tenancy agreement is entered into.
- Not retrospectively after move-in.
- Either within the tenancy agreement itself, or in a separate written statement issued alongside it.

It is intended that this will improve clarity and consistency for tenants at the outset of the tenancy. The legislation creates a formal obligation for tenants to receive prescribed information about the tenancy terms in writing. Failure to comply may attract enforcement action.

All tenancy agreements issued from May 2026 must be supported by a compliant 'written terms' process from the very start of the letting journey.

What Information Must Be Included?

The precise list of required written terms is yet to be confirmed, with the government indicating that further detail will be published in the coming months, and that the final requirements will be set out in a Statutory Instrument.

However, agents should expect that tenancy documentation will need to clearly set out the essential tenancy terms in a more standardised way, such as:

- The identities of the landlord and tenant.
- Rent and payment arrangements.
- The duration and nature of the tenancy.
- Responsibilities and obligations.
- Key conditions relevant to ending or varying the tenancy.



The most important message is that agents should not wait until April to address this. Tenancy agreement templates and pre-tenancy workflows should be reviewed well in advance so that the new written statement obligations can be implemented on time.

The Information Sheet Requirement For Existing Tenancies

For tenancies that already exist before the act comes into force, the government has taken a different approach.

Rather than requiring landlords and agents to provide the full new written statement of terms to every existing tenant, instead there is a transitional requirement: tenants must receive a government-produced Information Sheet summarising the new tenancy system.

DEADLINE: 31ST MAY 2026

Agents will have until 31st May 2026 to ensure the Information Sheet has been served on existing tenants within scope.

This applies to tenancies that are in place immediately before 1st May 2026. The Information Sheet is expected to be published this spring.

Who Must Receive The Information Sheet?

Guidance indicates that the Information Sheet must be issued to:

- All tenants named on the tenancy agreement.
- Across all existing written or part-written tenancies.

This means agents will need to consider how they are going to deliver the documents, and should prepare to be able to evidence all requirements have been adhered to. The Information Sheet may be provided electronically, or in hard copy.

However, as with many regulatory changes, compliance will not only depend on sending the document, but on being able to demonstrate that it has been issued appropriately.

Why Your Tenancy Templates Must Be Reviewed Now

Even though existing tenancy agreements will not need to be replaced, all agreements issued after 1st May must reflect the new framework.

Your existing legacy agreement wording will be inconsistent with the legal structure in practice, particularly where agreements assume:

- Fixed-term expiry
- Renewal-based tenancy cycles
- Outdated notice language

Agents should begin reviewing all templates as soon as possible to ensure they:

- Align with the new periodic tenancy model.
- Include any prescribed written information required by regulation.
- Remove clauses that rely on the previous Section 21 notices.
- Reflect the correct possession and notice framework under the Act.

Whilst we are expecting the government to provide further detail on prescribed terms and forms before 1st May, for now it is clear that tenancy paperwork will need to support a more standardised tenancy system.

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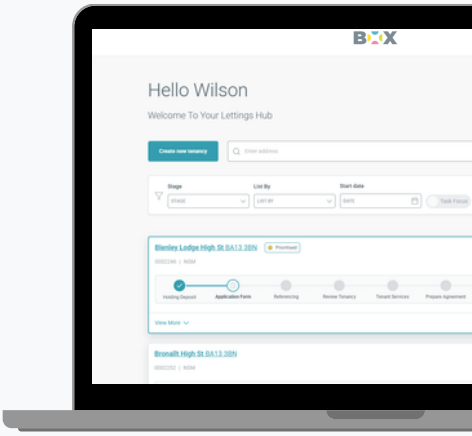

Prescribed Forms And Documentation

The Act introduces a wider shift towards prescribed forms and structured documentation, including updated notice requirements and full compliance with all written information.

As a result, agents should expect that future tenancy paperwork packs will need to be more tightly controlled, more up to date, and be more evidentially robust than under the current system.



Key Preparation Steps For Agents

Although further clarifications are expected later this spring, letting agents can take clear action now:

- Audit your current tenancy templates for fixed-term assumptions and outdated wording.
- Prepare workflows for issuing written tenancy terms correctly from May 2026.
- Create a robust delivery plan to ensure you can serve the Information Sheet to all existing tenants by 31st May.
- Identify any poorly documented tenancy arrangements and formalise them.
- Ensure document control systems can prove compliance.
- Begin landlord communications early so expectations are managed well ahead of the Act coming into force.

Looking Ahead

1st May represents a fundamental shift in the structure of tenancy documentation placed on landlords and agents.

The agencies that prepare early - by tightening tenancy templates, planning for written information delivery, and strengthening document audit processes - will be best placed to support their landlords confidently through the transition.

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