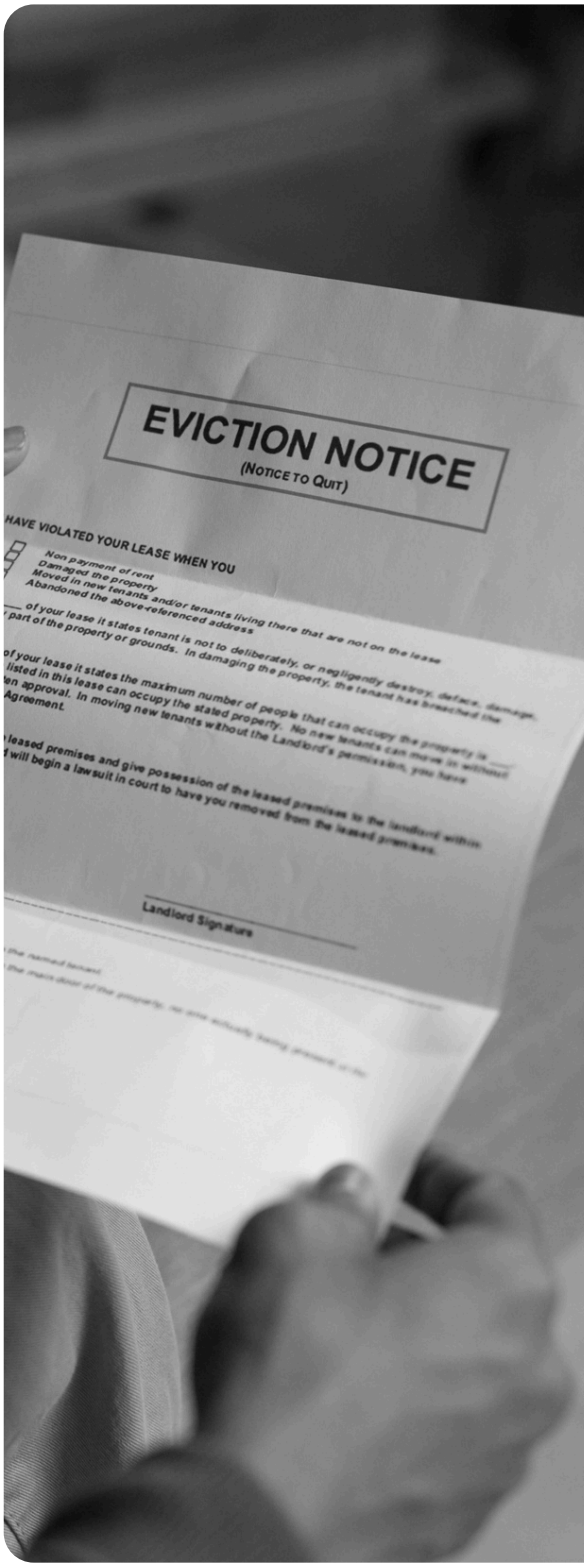
Renters' Rights Act | Your Guide To Serving Section 21 Notices



After 30th April 2026, no new Section 21 notices can be served, and if a valid notice is not in place by that date, then this route to possession is lost. This toolkit has been designed to help letting agents:

1 | Understand the transition processes during the final months of Section 21 notices.

2 | Avoid accidentally losing the automatic possession route.

3 | Guide landlords through the transition period.

There are certain scenarios where a landlord may be considering serving a Section 21 Notice, for example:

- They intend to sell.
- They want the property back for personal or family use.
- They are concerned about rent arrears or behaviour but lack evidence.

Section 21 Viability Checklist



Even before the 30th April 2026 deadline, a Section 21 cannot be used in practice if:

- The tenancy started on or after 31st December 2025.
- The tenancy has a fixed term that ends on or after 30th June 2026.

A Section 21 may be served during a fixed term, but it cannot end the tenancy before the fixed term expires unless a break clause applies.

For the Section 21 notice to be valid, the following prescribed requirements need to have been met and served correctly:

- Gas Safety Certificate.
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).
- How to Rent guide.
- Deposit protected within 30 days of receipt.
- Prescribed Information.

LICENSES

Where a property should be licensed, you will be unable to rely on a Section 21 unless a licence is in place and all of the licensing requirements have been complied with.

If any of these steps were missed or cannot be proven, the Section 21 notice may be invalid and may not be relied on.

The Section 21 Deadline

Key dates agents must work to:

30th April 2026 |
Final day to serve a new Section 21 notice.

1st May 2026 |
Section 21 notices are abolished - no new notices can be served from this date.

Section 21 Notice Decision Flow

1 CONFIRM THAT A SECTION 21 NOTICE CAN BE LEGALLY SERVED:

- The tenancy meets the criteria set out (see above) and
- It is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST).

NO → Section 21 is not permitted.

YES

2 PROVING COMPLIANCE

All prescribed documents set about above must have been served correctly and on time.

NO → Section 21 is not permitted.

YES

3 CAN THE NOTICE LAWFULLY EXPIRE?

Check that:

- At least two months' notice can be given, and
- The notice will not expire before the end of any fixed term (unless a break clause applies).

NO → Section 21 is not permitted.

YES

4 READY TO GO!

Serve promptly, and correctly.

BE QUICK AND CORRECT

To allow time for checks and any necessary corrections; do not wait until the end of April to serve a Section 21 notice. Ensure you serve using the correct method – which is usually by post, unless the agreement explicitly states an alternative method.

Once the notice expires, possession may still require court action (see below).

What Happens After A Section 21 Expires

A Section 21 notice does not end a tenancy; it simply gives the landlord the right to apply to the court for possession once the notice period has expired.

Understanding what happens after expiry is critical, particularly in the run-up to, and beyond 1st May 2026.



Expiry Does Not Equal Possession

Even when a Section 21 expires, the tenancy continues until:

- The tenant leaves voluntarily, or
- The court grants a possession order.

If the tenant remains in the property after the notice has expired, court proceedings are required to gain vacant possession.

If a Section 21 is:

- Served on or before 30th April 2026, and
- Served lawfully, and
- Not withdrawn or invalid.

It will remain valid, even though Section 21 is abolished from 1st May 2026. This means the landlord may still apply to court after 1st May 2026, and the court will consider the claim under the existing Section 21 rules.

This is a transitional protection.

Time Limits To Start Court Proceedings: Transitional Rules Explained



When a valid Section 21 notice is served on or before 30th April 2026, landlords must still start court proceedings for possession within strict statutory time limits. These transitional rules affect how long after the notice is served that proceedings can be issued.

- Six months from the date the notice was served - this is the default time limit for issuing possession proceedings under the usual Section 21 rules.
- Up to 31st July 2026 – this is the transitional cut-off set in the Renters' Rights Act for notices. Any Section 21 notice must have possession proceedings started by this date at the latest (three months after 1st May 2026).

Whichever of these two dates comes earlier becomes the deadline for issuing a court claim.

What This Means In Practice

- If notice is served by 31st January 2026 then the six months applies.
- If notice is served on or after 1st February 2026 then the new 31st July 2026 deadline applies.
- This transitional rule ensures that all Section 21 cases served before they are abolished have a defined enforcement window.

FOR EXAMPLE

If a Section 21 notice is served on 1st March 2026, under the usual rules, the landlord would have six months to start court proceedings, which would be until 1st September 2026. However, because Section 21 is being abolished, a transitional cut-off applies and court proceedings must be started by 31st July 2026.

What Happens If The Deadline Is Missed

If court proceedings are not started by the earlier of six months from service, or 31st July 2026, then:

- The Section 21 notice can no longer be relied on for possession.
- It cannot be re-served.
- Section 21 cannot be used again, because it is abolished from 1st May 2026.



What Landlords Cannot Do After 1st May 2026

Even if a Section 21 was almost correct, or nearly acted upon:

- A new Section 21 cannot be served.
- A defective notice cannot be corrected.
- A replacement notice cannot be issued.

Landlords who serve a Section 21 in time, but waited too long to issue court proceedings may lose the right to possession, even though the notice was valid when served. Instead they will need to use one of the new grounds under Section 8 notices,

SECTION 21: LAST CALL

- Decide early if your landlord wishes to serve a Section 21 notice.
- Check all documents before serving notice.
- Serve before 30th April 2026.
- Don't let a notice expire by mistake.

After 1st May, this route is gone!



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