



Briefing: King's Speech 2024

As the new government introduces legislation for the first parliamentary session and decides its areas of focus, one of its urgent priorities must be to tackle the housing emergency.

We live in a time of the highest homelessness on record. 112,660 households were homeless and living in temporary accommodation at the end of 2023 – a record high figure and up 12% in a year. At the same time, 317,430 households were accepted as either homeless or at imminent risk last year by their council – the highest number since records began.

The private rented sector's lack of security is contributing to this picture. 500 renters are receiving a Section 21 'no-fault' eviction notice each day, and rents are rising at record levels. Meanwhile, right-to-buy and demolitions are seeing social housing stock dwindle. In the last decade, the country has lost more than 250,000 social rent homes.

Reforming the private rented sector

There is political consensus that private renting is broken. Too many renters live in poor conditions – often injurious to their mental and physical health – with little redress. Section 21 'no-fault' evictions are a leading cause of homelessness and are often used by unscrupulous landlords to retaliate against those tenants who attempt to assert their rights.

Certain groups of renters – like those in receipt of benefits or with children – are regularly discriminated against and locked out of accessing private tenancies, either explicitly or by landlords unnecessarily calling for the use of guarantors or excessive rent-in-advance.

All of these failings can be resolved through a robust, comprehensive bill to reform private renting, that seeks to bring fairness, security, and good conditions to the 11 million renters in England.

Shelter expects the King's Speech to include such a bill. Failure to do so would be a huge, missed opportunity.

A new renters' bill must:

1. Lengthen notice periods (where the tenant has not breached the tenancy agreement) from two months to four, and ensure notice periods for all grounds are proportionate.
2. Scrap fixed term tenancies and include an initial 2-year period of protection from eviction (where the tenant has not breached the tenancy agreement).
3. Limit annual rent increases within tenancies to the lowest of inflation (CPI) or median wage growth.

4. Ensure strong deterrents against abusing the tenancy system to unlawfully evict tenants, including a 12 month “no reletting period” following evictions where tenants have not breached the tenancy agreement.
5. Ensure high evidence thresholds for possession where landlords want to sell or move in, including a requirement to provide post-eviction evidence, and strong penalties for misrepresentation.
6. Make all section 8 grounds discretionary, as is currently the case in Scotland.
7. Introduce a National Landlord Register with all the information tenants and local authorities need to uphold rights, including at minimum:
 - contact and address details for landlord and letting agent,
 - rent levels,
 - safety and regulatory information,
 - and the use of possession notices and automated restrictions on reletting.
8. Effectively outlaw discrimination against renters claiming housing benefits or with children and ensure that the evidence thresholds for such claims aren’t prohibitively high and address more discreet forms of exclusion.
9. Tackle wider discriminatory practices by capping rent in advance requests and setting restrictions on the scenarios in which a landlord or letting agent can legitimately request a guarantor and the amount which can be ‘guaranteed’.
10. Scrap the discriminatory and dysfunctional Right to Rent policy.

Planning reform and social housing supply

Beyond private rental reform, there is broad consensus across the housing sector and the political divide that the only lasting solution to the housing emergency is to build more genuinely affordable social rent homes. We need at least 90,000 social rent homes a year in England, for 10 years, to produce enough to house every homeless household and clear most social housing waiting lists.

To get there, the new government must invest in a new Affordable Homes Programme, reduce the cost of land, and unblock our planning system so that we can see a boost to council building of social homes.

For more detail on our comprehensive, six-point plan for how the Government can create a social housing revolution, please read our new report: [Brick by Brick: A Plan to Deliver the Social Rent Homes We Need](#).

Contact: If you have any questions or would like any further information on this briefing, please contact public_affairs@shelter.org.uk.

