



BRISTOL FAIR RENTING CAMPAIGN: THE CASE FOR RENT CONTROLS

A photograph of a residential street. In the background, there are several houses with red roofs and white walls. A large, dense green tree is in the middle ground. A large banner with the words "RENT CONTROLS NOW" in red capital letters is stretched across the street. A person is visible standing near the banner. A street lamp is on the right side of the image.

RENT CONTROLS NOW

INTRODUCTION

The Bristol Fair Renting Campaign is a group of people with experience of renting in Bristol, who came together to fight for a fair renting system for our city. We have created a manifesto for change, which has over 3,000 signatures. **This calls for action from both our local council and national government to tackle high rents, poor conditions, and discrimination in renting.**

[Here is our manifesto of demands](#)

We have worked closely with both the current Green and previous Labour council administrations to keep renters on the agenda and further these goals. We influenced the Council to tackle discrimination in renting, including creating a policy which includes anti-discrimination rules in all new property licences. We spearheaded and sat on our council's Living Rent Commission, where we discussed what a system of rent controls could look like for Bristol and agreed on a series of recommendations which would make renting fairer in our city. We currently sit on the Living Rent Commission Task & Finish Group, where we are working on how to implement some of these recommendations.

High and escalating rents is one of the main drivers of homelessness and inequality in our city, and across England. We believe that in conjunction with other interventions, such as ending no-fault evictions, **rent controls are a vital solution to the rental crisis we are facing.**

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN:

[SIGN OUR MANIFESTO](#)

FOLLOW US ON [INSTAGRAM](#) AND [FACEBOOK](#)

EXPERIENCES OF LOCAL RENTERS

Our group of renters came together because we have all been personally affected by the broken renting system in Bristol. Some of our negative experiences include:

- **being forced out of the city** due to unaffordable rents and landlords refusing to rent to us because we received benefits
- **only being able to afford to live in shared houses** for the long-term
- **settling for renting a room with no windows** because the other options were just too expensive
- **being forced out of our homes due to rent hikes and retaliatory evictions** – one of our members had their rent increased from £650 to £950 within three months of moving in and they have had to move house three times last year.

One of our leaders was recently **forced into a bidding war to keep their home.**



After their one-year fixed-term contract expired, the agent proposed a **47% rent increase to £650 each** (they live in a shared house of five people).



The tenants tried to negotiate and suggested £600, at which point the agent started booking in and doing viewings. **The tenants were asked to match what others said they would be willing to pay, which was £675.**



There have been ongoing problems with the condition and state of the property.



This renter's story is an example of rent hikes and bidding wars practices being applied together to force tenants to pay as much as possible, and essentially punishing tenants if they try to negotiate a rent increase.

Ruth's story

"We've all experienced awful renting situations in Bristol. I started renting as a student, where poor conditions were the norm and landlords never fixed anything. I lived in a house so cold you could see your breath everywhere in the property. My window was duct taped together and never properly fixed for the whole year.

Recently, I experienced a no-fault eviction as my landlord was selling. Finding a new place to live was incredibly stressful. I had to be on alert to call landlords every hour of the day which was very difficult to juggle alongside my full-time job, and many of the properties advertised online were well above my flatmate and I's budget of £1400pm (for a 2 bed). I was regularly asked by agents to offer more for properties as they said I would be unlikely to get the property without offering more money. We were rejected from several properties which was incredibly disheartening.

Thankfully, I found somewhere to live, but the rent is nearly half my monthly income and my flatmate and I only secured the property after offering the landlord two months' rent upfront."

Clare's story

"Although I'm in full time employment now, the cost of renting a one bed flat in Bristol is increasingly unaffordable. My rent has just been increased, and if it goes up any higher, I'm not sure how I'll manage. My neighbour pays a higher rent than I do for a smaller bedsit, and the landlord has put her rent up by an extra 75 pounds a month since the end of lockdown... My friend is a working single mum who claims universal credit to help her pay the rent. She was recently evicted from her home and is now in emergency accommodation because she couldn't find anyone who would rent to her, or anywhere she could afford."

Read more about Clare's story in her [blog](#) and in the [Bristol Cable](#)

Kate's story

"A few years ago, I needed to find a place to live. I'd been given notice on the room I rented with a Bristol family. After a few weeks it was getting uncomfortable, as nothing had come up. Renting for over 20 years, I'd always paid my rent on time and had a great reference from my previous landlord, but I couldn't find a new home. I was 47 and on benefits.

I had to look for private landlords, because letting agents would ask about income in the first two minutes and dismiss you. Out of 100 online adverts, there were only seven rooms that I could afford, and six of these wanted younger people. That left one advert, but on the third page of the small print it read 'No DSS' (no benefits). No other places came up.

A couple of weeks later, I moved in with friends of friends, who were putting their house on the market. Despite being physically ill and dealing with severe stress, I had to move all my belongings into somewhere I would have to leave once the house was sold. It was the closest I've come to being homeless, and with the rental market the way it is, that fear can stay with you even when you find somewhere."

Read more about Kate's story in the [Bristol Cable](#) and [BBC News](#)

Other renters' stories

Our campaign has spoken with hundreds of local renters over the years, all of whom shared the struggles they are experiencing with renting in Bristol. Even before the pandemic and cost of living crisis, Bristol renters were struggling with unfair rent increases.

Here are some stories that renters have shared more recently at our meet-ups and actions:

- One household shared that their **rent was increased three times** in 2023 (by 26%) and the landlord refuses to make repairs because they “couldn’t afford them”.
- Another renter said that they were **served a Section 21 notice for complaining about serious damp and water damage** and **had to move four times in one year**.
- One person’s **rent was raised while they had a rat infestation** in one of their bedrooms.

“I pay about 45% of my take-home salary to live in a cold and mouldy flat. Since I moved to Bristol in 2019, I’ve moved 5 times and my rent is up 70%.”

“I was told the rent would be £525 a month (as that is what it was advertised as) but when it came to signing the contract, the landlord had increased the price with little notice.”

“Rent increase after 3 months - £100 per person per month [because of] “market competition.”

With rents and bills continuing to rise, renters on lower incomes, especially families and Black communities, have to live in poor quality and unsafe properties. **Renters aren’t able to challenge landlords who refuse to make repairs because we can’t afford to risk being given a rent increase or eviction notice or move anywhere else.**

In 2021, our campaign spoke with families at Felix Road Adventure Playground in Easton, who told us that **rising rents meant they would have to move away from their community and children’s schools.**

Things are even worse now.

FINDINGS OF THE BRISTOL LIVING RENT COMMISSION

Following the then-Mayor's commitment in 2021 to make Bristol a Living Rent City, the Bristol Living Rent Commission was formed in summer 2022. Our campaign was invited to be a member. This was so we could represent local renters and help gather evidence to show the situation for renters now, and how this has changed in recent years.

The experiences renters shared with the Commission were bleak and exposed the severity of how unaffordable renting in Bristol is. The results showed that of the renters who responded:

- 40% had experienced a rent increase in the last year, 19% had two increases, and 16% had three or more.
- 50% spent at least 40% of their income on rent and more than 30% spent over 50% of their income on rent. Younger renters were disproportionately impacted with 50% of respondents aged 18-24 facing a rental burden of 50% or more of their income.
- Half had to pay rent in advance, separate from any deposit, to secure a property.
- Over a quarter had to compete with other tenants and paid more than the advertised rent to secure a tenancy.

The Living Rent Commission was also set up to consider what appetite there was in Bristol for rent controls to tackle the extremely high rents many across our city are struggling with, and to consider what a rent control model could look like for Bristol. The Commission's research found that there was very strong local support for rent controls, with **81% of Bristol residents supporting rent controls**.

This is also the case across wider Britain - a 2022 YouGov poll revealed that two in three people in Britain (67%) support rent caps.

OUR CAMPAIGN'S POSITION ON RENT CONTROLS

We have developed a position and specific demands on what rent controls should look like in Bristol, which are set out in this blog: [Bristol campaigners' fight for fair rents | Shelter](#). Please see more detailed information below.

It is vital that action is taken swiftly to control rents in Bristol, given how fast rents are rising in our city. Some damning stats include:

- The average rent in Bristol is now one of the most expensive outside London, and the most expensive in the South West region (£1,761 a month - ONS).
- Over the last decade, rents in Bristol have become out of control, rising by 69% - almost twice as fast as local wages.
- The average rent for a two bed home in Bristol now costs 42% of an average local wage, compared to 32% 10 years ago.
- 26% of Bristol rents privately, compared to 20% of the wider population. This demonstrates how widespread the impacts of this crisis are in our city.

There is strong evidence of the need, and support, for rent controls as an intervention to tackle unaffordable rents in Bristol. The response to the Living Rent Commission survey on rent control showed that a substantial majority (including renters, residents and local community and voluntary sector organisations) were in favour of it, and four out of five people who responded said they thought rent control was desirable. A majority of those who responded to the survey supported the need to stop large rent increases and reduce overall rent levels.

The New Economics Foundation came up with [a stepped, gradual approach to introducing rent controls](#), which we support and think could work in Bristol. This addresses the need to tackle current rent levels and unreasonable rent increases by reducing rents over a set period of time, and then regulating rent increases annually. We also think an immediate rent freeze is needed as a first, urgent action.

Step 1: Freeze rents now

We call on our Council and MPs to lobby the National Government for powers to freeze private rents in Bristol, alongside more general powers to control rents.

We need this as an emergency intervention to ensure that as many renters as possible are not priced out of their homes, and to prevent private rents from further spiraling out of control.

This would be a temporary measure while the fairest way to regulate rents in Bristol in the longer-term is worked out, and the data needed to enforce rent control effectively is gathered. However, this would only cap rents at their existing level, which are already completely unaffordable compared to renters' incomes, so a further step would need to be introduced.

At this stage, to ensure a successful longer-term rent control model can be successfully implemented, we also need our Council and MPs to lobby the government to ensure:

Greater security for renters

Our Council and MPs must hold the National Government to account to ensure that section 21 no fault evictions are indeed scrapped in the Renters' Rights Bill. **However, action on improving the stability of private renting cannot stop there - limiting rent increases is the next vital step to ensure that landlords don't use rent hikes to evict, as well as helping make sure the cost of rent is fairer.**

A landlord register is introduced

Decision makers must hold the National Government to account to ensure all landlords are required to register on the property portal being introduced through the Renters' Rights Bill. **This needs to include information about the safety and quality of homes landlords are renting out, as well as a means to record and monitor rents.** This will help ensure that we have all the information we need on renters, landlords and rents in Bristol to successfully be able to control rents.

Step 2: Slow down rent increases to bring rents in line with local incomes

This is needed to achieve a fair rent level e.g. by limiting the amount rents can increase annually as a percentage of local wage increases. **This would be implemented over several years until rents and renter incomes are indeed in line.**

To determine what a truly 'affordable' rent would be for Bristol, it would be helpful for our Council to gather data that tells us the average income of private renters in the city, including a breakdown of both full- and part-time wages, benefits, student income, and incomes of people who are not working. General data on incomes in Bristol is not specific enough, as homeowners who are in full-time employment quite often earn significantly more than private renters, which could skew the calculations.

Step 3: Keep rents in line with local wages

Our Living Rent Commission Task & Finish Group should explore the most effective long-term model of rent control for Bristol, including further engagement and co-production with the community. This would be brought in once rents and local incomes are in line with each other to ensure they stay this way and rents remain affordable for the long-term.

To ensure this, especially for those on lower incomes, long-term rent control in Bristol would need in principle:

- **To cap the amount rent can be increased by both within and between tenancies.** Unfair rent increases often occur between tenancies, and even when renters have greater security (after section 21 is scrapped), we don't want any incentives for landlords to evict tenants and increase the rent. More than nine out of ten respondents to the Living Rent Commission survey favoured a system where rents were controlled between tenancies.
- **To have a process to enforce this, without the onus being on renters to challenge unfair rents/increases.** Using the landlord register to record and monitor rents would enable the Council and new tenants to see what a previous rent was, and keep track of rent increases, for example.
- **Our Council would need to review this rent cap every year,** and decide a percentage annual increase on the basis of local wage increases to ensure incomes and rents remain in line. It was promising to see a commitment by the previous council administration to 'Publish an annual "living rent index" of what affordable rents would be for Bristol', which is what this measure could be based on.
- **To apply a rent control model city-wide, to all properties, with no time limit.**

In general, we support rent control powers being devolved to local authorities rather than being implemented across the country from a national body who may not understand the nuances of the rental market in each individual area. Each area faces its own challenges, which a rent control model would need to tackle. Local councils should work with their communities to design a model which works best for them.

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF RENT CONTROLS

Rent controls, in conjunction with other measures, can help tackle the immediate rental crisis we are facing in England. There are many positive impacts that rent controls can have on tenants and their communities, including:

- **Bringing renters out of poverty** by decreasing the percentage of their income that goes on rents.
- **Reducing homelessness** by preventing landlords from being able to evict tenants by raising the rent extortionately high.
- **Tackling gentrification and creating fairer and more diverse communities** by allowing renters on a wider range of incomes to be able to afford to rent a wider range of homes in a wider range of areas.
- **Improving renter wellbeing** by allowing renters more security in their homes and creating a more equal balance of power between renters and landlords.

Rent controls would not just have a localised or personal positive impact, it would also impact the wider economy and the Government's work to create 'value for money' for the taxpayer:

- Reducing rates of homelessness by introducing rent controls will **reduce the amount local councils and the Government (via grants to local authorities) spend on temporary accommodation and homelessness relief and prevention.**
- A more affordable private rented sector will also **make it easier for those on lower incomes to move out of temporary accommodation into private renting**, either making this their long-term home or as an interim while they wait for social housing. This will further reduce the temporary accommodation bill as people are able to move on quicker.
- Making rents affordable will **reduce the Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Housing Element bill**, and will mean that the Government and local authorities spend less on Discretionary Housing Payments topping up rents.
- Renters spending less on rent means they will have **more disposable income** to spend in the local and national economy, therefore aiding economic growth.

Not only do we have to consider the positives of rent controls, but also the cost of doing nothing. If urgent action is not taken, homelessness will continue to rise, renters will continue to suffer and fall into poverty, and the Government and local authorities will have to continue to shoulder the cost of the rental crisis.

When we consider the positives of this intervention and the serious negatives of not acting, the case for rent controls becomes even more clear.

REBUTTALS TO CONCERNS ABOUT RENT CONTROLS

Challenge: Won't the Renters' Rights Bill solve everything for renters?

Rebuttal:

- Renters urgently need the government to deliver a robust Renters' Rights Bill to improve security, tackle poor conditions and stamp out discrimination in the renting system. **However, the bill does not address the cost of rent**, which is a major issue that is driving people into poverty and homelessness. The cost of renting in Bristol has become out of control. The average rent in Bristol is one of the most expensive outside London, and the most expensive in the South West region (£1,761 a month - ONS).
- The experiences renters shared with Bristol's Living Rent Commission were bleak and exposed the severity of the situation. Four in ten renters who completed a tenant survey (which received 720 responses) said they had experienced a rent increase in the last year. 19% had two increases, and 16% three or more, in just one year. **The Renters' Rights Bill will limit rent increases to once a year, but this does nothing to regulate how much rents cost or can be increased by.**
- It is positive that the Government is banning the tribunal from being able to increase a tenant's rent if they go to them to challenge a rent increase. However, Shelter analysis of 100 tribunal cases from the beginning of May 2024 show that the average rent increase permitted by the tribunal was 23%, which is still very high. More than half of renters say they wouldn't be able to afford a rent increase above 10%. **So even if the tribunal will no longer permit rent increases that are larger than the landlord proposed, it will continue to permit large, unaffordable rent increases. And this does nothing to challenge 'market rent' levels, which allow rents to keep escalating.** One of our campaign members had the rent in their new home increased from £650 to £950 within three months of moving in.

- It is good to hear that the Government is committed to abolishing bidding wars and section 21 notices. However, a section 13 notice can still be used as a tool to increase the rent and price someone out of their home. **There will be nothing to stop a landlord demanding that a sitting tenant either pays 'what others are willing to pay' or has to leave.**

Challenge: But rent controls don't work?

Rebuttal:

- There isn't a single way to control rents - it depends on the context and country. **We need a model that works for Bristol.**
- A lot of European countries have some form of rent regulation, and their rental markets continue to function and receive investment. **Our government's refusal to intervene is not a common approach.**
- **Germany is a positive example of rent control absolutely working** - rents have become more affordable following a tightening of rent regulations. From 2016, Germany introduced a rental price brake which allowed regional governments to set rents in relation to a local reference rent in areas where annual rent increases were higher than 3.9%. The brake was introduced alongside other measures to improve the affordability of private rents, including greater investment in social homes and a reform to the housing allowance for private renters. This built on long established in-tenancy rent regulations which already limited the amount that rents can be raised within existing tenancies in Germany to 20% over a 3-year period. As a result of the rent brake, regulated rents had dropped 5.8%, while unregulated rents rose 2.9%.
- **It's also important to remember that we've had rent control here in the past, so this is not something that is unattainable in this country.** Britain put in place measures to limit the initial rent landlords could charge, as well as any subsequent increases, in response to housing shortages during and after both World Wars. Private renting was the most secure and affordable it has ever been. We're at crisis point once again now and need the Government to take decisive action - we need rent control.
- **Rent controls can be successful if expert work is done to design a clear policy approach based on robust, reliable data that is communicated effectively** to tenants, landlords and local stakeholders. It is vital that rent controls are implemented in this context and the Government and local councils work hand in hand to ensure that we are ready to make this policy change.

- **We know that barriers faced in Scotland were linked to a lack of robust data, so Bristol City Council, and others, need to make sure they collect the data that is needed to effectively enforce rent regulation**, including property details and their location, current and previous rent levels, and local wage growth. **The proposed property portal could be used to record and monitor some of this data, including rent levels.** This would also avoid putting the onus on renters to challenge landlords. The current reliance on renters to uphold our rights, and lack of regulation, is exactly why we have a power imbalance that allows for exploitation. **Furthermore, the policy approach was unclear in Scotland as it was poorly communicated. In future, both councils and the Government should work to clearly communicate policy to communities.**
- **One last barrier faced by the Scottish model was that it was only designed as a short-term temporary measure and only implemented within tenancies**, so landlords exploited this loophole and increased rents significantly outside of tenancies. **This shows that rent controls need to be carefully designed to make sure there are no loopholes landlords can use to get around rent control measures**, and further supports the need for a rent control model to control rents both within and between tenancies.
- **As mentioned above, there is no real choice but to take action on out of control rents if the Government is serious about tackling homelessness** - unaffordable rents are one of the biggest drivers of homelessness. There is also widespread national support for capping rents - [two in three people in Britain \(67%\) support rent caps](#), and the Bristol Living Rent Commission's findings reveal that 81% of Bristol residents support the need for rent controls.

Challenge: There will be a loss of supply as landlords will leave the market/not invest in rental properties, particularly as many will not be able to afford their mortgages.

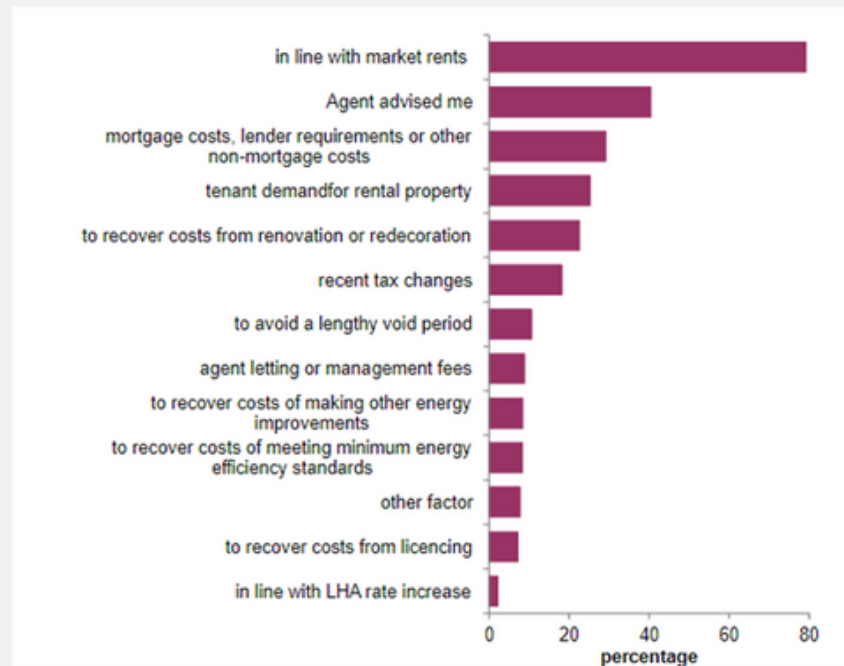
Rebuttal:

- We don't want a rent control model that risks renters losing their homes, and a well-researched model for Bristol should be designed which minimises these risks. **The model we support is a stepped, gradual approach** which achieves the intended outcome while minimising the severity of changes made to rent levels year on year.
- **However, renters are already losing their homes due to extortionate rents, with high rents as one of the driving causes of homelessness both in Bristol and across England.**

- **For example, rents in Bristol have risen by 69% over the last decade – almost twice as fast as local wages.** Private rents not being regulated has led to increasingly unaffordable rents and unfair rent increases, which are driving poverty, inequality and social segregation. This is not a recent issue, and was impacting renters long before interest rates began climbing.
- **Doing nothing carries more risks over the long-term,** as the unaffordability of private renting will only continue to grow and renters will continue to lose their homes at a faster and faster rate. If the Government is serious about tackling homelessness, it has to tackle high rents.
- **Furthermore, the evidence linking rent controls and landlords leaving the market is not strong.** There is minimal evidence to suggest this has happened in other cities and countries where rent control has been brought in. Most recently, the attempt by the Scottish Government to bring in rent controls did not result in a mass exodus from the market. While supply did contract slightly, this does happen for a range of reasons, and [research by Indigo House](#) could not conclude that changes in supply in Scotland's private rented sector were the result of Scotland's rent caps policy.
- In all examples of necessary regulation being brought into the private rental sector, landlords have threatened to leave the market to try and prevent governments from making important reforms to better protect renters. Most notably, landlords have threatened to leave the market if the Renters' Rights Bill is brought in, [yet the Government is still moving forward with the Bill](#), which is a welcome step. Landlords who charge lower, fairer rents are less likely to object to regulation than those seeking larger profits, and these are the landlords we would want to keep in the market.
- Rent controls would not impact many landlords' ability to meet the costs of renting their property, it would just reduce their profits to ensure renters can keep their homes and have a good quality of life. The latest data from Shelter shows that **55% of private landlords don't have a mortgage on any of the properties they let out**, so they do not need to charge extortionate rents to keep up with potentially high mortgage costs. [Findings from the latest English Private Landlord Survey](#) revealed that the average (mean) total annual income for landlords, including income from rental property, was nearly £100,000 (£99,466). The threat of many landlords not being able to afford to continue to rent out their properties just isn't the case.
- **Many landlords increase rents simply because market conditions and a lack of rent regulation allows them to, rather than because they need to.** So, again, rent controls will not result in people not being able to afford to be landlords. Findings from the English Private Landlord Survey (see graph on next page) confirms that 'market rent' rather than needing to cover costs is the primary influencing factor for landlords setting rents. The lack of regulation means that many landlords are cashing in on big increases in demand, a low supply of homes available to rent due to years of government failure to invest in genuinely affordable social homes, and current private renters staying in their homes longer because they can't afford to rent elsewhere or buy a home.

The most common rationale for rent levels given by landlords who increased the rent for their most recent new letting - or kept it the same - was they set rent in line with the market rate in their area (79% and 59% respectively). Just under a third (32%) of landlords who reduced the rent gave this reason. The most common reason given by landlords who reduced the rent was to avoid a lengthy void period (39%). Other common reasons given by landlords who increased the rent were their agent had advised them (40%) or mortgage costs or lender requirements (29%). Annex Table 4.11, Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 Factors influencing rent setting for landlords who increased rent



- Research from Shelter (YouGov survey of private landlords in England) found that **67% of landlords without a mortgage increased the rent in the year July 2022 to July 2023**. Of landlords that had increased the rent in the last five years, 43% said they did so because their letting agent advised them to and 31% said it was because the market was going that way in the area.
- **Furthermore, tenants should not be left to the mercy of shocks to the market.** Landlords chose to go into the business of renting out property and should absorb these risks themselves, instead of passing them on to tenants. This is not how many business investments work and nor should it be. Tenants should have a right to a stable home and ought to have protection from shocks to the market, particularly as they are least able to weather such fluctuations as this risks them losing their home. Private renters already pay the highest housing costs out of anyone, and during a cost of living crisis, renters are the last people that can afford to have costs passed on to them. [New Shelter findings reveal that two thirds of working private renters in England are struggling to pay their rent](#). In comparison, [ONS data](#) revealed that 28% of mortgage holders were finding it difficult to pay their mortgage.

- As Councillor Tom Renhard said when he was the Bristol City Council Cabinet Member for Housing: **“I’ve told landlords that just because you leave the market, it doesn’t mean the property will.”** (The Bristol Cable, 23 Nov 22). If landlords decide that they aren’t able to profit from private renting under rent controls and leave the market, the council could buy these properties and rent them out as social housing. Demand for private rental properties is only so high due to the lack of social housing, so this would help manage this and reduce the impact of any landlords who do decide to leave the market. The Mayor of London has introduced a Right to Buy-Back scheme to increase the supply of council housing which could be implemented by Bristol City Council. If the Government ended Right to Buy, this would also help retain vital council properties and help minimise demand in the private rented sector.
- [A 2022 YouGov poll](#) revealed that a majority of the British public (65%) support councils being given the powers to acquire long-term empty properties at below-market value for use as social housing, with 19% opposed. Such a policy was implemented in Barcelona in 2020 who have a first right of refusal when properties are sold.

Challenge: Even if the longer-term impacts of landlords leaving the market can be managed, what about the impact on the renters in the short-term who may be evicted due to landlords selling their properties?

Rebuttal:

- See above for arguments on why a mass exodus of landlords from the market is unlikely.
- **However, if some landlords do leave, our Council and National Government should work to ensure that these properties still remain in the rental market.** They could incentivise landlords to sell to other landlords and keep their sitting tenants, or, as mentioned above, councils could acquire these properties and rent them out as social housing. The Government could also ensure there are good safeguards against short notice evictions to give any tenants who are evicted more time to find a new home.
- We have heard and understand the argument that tenants who are evicted shouldn’t be able to jump the queue on social housing. However, each new social housing property that is acquired creates new stock which someone can move into, often from the private rental sector, which is not an appropriate place for many individuals and families to live. **Freeing up more private sector properties this way creates more opportunities for those who have been evicted to have a new place to live.**
- The Government should also work to improve homelessness support provided by local councils and give them the funding to properly discharge their duties. They could help ensure that anyone who loses their home can get the support and emergency accommodation they need. **Acquiring more properties for social housing if landlords leave the market could also shorten the length of time that homeless people remain housed in emergency accommodation.**

- **We have to consider the impacts of doing nothing. People are already being made homeless by the cost of rent and will continue to be made homeless for years to come because of this if action isn't taken now.** We must compare this crisis to only a **potential** risk, which could be mitigated, of rent controls causing some people to lose their homes in the short-term. If we are considering a cost-benefit analysis, the benefits of implementing rent controls by far outweighs its costs.
- **We also have to consider the impact of not introducing rent controls on the taxpayer.** If the Government is genuinely serious about 'value for money', rent controls are necessary to reduce the amount of public spending needed to support people to pay their rent.

High and rising rents are costing both local and national government a lot of money, which could be used to build more social housing to truly tackle the housing crisis this country is facing:

Since April 2023, the national government and local council have had to spend £1,635,962 topping up private rents in Bristol so that people don't lose their homes.

The council has already spent 64% of their 2024-25 allocation for discretionary housing payments in just six months. See data tables for [2023-24](#) and [April-September 2024](#).

The Government says they are making tough decisions which will be difficult at first but beneficial for the future. If the Government believes that rent controls may have difficult impacts in the short-term, but will be best for renters in the long term, taking such action would be in line with the principles they are applying to the rest of the economy.

CONCLUSION

Bristol, and the rest of England, is facing an acute rental crisis, with millions losing or set to lose their homes due to no-fault evictions and extortionate rents. Even if the Renters' Rights Bill does scrap no-fault evictions, renters will still be left with a huge rental burden which will continue to drive homelessness and poverty.

Measures to truly tackle this cost crisis are missing from the Renters' Rights Bill, and we believe that if the Government is serious about transforming private renting for the better, then it also needs to take decisive action to make rents affordable. There is a wealth of evidence across the world in support of the efficacy of rent controls. A carefully considered rent control model - designed by each local area to best fit their needs and mitigate any unintended consequences - can work, and make the difference renters desperately need.

We hope the Government will accept an amendment to the Bill to devolve rent control powers to local authorities to ensure that everyone is able to live in a safe, secure and quality home that they can afford.