



Student Accommodation

Introduction

The Renters Rights Bill seeks to introduce a whole raft of legislation, intended to give tenants a tenancy for life, unless a ground can be met for the landlord to end the tenancy.

Alternatively, it will be in the gift of the tenant to end the tenancy, at any time, with a 2-month tenants' notice.

Currently, it is intended that this will apply to all private tenancies, no matter what reason they are constituted.

Students

We seek to argue that the student model does not fall comfortably within this Bill, and that the student model is one that has existed for some time – successfully.

Most students fall into the same model that they require suitable accommodation for the academic year; that might be 10 to 12 months in duration. And that they require this accommodation for 1 to 3 years. We have noticed some tertiary education bodies starting to offer 18-month courses, rather than 3 years, but we believe they can also be accommodated with our suggestions below.

Problems with existing Bill

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a provision for student landlords to evict bona fide students by the end of the academic year (Ground 4a), it is looking at the wrong end of the academic year and does not allow for those students not following the standard academic year.

It is very rare for a student landlord to have to resort to an eviction notice to evict students, under the current model.

It is more likely that students will try to leave early, for a whole variety of reasons.

Under the current proposal, this may cause the following problems for the student tenants:

- if a joint and several liability tenancy, the tenancy will be ended for all, leaving the remaining tenants exposed – unless they can negotiate a better position,
- if individual room agreements, the remaining tenants will be protected but have no say over who the newly available room is let to.

This could severely upset the dynamics of the group.

We strongly recommend the formation of a new shorthold tenancy, but only to be used for bona fide students, according to the student test outlined in the Bill.

Specialist Student Shorthold Tenancy (SST)

This Student Shorthold Tenancy (SST) would specify:

- a commencement date, and
- a completion date.

The tenancy could be ended at any time with no notice, if the tenant(s) report a problem to the Local Authority, and a Section 11 Improvement Notice is served on the landlord.

The landlord must belong to the UNIPOL accreditation scheme to be able to issue an SST, else a standard Assured Tenancy, as described in the Renters Right Bill will be issued.

The rent period be allowed to follow the grants period for that student, this is unlikely to be monthly.

Alternative arrangements

If it proves impossible to introduce an SST into the Renters Right Bill, we call for the following:

- that student tenants are not allowed to give two months' notice until 4 months have expired since the commencement of the tenancy.
- The safety measures mentioned above can apply:
 - If the property does not meet the condition specified, as determined by an independent assessor the tenancy would end immediately
 - The tenancy could be ended at any time with no notice, if the tenant(s) report a problem to the Local Authority, and a Section 11 Improvement Notice is served on the landlord.

Unintended consequences

We are firmly of the believe that the following will happen if the Renters Right Bill is not amended specifically for students:

- many landlords will exit the student market, forcing student tenants into costly PBSA accommodation
- student tenants not meeting the 'standard' academic year test, will find it especially difficult to find accommodation.