

# Written evidence submitted by Generation Rent to the Renters' Rights Bill Committee – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024

Generation Rent is the voice of private renters across the UK. We are a non-profit campaigning for every renter to live in a secure, quality and affordable home.

## **Executive Summary**

**0 - Overview** - Generation Rent welcomes the Renters' Rights Bill. It is a long-awaited and much needed piece of legislation, and we are pleased that the new government has made it a priority. The “commitment to transform the experience of private renting”<sup>1</sup> is to be applauded, and we believe that the Bill takes many serious steps towards this aim. We do have concerns, most significantly around the current limitations of the Bill's proposals to tackle unaffordable rents and rent rises, and we have outlined these in this document.

**1 – Secure Homes** – This Bill sets out a comprehensive plan of reform, the most important of which is the abolition of Section 21 ‘no-fault’ evictions, which are a leading cause of homelessness. Section 21 is unfair and unsustainable and the Bill is right to abolish it immediately upon Royal Assent. However, the Bill is introducing new grounds for no-fault evictions under ‘landlord-need’, and we believe that tenants who suffer this should be compensated (see point 1.6).

**2 – Affordable Homes: The Cost of Renting Crisis** – While the Bill is strong, it lacks measures to sufficiently address the affordability crisis that is driving renters into poverty, debt and homelessness. In order to meaningfully address the cost of renting crisis, the Bill must limit rent increases to the lowest of inflation or wage growth (see point 2.4).

**3 – Quality Homes: From Safety to Decency** – The proposed private rented sector redress scheme, implementation of a decent homes standard and Awaab's law represent significant progress and are to be welcomed. However, these changes must be enforced in order to be effective.

**4 – Ending Discrimination** – The Bill's measures to address discrimination in privately rented homes are positive. However, fines must be increased to reflect the harm being caused by discrimination.

**5 – Private Rented Sector Database** – The database, including a landlord registration scheme, will represent an improvement for tenants and our security. However, it must go further to be truly useful, including by collecting information on rental amounts and evictions, to enable evidence-based improvements and enforcement around private renting.

**5 – Energy Efficiency** – Energy efficiency in rented properties must be improved as quickly as possible to end fuel poverty and the scourge of cold homes, affecting millions of renters. The government's promised improvement to the minimum energy efficiency standard is a start, but this should be written into the Bill. These changes must include ensuring that tenants are protected from unintended consequences of government grants and improvement works that could result in eviction or rent hikes (see point 6.3).

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<sup>1</sup> UK Government. “Guide to the Renters' Rights Bill”. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-renters-rights-bill>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**A:** Introduce no-fault eviction compensation, by waiving the final two months of rent when ground 1 or 1A are used to evict.

**B:** Double the tenant's protected period from no-fault eviction to 24 months, preventing evictions using ground 1 or 1A for that time after entering a new tenancy.

**C:** Limit in-tenancy rent rises to the lowest of wage growth or inflation.

**D:** Ban requests for multiple months' rent upfront.

**E:** Reform tenancy deposits by introducing deposit passporting, releasing non-contested portions of deposits when disputes take place, setting clear timescales and obligations on landlords to submit to adjudication, and giving penalties for repeated false claims.

**F:** Extend the private renting redress scheme to Wales.

**G:** Make 'Awaab's Law' requirements for private landlords fully match the protections in social housing.

**H:** Introduce an independent regulator for letting agents.

**I:** Increase maximum fines for discriminatory landlords from £7,000 to £15,000 and remove the need for intent to be proven in court.

**J:** End the 'Right to Rent' system and hostile environment for migrant renters.

**K:** Introduce a corporate parenting duty for local authorities to act as guarantors and offer private tenancy deposits for care leavers.

**L:** Remove the requirement for pet owning tenants to obtain pet insurance, and make consent for pets last throughout a tenancy.

**M:** Enable immediate Rent Repayment Orders when landlords are not registered with the property database or redress scheme.

**N:** Record actual rents on the property database.

**O:** Record evictions on the property database.

**P:** Uprate energy efficiency standards in privately rented homes.

**Q:** Enhance protections for tenants from rent rises and eviction as unintended consequences of energy efficiency uprating.

## **Submission**

### **1: Secure Homes**

**1.1** Too many private renters face unwanted moves. In 2022-23, 61,000 households were asked to leave by their landlord or letting agent, while 130,000 moved because their fixed term tenancy ended and 11,000 moved as a result of a rent increase.<sup>2</sup> These account for three in ten private renter moves. No-fault evictions are a driver of homelessness: 31,730 households faced homelessness in 2023-24 because their landlord wanted to sell the property while 13,570 households faced homelessness because their landlord wanted to re-let it.<sup>3</sup>

**1.2** The abolition of Section 21 evictions, a change that Generation Rent has spent nearly a decade campaigning for, is a welcome cornerstone of this Bill. It is right that this abolition will be implemented immediately upon Royal Assent of this Bill.

**1.3** It is also right that the system of open ended tenancies has been introduced. Open ended tenancies give more security for tenants who wish to remain in their home and community for the long-term, without fear of being forced out at the end of a fixed term as is currently the case. It also facilitates good-faith arrangements with our landlords, with openness and transparency encouraged and fostered. It is extremely rare for tenants to wish to leave their homes within the first six months without a very good reason and therefore the government should continue to resist any calls to introduce a minimum term for tenants.

**1.4** The Bill proposes a number of grounds through which tenants would continue to be removed from their homes through no fault of their own. The government has recognised the harm of no-fault evictions, with Minister Matthew Pennycook outlining how they provide landlords the possibility to “arbitrarily evict ... tenants that make complaints about things like damp and mould, rather than fix those problems”.<sup>4</sup> Generation Rent welcomes the government’s steps to mitigate the harm of grounds for sale and for the landlord to move in, as the Minister has listened to our concerns and extended the notice period for a landlord-need eviction to four months. This change will keep tenants out of temporary accommodation and homelessness, as it gives us more time to find a new home.

**1.5** It is positive that these new grounds require the landlord to provide a reason to evict the tenant, as that will outlaw the arbitrary and retaliatory evictions that too often occur under the current system after a tenant makes a complaint. Tenants who made a formal complaint to either their local authority or to a redress scheme had a 46% chance of being issued with a section 21 eviction notice within 6 months of doing so.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> English Housing Survey 2022-23, Private Rented Sector Report, Annex Table 3.12. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annex-tables-for-english-housing-survey-headline-report-2022-to-2023>

<sup>3</sup> MHCLG Statutory Homelessness, Detailed local authority level tables April 2023-March 2024, tables A2R and A2P <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

<sup>4</sup> The Standard. “Renters’ Bill aims to drive out disreputable landlords, says minister”. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/matthew-pennycook-government-angela-rayner-bird-ministry-of-justice-b1181365.html>

<sup>5</sup> Citizens Advice. Available at: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/citizens-advice-now-helping-one-renter-every-minute-as-eviction-ban-just-papering-over-the-cracks/>

**1.6 RECOMMENDATION A: Introduce no-fault eviction compensation.** We believe that no-fault eviction compensation should be paid to tenants who face the significant financial, logistical and emotional toil of an eviction through no fault of their own. We propose that this takes the form of non-payment of rent for the final two months of the notice period when ground 1, 1A or 6 are used to evict. Generation Rent research has shown that an unwanted move costs a typical two-adult tenant household £2216, and this combined with a new deposit for the next tenancy, means the two-month period is proportionate.<sup>6</sup>

**1.7** In the case of eviction for sale, the significant windfall that a landlord would receive for the sale would far outweigh the cost of two months unpaid rent, to compensate the tenant for the upheaval and stress of being removed from their home. Similarly, in the case of eviction for occupation by landlord or family, the landlord is clearly already anticipating no longer requiring rent from the property in the very near future, and so again this should be weighed against the impact of a no-fault eviction on the tenant.

**1.8** Half of private renters have no savings at all. Every time a tenant is evicted, even with a longer notice period, we find ourselves facing the tightest imaginable window of time to secure a new home on the date that our current tenancy ends. This is in order to avoid paying rent on two tenancies, when many of us are already struggling to afford one rent. Missing this window because of availability or competition can result in homelessness. No-fault eviction compensation solves this longstanding problem by significantly increasing the window in which a tenant can find a new home without risking falling into debt, poverty or arrears because of two rents. This period of waived rent also gives the tenant time to save for the deposit they will need for a new tenancy.

**1.9** Our recommendation has been designed to involve non-payment of rent rather than a requirement for landlords to pay compensation to evicted tenants so that landlords are not burdened by an up-front payment to tenants. It also removes the need for a specific new transaction to take place that could be bureaucratic or lead to delays and disputes. This principle already exists in Section 11 of the 1988 Housing Act,<sup>7</sup> where tenants evicted for refurbishment are entitled to have their removal costs covered.

**1.10 RECOMMENDATION B: Double the tenant's protected period from no-fault eviction to 24 months.** The protected period at the start of the tenancy, before the end of which the tenant cannot be evicted under landlord-need grounds, is welcome. However, this must be doubled from 12 to 24 months if tenants are to see a meaningful improvement in their security of tenure – a position that the Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook has been on record supporting as recently as last year.<sup>8</sup>

## **2: Affordable Homes: The Cost of Renting Crisis**

**2.1** The Bill in its current form fails to tackle private renters' primary concern: the unaffordable and soaring cost of renting. Rent inflation (8.4% in the year to September 2024) continues to far outstrip both wage growth (5.1%) and inflation (1.7%).<sup>9</sup> The Bill has some

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<sup>6</sup> Generation Rent. "The Renters' Rights Bill Second Reading". Available at:

<https://www.generationrent.org/2024/10/09/the-renters-rights-bill-second-reading/>

<sup>7</sup> Housing Act 1988. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/50/section/11/enacted>

<sup>8</sup> <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3462/stages/17981/amendments/10009760>

<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics. "Private rent and house prices, UK". Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/privaterentandhousepricesuk/latest>

positives in this area, including outlawing pre-scheduled rent increases being written into contracts and limited rent increases to once a year. However, it is clear that this is not enough to address how unaffordable renting has become.

**2.2** Generation Rent's 2024 survey found that 67% of private renters who haven't moved in the past year had been asked to pay a higher rent in the past 12 months. It is very easy for landlords to raise rent to match the market, but this is often unaffordable: Between March 2021 and July 2024, Zoopla's measure of rent on new tenancies in the UK increased by 35% while wages (seasonally-adjusted regular pay) increased by just 20%.

**2.3** This problem is especially acute for key workers. Generation Rent research found that renting a home in a number of the UK's largest cities, including London, is totally unaffordable for those who contribute so much to our communities and economy. Analysis of 15 key and essential worker roles show that not a single borough of Inner London is affordable for roles across education, healthcare, social care, construction, retail, commerce, and hospitality.<sup>10</sup>

**2.4 RECOMMENDATION C: Limit in-tenancy rent rises to the lowest of wage growth or inflation.** Under the Bill's proposals, tenants are still vulnerable to rent-hike evictions, meaning that landlords can increase the rent with the purpose of forcing us out – effectively giving us a Section 21 by the back door. To give us the security we have been promised, the government must limit the amount that rent can be increased within a tenancy to the lowest of either wage growth or inflation.

**2.5** The chosen mechanism of the Bill to address this is through the First Tier Tribunal, which already exists but is widely unknown and difficult to use. When a tenant challenges their rent rise at a Tribunal, the Tribunal measures the proposed new rent against the 'market rate', which is what similar tenancies in the area are being advertised for. This drives up prices for renters based on speculative price-setting rather than actual rents being paid in their area. This metric does not reflect actual in-tenancy landlord behaviour, facilitating profiteering that is totally unchecked and has no regard for what tenants can afford. Market rates have fuelled many of the crises our country faces, and the government cannot tackle poverty and homelessness without slamming the brakes on soaring rents. The Bill's change to the Tribunal, limiting their judgements to whichever is lower of the market rate or what the landlord has asked for, will not provide the "protection from unreasonable rent increases" that the government has promised to introduce.

**2.6** We are pleased that the Bill also includes a ban on rental bidding wars, including landlords soliciting bids and all 'voluntary' bidding, meaning that the final rent agreed cannot be more than the advertised price. While banning bidding wars will not solve the cost of renting crisis for tenants, it is welcome protection from some of the worst examples of exploitation, and will mean tenants won't have their time wasted because of landlord or letting agent greed.

**2.7 RECOMMENDATION D: Ban requests for multiple months' rent upfront.** It is not clear whether the Bill as-written outlaws the payment of multiple months' rent upfront. This practice continues to blight tenants' lives, with 24% of respondents to Generation Rent's February 2024 supporter survey reporting that they had been asked to pay multiple months'

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<sup>10</sup> Generation Rent. "Teachers and other key workers locked out of renting in London". Available at: <https://www.generationrent.org/2024/02/21/locked-out-of-renting-london/>

rent upfront the last time they moved. Requests for rent upfront drives inequality by denying access to homes for renters who do not have access to such large lump sums of money

**2.8 RECOMMENDATION E: Reform tenancy deposits by introducing deposit passporting, releasing non-contested portions of deposits when disputes take place, setting clear timescales and obligations on landlords to submit to adjudication, and giving penalties for repeated false claims.** There remains no commitment to reforming tenancy deposits as part of this Bill, and this issue must be addressed going forward. With half of renters reporting having no savings,<sup>11</sup> the ability to pay a substantial deposit at the start of each tenancy is problematic, and driving us into debt. The government must introduce measures to improve accessibility to private renting and trust in the deposit dispute process..

### **3: Quality Homes: From Safety to Decency**

**3.1** One in eight private rented homes (12%) contains a “Category 1” hazard, meaning they are unsafe to live in. Nine percent of private rented homes have a damp problem. These figures are higher than in any other tenure.<sup>12</sup>

**3.2** Generation Rent supports the introduction of a redress scheme as a part of this Bill. Its powers to hold landlords to account must be clear and enforceable, with the required resources to effectively handle complaints and resolve disputes.

**3.3 RECOMMENDATION F: Extend the private renting redress scheme to Wales.** While Wales has the Rent Smart Wales system, it does not contain the scope that the redress scheme in this Bill does to intervene when problems occur. This change would permit Welsh tenants to enjoy the same protections as those in England, and the scheme can work cross-border. Extension of this into Wales, with the consent of the Senedd, is possible under devolution arrangements and we believe would be welcomed by Welsh Government.

**3.4** The Bill aims to extend protections for social tenants to private tenants by introducing an equivalent of ‘Awaab’s Law’ (Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023) for privately rented homes. This must contain fixed timelines for tangible action to be taken by the landlord when reports of dangerous damp and mould and other hazards are made. Generation Rent strongly supports its introduction. Consequences for non-compliant landlords are welcome, but we urge them to be implemented at an earlier stage, as opposed to being reserved for repeat offenders (see point 5.3).

**3.5 RECOMMENDATION G: Make ‘Awaab’s Law’ requirements for private landlords fully match the protections in social housing.** There has been some discussion of the differences between (typical) private landlords and social housing providers, and how this may warrant a difference in timescales for action and other legal requirements. We reject this framing. Exposure to damp and mould carries serious risks which, in the tragic case of the toddler Awaab Ishak, proved to be fatal. Any landlord obligations that the government

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<sup>11</sup> Shelter. “Half of working renters only one pay cheque away from losing their home”. Available at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press\\_release/half\\_of\\_working\\_renters\\_only\\_one\\_pay\\_cheque\\_away\\_from\\_losing\\_their\\_home](https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/half_of_working_renters_only_one_pay_cheque_away_from_losing_their_home)

<sup>12</sup> English Housing Survey 2022-23, Private Rented Sector Report, Annex Table 4.7. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annex-tables-for-english-housing-survey-headline-report-2022-to-2023>

legislates for must focus on preventing health harms as urgently and robustly as possible, not compromising for the convenience of private landlords over social housing providers.

**3.6** Generation Rent supports the introduction of a Decent Homes Standard for privately rented homes, which also equalises standards with social homes. One in five privately rented homes are currently classed as non-decent and enforcement of this standard must be robust to drive up standards.

**3.6 RECOMMENDATION H: Introduce an independent regulator for letting agents.**

Tenants dealing with letting agents can face issues such as pressure to sign up to tenancies, complaints being ignored, excessive rent increases (as agents have greater incentive to maximise rent and are impacted less than landlords if tenants move out), deposits not being returned or returned with unfair deductions. A regulator for letting agents would help root out the worst practices. Notably, the letting agent industry supports this change.

## **4. Ending Discrimination**

**4.1** Minority ethnic renters are 36% more likely than white British and Irish renters to have been threatened with an eviction, according to Generation Rent research.<sup>13</sup> Ending arbitrary Section 21 evictions should help to address this injustice, but the new law must be monitored to see which further changes are needed to end discrimination.

**4.2 RECOMMENDATION I: Increase maximum fines for discriminatory landlords from £7,000 to £15,000 and remove the need for intent to be proven in court.** We welcome the Bill's proposal to outlaw landlords issuing blanket bans of tenants with children or those in receipt of benefits. However, given the high requirements for proving discrimination in these cases, £7,000 as a maximum fine is not enough to act as an adequate disincentive for breaking the law. The maximum fine should therefore be raised. As well as this, tenants should also be entitled to financial compensation and awarded some of the fine paid by the landlord – something that is not only fair for renters, but which will also incentivise tenants to engage with this anti-discrimination legislation. Moreover, in its current form, the Bill requires that a landlords' intent to discriminate must be proven in court. Regardless of a landlord's intent, policies and actions which cause discrimination must be the focus of this legislation and so this requirement must be removed.

**4.3 RECOMMENDATION J: End the 'Right to Rent' system and hostile environment for migrant renters.** The 'Right to Rent' means that landlords and agents must check the immigration status of adults who will live in the home before a tenancy starts. This continues to fuel discrimination in renting, with landlords required to act, effectively, as immigration officers. Those caught out by the policy face fines of up to £20,000 or a prison sentence of up to five years. As a result, many landlords are often reluctant to rent to any tenants born outside of the UK out of fear of making a mistake. In 2017, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants found that over half of landlords surveyed (51%) stated that they were less likely to consider letting to foreign nationals from outside the EU and almost a fifth (18%) were less likely to rent to EU nationals, after Right to Rent checks were put in place.<sup>14</sup> Not only are

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<sup>13</sup> HQN. "Risk of losing home 'a third higher' for minority ethnic private renters". Available at: <https://hqnetwork.co.uk/news/risk-of-losing-home-a-third-higher-for-minority-ethnic-private-renters-research/>

<sup>14</sup> Strategic Legal Fund. "Right to Rent". Available at: <https://strategiclegalfund.org.uk/news/right-to-rent--new-report-launched-by-icwi.php>

migrants who do have the right to rent being unfairly targeted, but so too are minority ethnic people born in the UK. Generation Rent research found that white people are 36% more likely to receive a positive response when enquiring about rental homes than Black people.<sup>15</sup> Ending the 'Right to Rent' policy would reduce the structural discrimination tenants face when seeking a new home, keeping many safe from insecure housing and homelessness.

**4.4 RECOMMENDATION K: Introduce a corporate parenting duty for local authorities to act as guarantors and offer private tenancy deposits for care leavers.** Care leavers face barriers to accessing a private tenancy because of the requirement of a guarantor and the need for a deposit, neither of which are always provided by local authorities despite their role as 'corporate parents'. Research by NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) this month has shown that 42% of local authorities in England act as a guarantor for care leavers while 77% will provide rent deposits for care leavers.<sup>16</sup> Generation Rent has been campaigning alongside NYAS and Barnardo's to make sure every care leaver has the same support and opportunities regardless of where they live.

**4.5 RECOMMENDATION L: Remove the requirement for pet owning tenants to obtain pet insurance, and make consent for pets last throughout a tenancy.** Tenants will be able to ask for permission to keep a pet in their homes, which a landlord can only refuse with reasonable grounds. The Bill should set out these grounds clearly and based on evidence of risk or harm. Landlords are not animal welfare experts and so should not be empowered beyond their role to interfere in their tenants' enjoyment of their home. For this law to not disadvantage the most deprived renters with pets, landlords should not be able to demand that the tenant purchases pet insurance as is currently written into the Bill. The tenancy deposit is already a tenant cost designed to protect the landlord in case of damages. We welcome that a landlord must respond to a written request from the tenant within 28 days, but the Bill should specify that non-response from a landlord can be taken as consent for the tenant to keep a pet. Once consent for a pet is granted, it must remain in place throughout the tenancy, or the threat of withdrawing consent could create a new power imbalance that would deter tenants from making complaints or asserting their rights.

## **5: Private Rented Sector Database**

**5.1** Generation Rent supports the introduction of the Private Rented Sector Database. We have campaigned for many years for the introduction of a national landlord register and we wholeheartedly agree that landlords must be registered in order to let out a property. This is a vital step towards greater transparency and professionalism in private renting.

**5.2** We also support the Bill's requirement for landlords to be registered with the database if they wish to serve an eviction notice. This will drive up compliance with the scheme and ensure that more tenants are protected by knowing that their landlord has incentive to register. This closes a loophole that the previous iteration of this legislation, the Renters (Reform) Bill, would have left open.

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<sup>15</sup> Generation Rent. "Minority ethnic people more likely to be ignored when searching for new privately rented homes". Available at: <https://www.generationrent.org/2023/11/08/minority-ethnic-people-more-likely-to-be-ignored-when-searching-for-new-privately-rented-homes/>

<sup>16</sup> CYP Now. "Most English councils not willing to act as guarantors for care leavers". Available at: <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/news/most-english-councils-not-willing-to-act-as-guarantors-for-care-leavers>



**5.3 RECOMMENDATION M: Enable immediate Rent Repayment Orders when landlords are not registered with the property database or redress scheme.** While we welcome the application of Rent Repayment Orders (RROs) for breaches of the requirement for landlords to sign up to the database and the redress scheme, we propose that they become eligible for a first offence. Tenants are often better placed than cash-strapped councils to spot non-compliance, but will have little incentive to check and report unregistered landlords if it is up to councils to investigate and issue warnings before the tenant becomes eligible for a rent refund. In the words of our late friend Simon Mullings during committee stage evidence for the Renters (Reform) Bill, an “army of tenants” would be willing to enforce this law at a time that local authorities are concerned by the burden of enforcement duties placed upon them.<sup>17</sup> RROs for first offences would create a strong incentive for tenants to check the database, and in turn a strong incentive for landlords to register in the first place. Generation Rent analysis of the First-tier Tribunal and Greater London Authority Rogue Landlord Database found that there were more successful RROs relating to landlord licensing offences than council fines or prosecutions in London in 2020-22.<sup>18</sup>

**5.6 RECOMMENDATION N: Record actual rents on the property database.** As noted in point 2.4, the database provides an excellent opportunity to record actual rents. Expanding its remit to require landlords to provide rental data, including serving of Section 13s (formal notice of a rent rise to a tenant), would create a new source of data on rents which could then inform policy-making. This recommendation was made by the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee in 2023.<sup>19</sup> This would also assist the First Tier Tribunal in making rent recommendations that are rooted in the reality of what is being paid, as opposed to speculative rates.

**5.6 RECOMMENDATION O: Record evictions on the property database.** This would further bolster compliance with the database, and will also facilitate an understanding of why evictions are taking place: something which is currently unknown as a result of Section 21 not requiring a reason to be given for the eviction. Furthermore, this would also assist local authority enforcement of the no-let period, closing any potential loophole for unscrupulous landlords who fraudulently evict their tenants claiming they are moving in or selling up, only to let it out again soon after.

## 6. Energy Efficiency

**6.1 RECOMMENDATION P: Uprate energy efficiency standards in privately rented homes.** While noting that energy efficiency standards are not in the Bill, Generation Rent welcomes separate government proposals to raise the minimum energy efficiency standard (MEES) for private rented homes from Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band E to C

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<sup>17</sup> Simon Mullings, co-chair of the Housing Law Practitioners Association (HLPAs), passed away earlier this year. He was a wonderful champion for private renters, particularly those facing hardship, and his oral evidence to the Renters (Reform) Bill Commons Committee in 2023 can and should be read again here:

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-16/debates/3e276448-ed20-447d-836d-ad38cc50baa3/Renters\(Reform\)Bill\(FourthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-16/debates/3e276448-ed20-447d-836d-ad38cc50baa3/Renters(Reform)Bill(FourthSitting))

<sup>18</sup> Generation Rent. “Why rent refunds are the key to fixing the rental market”. Available at:

<https://www.generationrent.org/2023/12/18/why-rent-refunds-are-the-key-to-fixing-the-rental-market/>

<sup>19</sup> Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee (2023) “Reforming the Private Rented Sector: Fifth Report of Session 2022-23”. Available at:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/33924/documents/185831/default/>

by 2030.<sup>20</sup> We believe that it is a vital measure to reduce both fuel poverty and carbon emissions while improving the quality and safety of more than two million homes in England. We are disappointed that reference to energy efficiency is not made in the Bill as it is an essential component of a safe and liveable home. It is also disappointing that another consultation is required on this given the previous iteration was conducted recently, and tenants need the government to take swifter action.

**6.2** The 2030 target could also be made more ambitious by implementing the new MEES earlier for new tenancies, ensuring that improvements take place earlier and that tenants feel the benefit. As private renting is the tenure type with the highest rates of fuel poverty, these changes are urgent and must not be delayed.

**6.3 RECOMMENDATION Q: Enhance protections for tenants from rent rises and eviction as unintended consequences of energy efficiency uprating.** The provision of homes that reach the minimum standard of decency, energy efficiency and warmth is the responsibility of the housing provider or landlord. The current system disincentivises tenants from applying for grants which could improve our homes because risks could outweigh the benefits to them. We must be sure that tenants who live through upgrades, especially those funded or part-funded by grants attained in their name, feel the benefit of the improvements without risk of eviction or a related rent increase if the landlord chooses to cash in on the property post-upgrades, thus capturing the benefit intended for the tenant. Measures would include clarifying that the First Tier Tribunal treats grant-funded improvements as the tenant's own when setting rents (resulting in a deduction from the market rate), and an extended period of protection from a no-fault eviction following grant-funded works.

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<sup>20</sup> House of Commons Library. "Energy efficiency of UK homes". Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9889/>