



Renters' Rights Bill: Evidence submitted to the Bill Committee by the Student Accredited Private Rental Sector (SAPRS)

October 2024

About SAPRS

- SAPRS is a group of leading second- and third-year university accommodation providers committed to providing quality, off-street housing to students across the UK.

Executive Summary

- The Renters' Rights Bill, as currently drafted, risks exacerbating the current student housing crisis through the removal of fixed-term tenancy agreements (FTTAs) for the student private rented sector.
- The decision to provide Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) with an exemption should be extended to the entire student sector, to protect the affordability and availability of student accommodation across the country.
- If no action is taken, students will suffer. Even without the Bill, StuRents has forecast a 490,000 bed shortfall in the student sector by 2026. This will only get worse should the Bill pass as it currently stands –with landlords leaving the student market, leading to less supply and higher prices.
- Our solution, to provide the student private rented sector with the same exemption as PBSA, provided there is adherence to a government-approved code of conduct which protects and enhances students' rights, will provide the security of supply for good landlords to continue letting their properties to students for years to come.

The need to amend the Renters' Rights Bill to ensure it delivers for students

- We welcome the Labour Government's ambition to deliver the much-needed overhaul of the private rented sector. We look forward to working in partnership with the Government to help deliver this objective.
- In its current form, however, the recently introduced Renters' Rights Bill's proposal to end FTTAs risks worsening the existing housing crisis for one particular group of renters: students.
- Within the Bill, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) is exempt from the ban on fixed-term tenancies.
- However, the student private rented sector (SPRS) has not been granted such an exemption, despite providing a vital and comparatively more affordable source of student housing.
- By introducing a new mandatory ground of possession, the Bill rightly recognises that the SPRS depends on cyclical tenancy agreements that fit the academic term times of students.
- However, the Renters' Rights Bill in its current form poses a significant issue for student housing availability and affordability. Under the current proposals, tenants can only give 2 months' notice to end their tenancy at any time. This poses challenges for landlords in the student market where early terminations could lead to extended void periods.
- This risks student landlords leaving the market, reducing the student housing supply, and driving up prices as a result. A negative precedent for this was created in Scotland, where as a result of similar legislation the student housing crisis has significantly worsened.
- Young people, including students, are already disproportionately affected by housing instability, the increased cost of living, and the mental health crisis exacerbated by the pandemic. The Government must act now to deliver a Bill that benefits students as well as general private renters.



- Our view that changes to the Bill to protect student housing are needed is shared by organisations such as [Unipol](#), [Universities UK](#) and the [Higher Education Policy Institute](#).
- The Government’s key objective is to deliver security and stability to renters. To deliver for all renters, including students, the Bill must create parity between all types of student housing by extending the exemption granted to PBSA to the SPRS, provided they adhere to an agreed code of conduct.
- Allowing both PBSA and the SPRS to offer FTTAs will protect the student housing supply, and more importantly students for years to come.

The importance of the Student Private Rented Sector

- The SPRS provides a significant amount of student housing - over 800,000 students live in student private rented accommodation, data from StuRents suggests.
- Without parity, the Bill risks significantly reducing the supply of these off-street student homes across the country, at a time when there is already a student housing crisis, with StuRents arguing there will already be a shortfall of 490,000 beds by 2026.
- It would also create a two-tier student housing system, in which the PBSA has a significant advantage in being able to provide FTTAs, while SPRS landlords would not have this privilege.
- And even with the exemption, PBSA cannot supply the number of beds needed to address the shortfall, between slowing PBSA growth and a reduction in the number of off-street properties available associated with the Bill, the student housing supply will come under immense pressure in the coming years.
- On average, it is also cheaper than purpose-built student accommodation, and therefore provides an important source of housing for domestic and economically disadvantaged students in Britain.

The detrimental impact on student mental health and student housing supply and affordability

- The Student Accredited Private Rental Sector (SAPRS) [estimates](#) that up to 149,600 students – or 25% of the total number of students in private rented accommodation - are at risk of losing their student home as a result of the ending of fixed-term tenancies and the subsequent impact on the student housing sector.
- A negative precedent to the English legislation already exists in Scotland, where the Scottish Government implemented similar legislation that led to a 12% drop in the number of privately rented properties between 2016 and 2020, as well as a rise in rent prices of 18% across Scotland. On its webpage, the University of Edinburgh [warns](#) that there has been a “significant fall in the number of private flats available for rental by students”.
- This risks exacerbating the current student mental health crisis. Student Minds has previously [highlighted](#) that over half of students it surveyed reported being affected by a mental health issue. 83% of those surveyed also noted they were either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ concerned about the cost-of-living crisis, with 41% suggesting this was having a negative impact on their wellbeing.
- If the Renters’ Rights Bill is not amended, rental prices for student housing will likely rise, increasing these financial strains on students and further adding pressures to student mental health.

The solution: Parity with Purpose Built Student Accommodation whilst driving up housing standards

- The solution we propose would not only safeguard student housing availability, but also contribute to improving student housing standards across the sector – a win-win.
- We propose a code of conduct that student private landlords must sign up to in order to be exempt from the ban on fixed-term tenancies, providing students with the security and protections of other



renters, and landlords with the security of supply to continue servicing students with their properties at the start of each academic year.

- Only if landlords adhere to the code and its quality standards will they receive the exemption – creating an incentive for landlords to adhere to the code, thus driving up standards across the sector.
- The code would be developed in close consultation with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and be administered by a trusted organisation such as Unipol, which is already administering and overseeing the code of conduct for the purpose-built student housing sector.
- If the Government creates parity between PBSA and the SPRS, provided they sign up to an approved code of conduct with standards and protections for students, this will ensure security of supply to the sector, whilst providing students with the ability to simply focus on their academic studies. This should be the desirable outcome for all parties involved.
- The Bill must create a fairer deal for all tenants, including students. A representative [YouGov survey](#) we commissioned in January 2024 shows that there is widespread support for stronger measures to tackle the student housing crisis, with more than half (53%) of respondents stating that the government should be doing more to support students in finding housing.