

Written evidence submitted by David and Manuela Yeandle.

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We are student landlords in Norwich and are the owners of two properties, which offer quality accommodation at a reasonable price to five and four students respectively.

We are very concerned about the impact of the proposed abolition of fixed-term tenancies for private student landlords and the knock-on effects for the students themselves.

The academic year differs from university to university, but most run from mid-September to mid-June (with breaks for Christmas and Easter). This equates to a period of nine months. Each year of study can be different, depending on the course followed, introductory periods, assessment periods, periods of work experience, and graduation arrangements. Some students need/choose to stay in student accommodation all year round, for example if they are estranged from their family or have a job in the university town in which they are studying. Landlords currently use the Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST), which covers a tenancy for a group of student friends or acquaintances, in which all persons are jointly and severally liable to the landlord. This means that the landlord could enforce the terms of the Tenancy Agreement against all of the tenants together, or against some of them only, or against any of them individually. Most ASTs run for one calendar year from 1 September to 31 August. Currently, there are periods when not all of the tenants will be in residence together, but for most of the year there will usually be someone in residence, usually because of job commitments. Many students have part-time work to help fund their studies, others seek temporary work in the long vacation.

If fixed-term tenancies are abolished and students can leave the tenancy after giving two months' notice, this will lead to significant uncertainties for tenants and landlords alike. Some students may choose to end their tenancy in June, thus leaving a void period for the landlord until September. This will mean that groups will lose coherence, with some students wishing to stay during the summer, others not. If landlords move to individual tenancies per person, some tenants will pay for nine months or less, others for twelve. There will be no security of income for landlords. Landlords will inevitably increase the monthly rent to cover the annual amount required in the space of nine months, for example, if the monthly rent (12 months) for a five-bedroom house is currently £2,200 (£440 per person), that will increase (all other things being equal) to £2,933 per month (£587 per person) for a nine-month period. Anyone staying for the summer months would be charged extra under a separate contract. This will result in the student paying more.

There will be increased administrative charges. Moreover, the landlord may become responsible for council tax and utilities bills in the event of a void period. A long void period will also cause problems for the landlord's insurance, probably necessitating the employment of an agent to carry out inspections and attend to maintenance. All of

Renters' Rights Bill – submission of evidence to the Public Bill Committee

these things will lead to increased rents to students so that the monthly rent of £2,933 would be likely to rise to £3,500 for the same accommodation.

Furthermore, there is also an important environmental consideration, as landlords will most likely under the circumstances make the move to bills-inclusive contracts, which are likely to encourage tenants to use more energy.

It seems to us that not enough thought has been given to private student landlords and that the same rules should apply to them as to university-owned student halls.

We are conscientious student landlords, who always respond immediately to our tenants and provide a high level of accommodation and appliances. The latter are repaired or replaced as soon as there is a problem. The properties are maintained in good order. We believe in fairness and honesty towards our tenants.

Landlords have been overwhelmed by regulations in the last ten years. A particular case in point is the cost of an HMO licence and the associated bureaucracy. We appreciate the need for some regulation, but it appears that the desire of the government to give security to regular tenants in private sector housing overlooks the needs of honest and reliable landlords who let to students. Already student landlords are selling their properties because of overregulation, thus reducing the availability of private houses and flats. We hope not to be driven to this, but the increasing burden of regulation is making it more and more likely.

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