

THE 2026 RENTER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Everything you need to know before the Renters' Rights Act takes effect

Updated for the Renters' Rights Act 2025 — In force 1 May 2026

Free guide — please share with anyone who rents

12 NEW RIGHTS

10 ACTION CHECKLISTS

KEY DATES

On **1 May 2026**, the biggest reform of the private rented sector in 30 years takes effect. If you rent your home in England, the rules that have governed your tenancy for decades are about to change — and most renters have no idea what it means for them.

HOW TO USE: Read this guide once. Bookmark the Action Plan page. Share it with anyone who rents.

Inside you will find:

- The 12 new rights every renter gains in 2026
- Key dates and what happens when
- Five scenarios — what to do if it happens to you
- A 30-day Action Plan to make sure you are covered
- Where to get free help if things go wrong

THE 12 NEW RIGHTS YOU GAIN

In force from **1 May 2026** unless otherwise stated.

1

The end of no-fault eviction

Section 21 is abolished. Your landlord can no longer make you leave without giving a reason.

7

Protection from family discrimination

Refusing tenants because they have children is now unlawful and a criminal offence.

2

Open-ended tenancies

All tenancies become Assured Periodic Tenancies – no more fixed terms locking you in.

8

Protection from 'No DSS'

Refusing tenants who claim housing benefit is unlawful and prosecutable.

3

The right to leave with 2 months' notice

You can give written notice at any time and walk away, no penalty.

9

Awaab's Law – strict repair timescales

Damp and mould must be investigated within 10 working days; emergencies within 24 hours.

4

One rent increase per year, maximum

Any increase must be on Form 4A, with at least 2 months' notice, and to market rate only.

10

The PRS Database and free Ombudsman

Verify your landlord. Resolve disputes for free. Compensation up to £25,000.

5

Free Tribunal challenge with no downside

You can challenge any rent increase. The Tribunal cannot raise it above the asking figure.

11

The advance rent cap

Maximum one month's rent in advance. Demands for 6 or 12 months are now illegal.

6

The right to keep a pet

Landlords cannot unreasonably refuse. Pet damage insurance replaces higher deposits.

12

The Mandatory Information Sheet

Every landlord must give you a written information sheet within the first month of your tenancy.

KEY DATES

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on **27 October 2025**. But not everything happens at once. Here is the timeline that matters to you.

DATE	WHAT HAPPENS
27 Oct 2025	Royal Assent – the law is on the statute book
1 May 2026	Main provisions take effect: Section 21 abolition, ASTAPT, rent rules, pet rights
1 May 2026	Discrimination provisions (children, benefits) become criminal offences
1 May 2026	Awaab's Law extended to private rented sector
31 May 2026	Deadline for landlords to issue Mandatory Information Sheet to existing tenants
Throughout 2026	PRS Database opens for landlord registration
Late 2026	PRS Ombudsman becomes mandatory for all private landlords

WATCH THIS: If you sign a new tenancy between now and 1 May 2026, the old rules apply until conversion. We recommend negotiating a one-month rolling tenancy if possible, to keep flexibility.

5 SCENARIOS — WHAT TO DO

If any of these happen to you, here is the first thing to do.

Your landlord wants to increase your rent

There are now strict rules about how and when a landlord can raise your rent — and real grounds to challenge an increase you think is unfair. But knowing whether your landlord has followed the correct process, whether the proposed figure is genuinely at market rate, and exactly how to challenge it without jeopardising your tenancy requires the right forms, the right evidence, and the right wording. Get it wrong and you could end up paying the full increase by default.

Members get: *Rent Increase Assessment Worksheet, step-by-step Tribunal guide, and a pre-drafted challenge letter — everything needed to push back with confidence.*

You have damp or mould

The law now sets strict timescales for landlords to act — and failure to meet them opens the door to compensation and enforcement action. But only if you have reported correctly, in the right way, at the right time, with the right documentation. A verbal complaint or a casual text message is worth very little. An incorrectly escalated complaint can actually weaken your position.

Members get: *Repair Request Letter, Repair Log template, and a clear escalation guide so every step is documented and timestamped correctly from day one.*

You receive an eviction notice

This is the scenario where getting things wrong costs the most. Many notices served by landlords contain errors that make them legally invalid — but tenants who simply comply and leave will never know. Responding incorrectly or missing a deadline can seriously damage your ability to defend your case in court.

Members get: *The Eviction Defence Pack — the exact documents to check, the letter to send, and a case review from our team within 48 hours.*

Your landlord won't return your deposit

Deposit disputes are winnable — but the outcome almost entirely depends on the quality of your evidence and whether the correct procedure was followed at every stage. Challenging deductions successfully requires knowing exactly which are unlawful, how depreciation is calculated, and which route to take.

Members get: *The Deposit Recovery Toolkit — evidence checklist, demand letter template, and adjudication walkthrough. Members typically recover £400–£2,000 in disputed deductions.*

You're told 'no children' or 'no DSS'

This is now a criminal offence — but proving it and getting a result requires preserving the right evidence immediately, knowing who to report to, and making a complaint that actually goes somewhere. Most tenants do nothing because they do not know it is unlawful, or do not know how to act on it.

Members get: *Discrimination evidence checklist, reporting guide, and direct support from our team in submitting a formal complaint.*

YOUR 30-DAY ACTION PLAN

Do these eight things in the next month and you will be ahead of 95% of renters.

WEEK 1	Document everything – Photograph every room of your home, date-stamped. Save your tenancy agreement, deposit protection certificate, and inventory in a single folder (paper or cloud).
WEEK 1	Verify deposit protection – Check your name and postcode on dps.co.uk , mydeposits.co.uk and tenancydepositscheme.com . If your deposit is not protected, you may already be entitled to 1–3x compensation.
WEEK 2	Audit your tenancy – Check the agreement for unfair clauses (no pets, no children, exit fees). From 1 May 2026 many of these become unenforceable.
WEEK 2	Set up a paper trail – Switch all communication with your landlord to email or written letter. A phone call leaves no record.
WEEK 3	Note your landlord's details – You will need their full name, address for service, and the deposit scheme reference. From 31 May 2026 they must give you these in writing.
WEEK 3	Identify your local resources – Bookmark Citizens Advice, Shelter, your council's Environmental Health and Housing teams. Save the Shelter helpline: 0808 800 4444.
WEEK 4	Calendar key dates – Add 1 May 2026 and 31 May 2026 to your calendar. Set a reminder 30 days before any planned rent review.
WEEK 4	Get your toolkit – Download or build your library of letter templates, checklists and guides. (We have done this for you – see the next page.)

WHERE TO GET FREE HELP

You do not have to do this alone. Here are the most useful free services if things go wrong.

SERVICE	WHAT THEY HELP WITH	CONTACT
Shelter	Housing crisis, eviction, illegal eviction	0808 800 4444
Citizens Advice	General tenancy advice, benefits	0800 144 8848
Local council Environmental Health	Damp, mould, hazards, repairs	Search 'EH' + your council
Local council Trading Standards	Discrimination, illegal advance rent, lettings agent issues	Via your council website
First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)	Rent increase challenges (free)	gov.uk/housing-tribunals
DPS / MyDeposits / TDS	Free deposit dispute adjudication	Their websites
PRS Ombudsman (from 2026)	Free binding dispute resolution	Details published 2026

REALITY CHECK: These services are excellent but stretched. Average wait for Shelter telephone advice is 45 minutes and Citizens Advice in many areas now takes 5–10 working days for an appointment. Plan ahead.

7 MISTAKES TO AVOID

Leaving when served a notice

A notice is not a court order. You have the right to remain until a judge orders possession.

Stopping rent over a repair dispute

This gives the landlord grounds to evict you. Pay rent, document disrepair, and pursue compensation separately.

Communicating only by phone

If it's not written down, it didn't happen. Email everything, even quick conversations ('just to confirm what we agreed today').

Assuming verbal agreements stand

Permission to keep a pet, agreement on rent, repair promises – get them in writing or they will not be enforceable.

Throwing away the move-in inventory

It is your single most important document for getting your deposit back. Keep a copy forever.

Ignoring small disrepair

A small damp patch becomes mould becomes structural damage. Report early, in writing, and keep escalating.

Trusting the landlord to know the law

Most landlords will not have read the Renters' Rights Act 2025. Some will deliberately ignore it. Knowing your rights is your single biggest protection.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Knowing your rights is the foundation. Acting on them – quickly, correctly, and with the right paperwork – is what actually keeps you in your home and your money in your pocket.

Renters Rights Act Services exists for one reason: to give ordinary tenants the same firepower that landlords and letting agents already have. We are not a charity and we are not a law firm. We are a membership service that gives you, for less than the cost of one Netflix subscription, everything you need.

WHAT YOU GET AS A MEMBER

26 ready-to-send templates and checklists – every letter, every form, every situation

Personal case review – submit your situation and get a written response from us

Plain-English Act explainers – 10 in-depth guides covering every major change

Eviction defence pack – exactly what to send and when, if it happens to you

Deposit recovery toolkit – typical members recover £400–£2,000 in deposit deductions

Rent challenge worksheet – calculate your case before going to the Tribunal

Member-only updates – every change to the law, explained the day it happens

Less than the cost of one bad takeaway. The peace of mind that comes from knowing exactly what to do – before you need to do it.

JOIN TODAY

rentersrightsactservices.co.uk

YOUR ACTION PLAN — ONE PAGE

Print this page. Tick as you go. You will be ahead of almost every renter in England.

TODAY	Read this guide cover-to-cover. Save it on your phone.
TODAY	Photograph every room in your home (date-stamped).
WEEK 1	Verify your deposit is protected (dps.co.uk / mydeposits.co.uk / tenancydepositscheme.com).
WEEK 1	Save tenancy agreement, deposit certificate, inventory in one folder.
WEEK 2	Audit your tenancy agreement for unfair clauses.
WEEK 2	Move all landlord communication to email/written letter.
WEEK 3	Note landlord's full name, address, deposit scheme reference.
WEEK 3	Bookmark Shelter (0808 800 4444), Citizens Advice (0800 144 8848).
WEEK 4	Calendar 1 May 2026 and 31 May 2026.
WEEK 4	Get your member toolkit — rentersrightsactservices.co.uk
ONGOING	If anything goes wrong: write before you talk. Document before you act. Ask before you accept.
ONE LAST THING:	Forward this guide to anyone you know who rents. The single biggest risk to UK renters in 2026 is that they will not know their new rights. Sharing this is free.

This guide is general information, not legal advice. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 is complex and individual situations vary. For complex disputes, seek advice from Shelter, Citizens Advice, or a qualified solicitor. © 2026 Renters Rights Act Services.