Renters' Reform Coalition

Asks for Local Authority Enforcement of Renters' Rights

The Renters' Rights Act is the largest transformation of private renters' rights in more than a generation, and can deliver real improvements to housing security and conditions. However, the legislation will only be as effective as it is enforced on the ground by local authorities.

Though the UK Government has introduced a new Duty to Enforce renters' rights for local authorities, meeting the basic requirements of the Duty will not be sufficient alone to meaningfully improve conditions for renters.

The Renters' Reform Coalition makes the following recommendations to local authorities to strengthen their enforcement of private renters' rights. By taking the following steps, local authorities can adopt a tenant-centred, outcome-focused, and harm-reduction approach to enforcing renters' rights:

1. Taking clear action against landlords breaching the rules while maintaining communication and input from tenants, to ensure their needs are considered and they are protected against retaliation.
2. Ensuring different local authority departments work together effectively to manage cases with continuity and improve efficiency in processing complaints.
3. Ensuring clear, prompt, and accessible communication to tenants, keeping them informed throughout the duration of their case.
4. Formally recognising the need to protect tenants with vulnerable characteristics across enforcement policies and approaches.
5. Providing wrap-around support by connecting tenants with the advice and services they need alongside enforcement action.
6. Making enforcement accessible through offering clear public information on the complaint process, different modes of communication to contact enforcement teams, and online guidance on tenants' full set of protections.
7. Informing and signposting tenants when they might benefit from accessing the First-tier Tribunal, including with applying for Rent Repayment Orders and challenging rent increases, and to civil legal aid where appropriate.
8. Increasing the number of proactive inspections of rented homes, to identify poor housing conditions without reliance on tenants making complaints.
9. Expanding both selective and additional licensing schemes to all eligible areas and utilising these schemes to enforce standards more proactively.
10. Employing at least one full-time tenant relations officer, whose role is dedicated to delivering clear communication and support to tenants.
11. Ensuring representation of private tenants from a range of backgrounds in the council's Housing Scrutiny Committee.