

**RENTERS' RIGHTS BILL BRIEFING – HOUSE OF LORDS COMMITTEE STAGE  
SHARED BY UNISON, A PUBLIC SERVICE TRADE UNION  
APRIL 2025**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

UNISON welcomes the Renters' Rights Bill, recognising its potential to deliver meaningful change within the Private Rented Sector (PRS). This legislation represents a vital opportunity to address the systemic challenges faced by millions of private tenants:

- Many UNISON members who rent privately struggle with unaffordable rents, poor housing conditions, and eviction threats.
- Housing costs and insecurity for public sector workers affect recruitment, retention, and by extension, public service delivery.
- The Bill includes provisions to ban no-fault evictions, limit rent increases, and improve rental standards, offering greater stability for tenants.
- However, UNISON recommends strengthening existing elements of the Bill to address housing supply, affordability, insecurity and accessibility.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

UNISON calls on Parliamentarians to take this opportunity to enact truly transformative legislation. We urge Parliamentarians to support amendments and additional measures that will:

- **Keep housing affordable for low and middle income earners.**
- **End discriminatory practices such as demands for high-earning guarantors.**
- **Empower local authorities with the resources to effectively enforce landlord compliance.**

**1. INTRODUCTION - POLICY CONTEXT**

UNISON, representing over 1.3M members predominantly working in vital public services, private contractors, and charities across the UK, is deeply invested in ensuring fair and secure housing for our members. Many of our members are the very individuals who administer housing benefit, manage social housing, and provide essential housing-related social care, housing advice, repair work and administrative support, within local authorities and housing associations.

The harsh realities of the Private Rented Sector – characterised by exorbitant costs, insecurity, and often substandard conditions – disproportionately affects our membership, a significant proportion of whom are women and low-paid workers. This instability directly impacts their wellbeing and career progression. The inability of public sector workers to afford to live within reasonable proximity to their workplaces is a growing crisis, directly contributing to recruitment and retention challenges and consequently hindering the delivery of essential services to the public.

UNISON welcomes the Renters' Rights Bill's commitment to abolish Section 21 no-fault evictions and establish the greater security of periodic tenancies as the standard – long-overdue measures that will fundamentally improve the lives of the 11m private renters across England. By properly regulating the PRS, this legislation has the potential to alleviate the current rental crisis.

UNISON remains steadfast in its support of Parliamentarians to ensure the Bill delivers comprehensive and enforceable protections for tenants while acknowledging the rights of responsible landlords. Crucially, we emphasise the need for adequately resourced local authorities to effectively oversee and implement these vital reforms.

## 2. HOUSING UNAFFORDABILITY AND INSECURITY

While UNISON welcomes the Renters' Rights Bill as a necessary step forward, particularly its provisions to ban no-fault evictions, curb exploitative rental bidding wars, limit rent increases, and empower tenants to challenge unfair practices and substandard conditions, **it falls short of fully addressing the escalating crisis of housing unaffordability and insecurity that disproportionately impacts vital public service workers and vulnerable communities.** UNISON asserts that bolder action is urgently needed to tackle excessive and unaffordable rents.

For countless UNISON members – the dedicated individuals who underpin our public services – the harsh realities of exorbitant housing costs, precarious living conditions, and the ever-present threat of eviction are a daily burden. This instability not only undermines their personal well-being but also directly impacts their ability to serve our communities effectively.

Evidence from [UNISON's collaboration with Generation Rent](#) illustrates the profound challenges faced by private tenants. Our research reveals a landscape of unaffordable rents, the constant threat of eviction, unacceptable housing conditions, and discriminatory practices. Alarming, **nearly one-third of UNISON's private renter members are forced to allocate over 60% of their income to rent – an unsustainable burden that represents their single largest cost-of-living pressure.** This crippling expenditure pushes essential workers and those in vulnerable, low-paid sectors, into severe financial hardship and poverty.

This reality is further confirmed by a [YouGov poll commissioned by Shelter](#), which demonstrates the widespread financial strain caused by soaring housing costs, even for those in employment. The poll revealed that **40% of workers struggle to pay their rent, with a third of private renters dedicating 50% or more of their income to housing, placing them firmly in financial hardship.**

UNISON has long campaigned for robust legislative reforms to tackle the root causes of housing unaffordability and its direct link to poverty, consistently calling for meaningful limits on in-tenancy rent increases and the unequivocal abolition of no-fault evictions. This insidious practice is often exploited for economic eviction, allowing landlords to displace tenants without cause to impose inflated rents.

Building on our [previous briefings](#) highlighting the devastating financial impact of housing costs and recognising that the Renters' Rights Bill's offers some protections against unfair rent hikes, UNISON firmly believes its affordability provisions must be significantly strengthened to ensure genuinely affordable housing and long-term security for all workers, thereby more effectively tackling poverty and in-work poverty. UNISON urges Parliament to enhance the Bill with stronger, enforceable tenant protections against unfair rent increases and reiterates our urgent call for significantly increased investment in genuinely affordable social and council housing, which is crucial for alleviating financial burdens, improving well-being, supporting public service recruitment, and reducing local authority costs.

### 3. HOUSE OF LORDS COMMITTEE STAGE: UNISON RECOMMENDATIONS

UNISON recommends the following key changes to strengthen the Bill and provide meaningful protection for tenants:

- **Clauses 7-8 – Rent Increases - UNISON recommends: Amending the Bill to limit in-tenancy rent increases to the lowest of wage growth or inflation (CPI).**
  - While UNISON welcomes measures empowering tenants to challenge unreasonable rent increases, we believe a stronger preventative measure is crucial. The current trajectory of rents significantly outpacing wage growth across England is unsustainable and places an immense financial burden on private tenants, forcing many from their homes. Limiting rent increases to the lower of wage growth or CPI offers a necessary mechanism to stabilise housing costs for low- and middle-income earners and address the widening gap between rents and wages. This proposal has already garnered cross-party support and would provide genuine protection against exploitation.
  
- **Clauses 32-38 – Outlawing Discriminatory Practices - UNISON recommends: Amending the Bill to restrict guarantor requests to the specific circumstance where an applicant cannot provide adequate proof of income.**
  - While UNISON welcomes the Bill's prohibition of blanket discrimination against benefit claimants and families with children, we remain deeply concerned about the persistent discriminatory practices within the PRS that disproportionately impact marginalised groups, including our members, and exacerbate housing insecurity.
  - A key concern raised consistently by our members is the imposition of unnecessary and often unrealistic guarantor requests. These demands, requiring tenants to secure a homeowner or high-earning individual to guarantee their tenancy, creates a significant barrier for those on modest incomes or receiving benefits. The often stringent criteria for guarantors – including homeownership, substantial income (sometimes three times the rent), and rigorous credit checks – effectively exclude many potential tenants from accessing suitable and affordable housing.
  - To ensure fair access to housing for all, particularly low-income families, UNISON urges the Bill to go further by explicitly restricting guarantor requests to the specific circumstance where an applicant cannot provide adequate proof of income. This targeted approach would address a significant discriminatory practice without unduly burdening other tenants. We echo the calls made in the House of Lords for immediate action to eliminate these discriminatory barriers.
  
- **Local Authority Enforcement - UNISON recommends that the government must: Provide local authorities with adequate funding, staffing, capacity, training, skills, and resources to effectively track rental properties and enforce housing regulations to hold bad landlords accountable.**
  - Whilst we welcome the Lords Minister's recognition of the need for resourcing, the stark reality of severe funding shortfalls in local government, exemplified by the £500 million deficit faced by

London boroughs, highlights the unsustainability of new enforcement duties under the Renters' Rights Bill without dedicated government funding. Years of financial strain and workforce cuts have already depleted staff and expertise in planning and housing departments, undermining their capacity to meet current obligations.

- With the added responsibilities from the White Paper on English Devolution, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, and the Renters' Rights Bill, UNISON insists on a comprehensive assessment of specific local housing needs to determine the necessary workforce capacity and funding required to effectively implement housing reforms, boost council and social housing supply, and ensure landlord compliance within the PRS. Achieving the government's housing and devolution goals necessitates a significant increase in vital technical professionals like housing officers, planners, environmental health officers, and building control officers, which requires sustained investment. Without this investment, local authorities will be unable to effectively implement the Bill, severely undermining tenant protections and its intended impact.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

UNISON supports key provisions in the Bill, particularly the long-overdue ban on Section 21 no-fault evictions. However, we believe that the Bill requires strengthening to truly address the deep-seated issues of housing unaffordability, insecurity, and discrimination that profoundly impact our lower-paid public service members. To deliver a genuinely fairer private rented sector, we urge Parliamentarians to support amendments that implement a robust cap on in-tenancy rent increases, enhance tenant protections against unfair practices like unnecessary guarantor requests and critically provide local authorities with the sustained resources needed for effective enforcement. These essential reforms are vital for protecting our public sector workforce, ensuring the delivery of vital services, and creating a fair and accessible private rental market for all.

#### Resources/References:

- UNISON (2025) [UNISON Briefing – Renters’ Rights Bill – House of Lords – Second Reading Stage -February 2025](#)
- UNISON (2025) [UNISON Briefing – Renters’ Rights Bill – House of Commons – Report Stage – January 2025](#)
- UNISON (2024) [UNISON Briefing – Renters’ Rights Briefing – House of Commons - Committee Stage - October 2024 -Final.docx](#)
- UNISON (2024) [UNISON Briefing – Renters’ Rights Bill – House of Commons – Second Reading Stage – 9 October 2024](#)
- UNISON & Generation Rent (2024) [‘The private rental crisis: voices from the frontline’ – how can we fix private renting for England’s workers](#)
- UNISON (2023) [‘Through the Roof’ – Housing and the Cost-of-living crisis for public service workers](#)

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