

A DURHAM STUDENT'S GUIDE TO:



DURHAM SU

**THE
RENTERS'
RIGHTS ACT**

ATTENTION STUDENTS!

There are huge changes coming to our student housing market and we want you to feel empowered to face them! We have created a guide with everything you need to know about the Renters' Rights Act and what to look out for later in the year!



Signed,

&



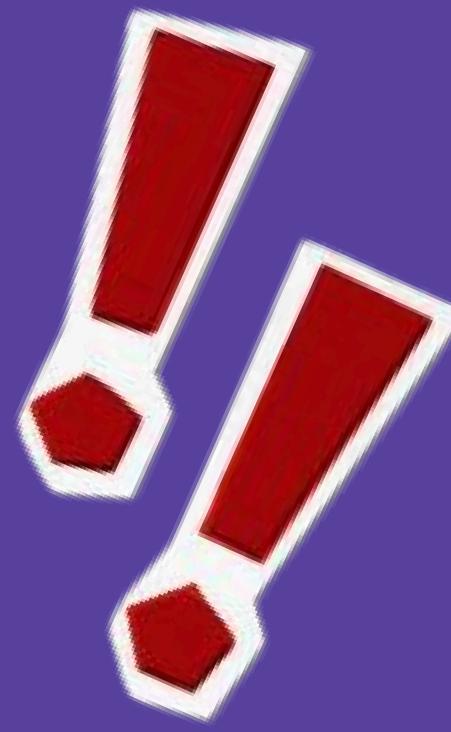
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abi Taylor".

Abi Taylor
Students' Union
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thea Cave".

Thea Cave
Chair of the JCR, MCR and
GCR Presidents

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- Things to be aware of!
- More Changes
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- FAQs, What to expect from us and signposting.

What is the Renters' Rights Act?

A new law giving tenants in England stronger rights was officially approved at the end of October.  This will have a huge impact on the way our student housing market operates!

How does it affect me?

This will impact everything from tenancy lengths, to eviction rights to housing standards.  The aspects which affect students will come into force on May 1st 2026!

Section 1

HMOs

Living in a house with 3 or more students
(called an “HMO” - House in Multiple
Occupancy)



3+ STUDENTS

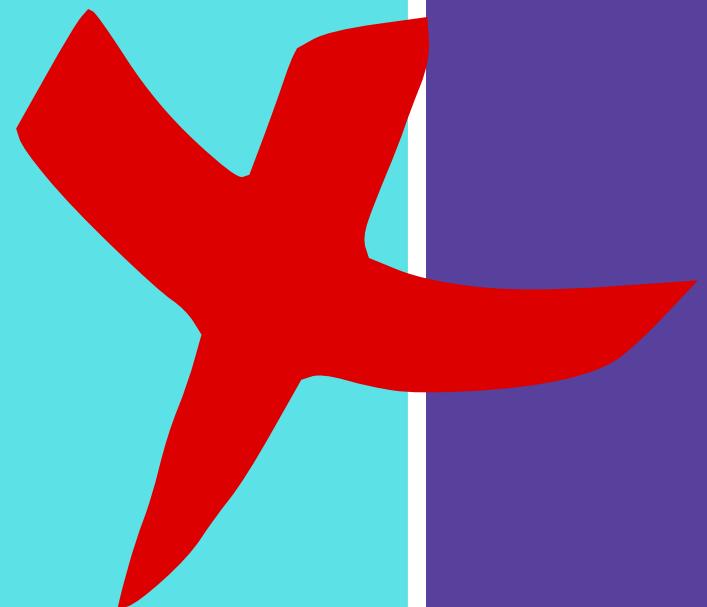
CHMOS

(changes
commencing
May 1st 2026)

1. Fixed-term contracts are abolished

Your tenancy runs month-to-month with no set end date, rather than having a set one year tenancy as has been the norm in Durham.

Change 1



Change 2

2. Students can terminate tenancies with 2 months notice

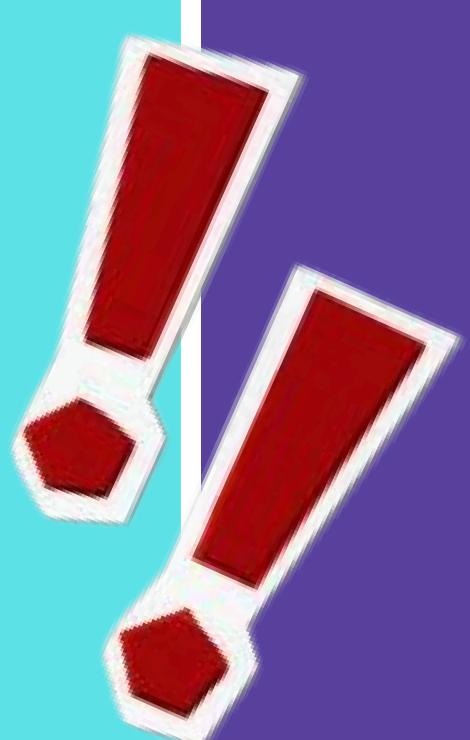
After your tenancy starts, you can leave at any time with two month's notice, giving you flexibility. But, any one person in a joint tenancy now has the power to end it for everyone.



3. Ground 4a Eviction

Your landlord can bring your tenancy to an end so they can rent to next year's students. The landlord has to tell you they plan to use this power before you sign your tenancy.

Change 3



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Fixed-term contracts are abolished

Instead of signing knowing you will be in a property for exactly 12 months, 1 of 2 things will happen...

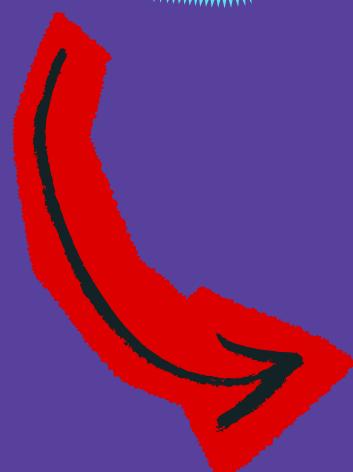
2. You will self-evict and leave the tenancy at a time you choose!

3. Your landlord will let you know when you sign that they intend to evict you later in the year.

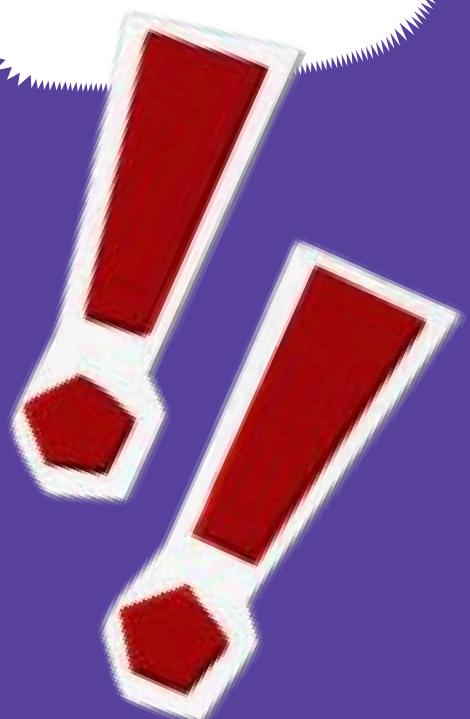
Unless your landlord lets you know when you sign that they intend to use Ground 4a to evict you, it's your job to serve notice 2 months before you want to leave!

MORE ON THIS!

Ground Up 4A Scenario 1



el



We believe this will be the way that most Durham HMO landlords will operate

1.

Your landlord has to tell you before you sign the tenancy that they plan to use Ground 4A

If the landlord wants to use Ground 4A, you can't sign your tenancy agreement more than six months before you move in.

2.

3.

When you're in the tenancy, they will give you 4 months' notice of the date they will evict you (a date between June and September).



This means that tenancies will (likely) not be signed before January - a big change for Durham!

GROUND 4A

What might this look like in practice in 2026/27?

June-September (2026)

In this transitional year, if you've already signed a tenancy agreement, landlords will have 1 month from 1st May 2026 to notify you if they might want to use Ground 4a to evict you later in the year

In your new 26/27 tenancy this summer

Michaelmas Term (2026)

Students start looking for housing, figuring out housemates and budget, but do not sign tenancies.

Signing your houses for 2027/28

Late January (2027)

Students can sign with landlords who intend to use Ground 4a, because it is 6 months before the earliest date students would move in - June.

They must inform you they intend to use it!

GROUND 4A

What might this look like in practice in 2026/27?

February- April (2027)

By this time your landlord should have given you a Section 8 Notice. That will inform you of the date of the end of your tenancy. You will have at least 4 months notice of this.

1st June- 30th September (2027)

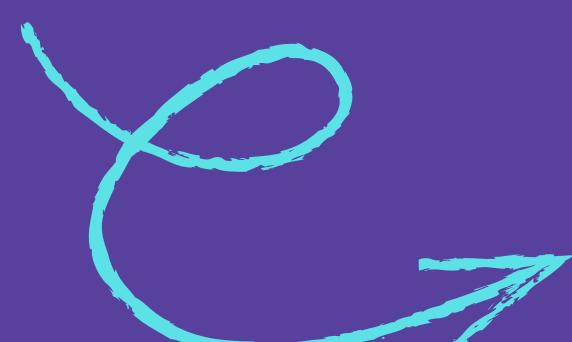
You would leave your tenancy on the date provided earlier in the year and move to your new one!

Leaving
your
2026/27
tenancy



Government advice will continue to come out from January-May 1st so keep your eyes peeled for any changes!

PERIODIC TENANCIES



Scenario 2

1.

From May 1st all tenancies will become rolling- this means they will no longer have a fixed end date

If your landlord doesn't let you know of their intent to evict you using 4a before you sign then it is on you to end your tenancy

2.

3.

This means you can leave anytime but you must give your landlord 2 months notice to move out.

Warning: If one housemate serves two months notice all students in the tenancy are evicted



Important: You will need to self evict the day before rent is due to ensure that you don't end up paying more than 2 months rent

MAY 1ST 2026

What will happen when it comes into force?

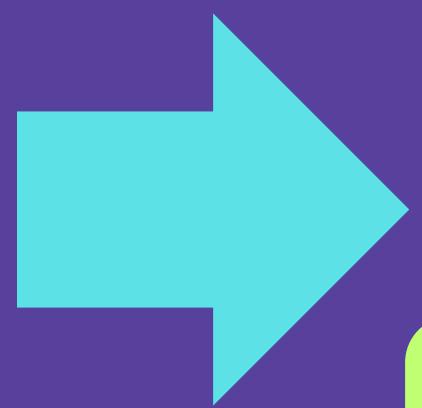


1. The tenancy you're currently in will become rolling!

On May 1st, your tenancy will no longer contain the end date that you signed up to.

For this year ONLY:

To get you from your current tenancy



To your next tenancy (for 26/27)



You will need to agree as a **house** and **with your landlord** on a date you'd like to leave the tenancy this summer (this will most likely be the one on your original tenancy document).

DISCLOSURE:
We believe this is what is **most likely** to happen.

MAY 1ST 2026

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**YOUR LANDLORD
WILL...**

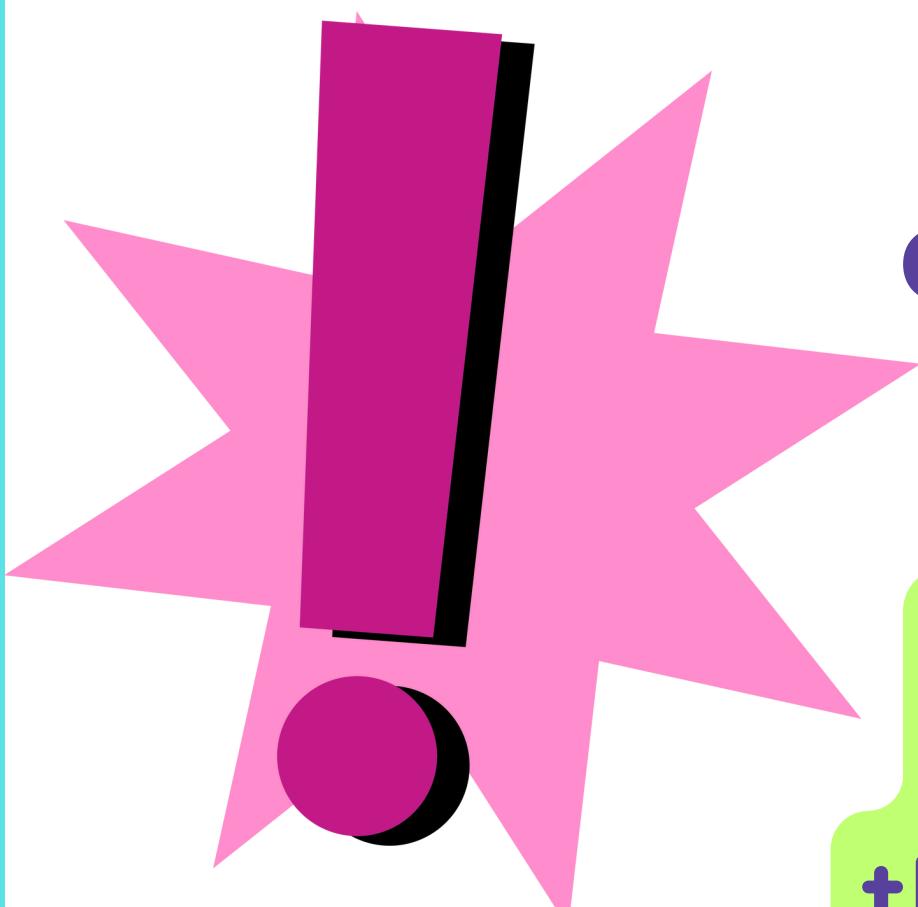
Get in contact before May 1st 2026 to let you know of how the law change will affect you and ask to agree an end date.

**YOU AS TENANTS
WILL...**

Need to reply to them to confirm when you will leave your tenancy this year- it must be agreed across tenants and with your landlord.

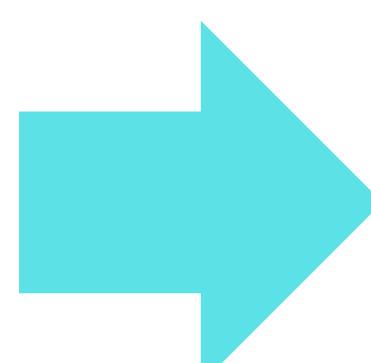
Landlords will receive advice on how to do this in January- so they will likely get in contact in late January/February.

BE AWARE!



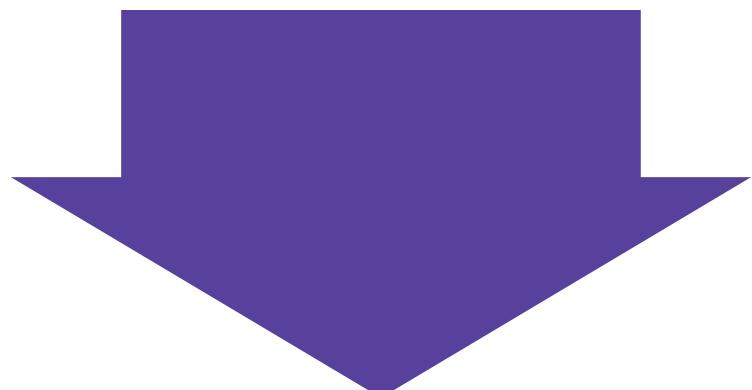
Landlords are feeling concerned about their ability to change over students...

Currently occupying the property on May 1st



To their next set of tenants (26/27)

Therefore, they may issue a Section 21 eviction notice before May 1st 2026 (when they become outlawed)



This seems intimidating, but will likely just confirm the end date on your original lease. There will be lots of support available if this occurs!



MORE ON HMOs

(changes
commencing May
1st 2026)

Change 4

4. Upfront rent payments will be capped at one months rent maximum.



Previously, some landlords asked for 3, 6, or even 12 months rent upfront. This will effect those who used it instead of a UK guarantor.

Change 5

5. You Have The Right To Request a Pet!

You have a right to request a pet once you have moved into a property and landlords can only refuse with a valid reason.



THE GUARANTOR ISSUE



Change 4

Upfront rent payments will be capped at one month's rent maximum.

The Problem

Why?

Previously, some landlords asked for 3, 6, or even 12 months' rent upfront from students without a UK guarantor- now that's not allowed

The Solution

Students who need a guarantor can now use a guarantor insurance service.

These services charge between 4% and 20% of the total rent.

Our Advice!

Landlords cannot insist you use a particular guarantor service. Shop around rather than simply accepting whatever service the letting agent suggests.

Section 2

1828BEDS

Living in a property by yourself or with one
other student (not an HMO)



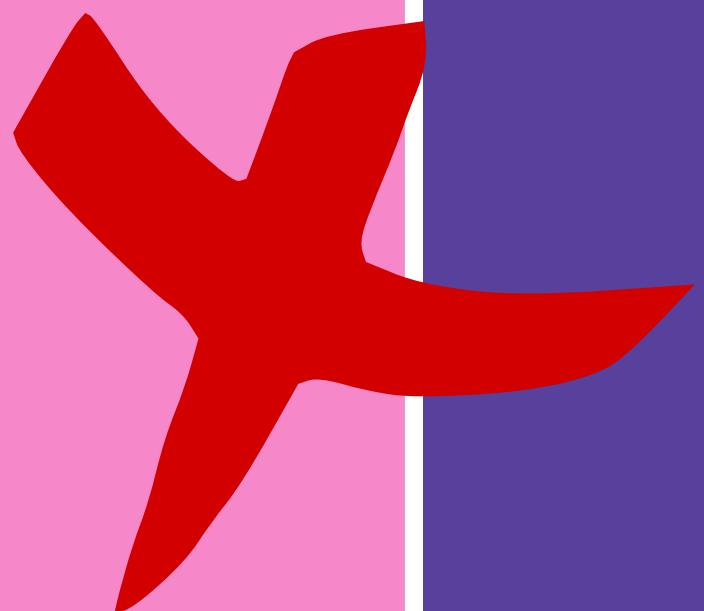
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2. Students can terminate tenancies with 2 months notice

You can leave a rental with 2 months' notice at any time, giving you flexibility. But, any one person in a joint tenancy now has the power to end it for everyone.



3. From May 1st you will be responsible for leaving your tenancy

Your tenancy will continue for as long as you choose, until you tell your landlord that you intend to leave. You'll give two months notice, but you (and your housemate if you have one) can agree a shorter period with the landlord.

Change 3

PERIODIC TENANCIES

The new normal!

1.

From May 1st all tenancies will become rolling- this means they will no longer have a fixed end date

This means you can leave anytime but you must give your landlord 2 months notice to move out.

2.

3.

From May 1st your tenancy agreement will not include the end date which you signed up to.

Warning: If one housemate serves two months notice all students in the tenancy are evicted

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MAY 1ST 2026

What will happen when it comes into force?

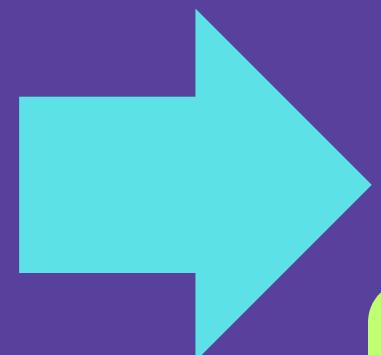


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From now on:

To get you from your current tenancy



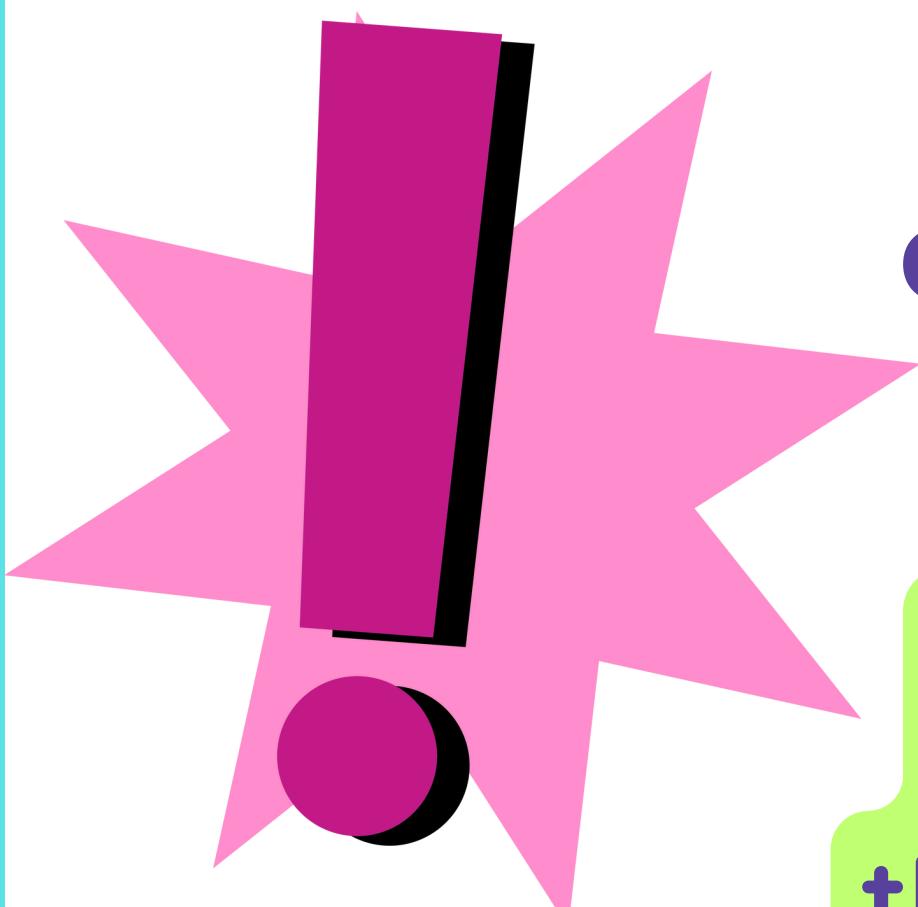
To your next tenancy (for 26/27)



You will need to give your landlord notice of when you intend to leave the property - usually this would be 2 months minimum, but you could agree an earlier date with your landlord

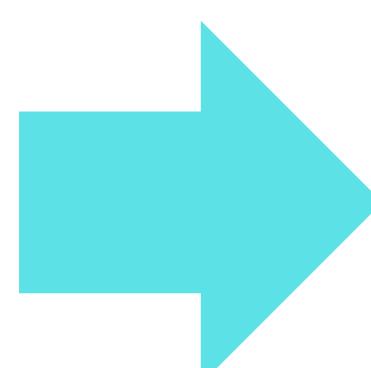
Guidance will be issued around April 2026 with clearer information for student renters on this transition

BE AWARE!



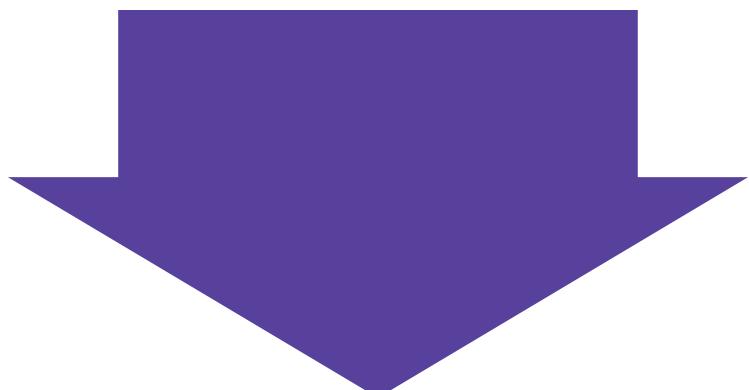
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182 BEDS

(changes commencing May 1st 2026)

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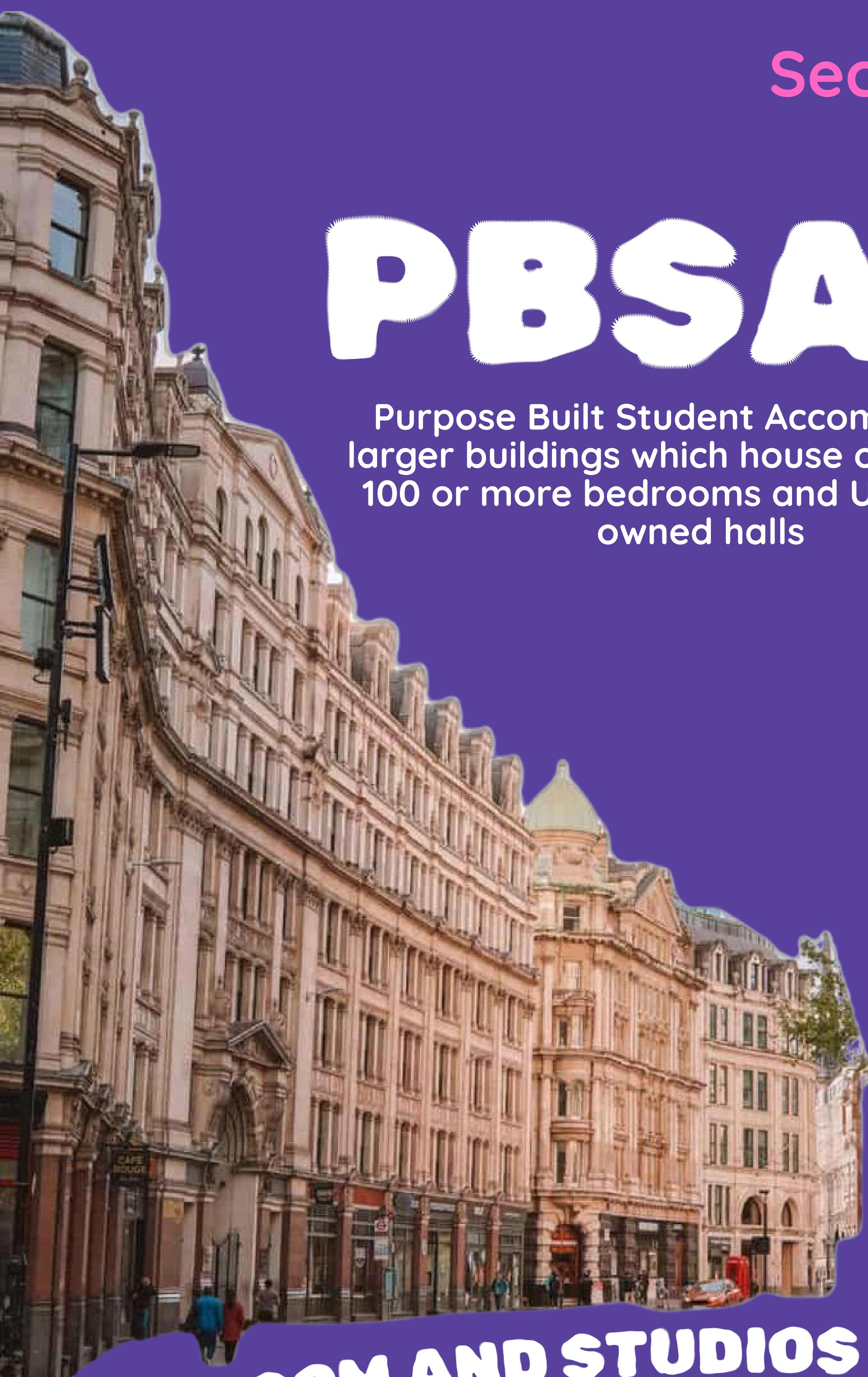
Our Advice!

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Section 3

PBSAS

Purpose Built Student Accommodation:
larger buildings which house on average
100 or more bedrooms and University-
owned halls



UNI ACCOM AND STUDIOS

WHAT'S CHANGING?

For PBSAs?

1.

From May 1st HMOs and 1 and 2 Bed properties will be seeing significant changes. PBSAs are exempt from most of the changes.

Your tenancies will change from "Assured Shorthold" to "Common Law", and fixed terms (i.e. tenancies with an end date) will be allowed in PBSA.

2.

Every provider (Unite, Student Roost etc.) will be affected slightly differently and we don't yet know the guidance on this. That will be coming out in March.



GETTING SUPPORT!

DURHAM SU

Section 4



Help! I've been served a Section 21 Eviction Notice!

Firstly, don't worry- these will likely just secure your original leaving date, but even if they don't they are hard to enforce. Contact the Students' Union advice service for support.

I'm in a PBSA, when will I hear more details from my provider?

The guidance for PBSAs comes out in March, so expect them to get in contact early April. We'll release content too!

I'm in a 1 or 2 bed property- how do I serve 2 months notice?

There isn't a magical way to serve notice! You will do this by emailing your landlord, and we will supply you with a template so you feel confident it's got everything it needs in it.

FAQs



WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON?

Short Form Content

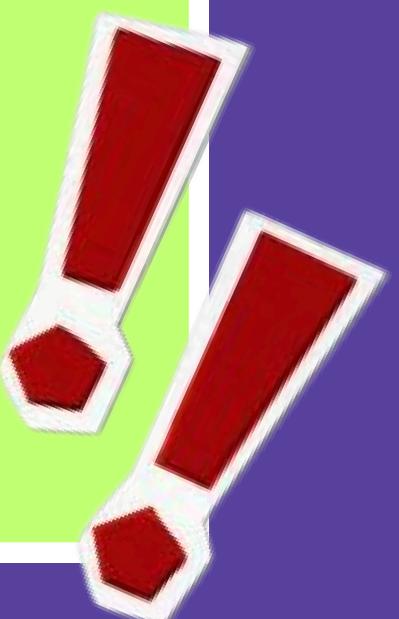
1. All of this will be broken down into bite size content!

Think of this as the Renters' Rights Act bible, it's got everything you could need to know- we'll be breaking it down in the new year. Keep your eye out!

2. Abi will be briefing relevant student leaders in the new year.

We know students go to college leaders, welfare officers, the university and the Students' Union for advice. All will be trained to help you.

Briefings



Templates

3. We will draft every template you could ever need!

Using these new powers can be very intimidating, so we will make it as easy to enact them as possible. Expect these during Epiphany term.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Internal

- Durham Students' Union Advice service: <https://ask.durhamsu.com/support/tickets/new> (ask.su@durhamsu.com)
- Durham University Housing Hub: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/colleges-and-student-experience/housing-hub/> (accommodation.office@durham.ac.uk)

External

- Shelter England: www.shelter.org.uk (phone: 0808 800 4444)
- Citizens Advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- Acorn union (tenant union): www.acorntheunion.org.uk
- Your local council's housing advice team: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/housing>