

# 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 stylized white signature of Abi Taylor on a dark purple background.

Abi Taylor  
Students' Union  
President

A stylized white signature of Thea Cave on a dark purple background.

Thea Cave  
Chair of the JCR, MCR and  
GCR Presidents

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What is the Renters' Rights Act?

HMOs (Student Houses with 3 or more people)

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- Ground 4a Eviction
- Periodic Tenancies
- What will happen on May 1<sup>st</sup>?
- Things to be aware of!
- More Changes
- The Guarantor Issue.

3.

1 and 2 Bed Student Properties

- What's changing?
- Periodic Tenancies
- What will happen on May 1<sup>st</sup>?
- Things to be aware of!
- More Changes
- The Guarantor Issue.

PBSAs (College and large accommodation blocks)

4.

- What's Changing?

5.

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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 1<sup>st</sup> 2026!



# Section 1

# HMOs

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



**3+ STUDENTS**



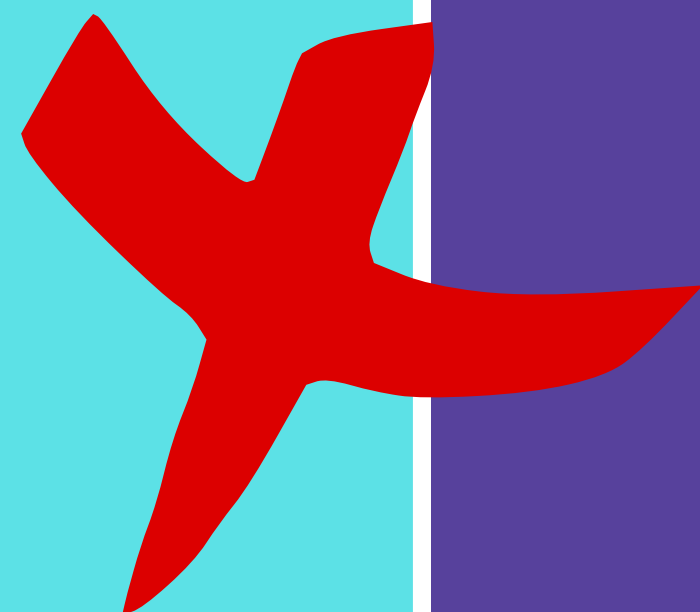
# HMOs

(changes  
commencing  
May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026)

## Change 1

### 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 2

### 2. Students can terminate tenancies with 2 months notice

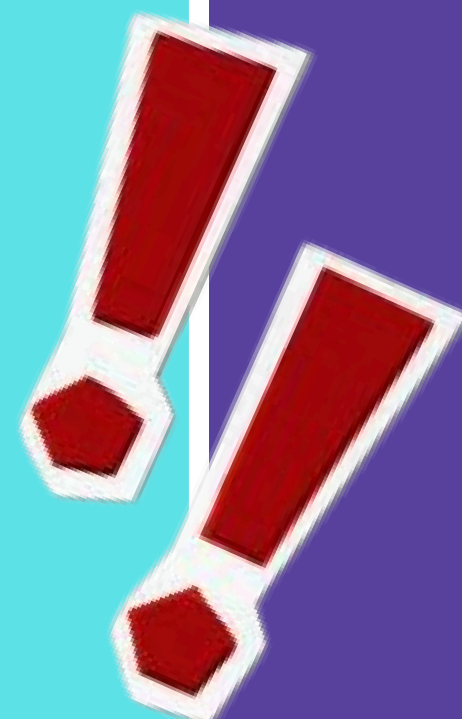
After your tenancy starts, you can leave at any time with two month's notice, giving you flexibility. But, any one person in a joint tenancy now has the power to end it for everyone.



## Change 3

### 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.





# 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!**

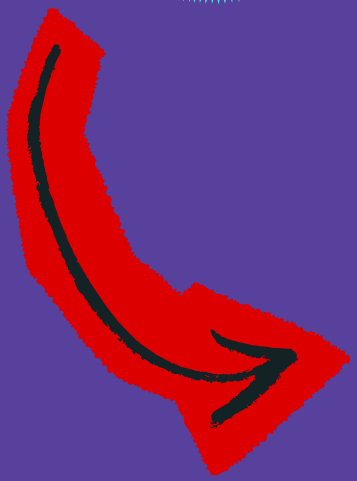
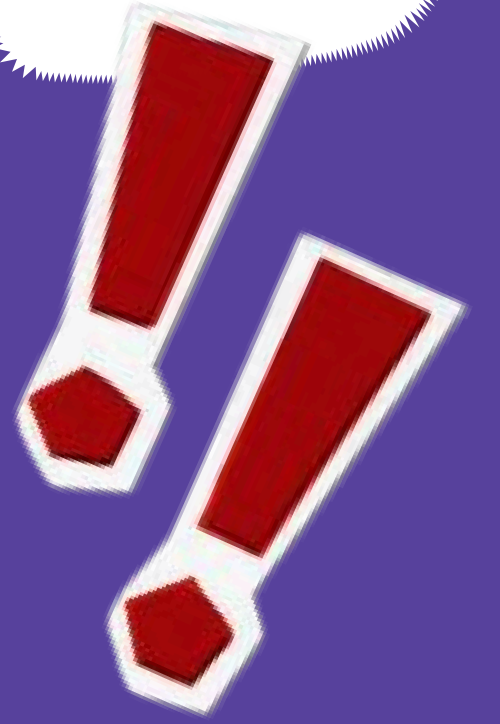
**MORE ON THIS!**



# GROUND

# 4A

## Scenario 1



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, landlords must give you notice within the first month of your tenancy that they intent 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?

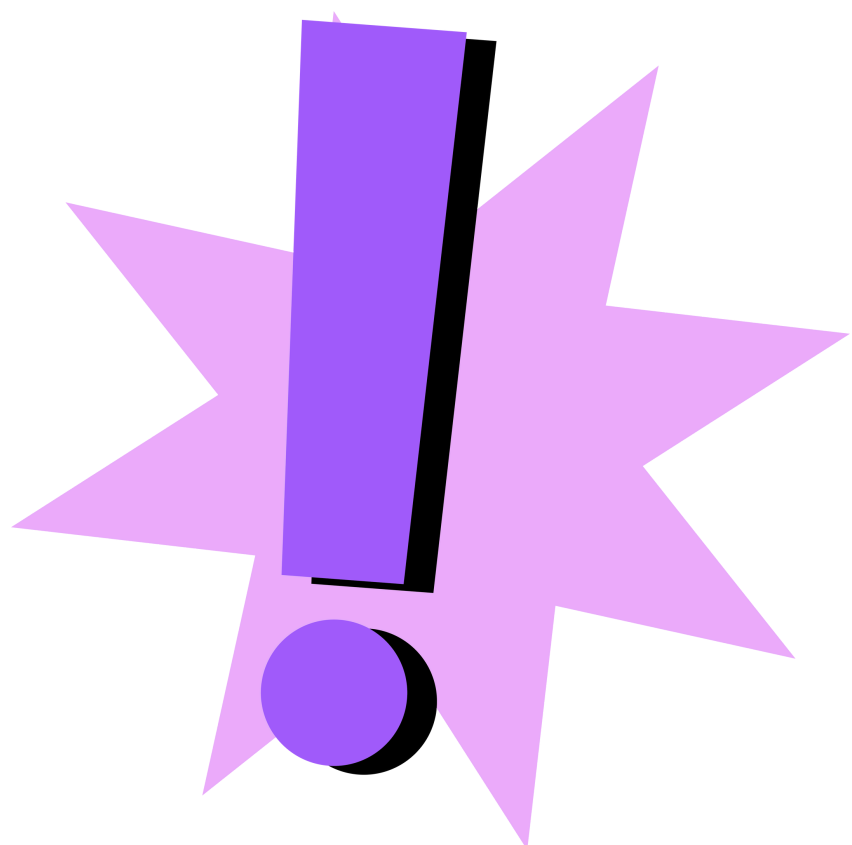
## February- April (2027)

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.

## 1<sup>st</sup> June- 30<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> so keep your eyes peeled for any changes!



# PERIODIC TENANCIES



## Scenario 2

1.

From May 1<sup>st</sup> 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

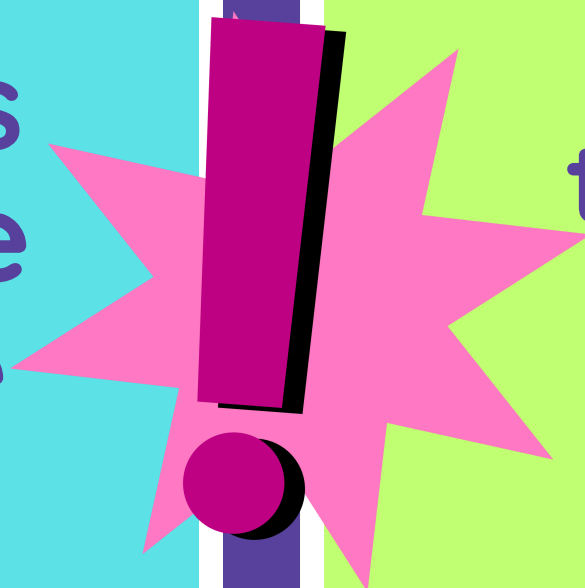
2.

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 1<sup>ST</sup> 2026

What will happen when it comes into force?

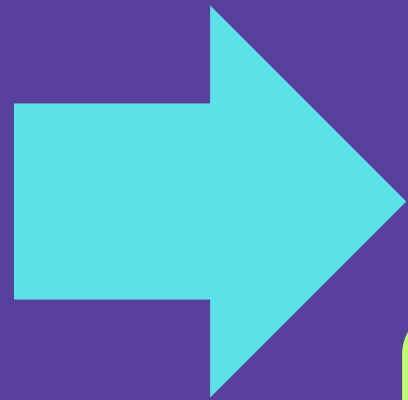


1. The tenancy you're currently in will become rolling!

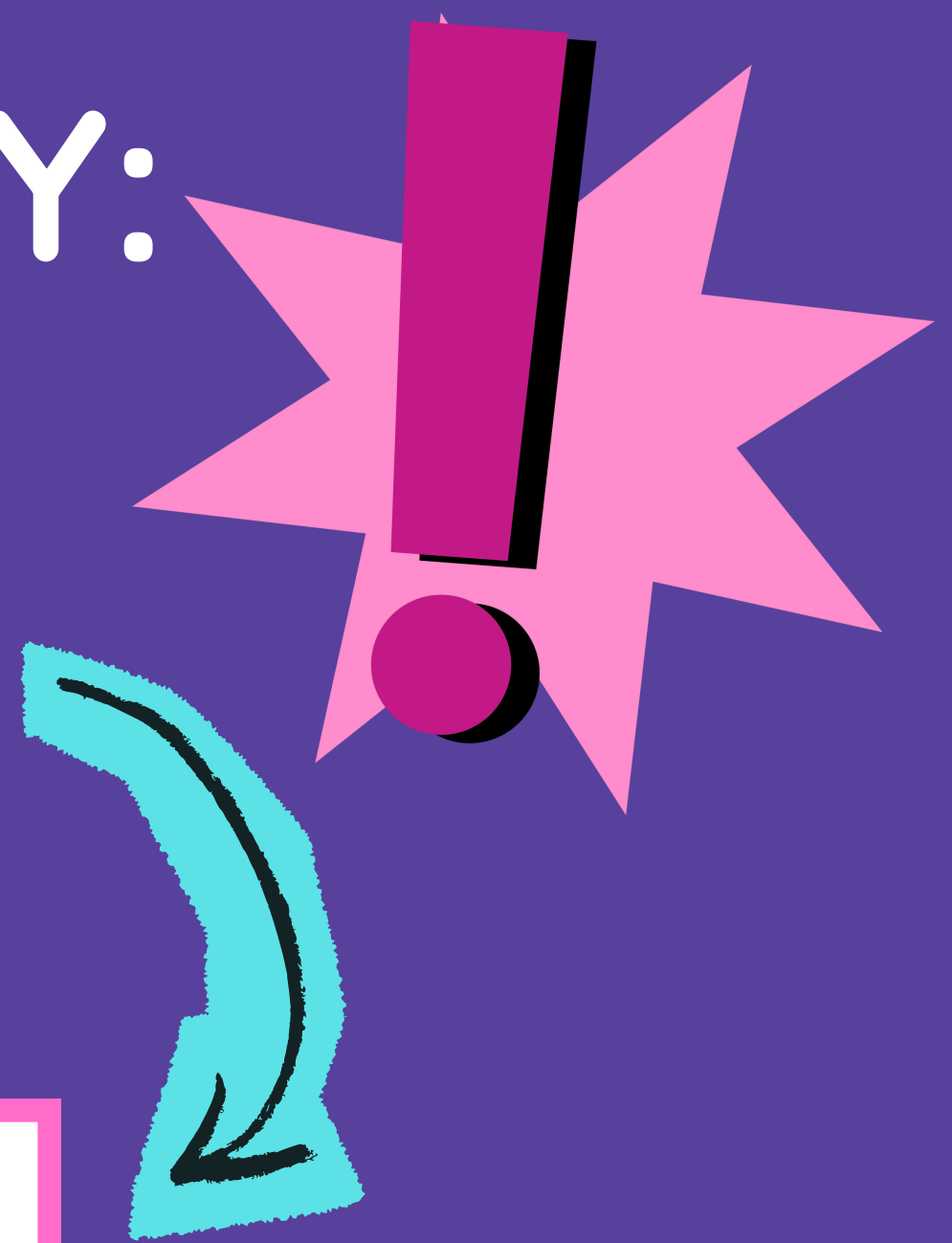
On May 1<sup>st</sup>, your tenancy will no longer contain the end date that you signed up to.

## 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 1<sup>ST</sup> 2026

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

YOUR LANDLORD  
WILL...

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

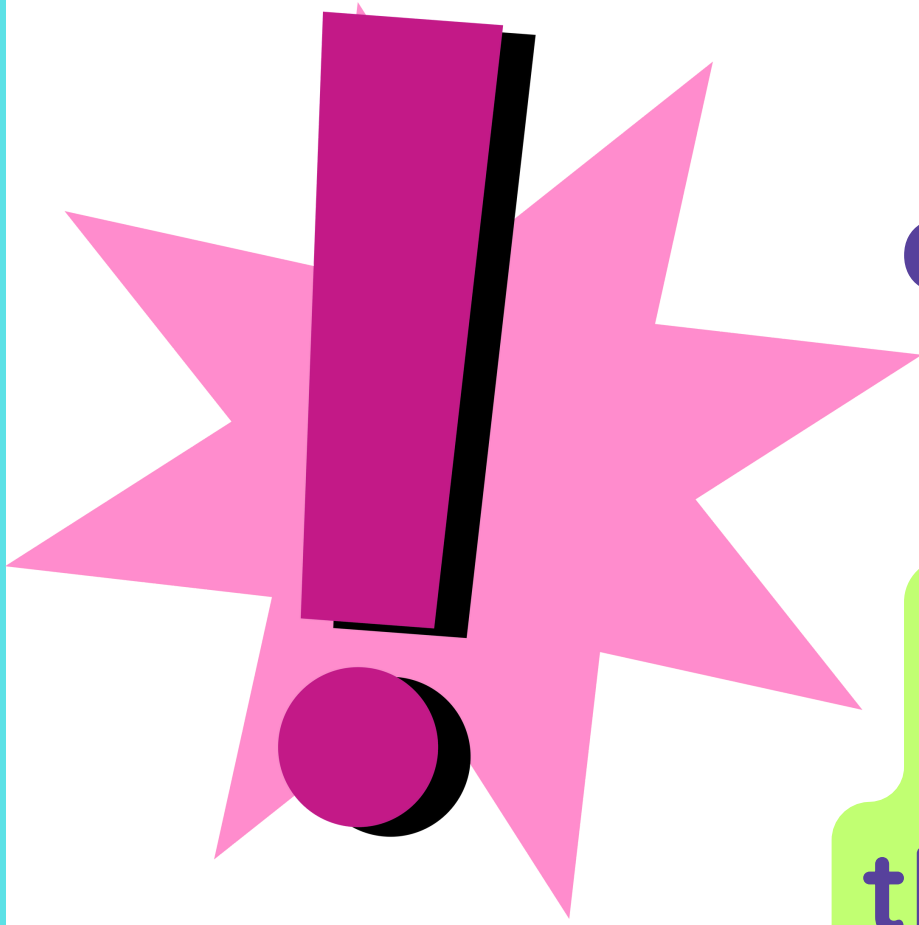
YOU AS TENANTS  
WILL...

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.



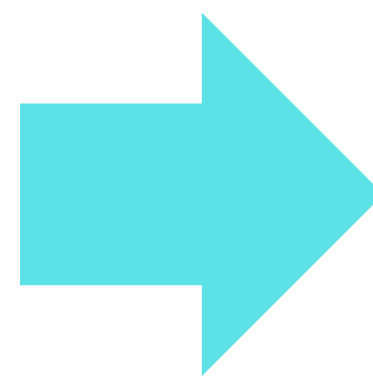
Landlords will receive advice on how to do this in January- so they will likely get in contact in late January/February.

# 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  
1<sup>st</sup> 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.

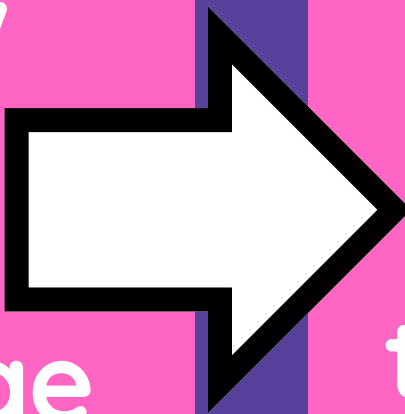
## The Problem

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

# 1 & 2 BEDS

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



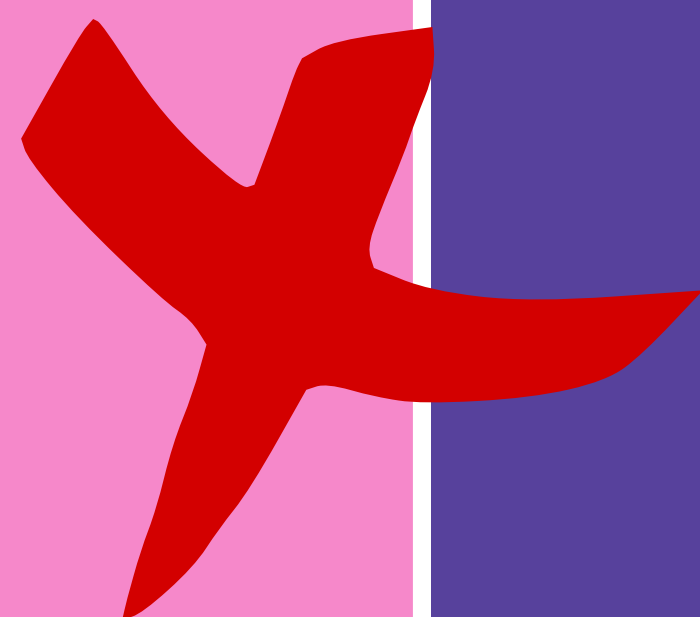
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## Change 2

### 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.



## Change 3

### 3. From May 1<sup>st</sup> 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.



# PERIODIC TENANCIES



The new normal!

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From May 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

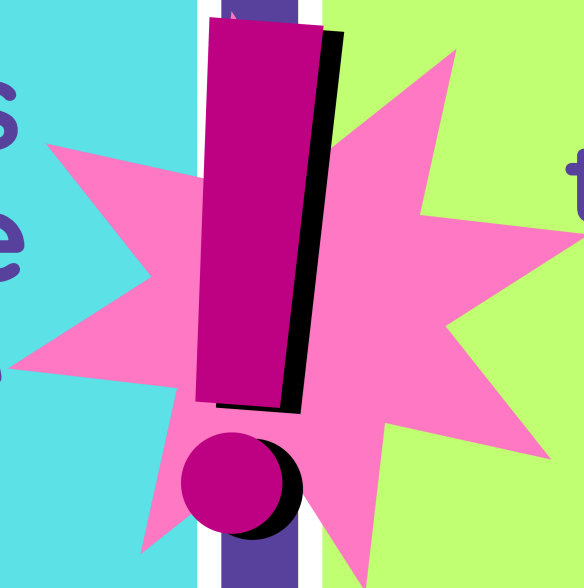
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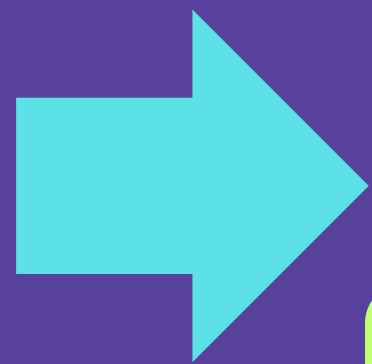


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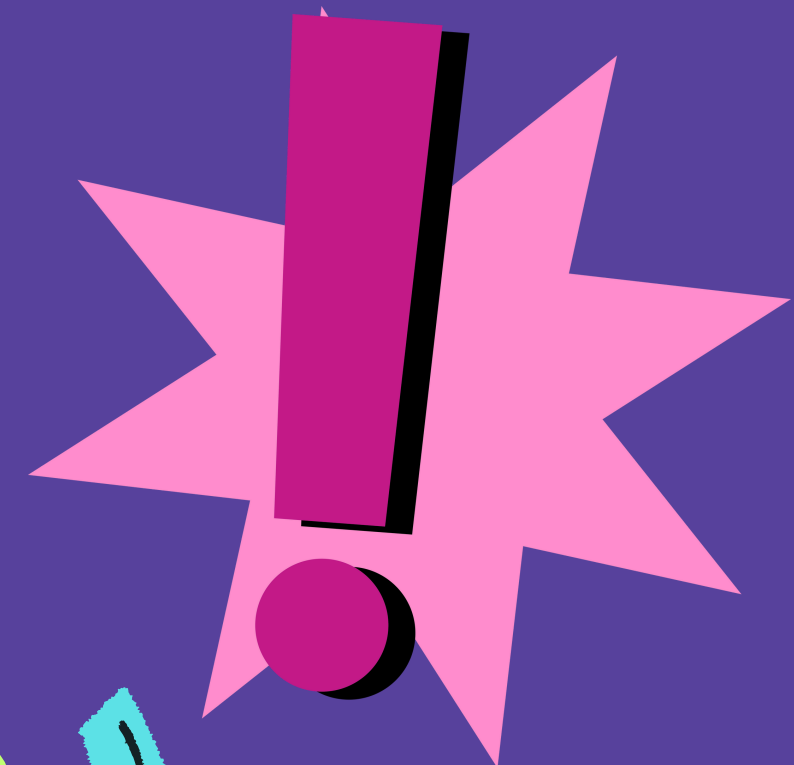
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## From now on:

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To your next tenancy (for 26/27)

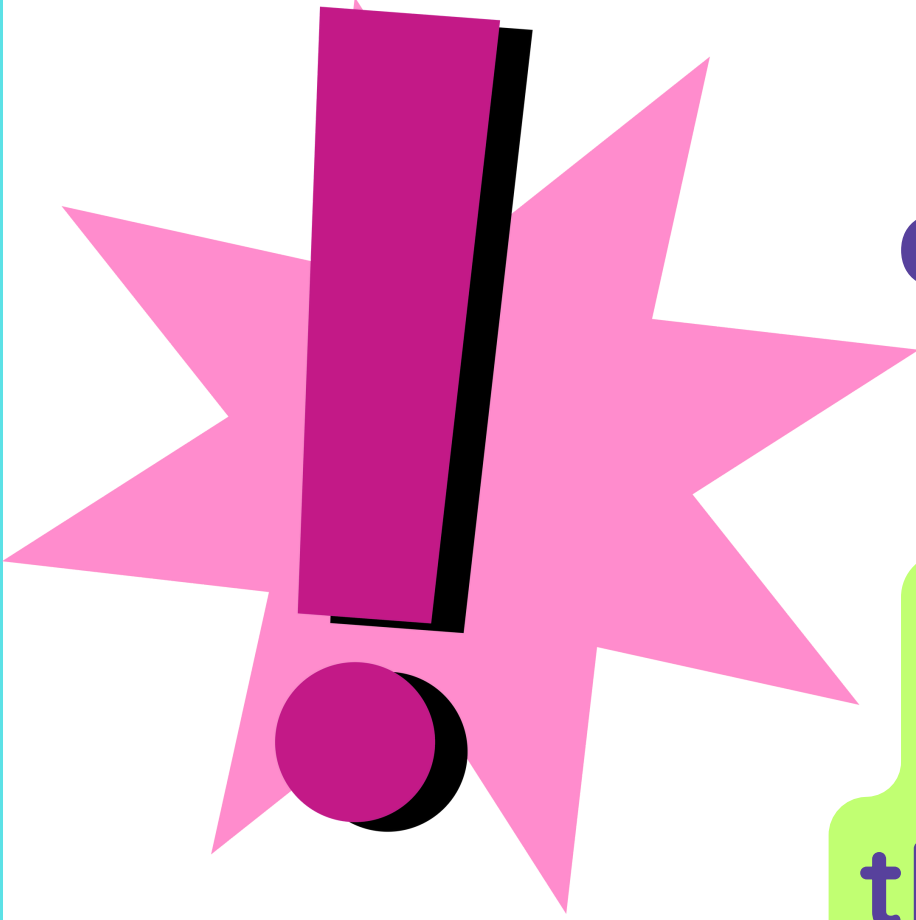


You will need to give your landlord notice of when you intend to leave the property - usually this would be 2 months minimum, but you could agree an earlier date with your landlord

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

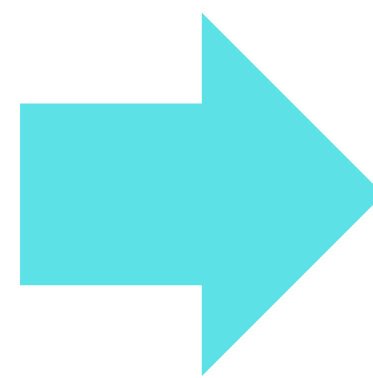


# BE AWARE!



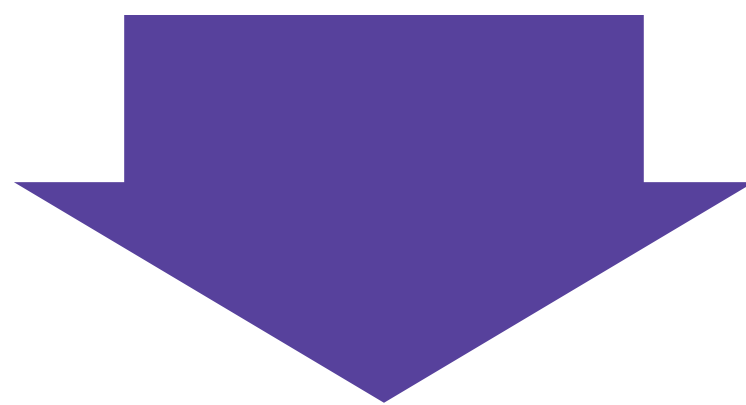
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(changes commencing May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026)

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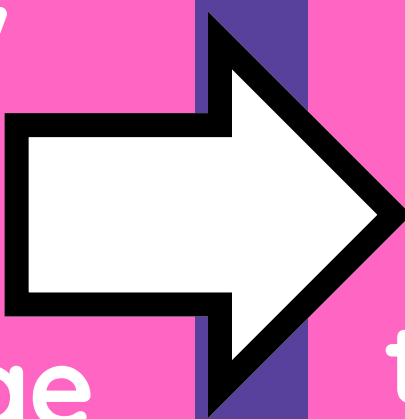
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## Our Advice!

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# 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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, StuRents 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!

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## Section 4





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



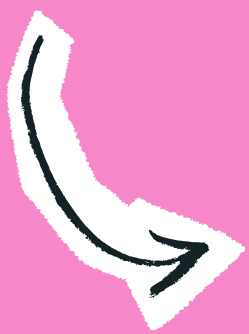
Firstly, don't worry- these will likely just secure your original leaving date, but even if they don't they are hard to enforce. Contact the Students' Union advice service for support.

## 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!

## Briefings

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.



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