

# 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,*

*&*



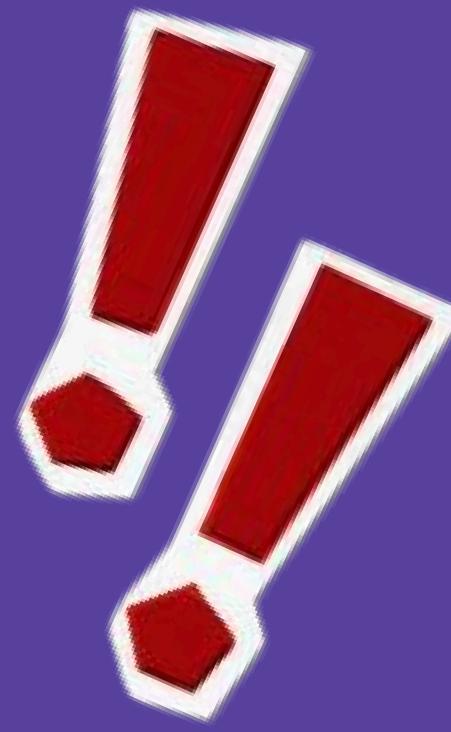
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abi Taylor".

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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3.

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- What's changing?
- Periodic Tenancies
- What will happen on May 1<sup>st</sup>?

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4.

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# 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

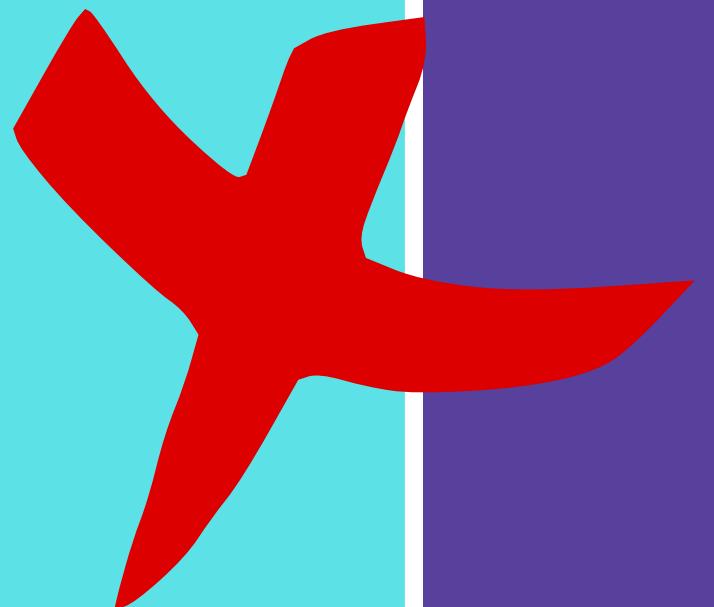
# CHMOS

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

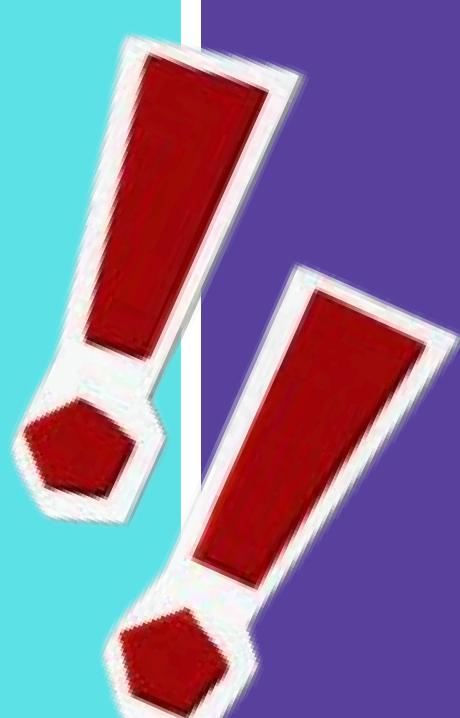
After your tenancy starts, you can leave at any time with two month's notice, giving you flexibility. But, any one person in a joint tenancy now has the power to end it for everyone.



## 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!

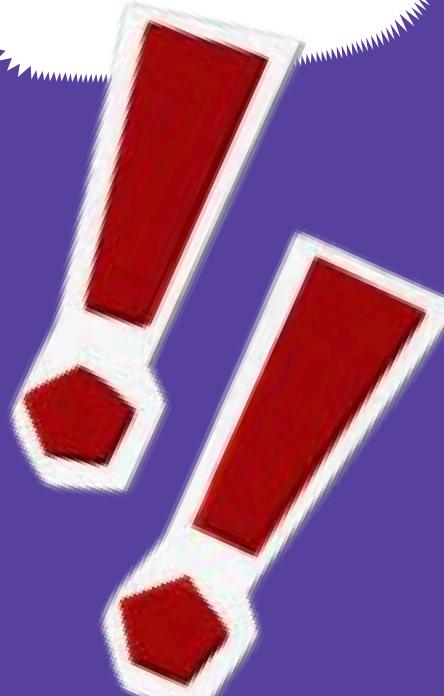
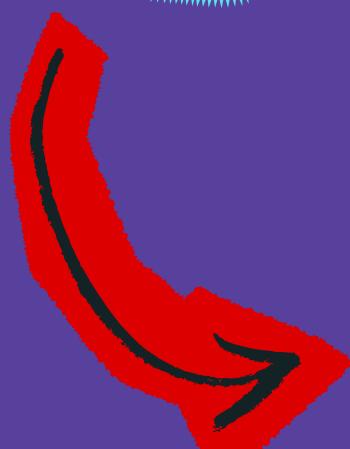
3. Your landlord will let you know when you sign that they intend to evict you later in the year.

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



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

1.

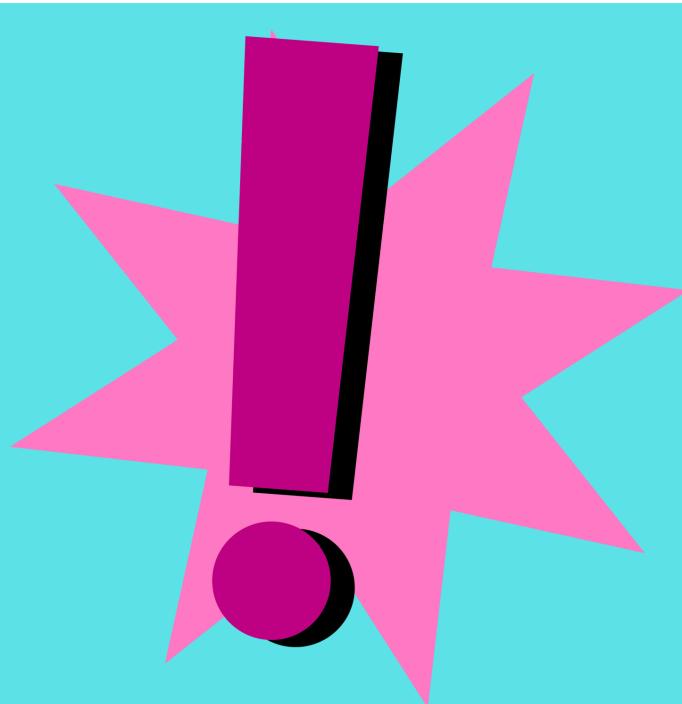
Your landlord has to tell you before you sign the tenancy that they plan to use Ground 4A

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, your 2026/27 landlord 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 - July.

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)

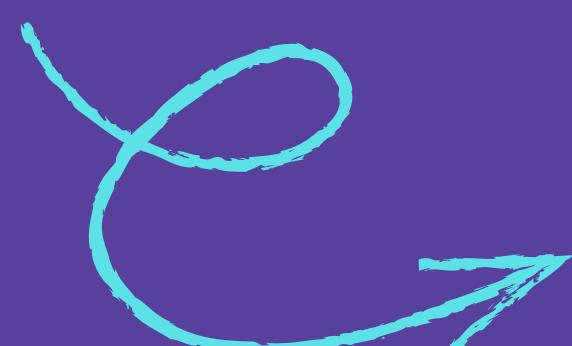
You would leave your tenancy on the date provided earlier in the year and move to your new one!

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

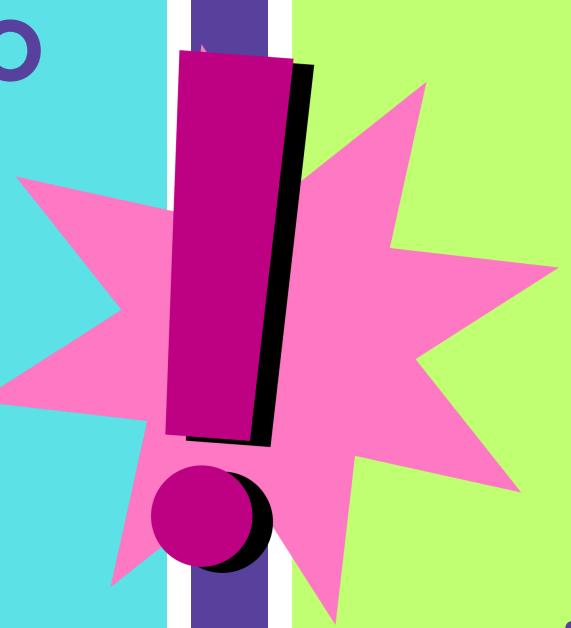
If your landlord doesn't let you know of their intent to evict you using 4a before you sign then it is on you to end your tenancy

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 unless agreed otherwise with the landlord.



**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?

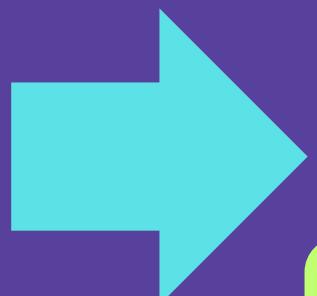


1. The tenancy you're currently in will become rolling!

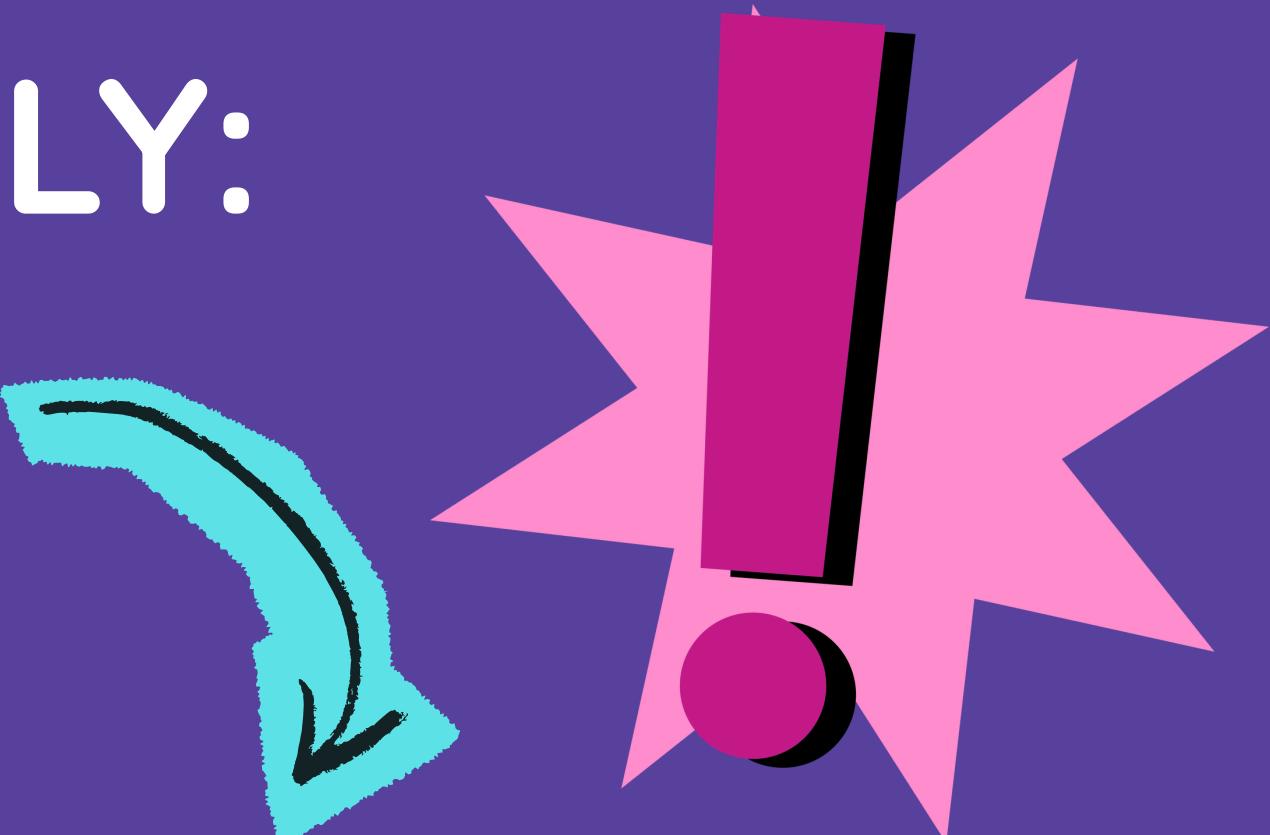
On May 1<sup>st</sup>, your tenancy will no longer contain the end date that you signed up to.

For this year ONLY:

To get you from your current tenancy



To your next tenancy (for 26/27)



One of two things will need to happen:

1

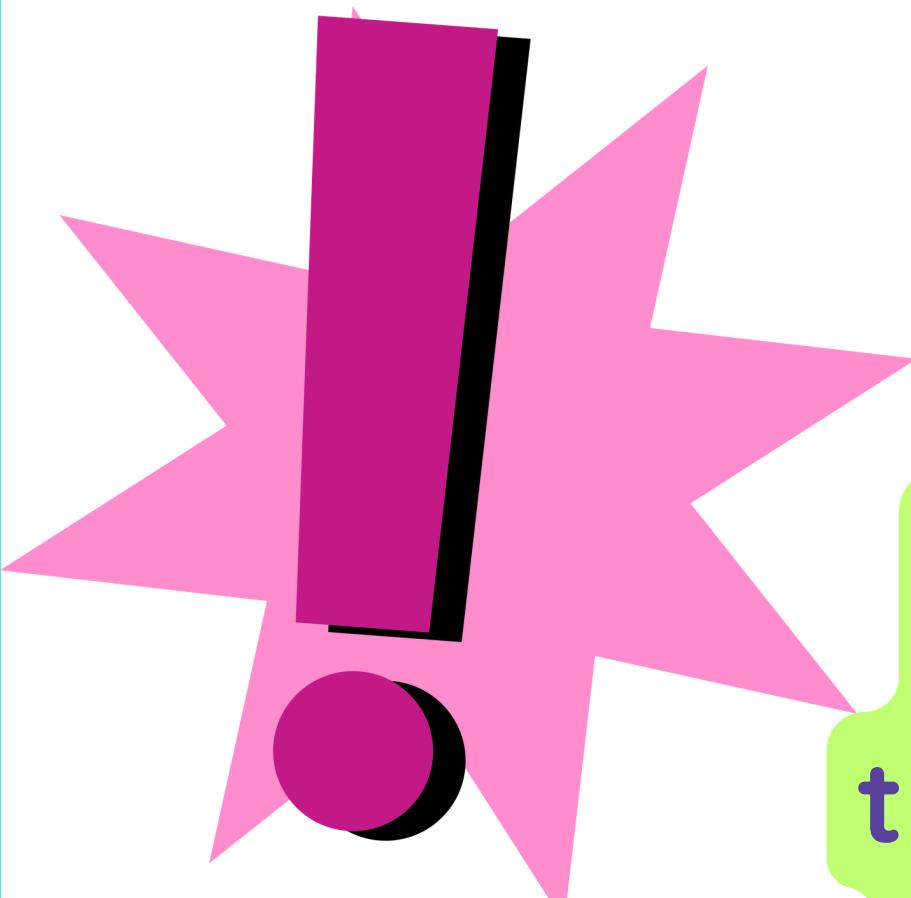
Your Landlord will serve you a Section 21 Eviction Notice before May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026

2

You serve 2 months notice, 2 months from when you intend to leave the property

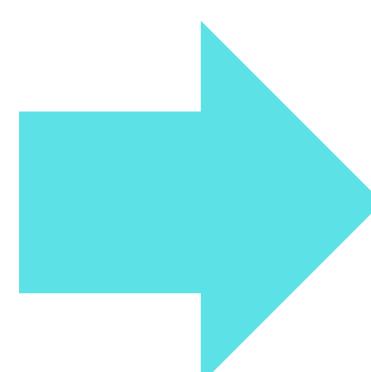
# SECTION 21

## EVICTION NOTICE



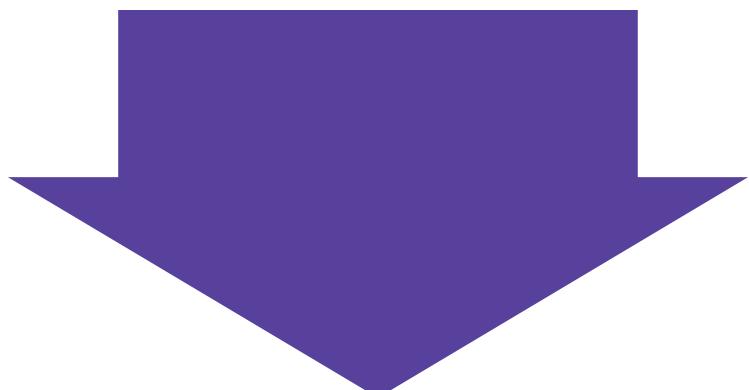
Landlords are getting nervous about their ability to change over students...

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 tenancy. Always ask your landlord for more clarification if you need it!

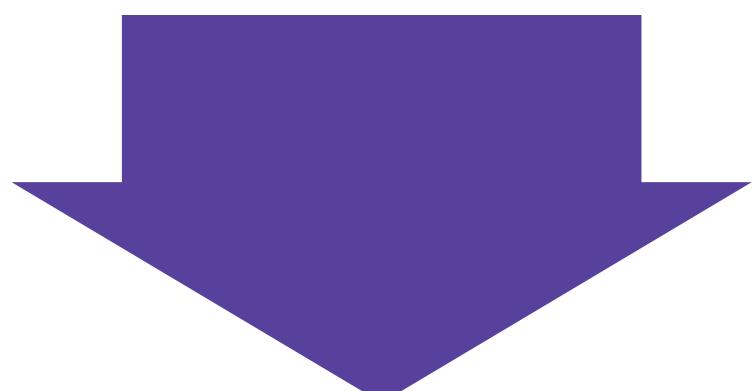


# SERVING 2 MONTHS NOTICE

From  
May  
1st...

If you have **not** been served a **Section 21 Eviction Notice**- it is now **YOUR** responsibility to bring your tenancy to an end.

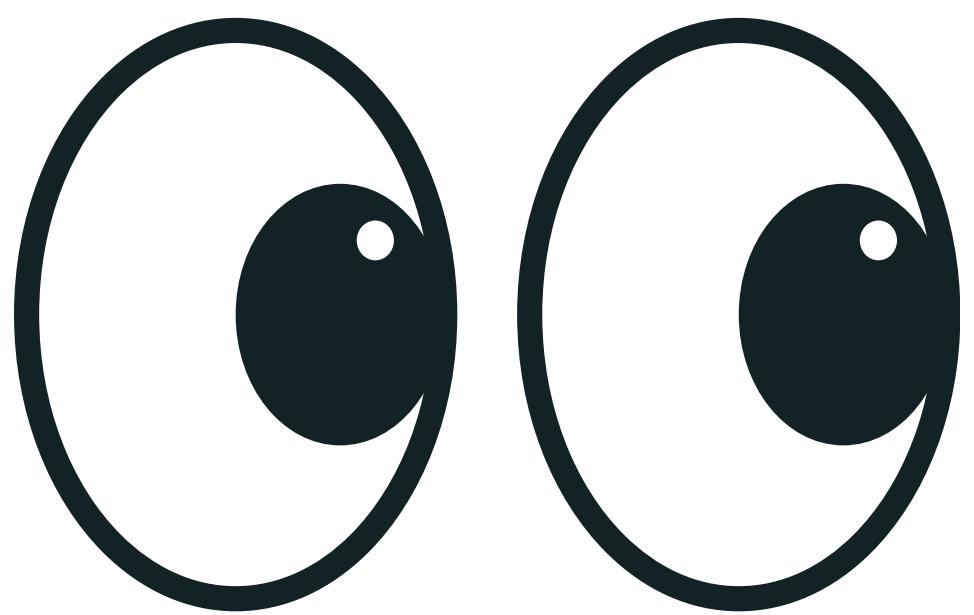
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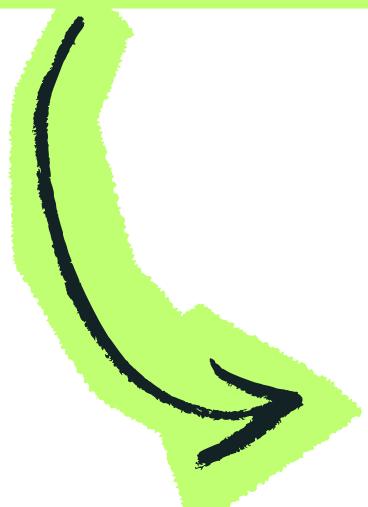
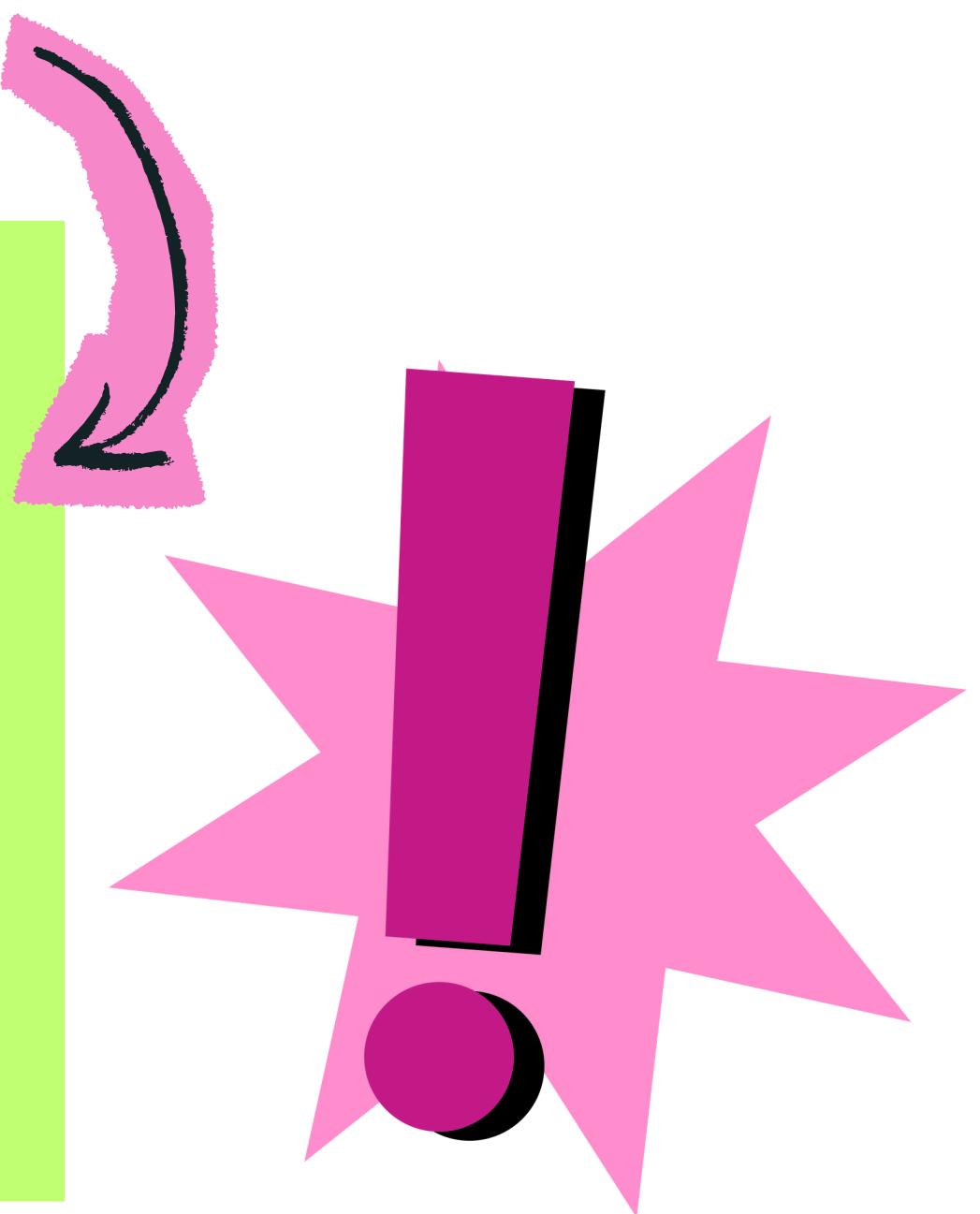
Usually this would be 2 months minimum, but you could agree an earlier exit date with your landlord!

# LOOK OUT FOR...



A government mandated  
information sheet

Your landlord will get in contact before May 31<sup>st</sup> 2026 to let you know of how the law change will affect you and inform you of your new rights



Landlords will receive a template for this in March- so they will likely get in contact in April 2026.

This is a great time to have dialogue with your landlord and clarify anything you're nervous about!

# MORE ON HMOs

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

Change 4



4. Landlords cannot ask for more than a month's rent upfront.

Previously, some landlords asked for 3, 6, or even 12 months rent upfront. They cannot ask, however you can request to pay your rent in those installments.

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

Landlords cannot explicitly ask, but you as a prospective/current tenant can ask to pay termly or annually.

If they do not agree, students use a guarantor insurance service. These services charge between 4% and 20% of the total rent.

## Section 2

1828BEDS

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



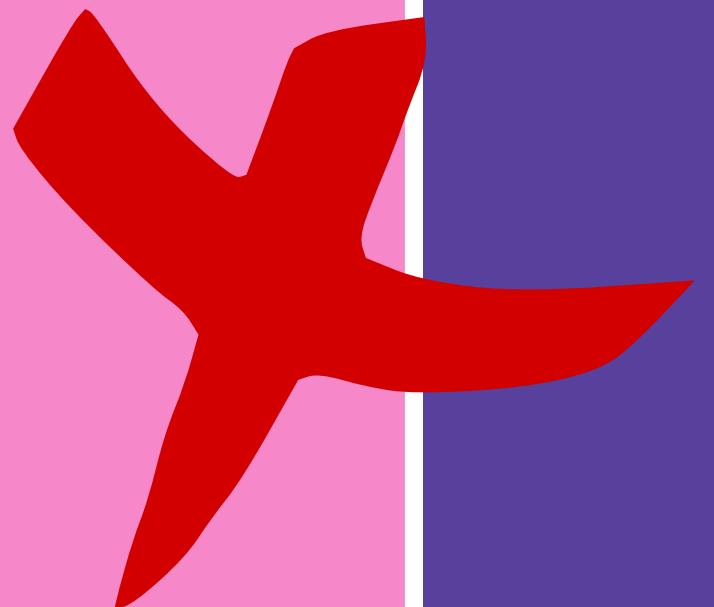
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## 2. Students can terminate tenancies with 2 months notice

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 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.

Change 3

# PERIODIC TENANCIES

The new normal!

1.

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

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

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

What will happen when it comes into force?

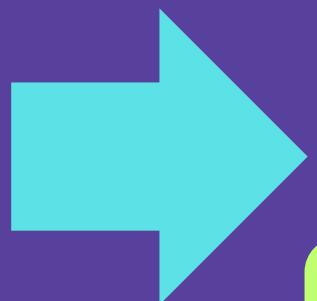


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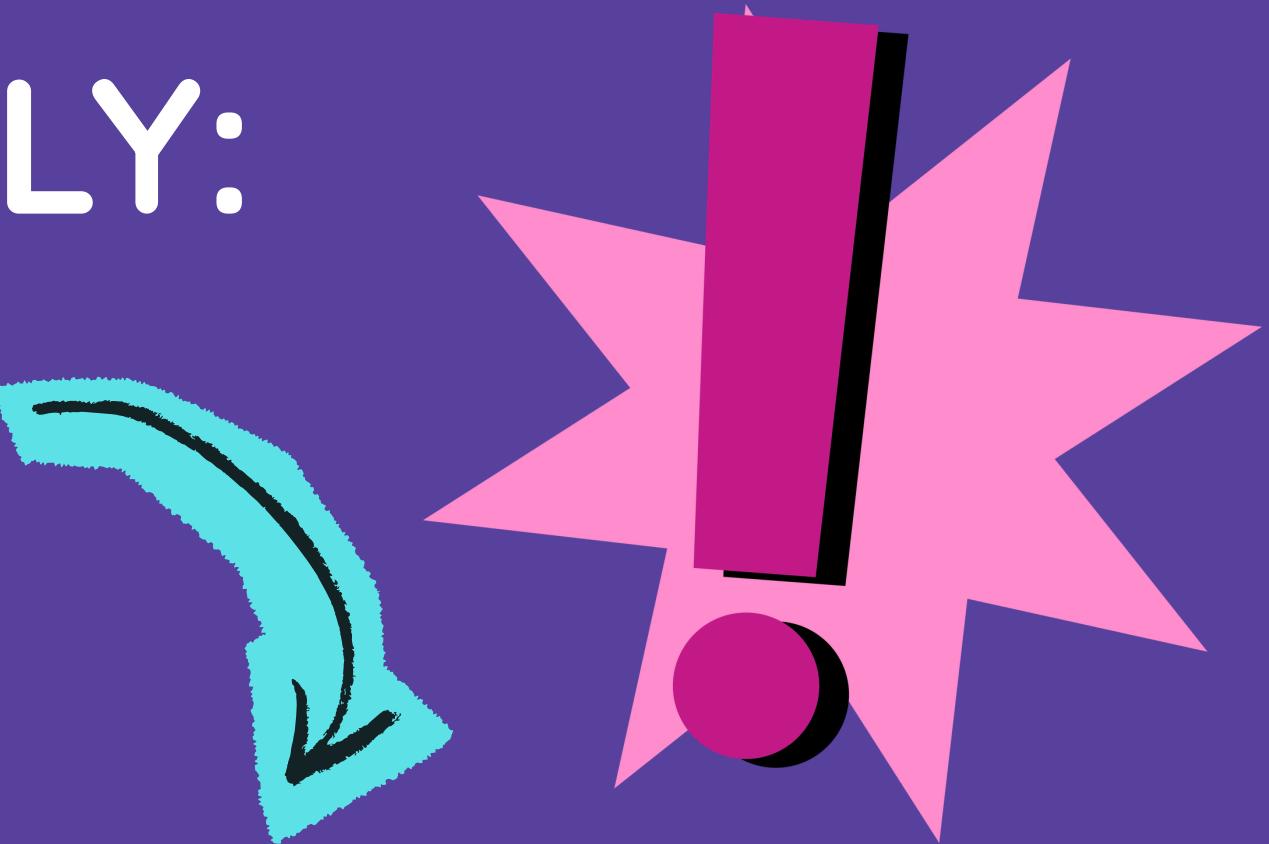
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To your next tenancy (for 26/27)



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2

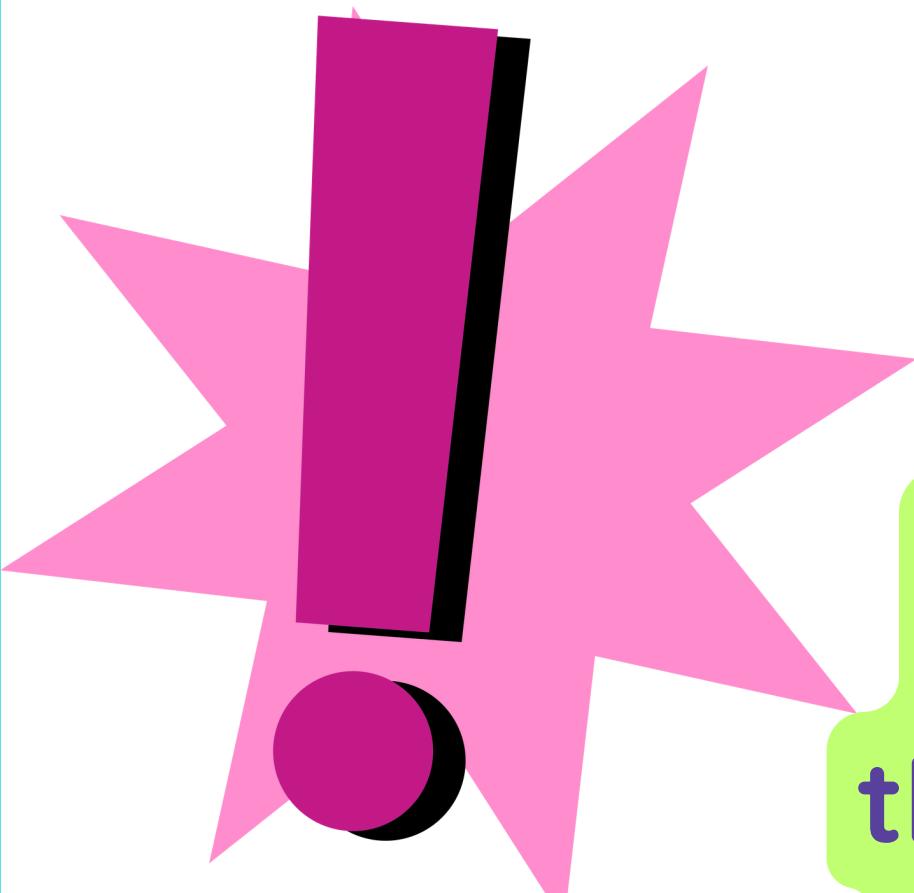
You serve 2 months notice, 2 months from when you intend to leave the property

3

You agree as a house and with your landlord on a date you'd like to leave the tenancy informally

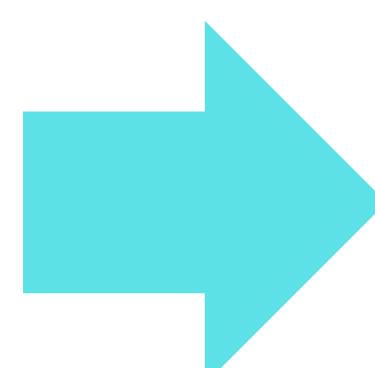
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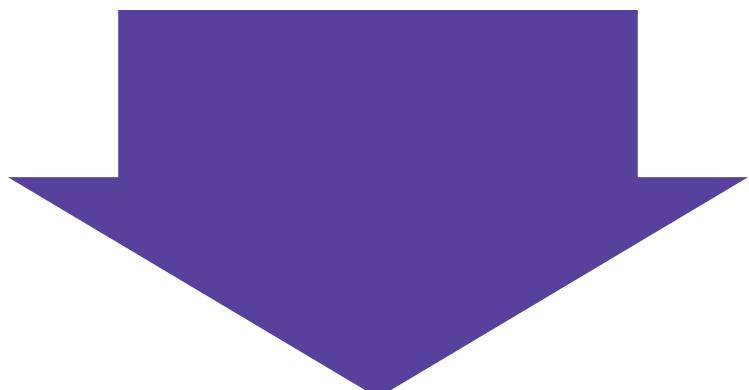
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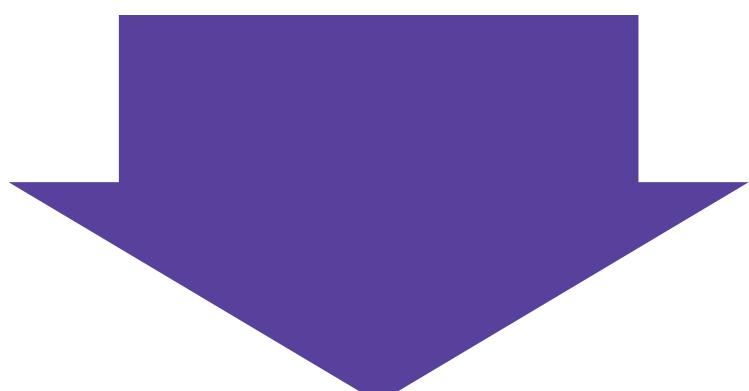


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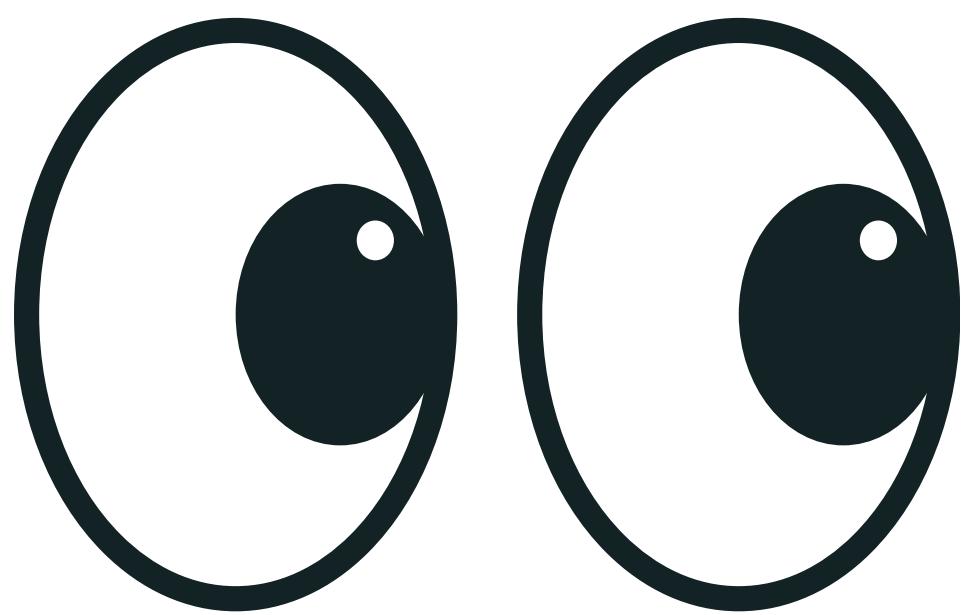
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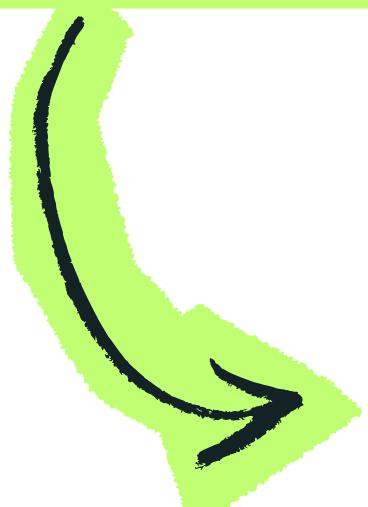
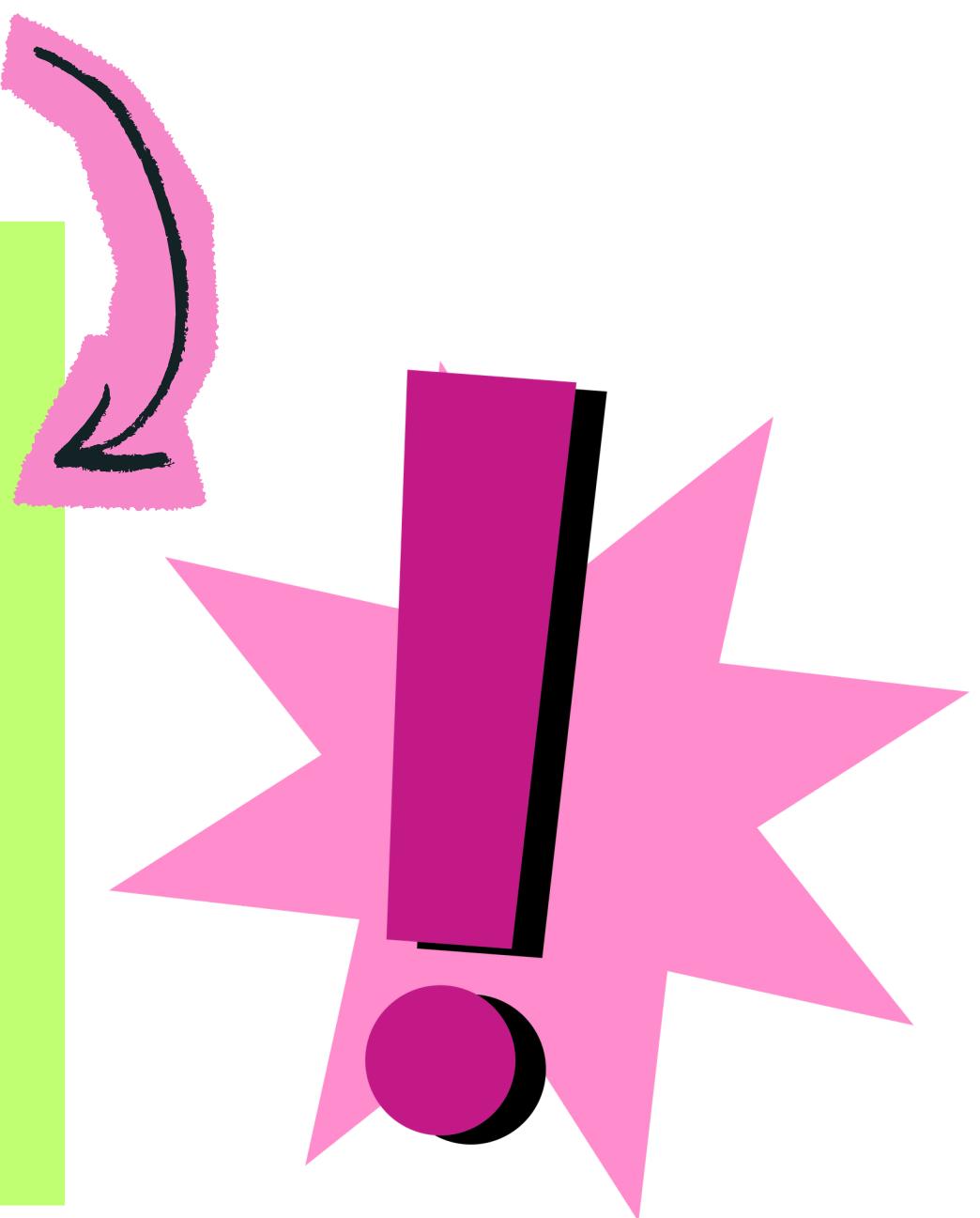
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## The Problem

### Why?

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## The Solution

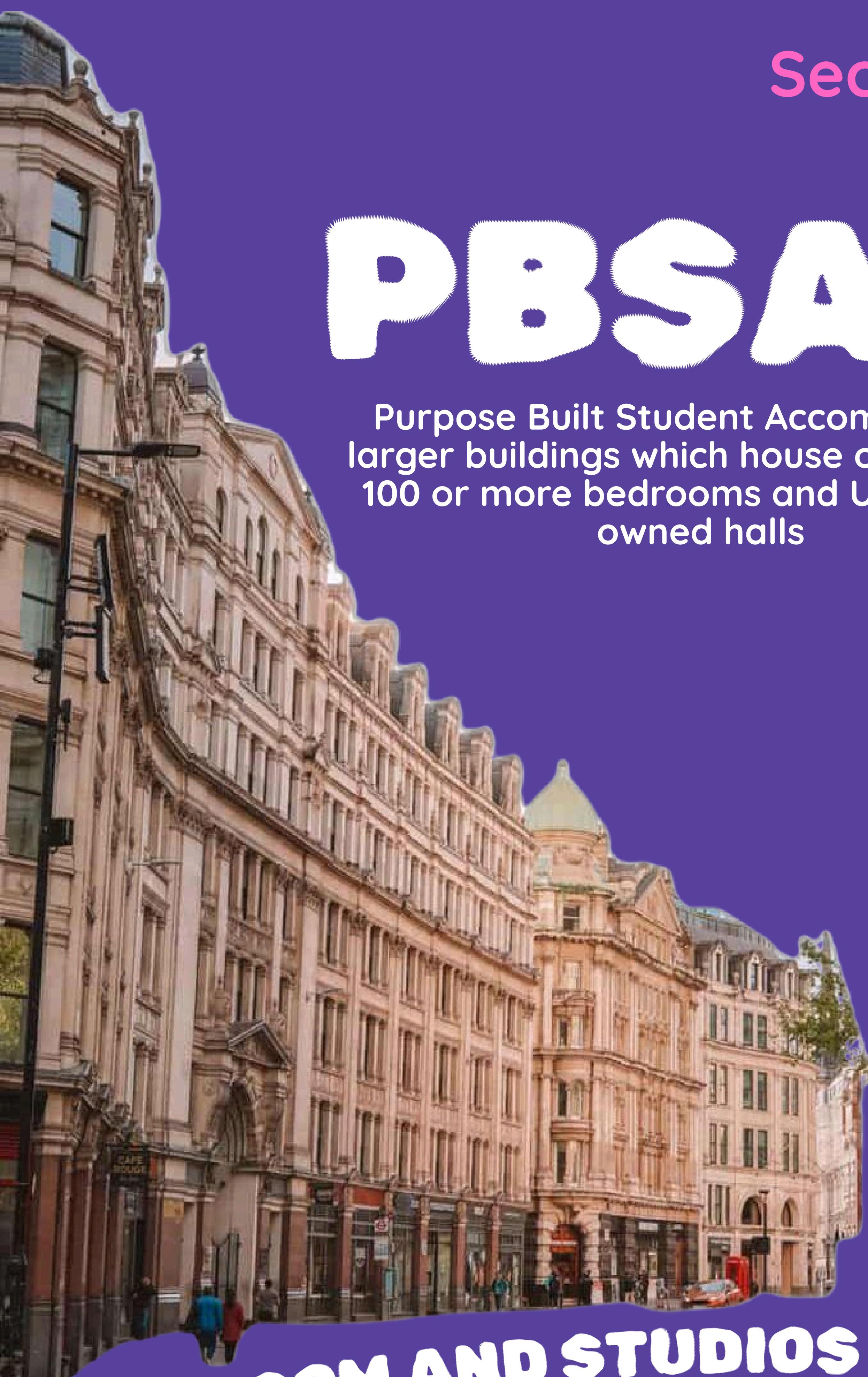
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## Section 3

# 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 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, 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!

## Section 4

DURHAM SU



## 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 before May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026.

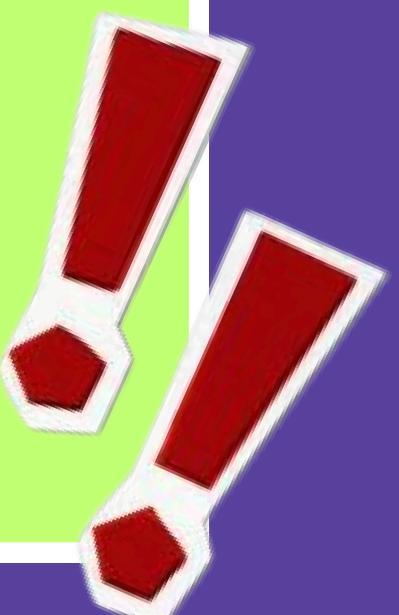
We know students go to college leaders, welfare officers, the university and the Students' Union for advice. All will be trained to help you.

## 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](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>