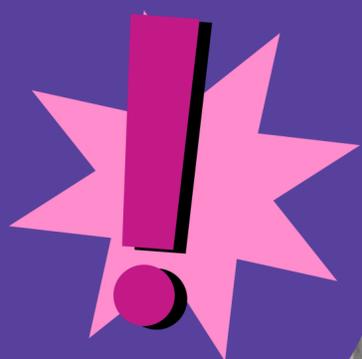


A DURHAM STUDENT'S GUIDE TO:

*Last updated
March 2026



DURHAMSU

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 in the coming months.



Signed,
&



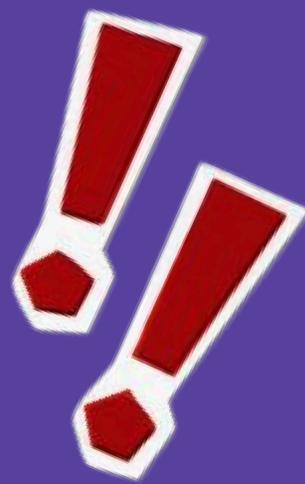
A white handwritten signature of Abi Taylor on a dark blue background.

Abi Taylor
Students' Union
President

A white handwritten signature of Thea Cave on a dark blue background.

Thea Cave
Chair of the JCR, MCR and
GCR Presidents

CONTENTS!



1.

What is the Renters' Rights Act?

HMOs (Student Houses with 3 or more people)

2.

- What's changing?
- What does this mean for me?
- Ground 4a Eviction
- Periodic Tenancies
- What will happen on May 1st?
- 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 1st?
- Things to be aware of!
- More Changes
- The Guarantor Issue.

PBSAs (College and large accommodation blocks)

4.

- What's Changing?

5.

Where can I get support?

- 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

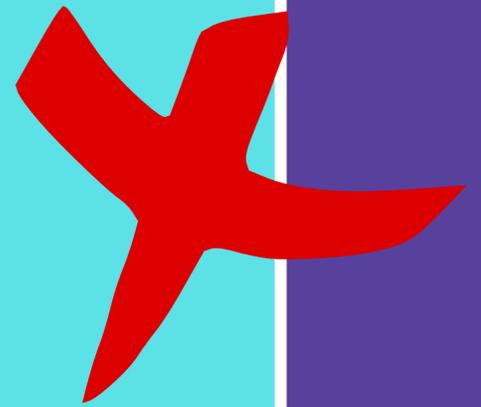
HMMOS

(changes commencing May 1st 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.



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.

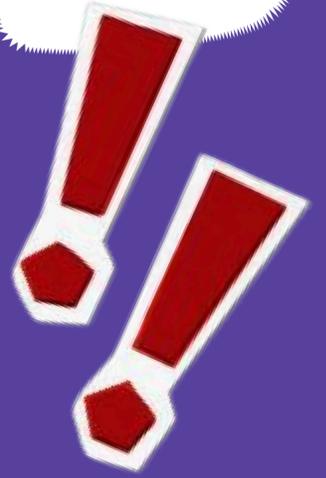
Unless your landlord lets you know when you sign that they intend to use Ground 4a to evict you, **it's your job to serve notice 2 months before you want to leave!**

MORE ON THIS!

GROUND

4A

Scenario 1



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

1.

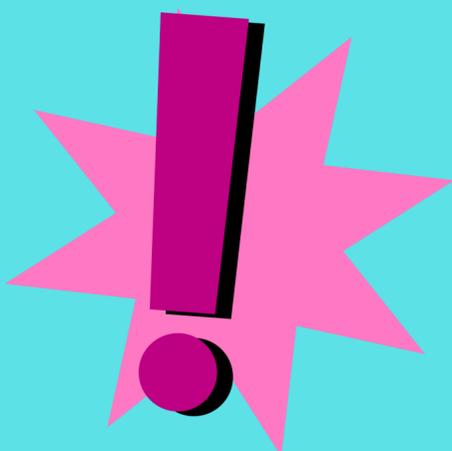
Your landlord has to tell you before you sign the tenancy that they plan to use Ground 4A

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 in summer 2027.

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?

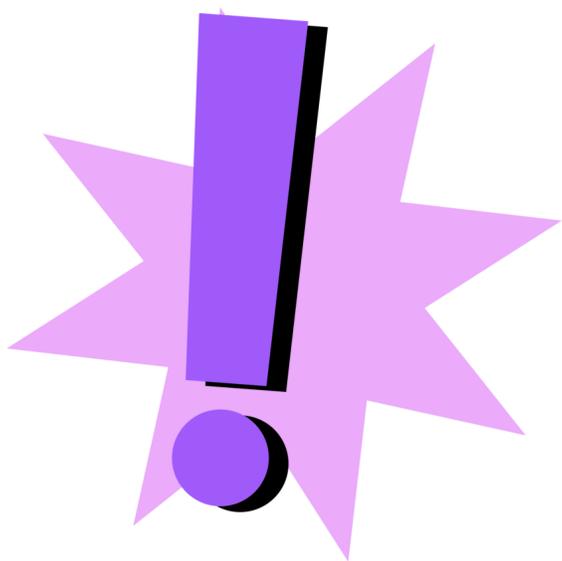
February- April (2027)

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.

1st June- 30th September (2027)

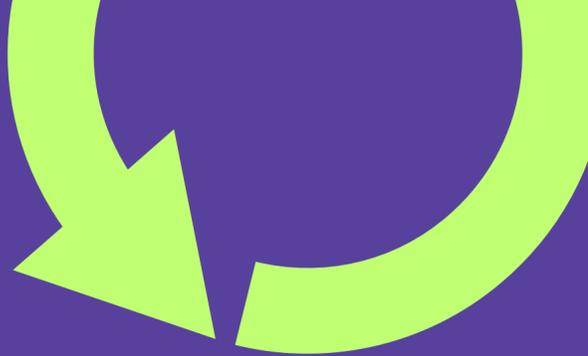
You would leave your tenancy on the date provided earlier in the year and move to your new one!

Leaving
your
2026/27
tenancy



There is a special provision for landlords to use Ground 4a to evict students this summer introduced at the end of February 2026- have a read on p.15!

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 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 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)



One of three things will need to happen:

- 1 Your Landlord will serve you a **Section 21 Eviction Notice** before May 1st 2026
- 2 You serve **2 months notice**, 2 months from when you intend to leave the property

NEW AS OF FEBRUARY 27TH 2026

- 3 Your Landlord will use Ground 4a to evict you with two months notice



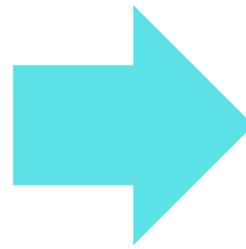
SECTION 21

EVICITION NOTICE

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

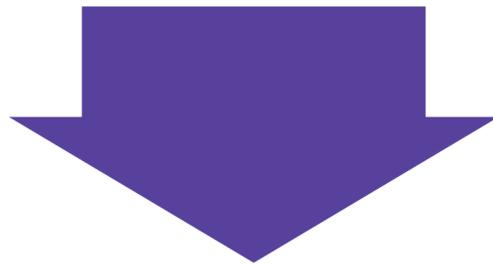


Currently occupying the property on May 1st



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)



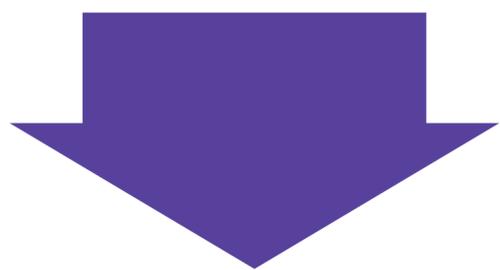
This seems intimidating, but will likely just confirm the end date on your original tenancy. Always ask your landlord for more clarification if you need it!



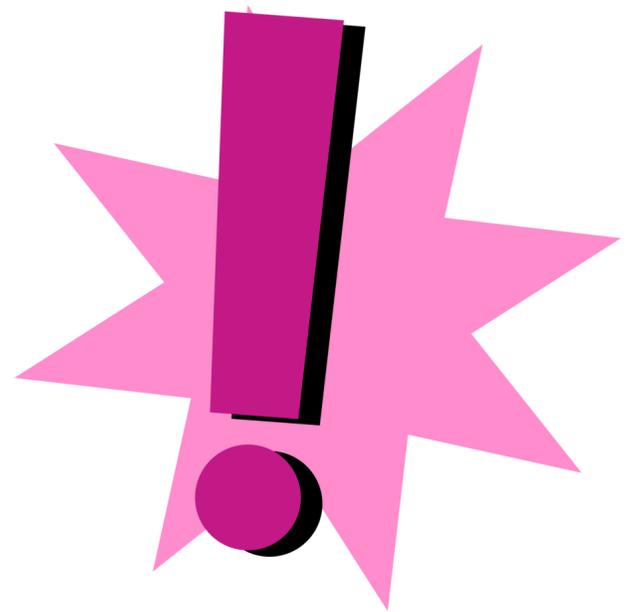
SERVING 2 MONTHS NOTICE

If you have **not** been served a **Section 21 Eviction Notice** before **May 1st** or a **Ground 4a Section 8 notice** after **May 1st** (see below) it is now **YOUR** responsibility to bring your tenancy to an end.

You will need to give your landlord 2 months notice from when you intend to leave the property - ideally the day before rent is paid.



We will produce a template before **May 1st** so that you feel confident you have all the right information in your eviction notice!



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

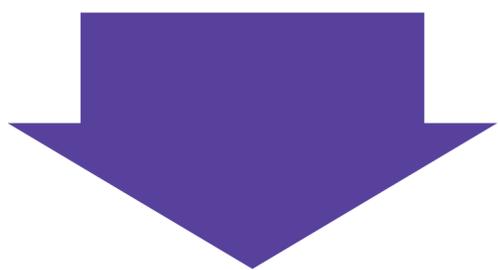
GROUND 4A

SPECIAL PROVISION

**From
May
1st...**

If you have **not** been served a **Section 21 Eviction Notice**- your landlord could evict you with two months notice using a Ground 4a special provision.

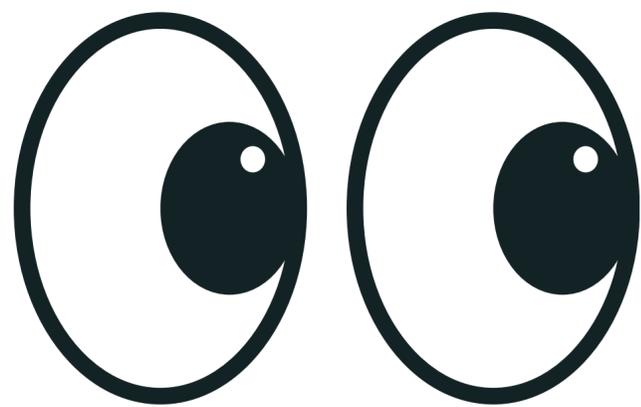
From **1st May to 31st May 2026** landlords will need to tell you **they intend to rely on Ground 4a** - the new student possession ground - this is called a '**Pre-Notice**' and it is a condition of being able to use this particular route to end a tenancy.



They will then give you 2 months notice to leave your tenancy (via a Section 8 Notice) and they will give Ground 4a as the reason for the notice being given.

Landlords giving 2 months notice is for **THIS SUMMER ONLY**- 4 months is required for 2027 onwards!

LOOK OUT FOR...



A government mandated information sheet

Your landlord will get in contact before May 31st 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 1st 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

1 & 2 BEDS

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



SMALLER

HOMES

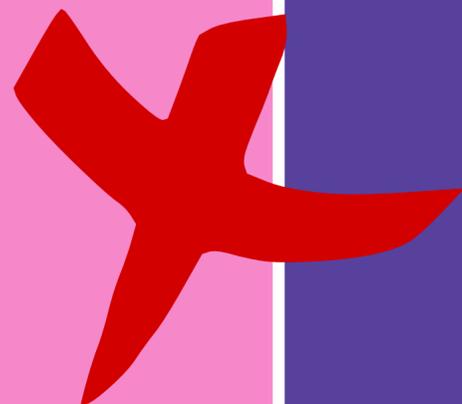
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Change 2

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 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.

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.

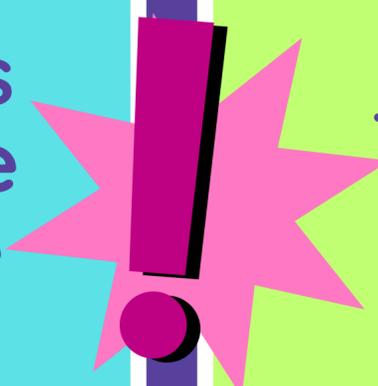
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Warning: If one housemate serves two months notice all students in the tenancy are evicted

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MAY 1ST 2026

What will happen when it comes into force?

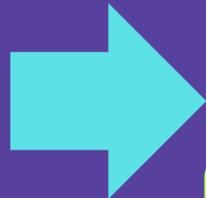


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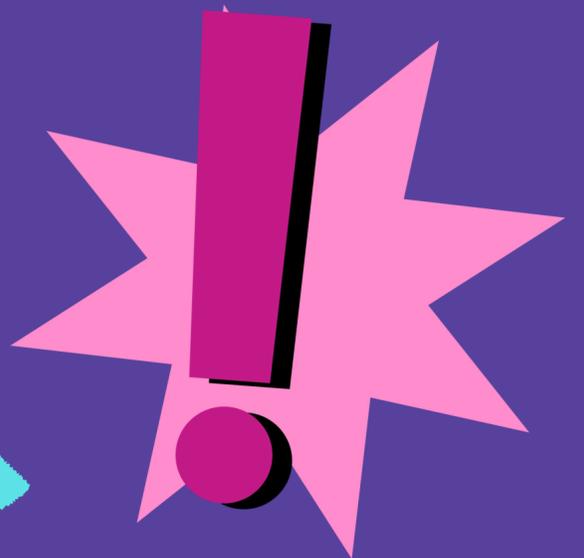
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To your next tenancy (for 26/27)



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2

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

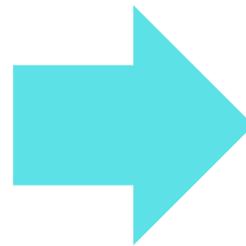
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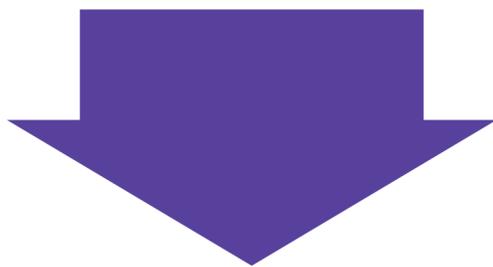


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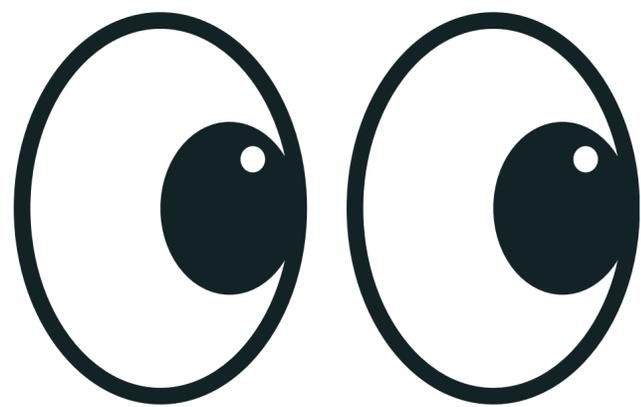
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1 & 2 BEDS

(changes commencing May 1st 2026)

Change 4



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The Problem

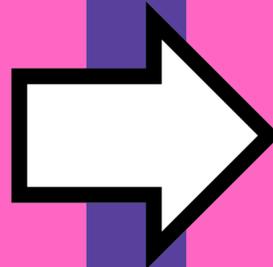
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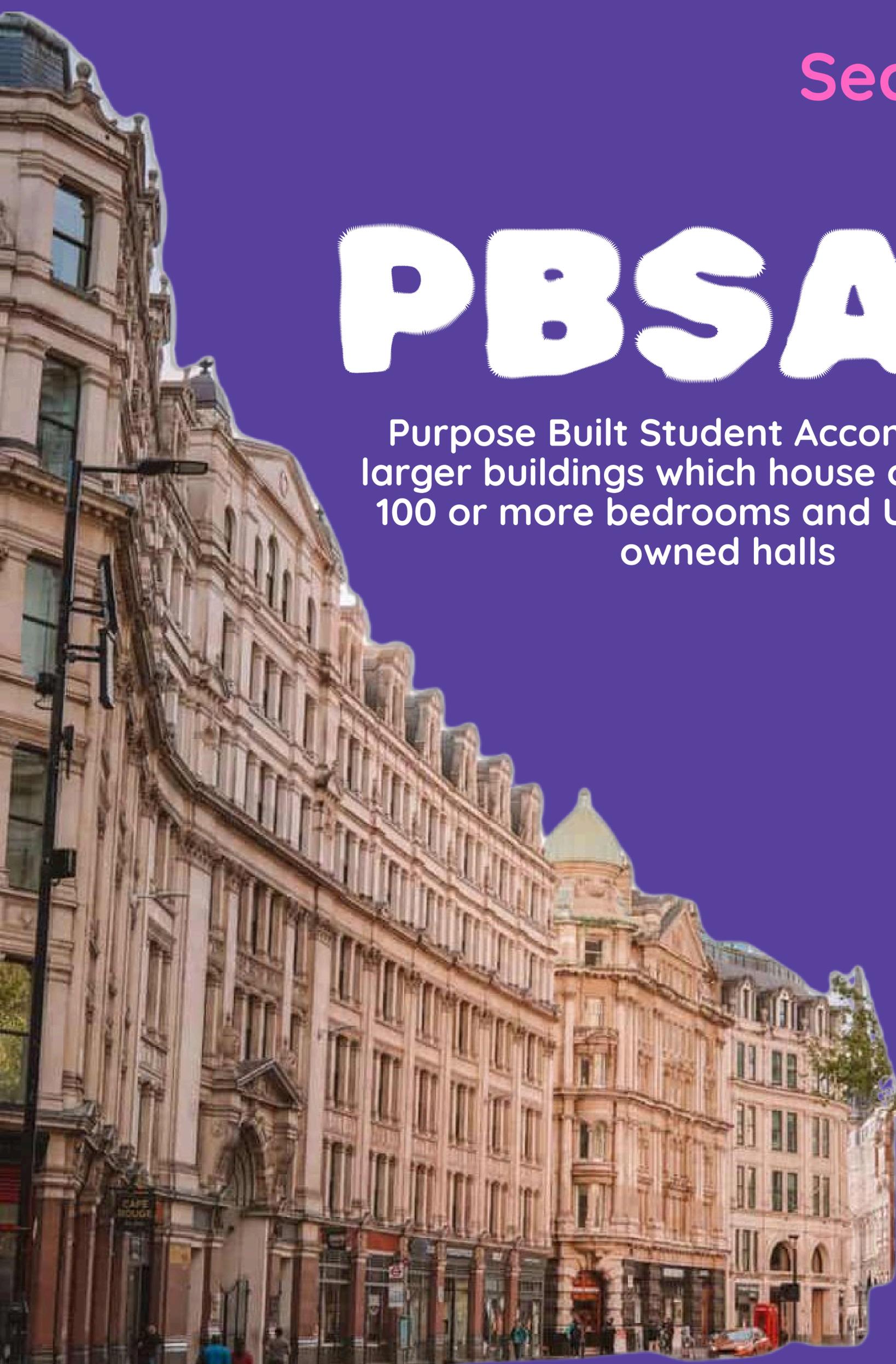
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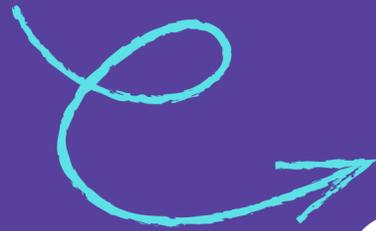
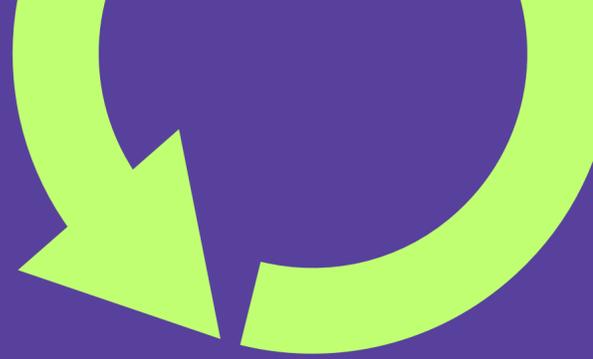
PBSAS

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 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!

Briefings

2. Abi will be briefing relevant student leaders before May 1st 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.



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>