

HOME FRONT

Major changes for England's private rental sector as Renters' Rights Act becomes law

The Renters' Rights Act officially received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025, marking the most significant overhaul of private renting in England in decades. Aimed at creating a fairer and more balanced rental market, the legislation introduces sweeping changes that strengthen protections for tenants while ensuring greater accountability for landlords.

Key changes for tenants and landlords

One of the headline reforms is the abolition of "no fault" Section 21 evictions. In their place, all fixed term assured short-hold tenancies will move to rolling-assured periodic tenancies, giving tenants increased long term stability and the flexibility to leave when needed.

Other major changes include:

- Fairer grounds for possession that remove the previous imbalance between landlords and tenants.
- Limits on rent increases, now restricted to once per year with a minimum of two months' notice.
- Stronger tenant protections, including a ban on rental bidding wars and a cap of one month's rent for advance payments.
- Anti discrimination measures, preventing landlords from excluding families with children or tenants receiving benefits.
- A new right to request pets, which landlords must not unreasonably refuse.

Key changes to enforcement

The Act also significantly boosts the enforcement powers of local housing authorities. Crucially, enforcement is now a duty, not an option — ending the previous expectation that councils should attempt informal resolution before taking action.

From 1 May 2026, non-compliance will fall into two categories of conduct, which will be enforceable under the new system as:

- Breaches - landlords, agents, or anyone acting on their behalf can face financial penalties of up to £7,000 for failing to meet requirements such as providing mandatory information or attempting to issue an unlawful Section 21 notice.
- Offences - more serious misconduct, including unlawful eviction, can lead to financial penalties of up to £40,000 as an alternative to prosecution.

Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renting-out-your-property-guidance-for-landlords-and-letting-agents/renters-rights-act-an-overview-for-landlords>.

IN THIS ISSUE

The Renters' Rights Act page 1

News and events pages 2-6

NEWS & EVENTS

Co-chairs take over at KHG

In a change at the top of the Kent Housing Group, Brian Horton and Rebecca (Becc) Wilcox have taken up the roles of Co-Chairs.

Becc said: "I've worked in housing for 23 years, starting my career under the mentoring of Tracey Kerly. I spent 18 years with ABC having started as a lettings officer and leaving as the operations manager for neighbourhoods, development and resettlement. My highlight at Ashford was hosting HRH Princess Anne when she opened the remodelled Danemore independent living scheme in February 2020.

"I've been with Medway Council for four years, having started out as their Development Manager supporting the delivery of the first HRA-managed council build programme to becoming the Chief Housing Officer in April 2025.

"I've spent a significant amount of my career in housing management, including supporting the Stanhope PFI project in partnership with Moat, the first delivery of council homes in Ashford, and led on a number of service improvements.

"I led the Landlord Services team through Kent & Medway's first inspection under the new social housing regulatory inspection regime, and gained a C2. I've been involved with KHG since I started my career and have had the pleasure of hosting the Excellence Awards the last three years.

"I'm pleased to take on the Co-Chair of KHG alongside Brian. I'm keen to support KHG and our members with the implementation of the Competence and Professionalism Standard, the new SAHP 2026 programme to support the increasing delivery of social housing, supporting members with the new legislation and positive outcomes from the spring statement."



Awaab's Law webinar

Kent Housing Group was happy to welcome 115 people, mainly from member organisations and also some paying guests, to a 6 November webinar studying what the introduction of Awaab's Law means for the housing sector in Kent and Medway.

The event included an **overview and legal implications of Awaab's Law**: Jonathan Hulley provided a comprehensive overview, detailing its scope, phased implementation, repair timelines, and the legal responsibilities for social landlords.

Practical identification and reporting of damp and mould: San Nyunt delivered a detailed practical guide on identifying, recording, and reporting damp and mould, covering types, causes, inspection techniques, and the importance of holistic assessment.

Culture change and proactive case management in damp and mould response: Neil Diddams, then Adam Spokes, discussed the shift from compliance

to proactive, curiosity-driven approaches in managing damp and mould, highlighting the use of data, cross-team accountability, and resident engagement.

Digital solutions for damp and mould case management: Elaine Smith from Hyde and Aimee Fitzgerald and Wendy Mason from mhs homes demonstrated their organisations' digital platforms for managing damp and mould cases, showcasing automated triage, integration with repairs, and real-time tracking.

The presentations and other resources are available on our website here [Awaab's Law webinar - Kent Housing Group](#)

Everyone has been asked to share good practice and pilot initiatives so we can learn from each other. Please email kenthousinggroup@ashford.gov.uk with your examples.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE NEWS: kenthousinggroup.org.uk/news

No Use Empty – revitalising Kent's communities

Kent County Council's No Use Empty (NUE) initiative has been transforming the county since 2005 by tackling the problem of long-term empty properties.

Working with all district councils, NUE provides short-term secured loans and expert guidance to property owners, enabling them to refurbish and bring homes back into use. So far the scheme has returned over 8,900 properties to the housing market, leveraging more than £100m in combined public and private investment.

A standout success is 45 Augusta Gardens in Folkestone, a five-storey townhouse left derelict for nearly 20 years. Thanks to NUE loans and support, developer Will Brown transformed the property into five modern flats after a challenging three-year project. Once dubbed the "Pigeon Hotel," it is now a vibrant part of the community, inspiring neighbouring homeowners to invest in their properties.

With funding still available, the initiative continues to offer opportunities for developers and landlords to make a real difference.

Learn more or apply for a loan at

www.no-use-empty.org.uk or contact the NUE Team at: nouseempty@kent.gov.uk



Why we need the Money Guiders Programme

Much of life is shaped by how we manage our money. When people reach out for help, money guidance is often given as part of wider support. Kent County Council created this free programme because money guidance, and the skill set needed to provide it, wasn't clearly defined, training and resources were patchy and the role generally undervalued.

Money Guiders helps organisations and practitioners to talk about money with customers confidently, and offer safe, effective guidance.

- You'll know what money guidance means, and the boundaries between guidance and regulated advice.
- You'll develop the core and technical competencies to support what you do, enhancing your service.
- You'll be part of a community where practitioners learn from each other.
- You'll take your help further with a free knowledge hub and online events.

Find out more at [Money Guiders Programme - Kent County Council](#) and sign up for an online induction at [Join the Money Guiders Programme](#)

**Money
Guiders**

Take your help further

NEWS & EVENTS

New Members

Introducing BluePine Living

BluePine Living is a newly established For-Profit Registered Provider dedicated to delivering high-quality, energy-efficient, and well-managed affordable homes that align with local housing strategies and support long-term community wellbeing.

Our experienced team brings together specialists from across affordable housing, private equity, local government, and property services. Our leadership includes former senior executives from major UK registered providers, private developers, and investment firms, with expertise spanning regulatory compliance, property acquisition, development delivery, asset management, finance, and customer service.

We are delighted to have been accepted as a member of the Kent Housing Group. As part of this partnership, BluePine Living is committed to upholding the highest standards of governance, financial viability, and customer care. We look forward to actively contributing to the delivery of the Group's vision: Better Homes, supporting Growth, Wellbeing, and Choice for all residents across Kent and Medway.

For information email Head of Housing Yasmine Ameen at yameen@bluepine.co.uk or visit www.bluepine.co.uk

Welcome to Change Grow Live

Change Grow Live (CGL) is a national charity dedicated to supporting people in making positive changes in

their lives. Our Housing Support Service works with individuals facing complex challenges to help them secure and maintain safe, suitable accommodation across West Kent.

We provide assistance at every stage of the housing journey, whether someone is homeless, experiencing a tenancy crisis, or starting a new tenancy. Our housing team is embedded within local council offices and attends community drop-ins, creating accessible spaces for people to discuss housing concerns and receive tailored advice.

Commissioned by Kent County Council and funded through the national 10-year Drug Strategy, we place housing at the heart of recovery. Each housing plan is personalised, ensuring that even those reluctant to engage receive ongoing support until they feel ready.

We accept both professional and direct referrals for individuals with a treatment need and offer fast-track access through our housing team. To overcome practical barriers, we can also provide personal budgets for essentials such as furniture and household items. While CGL does not own or manage housing, we work closely with local authorities, housing providers, and community organisations to achieve safe and stable accommodation outcomes for our clients.

For information email cgl@WACOMMS.CO.UK or visit www.changegrowlive.org



Join the Digital and Energy Champion Network

Looking to build your skills, give back to your community, or make a positive impact where you live or work? The Digital and Energy Champion Network is a great place to start.

As a Champion volunteer, you'll access free online training, a practical toolkit, and regular webinars with expert speakers. You'll also receive a quarterly newsletter full of resources to help you support others, from improving digital confidence to saving energy and making everyday changes that matter.

Digital Champions help people gain confidence online, use digital tools safely, and make the most of everyday technology; whether accessing services, managing finances, or staying in touch. You don't need to be a technical expert just someone who enjoys helping others feel more connected.

Energy Champions support others to become energy confident using our practical resources. Your guidance can help people take control of their energy use and make small changes that have a big impact.

Becoming a Digital or Energy Champion is flexible and rewarding. It's ideal for anyone looking to grow their confidence, enhance their skills, or take the next step towards new opportunities — all while being part of a supportive, county-wide network of volunteers.

Find out how to join the Digital and Energy Champion Network today and start making a real difference in your community.

Visit: www.digitalkent.uk/information/projects/dcn

Email: digitalchampions@kent.gov.uk



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE NEWS: kenthousinggroup.org.uk/news

Control Flow Technologies

Control Flow Technologies Group (formerly Cenergist) was proud to sponsor the Kent Housing Group Conference in June 2025 and to support delivery of the **Better Homes: Growth, Wellbeing and Choice strategy**.

Working with Ashford Borough Council, Control Flow Technologies Group helped to unlock housing developments affected by nutrient neutrality restrictions in the River Stour catchment. They installed their patent Control Flow HL2024® devices in more than 3,000 council homes, delivering consistent water flow to reduce wastage, lower emissions and improve boiler performance.

The project directly contributes to the Strategy's SEH6 ambition to simplify the energy and water efficiency landscape across Kent and Medway. Residents benefit from reduced water and energy bills (by up to £360 a year) with a 98% satisfaction rate reported.

Through innovation and partnership, they continue to help councils and landlords improve efficiency standards and create more sustainable communities across the region, as well as helping tenants save money on their utility bills.

For more information visit www.controlflow.co.uk
Email info@controlflow.co.uk



Fire evacuation plans

From April 2026, new legal requirements will apply to residential and social landlords in England relating to residents who may need assistance to evacuate during a fire. Kent Fire & Rescue Service provides this guidance.

The legislation introduces Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (RPEEPs), covering residents with physical or sensory impairments, health conditions, learning disabilities, or temporary mobility issues.

They support a practical, proportionate, and risk-based approach by identifying residents at increased risk and setting out realistic evacuation arrangements aligned with the building's fire strategy and fire risk assessment.

RPEEPs should be developed in consultation with residents, reviewed regularly, and managed in line with data protection requirements. Landlords are encouraged to use the government RPEEP toolkit, which provides practical guidance and templates to support consistent implementation.

More information is available at **The Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025**, and the government factsheet **Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (Residential PEEPs) - GOV.UK**



Kent Fire & Rescue Service

NEWS & EVENTS

KHG Excellence Awards 2026 – time to get nominating!

Nominations are now officially open for the KHG Excellence Awards 2026, which recognise the outstanding housing professionals we have across Kent and Medway.

This year's categories are:

- Excellent Partnership
- Excellence in Delivering Services for Vulnerable People
- Excellence in Development and Regeneration
- Innovator of the Year
- Excellent Community Project
- Excellent Young Professional of the Year (up to 30 years old)
- Excellent Housing Professional
- Excellent Associate Professional
- Team of the Year
- Excellence in the Private Sector
- Unsung Community Hero/Neighbour of the Year
- Excellence in Asset Management

Also, just to let you know that following feedback, we have shortened the nomination form and hope this will encourage even more submissions than ever before!

For further information and to download the nomination form, please visit: [KHG Excellence Awards 2026 - Kent Housing Group](#). The deadline for submitting nominations is Tuesday 7 April 2026.

The awards ceremony will be held in Canterbury on Friday 25 September 2026.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE NEWS: kenthousinggroup.org.uk/news