

Housing Secretary extends support for renters during pandemic

- Renters protected with ban on bailiff enforced evictions extended until 31 March
- Exemptions in place for the most serious cases
- Part of a wider package of support for renters during the pandemic

Renters will continue to be supported during the ongoing national lockdown restrictions, with an extension to the ban on bailiff evictions, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (14 February 2021).

The ban on bailiff evictions – which was introduced at the start of the pandemic – has been extended for another 6 weeks – until 31 March – with measures kept under review in line with the latest public health advice.

Exemptions remain in place for the most serious circumstances that cause the greatest strain on landlords as well as other residents and neighbours, such as illegal occupation, anti-social behaviour and arrears of 6 months' rent or more.

The measures are part of a wide-ranging package of support the government has provided to protect renters from the economic impact of the pandemic, including supporting businesses to pay staff through the furlough scheme and strengthening the welfare safety-net by billions of pounds.

Landlords are also required to give 6-month notice periods to tenants before starting possession proceedings, except in the most serious circumstances, meaning that most renters now served notice can stay in their homes until at least August 2021, with time to find alternative support or accommodation.

For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

Housing Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We have taken unprecedented action to support renters during the pandemic including introducing a six-month notice period and financial support to help those struggling to pay their rent.

By extending the ban on the enforcement of evictions by bailiffs, in all but the most serious cases, we are ensuring renters remain protected during this difficult time.

Our measures strike the right balance between protecting tenants and enabling landlords to exercise their right to justice.

Court rules and procedures introduced in September to support both tenants and landlords will remain in place and regularly reviewed, with courts continuing to prioritise the most cases, such as those involving anti-social behaviour, illegal occupation and perpetrators of domestic abuse in the social sector.

The government has also launched a new free mediation pilot to support landlords and tenants to resolve disputes before a formal court hearing takes place. This will help tenants at an early stage of the possession process, mitigating the risk of tenants becoming homeless and helping to sustain tenancies where possible.

Together these measures strike the right balance between prioritising public health and supporting the most vulnerable renters, whilst ensuring landlords can access and exercise their right to justice in the most serious cases.

The package of support is reducing the number of evictions as applications to the courts for possession by private and social landlords were down 67% between October and December 2020, compared to the same quarter in 2019. The number of repossessions recorded October to December 2020 was down 93% compared to the same quarter in 2019. Only 548 repossessions were recorded between April and December 2020 compared to 22,444 in the same period in 2019.

The government previously changed the law in England to ensure bailiffs do not enforce evictions for 6 weeks until 22 February. This has now been extended for a further 6 weeks until 31 March. This will be kept under review.

The only exceptions to this are for the most egregious cases – anti-social behaviour, illegal occupation, death of a tenant where the property is unoccupied, fraud, perpetrators of domestic abuse in social housing and rent arrears equivalent to at least 6 months' rent.

[Guidance](#) to support landlords and tenants in the social and private rented sectors understand the possession action process and new rules within the court system in England and Wales is available.