

Housing Secretary pledges new funding to crackdown on criminal landlords

- More than £4 million of funding for councils to tackle criminal landlords across England.
- Move to empower councils to stamp out exploitative landlords and enable good landlords to thrive.
- Builds on strong action already taken by government to drive up standards in the rental sector.

More than 100 councils across England have been awarded a share of over £4 million to crack down on criminal landlords and letting agents, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick MP has announced today (3 January 2020).

The majority of landlords provide decent homes for their tenants, but a small minority persist in breaking the law, making tenants' lives a misery by offering inadequate or unsafe housing.

The new funding will be used by councils to take enforcement action against these landlords, and advise tenants of their housing rights.

This action will continue the government's ongoing work to make the private rented sector fairer and stamp out criminal practices for good.

Among the councils to benefit from the funding are:

- 21 councils across Yorkshire and Humberside – to train over 100 enforcement officers across the region to ensure standards are being met by landlords
- Northampton – to create a 'Special Operations Unit' to enforce against the very worst landlords responsible for over 100 homes in the town
- Thurrock – to work with the care service to ensure the most vulnerable young tenants are in decent, well-maintained homes
- Greenwich – to trial new technology to identify particularly cold homes to ensure renters are warm over the winter period

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

This government will deliver a better deal for renters. It's completely unacceptable that a minority of unscrupulous landlords continue to break the law and provide homes which fall short of the standards we rightly expect – making lives difficult for hard-working tenants who just want to get on with their lives.

Everyone deserves to live in a home that is safe and secure and the funding announced today will strengthen councils' powers to crack down on poor landlords and drive up standards in the private rented sector for renters across the country.

Councils already have strong powers to force landlords to make necessary improvements to a property through use of a range of measures, including civil penalties and banning orders for the worst offenders.

The grants will support a range of projects to enable councils to make the best use of these powers. This will include trialling innovative ideas, sharing best practice and targeted enforcement where we know landlords shirk their responsibilities.

Today's announcement demonstrates government's commitment to helping good landlords to thrive, and hard-working tenants across the country get the homes they deserve – creating a housing market that works for everyone.

This government has committed to delivering a fairer deal for renters and empower them whilst also giving greater peace of mind.

We will end no fault evictions, so that landlords can't remove tenants without good reason, and introduce Lifetime Rental Deposits so renters don't have to save up for a new deposit while their money is tied up in an old one.

There are more than 4.5 million households in the private rented sector in England, with recent statistics showing that 82% of private renters are satisfied with their accommodation.

The fund will help councils take on the most common challenges that stand in the way of tackling poor standards in the private rented sector, including:

- encouraging positive landlord/tenant/local authority relationships, particularly with vulnerable groups such as care leavers
- the need for better information – on housing stock, and on landlords and agents operating in their areas
- data sharing between authorities and agencies – identifying and bringing together different data sets to enable better enforcement targeting which protects the most vulnerable tenants
- internal 'ways of working' – improving housing-specific legal expertise, in-house communication between teams, and tools and strategies to effectively implement policy
- innovative software – for enforcement officers to record their findings, gather evidence and streamline the enforcement process

A summary of funding for PRS Innovation and Enforcement Grant projects can be viewed here:

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