

BRIEFING

Housing rights and housing realities: how to make new housing rights effective

The Renters Rights Act 2025¹ has the potential to transform the private rented sector (PRS) by strengthening the rights of private tenants and making landlords more accountable. However, enhanced protections will be of limited use to renters from marginalised communities if they are not aware of their rights and if they do not have the skills or appropriate support to exercise them.

Findings from recent legal needs research shows that while housing problems such as rent arrears, eviction and serious disrepair are commonplace, without help, people struggle to exercise their rights.² People who are likely to struggle include disabled people, low-income households and lone parents – renters who are often prone to poor housing conditions and the rental discrimination the Act is intended to protect.

This briefing draws from research findings with marginalised groups exploring why they struggle, what makes a difference and what is needed now to turn housing rights into a reality.

Why do people struggle to access their housing rights?

1 Most people have limited knowledge of their housing rights. This is worsened by power imbalances that mean people feel they must accept what their landlord says or risk losing their home.

“ I don’t even know, to tell you the truth, what’s my rights. I know that I should have the things properly then because I’ve been paying the rent. ”

2 The steps involved in asserting rights and the formal processes for enforcement can be difficult to navigate. This is especially so if someone has a disability or long-term health condition. People find it particularly challenging to escalate disputes, and they don’t know what to do next.

“ It’s dangerous, they just won’t listen. I’ve told them time and time again. ”

3 Fear, shame and stigma prevent people from asking for help. People usually don’t know where to go for help and advice. Even if they do, they may be more focused on survival and immediate needs, or they may feel ashamed to discuss their housing conditions.

“ I don’t want to start telling them about the house as well, they’ll think there’s something wrong with me. ”

4 Housing advice and legal support are simply not available to most people. Many people across the country live in housing advice deserts.³ Even when advice and legal support are available, high thresholds for legal aid exclude most from eligibility. Organisations are overcapacity, and if they can’t help there is nowhere else to turn.

“ If they can’t do it, who can? ”

What makes a difference?

People are better able to enforce their rights when they know what their rights are, when they can access help from providers that they trust, and when there is a joined-up ecosystem of legal support including trusted intermediaries, generalist and specialist advice, and high-quality digital information resources and guidance.

1 Support from community organisations helps people take early action and access more specialised support. When an intermediary had identified the problem, they were able to offer varying forms of support, including signposting and referral, making phone calls and filling out forms, and advocacy. They helped people feel more confident about taking action and work out the next steps.

“ I just kind of knew that this woman would be able to help me. She was listening to what I was saying. She’d got help around her, they were taking it serious, because I could here somebody behind her. I’d hear somebody saying, she should have done that. Have you done this? They knew their stuff as well. ”

This works best when intermediaries have increased knowledge, skills and confidence to identify housing problems and provide help as early as possible and when they work collaboratively with advice and legal services.

2 Holistic assessments help identify interconnected problems and anticipate risks. Housing problems do not usually happen on their own. For instance, rent arrears are often a consequence of earlier problems with benefits. More holistic forms of assessment at early stages helps to address the causes of problems and prevent further problems from arising.

3 Access to advice and legal support improves outcomes. Early legal advice usually led to positive outcome including securing housing and averting homelessness, improving health and well-being.

“ So that was the only way I found to deal with the issue, to go to The Law Centre, to go to the council, to speak to the Job Centre, all of these helped to find, you know, deal with this situation. ”

What is needed now to secure improved protections for renters brought about by the Renters Rights Act?

1 Ensure the availability of high quality, accessible legal information, guidance and education. Important changes to end no-fault evictions, tenancy changes and rent controls require trusted and accessible and independent sources of legal information and support for renters alongside education and training opportunities for community organisations at the frontline.⁴ People must be guided to trusted sources that will help them build confidence and develop the knowledge and skills to navigate processes. This includes effective signposting from Government websites.

2 Increase the availability of early housing advice and legal support. Existing initiatives such as the Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service Early Legal Advice and the In Court Duty Scheme are vital, but have significant limitations and do not reach enough people at early stages.⁵

3 Fund targeted, collaborative approaches that help ensure people receive help at the earliest opportunity, with clear and stable referral routes from community organisations to advice and legal services.⁶ The success of health justice partnerships, for example, have shown just how well this kind of collaboration can work.⁷

4 Work together to address systemic issues that arise for marginalised people in enforcing new rights. People who are marginalised or disadvantaged will face significant barriers to enforce their rights. Redress will often only be available after someone has lost their home, through complex processes that require legal support.⁸ Ensuring protections are properly enforced will need a partnership approach bringing together renters groups, advice and community organisations, local authorities and Ombudsman services.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/26/contents>

² This briefing draws on insights from a recent qualitative study of legal need conducted Coventry, focused on the experiences of marginalised groups and the role of trusted intermediaries. The study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation. [Understanding Local Legal Needs: Early Intervention and the Ecosystem of Legal Support \(2025\)](#).

³ Recent statistics show that there was no legal aid provider office for housing in 183 local authorities. population was within 10 kilometres of a legal aid office in 2022-23. [Value for Money in Legal Aid \(2024\)](#). Housing was highlighted as a particular area of concern in the [Review of Civil Legal Aid \(2025\)](#).

⁴ 92% of respondents among participants in Advicenow’s housing-related training felt they now had the next steps to deal with housing, disrepair and homelessness issues. 58% felt their knowledge about housing rights increased. [Advicenow Impact Report 2023-2024](#).

⁵ Central England Law Centre’s Housing Duty Scheme provides support at Court to up to 25 clients per month. They are often vulnerable and facing homelessness. This is often the first time that clients have had access to any form of legal advice and the results are often transformational. Rogue landlords have been held to account, possession proceedings have been thrown out and eviction avoided. While this was very beneficial, many of the people could have been helped earlier. These schemes are dependent on capacity within a stretched legal aid sector. Additionally, neither allows full representation through court proceedings (for example HLPAS early legal advice is only available up to the first substantive hearing). Finally, they only cover possession proceedings and do not include, for example, responding to applications for anti-social behaviour injunctions. Finally, the lack of widespread access to generalist housing advice and triage (and awareness therefore of when to seek specialist advice) poses a challenge.

⁶ In the last twelve months, Central England Law Centre’s Housing Team has received 296 referrals from intermediaries, ranging from local GPs through to national charities. The majority of these referrals were facilitated by the relationship built between the Central England Law Centre and the intermedialary and the impact of them was potentially transformational with rogue landlords being held to account, homelessness avoided and severe disrepair resolved.

⁷ See for instance, Liz Curran. [“Health-justice partnerships vital to help marginalised groups.”](#)

⁸ Greater Manchester Law Centre, [What is the Renters’ Rights Act and when will it come into force?](#)