

# [Press release: James Brokenshire heralds new law protecting tenants from unfair letting fees](#)

- Tenant Fees Act puts a stop to unnecessary, costly fees imposed on tenants by landlords or letting agents
- New Act bans unfair letting fees and caps tenancy deposits at 5 weeks' rent, with ban on fees to take effect from 1 June 2019
- Measures expected to save renters at least £240 million a year – or up to £70 per household

Tenants will be protected from unfair letting fees and will see their tenancy deposits capped at 5 weeks' rent, putting hard-earned cash back in their pockets, thanks to a new law being ushered in today (12 February 2019).

Unexpected letting fees and high deposits can make properties harder for people to afford and are often not clearly explained upfront – leaving many prospective tenants unaware of the true costs of renting a property.

The [Tenant Fees Bill](#), which has received Royal Assent today and now becomes an Act, puts an end to costly fees imposed by landlords or agents – with the ban on fees to come into effect from 1 June. It is expected to save tenants across England at least £240 million a year, or up to £70 per household.

The Act also caps the security deposits that renters pay at the start of their tenancy at 5 weeks' rent, giving people the assurance that legally they cannot be expected to pay more than this to secure a property.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said,

Tenants across the country should not be stung by unexpected costs from agents or landlords.

This Act not only delivers on our promise to ban letting fees but also caps deposits at 5 weeks' rent and sets out how and when landlords can charge tenants fees – helping renters keep more of their hard-earned cash.

This is part of our ongoing action to make renting fairer and more transparent and make a housing market that works for everyone.

Under the Act, landlords and agents are only able to recover reasonably incurred costs from tenants and must provide evidence of these costs before they can impose any charges.

This will put a stop to, for example, tenants being charged hundreds of pounds for a damaged item that actually only costs a few pounds to replace – such as £60 to replace smoke alarms.

The Act also ensures that tenants who have been charged unfair fees get their money back quickly by reducing the timeframe during which landlords and agents must pay back any fees that they have unlawfully charged. Taken together, these provisions help reduce the costs that tenants can face at the outset, renewal and termination of a tenancy.

The Act is part of a wider package of government reforms aimed at rebalancing the relationship between tenants and landlords to deliver a fairer, better quality and more affordable private rental market.

We have introduced a range of powers for local authorities to enable them to crack down on the small minority of rogue landlords and agents who let unfit properties. This includes fixed financial penalties of up to £30,000 and banning orders – possibly for life – for the most serious offenders.

Ministers have also extended mandatory licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation to improve living conditions of tenants in shared homes and tightened up rules on smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Private tenants can also apply for a refund of up to 12 months' rent if their landlord does not deal with health and safety hazards in their home.

Other government steps to reform and improve renting include:

- a national database of rogue landlords and agents to keep track of those that have been banned from letting
- a comprehensive review of the rating system used by local authorities to assess the presence of serious risks to the health and safety of tenants
- mandatory client money protection – by which rental money held by letting agents is safeguarded against theft and fraud – for all agents
- a mandatory redress scheme for landlords
- an independent regulator to oversee letting agents, setting standards and maintaining minimum qualifications
- new, mandatory 5-yearly electrical installation safety inspections

- considering the case for a specialist housing court to provide greater access to justice for landlords and tenants in property disputes

These measures are all part of ongoing government action to protect tenants and drive up standards in the private rented sector – helping make a housing market that is fairer and works for everyone.

The Tenant Fees Bill has now received Royal Assent. From 1 June the Act will improve security for tenants, including:

- capping security deposits at no more than 5 weeks' rent and holding deposits at no more than 1 week's rent. It also sets out the proposed requirements on landlords and agents for returning a holding deposit to a tenant
- capping the amount that can be charged for a change to a tenancy at £50 unless the landlord demonstrates that greater costs were incurred
- creating a financial penalty with a fine of £5,000 for an initial breach of the ban with a criminal offence where a person has been fined or convicted of the same offence within the last 5 years. Financial penalties of up to £30,000 can be issued as an alternative to prosecution
- requiring Trading Standards to enforce the ban and to make provision for tenants to be able to recover unlawfully charged fees via the First-tier Tribunal
- preventing landlords from recovering possession of their property via the section 21 Housing Act 1988 procedure until they have repaid any unlawfully charged fees
- enabling the appointment of a lead enforcement authority in the lettings sector
- amending the Consumer Rights Act 2015 to specify that the letting agent transparency requirements should apply to online property portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla
- enabling local authorities to retain the money raised through financial penalties with this money reserved for future local housing enforcement

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## Press release: UK aid to provide life-saving assistance for Venezuelans



The UK is providing an emergency aid package to treat malnourished children, and provide vaccinations and clean water to the most vulnerable communities affected by the Venezuela crisis, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt announced today (12 February).

Hyperinflation in Venezuela is now at an all-time high, exceeding one million percent at the end of 2018. This has resulted in economic collapse with many Venezuelans being unable to afford food or other basic necessities. As the situation has deteriorated further, millions of people have had no choice but to flee to neighbouring countries to survive.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

I am deeply disturbed by the awful scenes of suffering in Venezuela as a result of the Maduro regime's reckless mismanagement, with families resorting to eating rotting food to try to survive. UK aid will provide life-saving treatment to malnourished children, immunisations against deadly diseases and access to clean water and sanitation.

While the UK has stepped up by providing urgent relief, all parties must immediately recognise the severity of the crisis and allow unhindered access for aid agencies.

In Venezuela and across neighbouring countries, today's UK aid support will:

- respond to the most severe health and nutrition needs by supporting emergency rooms and maternity wards, providing vaccines and vital nutrition for children and improving water supply and sanitation;
- ensure people fleeing their homes have access to critical support, including through the provision of mobile health clinics;
- help meet the immediate needs of those forced to flee Venezuela, who are

at greater risk of exploitation, by offering migrants access to personal documentation and information on how to access basic services.

## Notes to editors

- Today's announcement of £6.5 million is new funding from DFID's crisis reserve. The money will support humanitarian agencies across the region. Given the difficulties agencies are already facing, and the Maduro regime's denial of a humanitarian crisis, we are not disclosing those that we are supporting.
- In addition to today's new support, DFID already provides core funding to multilateral organisations on the ground which are providing emergency humanitarian relief as part of the international response in the region.
- The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, to which the UK was the largest donor in 2018, has allocated a total of US\$26 million to the region for this crisis, including US\$9 million within Venezuela.

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## [News story: Funding for Commonwealth partnerships to improve antimicrobial stewardship](#)

The scheme is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care's [Fleming Fund](#) and was launched in September 2018. The Fleming Fund has committed £1.3 million in UK aid to support new or existing partnerships between NHS trusts and UK health institutions, and their counterparts across 4 African Commonwealth countries.

Through these partnerships, multidisciplinary teams of pharmacists, doctors and specialist nurses will link with teams in partnered institutions and undertake projects of up to 15 months. These projects aim to improve AMS practices through raising awareness, improving protocols and developing tools that will reduce the spread and increase of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

DHSC is funding teams from across the UK with strong records in antimicrobial stewardship such as Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The project is also funding education and research institutions to support these partnerships, including Brighton and Sussex Medical School, the University of Manchester and Nottingham Trent University.

The UK government published a [5-year action plan](#) and [20-year vision](#) for AMR

earlier this year. The role of stewardship was highlighted as important in containing and controlling AMR by 2040, and the role of engaging the international audience and providing global guidance was noted as being essential.

Through partnerships like those under the Fleming Fund, UK aid is helping bring improvements in healthcare to people across the continent and delivering global benefits. AMR is a global threat that does not respect borders – by tackling this threat abroad, the UK can better protect against resistance domestically.

Professor Keith Ridge, England's Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, said:

The quality of all the proposals received was extremely high and the selected NHS teams will make a great impact working in partnership with teams on stewardship practices across Africa. The UK has a lot to share in antimicrobial stewardship and it's encouraging to see such an interest in sharing learning between the NHS and the partner countries.

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## **News story: Terrorism insurance gap closed giving peace of mind to businesses**

Businesses can now better protect themselves from financial losses caused by terror attacks thanks to a change in the law given Royal Assent today (12 February 2019).

The Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, which was brought into law today, makes legal changes that means more insurers will offer new policies to businesses that include 'losses from a terror attack that are not contingent on damage to commercial property'. Currently, Pool Re, the government-back terrorism reinsurer, can only reinsure losses incurred if a company's premises had been physically damaged by terrorists. Business owners will now find it easier to buy terrorism insurance that will pay out if they lose custom in the wake of a terror attack because they cannot trade or are prevented from accessing their premises.

John Glen, Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

We will not allow terrorists to change our way of life. So when businesses raised their concerns about a gap in insurance cover

following a terror attack, we worked with Pool Re to come up with a solution. Today, we've changed the law to give businesses peace of mind, helping them to insure themselves against financial loss as a result of a terrorist attack, even if there is no physical damage to their property. This means businesses will be able take out new and comprehensive policies to protect them in the future.

## **Further information**

The Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 includes amendments to the Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993. It was this legislation which enabled the government to back Pool Re, the terrorism reinsurance mutual.

The "terrorism insurance gap" was caused by a lack of insurers willing to take on risk without Pool Re's support. Today's legal change means that this gap is now closed.

Julian Enoizi, Pool Re's Chief Executive, is available for comment. Please contact, Tracey Paul [TAP@poolre.co.uk](mailto:TAP@poolre.co.uk).

Pool Reinsurance Company Limited, also known as Pool Re, was established in 1993 by the insurance industry in the wake of the IRA bombing of the Baltic Exchange in 1992.

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## **[Press release: Gloucestershire school children learning to love nature with help from the Environment Agency](#)**



School children in Gloucestershire are discovering life from rivers

School children in Gloucester and Cinderford are learning to love their rivers through funding provided by the Environment Agency.

More than 400 primary-aged children from seven schools are taking part in the Love Your River Gloucester and Cinderford Wild Towns projects to support river restoration and habitat improvements. Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Severn Rivers Trust and Severn Trent Water are key partners in the projects.

The EA is funding community engagement for the projects over three months, and this is being delivered by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. The children are learning about the water environment, including what lives in the river, the water cycle, pollution and how they can help to keep our rivers clean.

Karen Andrews for the Environment Agency said:

These are really exciting projects, and part of a bigger overall aim to improve rivers in the county, which should lead to better water quality and biodiversity.

Importantly, it's also helping to teach the next generation how to improve and look after our natural environment.

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