

# Press release: Government action to end letting fees

Unexpected letting fees and high deposits can cause a significant affordability problem for tenants and are often not clearly explained – leaving many residents unaware of the true costs of renting a property.

Introduced into Parliament today (2 May 2018), the [Tenant Fees Bill](#) will bring an end to costly letting fees and save tenants around £240 million a year, according to government figures.

The Bill will also give tenants greater assurances that the deposit they pay at the start of the tenancy cannot exceed 6 weeks' rent.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

This government is determined to build a housing market fit for the future. Tenants across the country should not be stung by unexpected costs.

That's why we're delivering our promise to ban letting fees, alongside other measures to make renting fairer and more transparent.

The Tenant Fees Bill will stop letting agents from exploiting their position as intermediaries between landlords and tenants, and prevent unfair practices such as double charging for the same services.

It will also help to increase competition between agents and landlords, which could help drive lower costs overall and a higher quality of service for tenants.

Other key measures in the Bill, which reflects feedback from a recent public consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny from the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, include:

- capping holding deposits at no more than one week's rent. The Bill also sets out the proposed requirements on landlords and agents to return a holding deposit to a tenant
- capping the amount that can be charged for a change to 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
- prevents 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 property portals such as Rightmove and Zoopla
- local authorities will be able to retain the money raised through financial penalties with this money reserved for future local housing enforcement

Alongside rent and deposits, agents and landlords will only be permitted to charge tenants fees associated with:

- a change or early termination of a tenancy when requested by the tenant
- utilities, communication services and Council Tax
- payments arising from a default by the tenant such as replacing lost key

The new measures are subject to Parliamentary timetables and will be introduced in law next year.

The Tenant Fees Bill builds on government's work this year to protect tenants and landlords through the introduction of new rogue landlord database, banning orders for rogue landlords and property agents as well as a new code of practice to regulate the letting and managing agents sector.

All proposals relate to England only. The ban on letting fees will apply to assured shorthold tenancies and licences to occupy in the private rented sector.

A ban on letting fees was announced at Autumn Statement 2016, it was also a commitment in the 2017 Conservative Manifesto.

The Tenant Fees Bill reflects feedback from the recent [public consultation](#), which ran from April to June 2017 and received over 4,700 responses. 58% of respondents (93% of tenants) agreed with government's proposed approach to ban letting fees to tenants with the exception of a holding deposit,

refundable tenancy deposit and tenant default fees.

A [draft Tenant Fees Bill](#) was published by government on 1 November 2017 and underwent pre-legislative scrutiny by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee who published their [report](#) on 29 March 2018.

The Committee agreed that the Bill has the potential to save tenants in the private rented sector hundreds of pounds as well as making the market more transparent. Government has carefully considered the Select Committee's report and accepted the majority of their recommendations. Read the [government response](#) to the Select Committee report.

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## [News story: A year of hazard reduction](#)



The safe reduction of hazards at Dounreay during the last year is the subject of the first in a series of new films, featuring members of the team involved in Scotland's largest decommissioning project.

Successes including the demolition of a reactor support complex and the start of fuel removal from Dounreay Fast Reactor are included, along with the company's focus on safety, security and environmental compliance and equality, diversity and inclusion.

PDF, 1.69MB, 11 pages

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1. 3 August 2018 New brochure added to story and photograph updated
2. 2 May 2018 First published.

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# **[Press release: Women offered NHS breast screening after missed invitations](#)**

The decision follows analysis by Public Health England (PHE) dating back to 2009, which found that a number of invitations for a final test had not been sent out to women, between their 68th and 71st birthday. The total number of older women affected since 2009 is estimated to be approximately 450,000.

The routine NHS breast screening programme invites more than 2.5 million women every year for a test, with women between the ages of 50 to 70 receiving a screen every 3 years up to their 71st birthday. Around 2 million women take up the offer.

The problem was identified in January 2018 whilst reviewing the progress of the age extension trial (AgeX). It then became apparent that a similar impact

has resulted from long term problems with the routine programme as well. In addition, some local services have not invited everyone for a final screen in the 3 years before their 71st birthday.

PHE has carried out a thorough investigation including a detailed analysis of data going back to 2009 and has been advised by experts and clinicians. The fault has now been identified and fixed and women who did not receive their final routine invitation and are registered with a GP are being contacted and offered the opportunity to have a catch up screen. All of these women will be contacted by the end of May 2018. Women can seek advice by calling the helpline on 0800 169 2692. We anticipate that all rescreens will be completed by the end of October 2018 and extra capacity is being identified so that routine screening will not be affected.

Dr Jenny Harries, PHE Deputy Medical Director said:

On behalf of NHS breast screening services, we apologise to the women affected and we are writing to them to offer a catch-up screening appointment. They and their families' wellbeing is our top priority and we are very sorry for these faults in the system.

A complex IT problem with the breast screening invitation system has led to some women not being invited for their final screen between their 68th and 71st birthdays. We have carried out urgent work to identify the problem and have fixed it. Additional failsafe systems have been introduced to ensure the problem does not reoccur.

The NHS breast screening programme is a world leading prevention service for women in England detecting around 18,400 cancers per year and saving 1,300 lives.

Local breast screening services are currently working closely with NHS England and PHE to ensure that all of the women affected are contacted and offered the opportunity for a screen.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has commissioned an independent review of the NHS breast screening programme to look at issues, including its processes, IT systems and further changes and improvements that can be made to the system to minimise the risk of any repetition of this incident.

The review will be chaired by Lynda Thomas, Chief Executive of Macmillan Cancer Support and Professor Martin Gore, Consultant Medical Oncologist and Professor of Cancer Medicine at The Royal Marsden, and is expected to report in 6 months.

1. It is estimated that 450,000 women since 2009 were not invited for a screen and 309,000 women were not invited for a screen and are alive.

2. The long term clinical research trial called AgeX, led by Oxford University, is ongoing to assess reliably the risks and benefits of offering an extra screen to women aged 71 to 73 and between 47 to 49 years.
3. All women that were not sent an invitation for their final screen will be given the opportunity for a new screening appointment. All women under 72 years old who are affected will receive an appointment letter informing them of their time and date. Women aged 72 years old and above will be able to contact a dedicated helpline to discuss whether a screen could benefit them.
4. There are 79 local NHS breast screening services across the country. Women are routinely screened every three years, with the number of women invited per screening service ranging from 25,738 to 254,645.
5. An independent panel concluded in 2012 that, while routine breast screening at ages 50 to 70 confers significant benefit to UK women, the advantages and disadvantages of starting breast screening at younger or older ages were uncertain. A clinical trial, AgeX led by Oxford University, is ongoing to assess reliably the risks and benefits of offering an extra screen to women aged 71 to 73 and between 47 to 49 years.
6. The total number of women screened in 2016 to 2017 was 2.2 million (2,199,342). The number of women invited was 2.9 million (2,959,979).
7. In developing its response to this issue, PHE consulted an expert clinical group including radiologists, consultant breast surgeons, oncologists and epidemiologists.

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## **[News story: New ACCEA Chair announced](#)**

Stuart is a GMC-registered physician who trained in General Medicine and General Practice. He spent many years working in senior leadership roles at Roche, GlaxoSmithKline, Norgine, Takeda and UCB.

He founded Vermilion Life Sciences, which aims to improve patient access to medicines by reducing development times and costs of new medicines.

Stuart is a:

- board trustee of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine
- professional member of the board of the Human Tissue Authority

He has also worked as an external 'champion' for the Office for Life Sciences' [Accelerated Access Review](#).

This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office Code of Governance for Public Appointments. It has been made on merit and political activity played no part in the decision process. During the appointments process, Stuart has not declared any political activity.

The post is for up to 2 days a week and has a salary of £52,540 a year.

Stuart said:

I am honoured and excited to have been selected as the Chair of ACCEA. I aim to rapidly learn about the operation of the scheme and how it both rewards and incentivises the highest quality research, care and outcomes that provide important benefits for patients and public health.

I look forward to meeting my new colleagues and learning from them, as we work together to investigate how to maximise the positive impact of the Awards.

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## **[News story: Appointment of new non-judicial members of the Sentencing Council for England and Wales](#)**

We are pleased to announce that Alpa Parmar and Beverley Thompson-Brown have been appointed by the Lord Chancellor in consultation with the Lord Chief Justice as non-judicial members of the Sentencing Council for England and Wales for a period of 3 years.

Alpa Parmar is a Socio-Legal Scholar of Criminal Justice at the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford who specialises in the intersections of race and criminal justice. She has conducted a range of empirical research projects and published on minority ethnic groups and their experiences of the criminal justice process. Alpa was a member of the advisory group for the Restorative Justice Council's project on the experiences of BAME groups and she served as an academic expert on the Lammy Review. She holds a doctorate from Cambridge University and was previously British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at Kings College, London.

Beverley Thompson-Brown has spent over 30 years working in the criminal justice sector initially as a probation officer in London. She was Director for Race, Prisons and Resettlement Services at NACRO for 10 years and is currently an Independent consultant having recently worked on a Lammy-related project for HMPPS. She works across the UK, Australia, USA & Canada on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategies. Prior to this, she was a Senior Civil Servant at HMPS and was awarded an OBE for services to Race Equality in 2000. Furthermore, she has been the Chief Executive of Northampton Probation Service.

The Sentencing Council for England and Wales was set up by part four of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 to promote greater transparency and consistency in sentencing, whilst maintaining the independence of the judiciary.

The appointments process have been conducted in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice on Ministerial public appointments to public bodies.

Alpa and Beverley have declared no political activity or conflict of interest.