



# NORTHERN HOUSING FESTIVAL



## The Strategy Lab: Leadership and Culture

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First Choice Homes

# Leadership, Strategy and Culture



Housing Ireland Conference  
Thursday 4th March 2026

**Mushtaq Khan**  
CEO  
Housing Diversity Network

# About us



## Board Diversity & Excellence Programmes

Draws on leading practice to make a real and lasting impact at board level – diversifying candidate pools and helping new/potential board members to develop their expertise & strategic thinking.

## Sector-specific EDI assessment

With option for joint quality mark with the RACE Equality Code – combining robust governance framework guidance with holistic review of wider EDI and customer / community impact.

**Training & Consultancy**  
Offers highly skilled and specialist Associates who can provide customised and comprehensive support for your organisation and its workforce.

**Staff Mentoring Programme**  
Award-winning initiative that can contribute to a wide range of organisational strategies and objectives around learning & development, inclusion, and talent management.

**Coaching**  
Unique coaching experiences that recognise there are differences in the lived experience of the people we work with and that they may have experienced inequalities or continue to face them.



# Aligning Leadership, Strategy and Culture



# Drivers for change

Better Social  
Housing Review

Housing  
Ombudsman

Complaint  
handling code

RSH Consumer  
Standards

Social & political  
landscape

Tenant Satisfaction  
Measures

NHF Code of  
Governance and  
Chair's Challenge

And Lots of Others

# Culture: The Hidden Driver

Culture influences:

- How decisions are made
- Staff behaviours
- Tenant trust
- Innovation



# Our Research



# Key findings

## Dignity & Respect and Feeling Welcome

- **People with disabilities, those from minoritised ethnic groups, and transgender people were less likely to agree that their organisation is committed to treating them with dignity and respect.**
- **These groups were also less likely to report feeling welcome in their organisations than the majority.**

## Confidence in EDI performance and The Inclusion Illusion

- **General feedback on organisational EDI performance, and commitment to improvement, had fewer positive responses than other indicators - suggesting more work needs to be done as a sector to both improve, and assure our workforces that EDI is a genuine priority.**
- **Groups with certain protected characteristics - again particularly people with disabilities, from minoritised ethnic groups, and transgender people - often reported lower levels of confidence in recruitment inclusivity and fairness in career progression, indicating that policy intentions may not always translate into equitable outcomes.**

# Building the Right Culture

Thriving organisations are:

- Purpose-driven
- Accountable
- Inclusive
- Collaborative
- Learn from mistakes



# Our Research



- Lack of transparency and accountability
- Marketing over substance
- Little collaboration

## What Good Leadership Looks Like

Purpose-driven

- Transparent and accountable
- Open to challenge
- Grounded in tenant experience
- Committed to diversity and inclusion

## Tenant Voice and Influence

Moving beyond consultation:

- Listening to lived experience
- Involving tenants in shaping services
- Board engagement with tenants

# Final Reflections

Strong housing organisations are defined not only by strategy but by their people, culture and commitment to purpose



# Thank you!

Keep in touch

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 Housing Diversity Network



The logo for Northern Housing Festival is a large, stylized sunburst or fan shape composed of many thin, parallel lines radiating from a central point. The lines are colored in shades of yellow and gold, creating a gradient effect. The text 'NORTHERN HOUSING FESTIVAL' is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image, with 'NORTHERN' and 'FESTIVAL' in yellow and 'HOUSING' in white. The background is a solid dark purple.

# NORTHERN HOUSING FESTIVAL



## Policy Update: The Renters Right Act

### **Chloe Fletcher**

Head of policy and external affairs  
Chartered Institute of Housing

### **Dan Wilson-Craw**

Deputy chief executive  
Generation Rent

### **Erika Grunert**

Head of service (RCBC) and chair of  
Private Rented Sector Group  
(NEPPP)



# Renters' Rights Act 2025

March/April 2026

# Overview



- Problems with current rental system
- What is in the Renters' Rights Act?
  - Phase 1 – tenancies, rents, access, pets
  - Beyond – conditions, regulation
- What's missing?

# Renting today



- Section 21 - No reason needed to evict
  - Renters lack confidence to complain
  - Renters lack bargaining power to fight rent rises
  - General lack of trust in landlord-tenant relationship
  - Difficult to plan your life
- Fixed terms
  - Difficult to move out of unsuitable home
  - Pressure to renew at the end of it
- No landlord register or ombudsman
  - Easy for landlords to avoid accountability

# New changes from **May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026:**



## Tenancies

- **No more Section 21 evictions**

- Landlords must have a valid reason for eviction, such as sale or rent arrears
- Tenants who have not broken the agreement get 4 months' notice

- **The end of fixed term contracts**

- All tenancies will be rolling contracts, which tenants can end with two months' notice

- **Tenancy agreement/information sheet**

- Landlord must give you certain information about the tenancy and your rights

# New changes from **May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026:**



## Rent increases

- Landlords can only raise rent once a year, and not in first 12 months
- 2 months' notice with formal Section 13 notice
- Tenants can challenge unfair rent hikes at tribunal
- Tribunal bases rent on open market and takes account of quality
- New rent won't be higher than landlord's proposal, and won't be backdated

# New changes from **May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026:**



## **Access to new tenancies**

- **No more bidding wars**

- Landlords cannot ask for or accept rent higher than the advertised rent price

- **Maximum 1 month's rent upfront**

- **No tenant discrimination**

- Illegal to refuse tenants just because they receive benefits or have children

# New changes from **May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026:**



## **Pets**

- Renters can request to live with a pet and landlords need a good reason to refuse

# Still to come



## Regulation

- **Private Rented Property Database**
  - Brings England into line with the rest of the UK
  - Check a property's status and landlord online
  - Some information available to the public, more available to councils
  - Landlords will need to be compliant to seek eviction in most cases
  - Full details tbc
  - Rolling out in late 2026
- **Private Landlord Ombudsman**
  - Membership mandatory
  - Rolling out in 2027

# Still to come



## Decent Homes Standard

- **On-the-spot fines**

- Tougher powers for councils when landlords have failed to fix serious hazards
- Expected in 2026

- **Awaab's Law**

- Timescales for landlords to respond to problems like damp and mould
- Subject to consultation

- **Energy efficiency**

- New minimum standard equivalent to EPC Band C (under revision) by 2030
- Cost cap of £10,000 and numerous exemptions

- **Reasonable repair and facilities**

- Deadline of 2035

# What's missing



- **Affordable rents**

- Rent rises linked to the market will price many renters out of their homes

- **Continued insecurity**

- Renters evicted for sale etc must cover the cost of their move

- **Deposits**

- Delays and poor incentives can be abused by unscrupulous landlords
- Renters get little return on what is their money

- **Letting agents**

- Current redress system flawed
- Demands to reform wider property agent sector

# Thank you!

Get email updates on the RRA in the run-up to May and beyond:

<https://www.generationrent.org/rra-updates/>



**Generation  
Rent**



Erika Grunert

Head of Service (RCBC)

North East Public Protection Partnership  
(Private Rented Sector Housing NE Group Chair)

**Renters' Rights Act 2025**

## Implications for Private Sector Tenants:

- Better protection against criminal landlords.
- More certainty with tenancy under a good landlord.
- Fast track enforcement when things go wrong.
- Property database (from 2027) will help choices.
- PRS Ombudsman for redress, from 2028?
- Awaab's Law for the PRS, from 2030?
- Decent Homes Standards for the PRS, from 2035?

## Implications for Private Sector Landlords:

- Need to operate in a businesslike way; an end to casual landlords?
- Lots to learn, lots of advice from the Govt.
- The good landlord community could prosper if criminality is no longer profitable.
- Likely to see a shift to more agency involvement

## Implications for Housing Professionals:

- Enforcement no longer optional – now a duty.
- Criminal landlords are going to be a challenge.
- Enforcement role transcends normal silos.
- Significant new funding in the pipeline.
- Need to significantly grow a new workforce.