

Written evidence submitted by Naomi Gann [IOC 316]

I am not currently a renter, but most of my peers are renters and many of them have been put in a precarious living situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the experiences of renters that I know, I believe that the current government measures intended to protect renters do not go far enough, which is why I am submitting this evidence.

1 How effective has the support provided by MHCLG and other Government departments in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on those in the private rented sector, rough sleepers, and the homeless?

The support provided by MHCLG has meant renters are safe from evictions for now, which is a step in the right direction but in my opinion does not go far enough since there is no guarantee that renters won't face eviction as soon as the restrictions are lifted. Also, although the government has advised that landlords and tenants negotiate repayment plans where necessary, there has been no hard legislation to back this up. Without other measures the eviction ban will just delay eviction for many renters, and does not by itself guarantee that a feasible repayment arrangement will be offered to them.

I am also aware that the eviction ban does not extend to lodgers, and that this demographic is therefore in an extremely precarious position if they cannot afford to pay rent or are asked to leave the property for some other reason during this crisis.

2 What problems remain a current and immediate concern for these groups?

Several renting households I know are trying to negotiate reduced/deferred rent payments with their landlord due to COVID-19-related loss of income, but since there is no actual requirement for landlords to offer rent holidays or even to reduce rent for this period, many landlords are not obliging, and several tenants I know simply cannot afford to pay the rent that is being demanded of them. Several are worrying about the ensuing debts hitting them at what will likely be an uncertain time financially, and some also fear being revenge-evicted once the eviction ban has been lifted.

Lodgers are experiencing all of these worries but compounded by the fact that they do not have the eviction-ban to fall back on as a means to buy time and plan for the future.

3 What might be the immediate post-lockdown impacts for these groups, and what action is needed to help with these?

In order to protect tenants from eviction and debt during the COVID-19 outbreak, I believe the government must provide better support for renters. We need protection from evictions post emergency and from rent debt accrued during the crisis. I would propose the following actions as a means to achieving this:

- 1 The government should enact a rent waiver via Section 8 to ensure that any arrears accrued during the crisis cannot be included in any future grounds for eviction on the basis of rent arrears.
- 2 There must be an immediate and permanent end to Section 21.
- 3 Landlords should be made to start the process for any paused evictions from scratch once the ban on court proceedings has lifted.
- 4 Protection from eviction should be extended to lodgers.

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