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Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

Statement on the publication of the Renters Reform Bill

18 May 2023

Yesterday, the long-awaited [Renters Reform Bill](#) had its first reading in Parliament, fulfilling many of the ambitions set out within the [Renters Reform White Paper](#), to ‘reset the balance of rights and responsibilities between tenants and landlords’. The most prominent and welcomed aspect of the bill is the end of Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions, which has caused housing insecurity and homelessness for many private renters, including victims of domestic abuse living in the private rented sector (PRS).

There are now more victims of domestic abuse living in the PRS than ever before, in part due to the growth of the PRS, but also due to a significant lack of social housing, with many victims of domestic abuse having no other choice but to take on PRS tenancies, which have often been insecure, unaffordable, and, unsafe. In the context of a cost-of-living crisis, including soaring rents, and local housing allowance rates that do not meet rental demands, many victims of domestic abuse (many of whom are single women with children) are placed in positions of great hardship and the risk of homelessness, in addition to the ever-present threat of harm and homicide.

By removing Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions, and the government’s commitment to take future action to address discrimination against tenants with children, we hope victims of domestic abuse will face fewer housing barriers to achieving safety. However, we continue to be concerned that this will be undermined by the changes proposed within the bill to make it easier for landlords to evict on grounds of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and rent arrears. This includes, broadening the discretionary ASB ground for eviction to “any behaviour capable of causing nuisance or annoyance” as well as introducing a new mandatory ground for repeat serious arrears, as detailed within the [White Paper](#).

Victims of domestic abuse are significantly more likely to have ASB complaints made against, often due to the misidentification of domestic abuse as ASB. Victims of domestic abuse are also more likely to be in rent arrears, both as a direct result of economic abuse, and due to the economic and practical burden of fleeing abuse and becoming homeless, often with their children (victims of domestic abuse in their own right). With no proposed safeguards in place to protect victims of domestic abuse from evictions related to domestic abuse, we fear this will lead to harm and homelessness. As a result, victims of domestic abuse may become more dependent on their abuser and make it even more difficult to leave.

We have worked closely alongside [the DAHA-led National Housing and Domestic Abuse Policy and Practice Group](#) to publish a detailed [briefing](#) on the impact of the proposed changes through the RRB on victims of domestic abuse in cases of ASB. We make clear recommendations for how the government can safeguard victims of domestic abuse and other vulnerable tenants, including those at risk of other forms of abuse or exploitation or in need of health or social care support. These recommendations included:

- **not expanding the ground’s definition to “any behaviour ‘capable’ of causing nuisance or annoyance”**

- introducing a pre-eviction ASB protocol for landlords and managing agents.
- a commitment to the professionalisation of the PRS which ensures landlords and managing agents are equipped to fulfil their legal obligations to their tenants.
- developing guidance for landlords and managing agents on responding to ASB and rent arrears, including links between ASB, rent arrears and domestic abuse (accessible within the new property portal) as well as guidance for judges.

We look forward to further scrutinising the bill, which will undoubtedly lead to further recommendations from our National Group, particularly in the areas of rent arrears. We want to work with sector partners, government, and parliamentarians to ensure the bill works to protect all renters, which must include victims of domestic abuse living in the PRS who already face far too many barriers to safety and housing insecurity.

For more information and any press enquiries, please contact the DAHA National Group Chair and Senior Housing Manager, Deidre Cartwright, by emailing: d.cartwright@standingtogether.org.uk