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Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

## **Victims of domestic abuse could be trapped into tenancies for 6 months under new changes to rental reforms.**

The government has announced that they plan to water-down the Renters (Reform) Bill currently passing through Parliament by forcing tenants to be trapped into properties for the first 6 months of a new tenancy.

This comes after the government was met with pressure from a number of its backbench MPs to roll-back on many proposals of the Bill which would have given tenants more stability and flexibility.

One of the most concerning proposals would seek to bring in a 4-month protected period for all new tenancies before a tenant can put in two months' notice to leave. This will mean that a new tenant will be trapped into a property for a total of 6 months before being able to move on.

The government have said that they are exploring exemptions so that renters can get out of tenancies in some cases. This may include when they have been mis-sold the property or in cases of domestic abuse. However, there have been no details revealed about these suggestions.

Setting aside how late in the day it is to still have no details about these key aspects of the Bill, a very important fact threatens to make these exemptions almost useless. That is that it simply will take too long for tenants to go through the courts to get out of their contracts in a reasonable period of time.

It is also extremely expensive and time consuming for people to use the courts – time and money that many renters, especially victims of abuse, simply do not have.

The 6 months 'tenant trap' would leave many renters stuck in poor quality, mould ridden properties, with no accountability for bad landlords who are now being guaranteed half a years' worth of rent.

But, even more dangerous than that, the 'tenant trap' threatens to force victims of abuse to remain in homes with their abusers – unable to flee or move away. Because they will be legally liable to pay the rent on the property for 6 months, victims and their children may have to remain in extremely dangerous situations, at the mercy of their perpetrators.

If victims of abuse want to get out of this 'tenant trap' they will need to go through the courts to do it, putting the onus on survivors to fight to be free of tenancies causing them direct harm. This is completely unacceptable and must not be allowed to happen.

Two women a week are killed by a current or former partner in England and Wales. 62% of children living with domestic abuse are directly harmed by the perpetrator of the abuse. These are terrifying figures, and we must do everything we can do to ensure that survivors are able to leave violent



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perpetrators as quickly and as easily as possible. Trapping renters into tenancies for 6 months at a time does the opposite of that.

We cannot allow long-promised rental reforms to be undermined and undone. The 'tenant trap' only works to reward bad landlords and to help perpetrators maintain control over victims of abuse.

We are calling on the government to stop their plans to inflict a dangerous 'tenant trap' on renters across the country. They must make sure that the Bill supports and protect survivors of abuse, rather than endangers them further.