

**Access to homes for under-35's:**  
*The impact of Welfare Reform  
on Private Renting*

July 2017



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# Key Findings

- The recent Housing White paper highlights the extent to which policymakers are increasingly looking to the private rented sector to accommodate younger households. At the same time a number of regulatory and taxation changes are influencing the operating environment for private landlords.
- This report outlines the findings from a survey of landlords and lettings agents, exploring their experiences with, and perceptions of letting to under-35 year olds. A total of 1,996 responses were received and analysed.
- The vast majority of respondents were happy to let to all or some under-35s. This group were a major source of demand. However, many landlords have decreased their lettings to some groups of under-35s.
- There were specific issues or policies which made landlords unwilling to let to particular groups of under-35s. Two-thirds were not willing to let to Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (HB/UC) claimants.
- Reasons for not being willing to let to particular groups of under-35s tended to fall into two categories – difficulty in managing the accommodation and fears about financial loss.
- Four-fifths of landlords/agents who continued to let to HB/UC claimants had put in place additional safeguards in the last three years. The most common safeguards were the use of guarantors or direct payment to the landlord.
- Two-fifths of respondents provided shared accommodation. This demonstrates the importance of this type of accommodation in the private rented sector.
- A range of policy changes or initiatives would make landlords more willing to let to under-35s. Over half of landlords/agents favoured tax changes – reversing changes to Mortgage Interest Relief and/or providing tax relief for longer tenancies. Four out of five would be more willing to let to under-35s with a bond or rent deposit scheme.
- The decline in landlords willing to let to certain types of under-35s – particularly HB/UC claimants – represents a major challenge to government's policy approach to the private rented sector.
- It appears that landlords are not necessarily looking for higher rents or increased yields from their properties. Instead there is evidence that many are seeking a reduction of risk – particularly in relation to arrears and the administration of welfare payments.
- There is an urgent need for policymakers to engage with landlords to ensure that under-35s – particularly those on HB/UC – can still access accommodation within the private rented sector.

# Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The changing housing circumstances of adults aged 35 years and under represents one of the most dramatic and unexpected housing transitions to have taken place in Great Britain over the past sixty years. This group has become known as 'generation rent' and has been associated with the rapid growth of private renting in recent years. The private rented sector doubled in size between 2001/02 and 2011/12.<sup>1</sup> Popular accounts of 'generation rent' have focused on younger households who are 'priced out' of owner occupation. However, this underestimates the role of private renting in accommodating a range of households on low incomes.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that younger households have been at the sharp end of far-reaching changes in access to housing finance, in the impact of austerity, of welfare reform policy measures, and in structural shifts in the labour market.<sup>3</sup>

Private renting is increasingly expected to meet the needs of low income households (single people in particular). The Housing White Paper published in February 2017 highlighted the growth of the private rented sector. It noted increased satisfaction amongst tenants but also proposed changes to make the sector more 'family friendly' and 'drive out the rogue landlords'.<sup>4</sup> At the same time there are numerous changes to the policy and regulatory environment in which private renting operates. These include:

- Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR). In 2012 the SAR was extended to all single people under the age of 35 years. It meant that these people were eligible for Housing Benefit rates for a single room in a shared property.<sup>5</sup>
- Taxation. The 2015 Budget announced a restriction of "relief for mortgage interest for individual landlords to the basic rate of income tax." This was followed by an announcement in the 2015 Autumn Statement of a three percentage point Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) surcharge for additional properties such as buy-to-lets".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ONS (2014) Trends in the United Kingdom Housing Market, 2014, [https://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766\\_373513.pdf](https://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_373513.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Cole, I., Powell, R. & Sanderson, E. (2016) Putting the Squeeze on 'Generation Rent': Housing Benefit Claimants in the Private Rented Sector - Transitions, Marginality and Stigmatisation, *Sociological Research Online*, 21 (2), 9. Kemp, Peter A. (2011) Low-income tenants in the private rental housing market', *Housing Studies* 26: 7 & 8 1019-1034.

<sup>3</sup> McKee, K.; Moore, T.; Soaita, A; & Crawford, J. (206) " 'Generation Rent' and the Fallacy of Choice", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

<sup>4</sup> DCLG (2017) Fixing our broken housing market, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/590464/Fixing\\_our\\_broken\\_housing\\_market\\_-\\_print\\_ready\\_version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, W. (2014) Housing Benefit: Shared Accommodation Rate, House of Commons Library.

<sup>6</sup> Bate, A. (2016) Building the new private rented sector: issues and prospects (England), House of Commons Library.

- Council Tax disaggregation. In some areas, Homes for Multiple Occupation (HMOs) have been revalued in relation to Council Tax. Each room within the HMO is charged Council Tax rather than the property as a whole.<sup>7</sup>
- HMO licensing. The government is planning to extend mandatory licensing to all HMOs.<sup>8</sup>

At the moment there is little evidence on how landlords will respond to these changes.

A survey of RLA members in 2015 provided some empirical grounds for supposing that there are disquieting times ahead for 'generation rent'. Thirty eight per cent of respondents (n=799) said that they had stopped renting to Housing Benefit claimants under the age of 35 who were not living in shared accommodation because of concerns about how they would meet the shortfall in rent.<sup>9</sup>

We think that more attention needs to be paid to younger households living in the private rented sector. Landlords are a diverse group whose experiences and motivations are poorly understood. Policy decisions about private renting are often made with little or no understanding of how landlords might respond. This is despite the fact that landlord responses are vital to the functioning of this growing tenure and the housing options of millions of people. So the RLA and CRESR (Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research) have been working together to understand the views and experiences of landlords operating in this changing environment.

## 1.2. Methods and survey sample

In February 2017 an online survey was sent to around 52,000 landlords and lettings agents known to the RLA. This survey contained 43 questions on landlord's experiences and perceptions of letting to under-35 year olds. **A total of 1,996 responses were received and analysed.** The combination of questions asked to each respondent varied depending on their answers to specific questions in the survey. This resulted in different sample sizes for each question which are outlined in the footnotes.

The survey also collected data on the characteristics of landlords/letting agents and their property portfolios. This allowed more detailed analysis of responses to questions by different sub-groups.

**Key features of the sample** from this survey were that:

- 84 per cent of respondents were landlords only. In contrast, three per cent were managing agents but not landlords;
- the majority of respondents had relatively small portfolios. The median average for size of portfolio was two to five properties;
- around two-thirds (64 per cent) were operating on a part-time basis;
- they were experienced. The median length of time as a landlord/agent was between 11 and 20 years.

<sup>7</sup> RLA (2017) Council Tax on disaggregated HMO properties, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTVhHH3Prqo>

<sup>8</sup> DCLG (2016) Extending mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/560777/HMO\\_Tech\\_Disc\\_RESPO\\_NSE\\_DOC.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/560777/HMO_Tech_Disc_RESPO_NSE_DOC.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Reeve, K. et al (2016) Home: No less will do, <http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/home-no-less-will-do-prs.pdf>

- almost half (45 per cent) have increased their portfolio over the last five years;
- their geographic location was more focused on London and South East. There was less coverage of Wales and Scotland.

Characteristics of landlords can be compared with other data sources to assess the extent to which this sample represents the wider population. This sample broadly reflects other data sources on landlord characteristics. Further discussion of the sample and its statistical reliability can be found in Appendix 1.

### **1.3. Structure of report**

In the next chapter we present information about the profile of tenants landlords/agents are seeking to let to, and explore perceptions of demand. Chapter three moves on to look in more detail at landlord lettings strategies towards under-35s. In chapter four, we investigate notable shifts in landlord/agents' attitudes towards Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (HB/UC) claimants. Landlords/agents perceptions of and strategies towards shared accommodation are discussed in chapter five. Chapter six looks at the extent to which different policy changes and initiatives might make landlords/agents more able or willing to let to under-35s. Finally, chapter seven assess the wider implications of the survey findings.

# Landlord strategy and tenant demand

# 2

This chapter explores the types of tenants that landlords/agents are seeking to let their properties to and their perceptions of demand.

## 2.1. Target groups for landlords

Landlords were asked whether they were seeking to let their properties to particular groups of tenants. Figure 2.1 shows that more than one-third (37 per cent) did not have a particular tenant group which they mainly rented to. This suggests some flexibility in the letting strategies of these landlords/agents, challenging, perhaps, the perception that landlords operate in particular 'markets', resulting in clear segmentation of the sector.

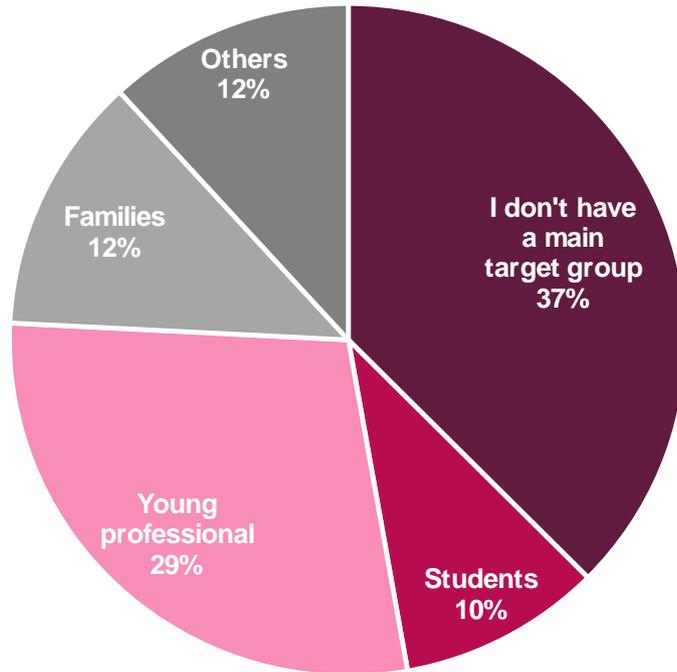
Young professionals were the group that the highest proportion of respondents focused their lettings on. Across the sample, two-fifths (29 per cent) were focusing on young professionals. There was geographic variation in the target groups with more than half of respondents (53 per cent) operating mainly in London focusing on letting to young professionals.

Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claimants were the main target group for only five per cent of landlords. However, this increased to:

- 19 per cent with portfolios of more than 11 properties;
- 12 per cent of those operating mainly in the North West;
- 10 per cent of full-time landlords.

Responses to the 'other' category highlight a range of different, more specific target groups. For example, some landlords were focusing on tenants who were undergoing rehabilitation for drug or alcohol dependency.

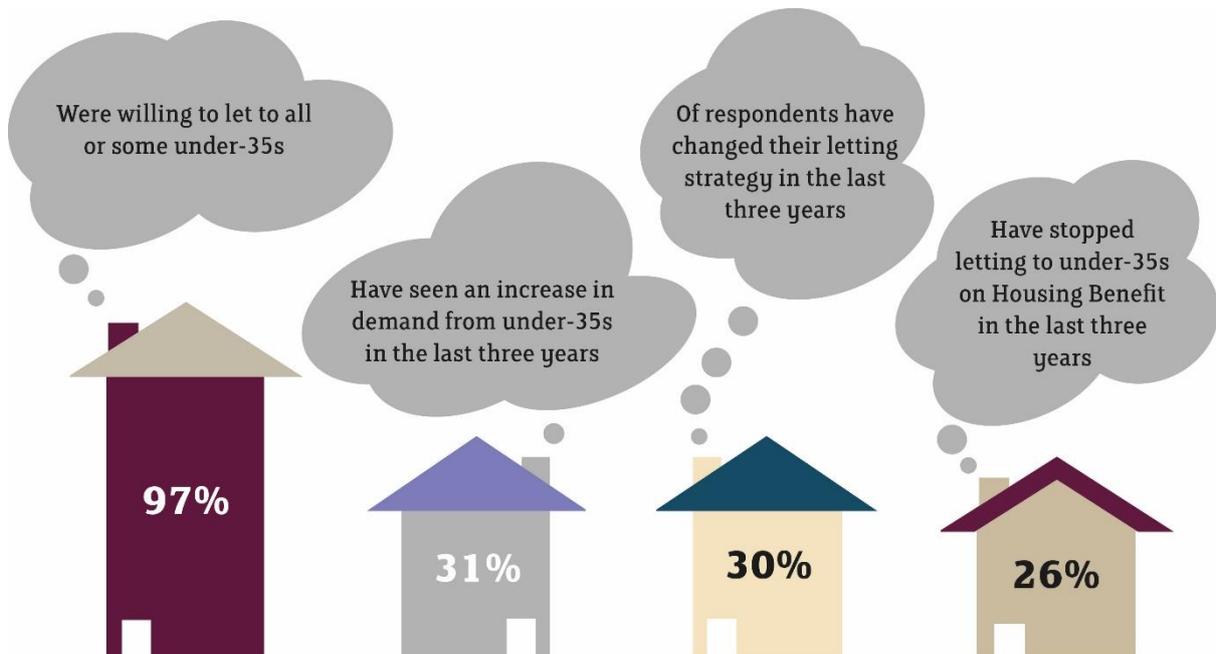
Figure 2.1: Is there a particular tenant group that you mainly rent to? (please tick one)<sup>10</sup>



## 2.2. Demand from under-35s

In general, **under-35s** represented an important source of demand for most landlords.

Figure 2.2: Landlord letting strategies<sup>11</sup>



<sup>10</sup> n=1991

<sup>11</sup> n=1996, 1945, 1948, 1948 respectively

The survey shows that (see Figure 2.2):

- 97 per cent were willing to let to all or some groups of under-35s;<sup>12</sup>
- 45 per cent let more than half of their portfolio to some groups of under-35s.<sup>13</sup>

There was regional variation in the proportion of stock being let to under-35s. This was highest for those letting mainly in London where almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of respondents were letting more than half their stock to under-35s.

The survey suggests that **demand for rental properties from under-35s has been growing in recent years**. Almost one-third of respondents (31 per cent) have seen an increase in demand from under-35s in the last three years. This can be compared to three per cent who have seen a decline in demand from this group. The increase in demand was reported by landlords across Great Britain but was highest for those operating mainly in the South West (38 per cent).

This increase in demand is reflected by additional comments made by respondents to the survey. One landlord stated that *"we noticed that, for the first time ever, families with babies are applying to live in one bedroom flats because they can't afford more rooms and we have been letting property for 25 years."*

### 2.3. Landlord strategy

The survey suggests that landlord strategies are not static but have changed in recent years. In total, 30 per cent of respondents<sup>14</sup> have changed their letting strategy in the last three years. Of those who had changed their strategy:

- 32 per cent have actively sought to decrease lettings to under-35s;<sup>15</sup>
- 6 per cent have actively sought to increase lettings to under-35s.

This shift away from letting to under-35s is more pronounced for particular groups of tenants. Of those who had actively decreased in the last three years 87 per cent have stopped letting to under-35s on Housing Benefit in the last three years. Other changes to strategy were reported in the additional comments made by landlords. A common approach was that *"at least one person (if in a couple) must be in full time employment"*.

The survey asked why landlords/agents had decreased lettings to under-35s. In response to this:

- 79 per cent cited higher risk of rent arrears;<sup>16</sup>
- 68 per cent cited higher risk of breach in tenancy conditions.

This question was asked to all landlords who had let to under-35s. It appears to show widespread concerns about letting to under-35s even from landlords who have not actively changed their strategy in the last three years.

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<sup>12</sup> n=1996

<sup>13</sup> n=1867

<sup>14</sup> n=1948

<sup>15</sup> n=600

<sup>16</sup> n=1810

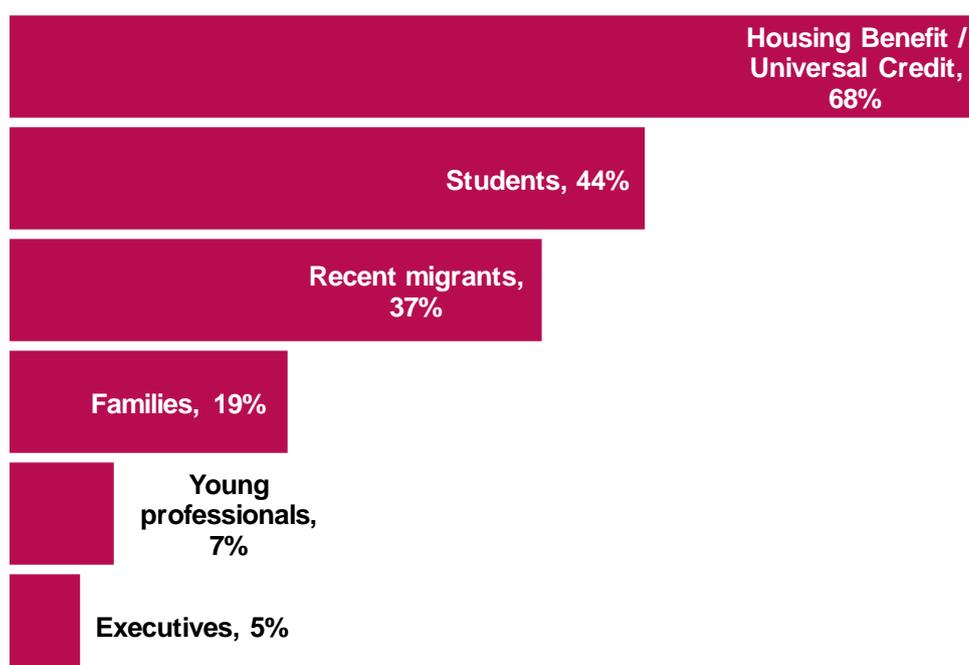
## Letting to Under-35s

This chapter looks in more detail at landlord lettings strategies towards under-35s.

Figure 3.1 outlines the different sub-groups of under-35s who landlords are not willing to let to. Two-thirds of landlords (68 per cent) are not willing to let to under-35s on Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (HB/UC). More than two-fifths of landlords (44 per cent) are not willing to let to students.

This supports evidence that students and HB/UC claimants are viewed as relatively distinct sub-markets which some landlords specialise in and others avoid. There was some regional variation in the willingness to let to both these groups. The proportion of respondents not willing to let to HB/UC claimants varied from 75 per cent in London to 61 per cent in Wales. By comparison, the proportion not willing to let to students varied from 53 per cent in South East to 32 per cent in Scotland. Recent migrants represented the third largest group that landlords were not willing to rent to. It would be worth exploring the extent to which this has been influenced by the introduction of 'Right to Rent' legislation which means that landlords have a legal obligation to check the immigration status of tenants.

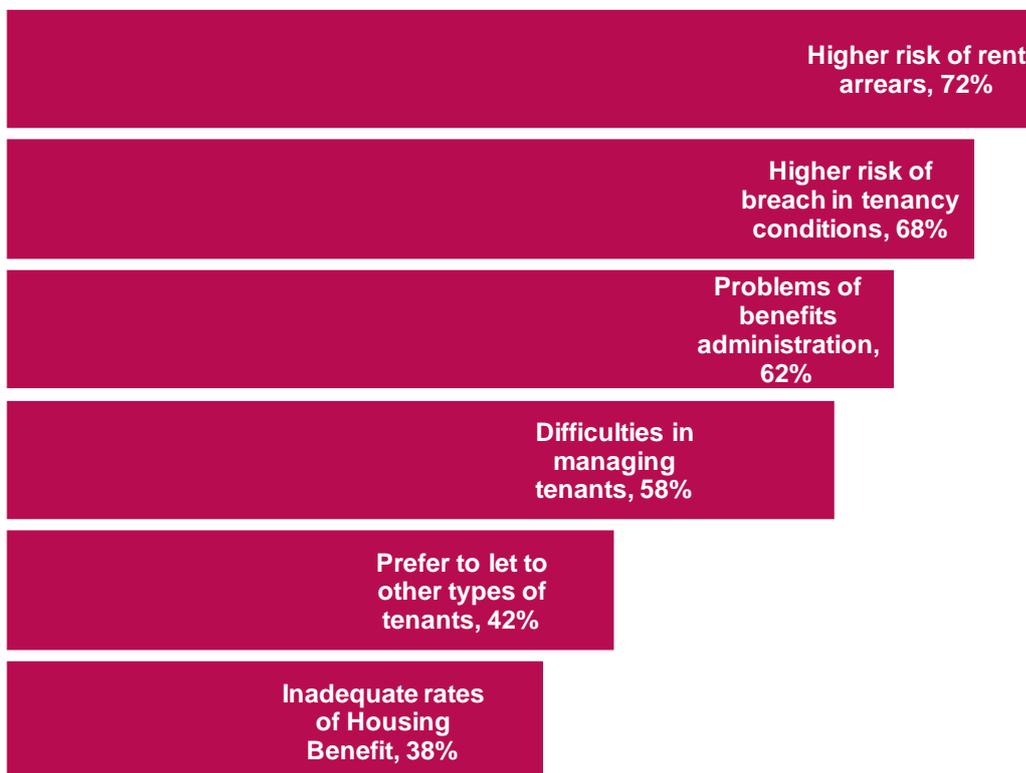
**Figure 3.1: Which of the following groups of under-35s are you NOT willing to let to (if any)? (please tick all that apply)<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>17</sup> n=1872

Figure 3.2 highlights the most common reasons why landlords were not willing to let to particular groups of under-35s. These tend to fall into two categories – difficulty in managing the accommodation and fears about financial loss. The high proportion of landlords citing benefit administration as a deterrent is worth noting. This is a clear, tangible problem that ought to be relatively easy to rectify.

**Figure 3.2: Why are you not willing to let to some groups of under-35s? (please tick all that apply)<sup>18</sup>**



Further questions investigated whether any particular policy changes had made respondents more or less willing to let to under-35s. Respondents stated that the following changes made them less willing to let to under-35s:<sup>19</sup>

- 48 per cent – Direct payments of Universal Credit;
- 41 per cent – Caps on Local Housing Allowance rates;
- 40 per cent – Four year freeze on Housing Benefit payments to working age claimants;
- 39 per cent – Increased regulation (e.g. immigration checks, licensing and Article 4 directions);
- 30 per cent – Taxation changes (e.g. Mortgage Interest Relief / Section 24).

In the additional comments to these questions a number of respondents were critical of the impact of taxation, with some indicating that the change had prompted them to exit the traditional rental market. For example, one stated that *"I have turned two properties into holiday let's, over last 12 months, due to taxation changes"*.

<sup>18</sup> n=1572

<sup>19</sup> n=1465 to 1579

This chapter suggests that under-35s provide a rich source of demand for landlords, comprise a significant proportion of their tenants. Nearly all landlords consider renting to under-35s but there are particular sub-groups to whom they are less willing to let to. The findings suggest that government policy and administration are acting as a deterrent as much as perceptions of the inherent characteristics of the population group. The key group who landlords are less willing to let to are under-35s on HB/UC and this group are discussed further in the next chapter.

# 4

## Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

Previous chapters have highlighted notable shifts in landlord/agents' attitudes towards Housing Benefit/Universal Credit (HB/UC) claimants. This chapter analyses this trend in more detail.

The overall trends away from letting to this sub-group are stark. One-third (33 per cent) of respondents changed their letting strategy in the past three years to move away (wholly or partly) from HB/UC.<sup>20</sup> There was evidence that this trend was stronger amongst landlords with larger portfolios (11 + properties)

The additional comments provide more details on why landlords are doing this. For example, one respondent said:

*"I will be more hesitant to let to DSS [Housing Benefit] tenants now. The local council finds you a tenant and settles them, promising to pay the housing benefit direct to the landlord. However, when the tenant's circumstances change and/or they do not complete their forms one time the council simply stops paying the landlord, without any warning whatsoever, leaving the landlord high and dry with a non-paying tenant in their property."*

Uncertainties around Housing Benefit payments would appear to be driving some landlord's to move away from this tenant group. Four-fifths (79 per cent) of landlords/agents who continued to let to HB/UC claimants had put in place additional safeguards in the last three years.<sup>21</sup> Figure 4.1 indicates which safeguards were most commonly used. It is worth noting that one-fifth of landlords (20 per cent) did not impose any additional safeguards. An additional comment highlights the approach of one respondent:

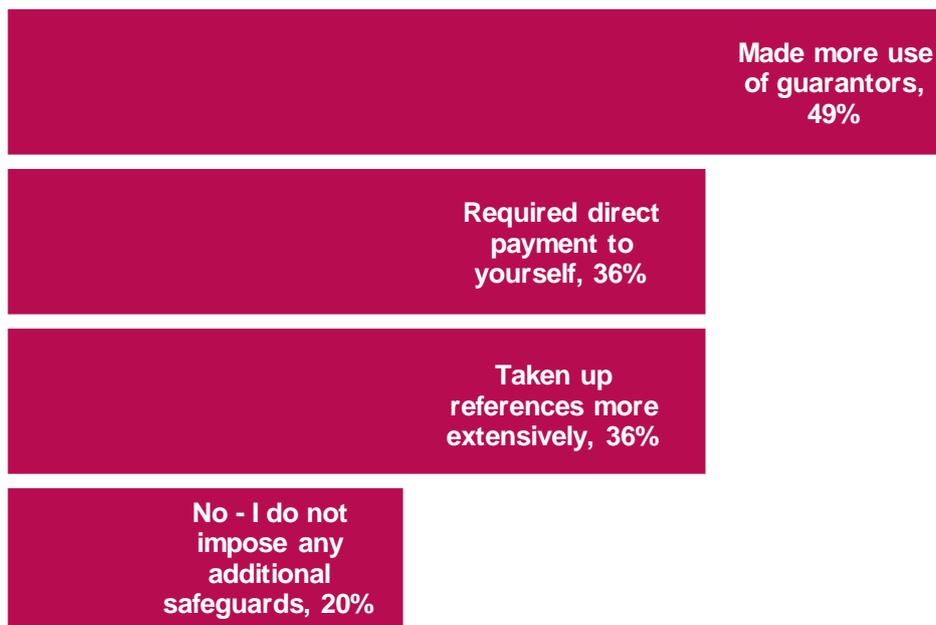
*"I will still consider accepting DSS tenants but will want a proper guarantor or clear evidence that they are embarking on a work path that will lead them to financial independence so that they can pay their own rent in future. I would also consider a person who was on long term incapacity benefit where it was unlikely the housing benefit would cease"*

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<sup>20</sup> n=1549

<sup>21</sup> n=1618

**Figure 4.1: In the past three years, have you put in place any of the following measures as additional safeguards when letting your properties to younger people receiving Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance / Universal Credit? (please tick all that apply)<sup>22</sup>**



The survey also assessed the impact of the introduction of the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR). This change had only affected one-fifth of landlords (21 per cent).<sup>23</sup> However, it appears to have had a notable impact on those who have been affected. Amongst respondents whose lettings practice had been influenced by the introduction of SAR:

- 68 per cent had reduced or stopped letting to under-35s on benefits;
- 15 per cent had reduced or stopped letting to under-35s regardless of benefit status.

This chapter suggests that landlords are moving away from accommodating under-35s on HB/UC. At the same time the private rented sector is being promoted by policy makers as a key means to meet the housing needs of this group. These findings challenge the suggestion that private renting will provide an alternative for young households who are unable to access social housing or owner occupation. There is also evidence that policies aimed at one group (HB/UC claimants) are affecting access to housing for all under-35s.

<sup>22</sup> Not applicable removed leaving n=570

<sup>23</sup> n=1648

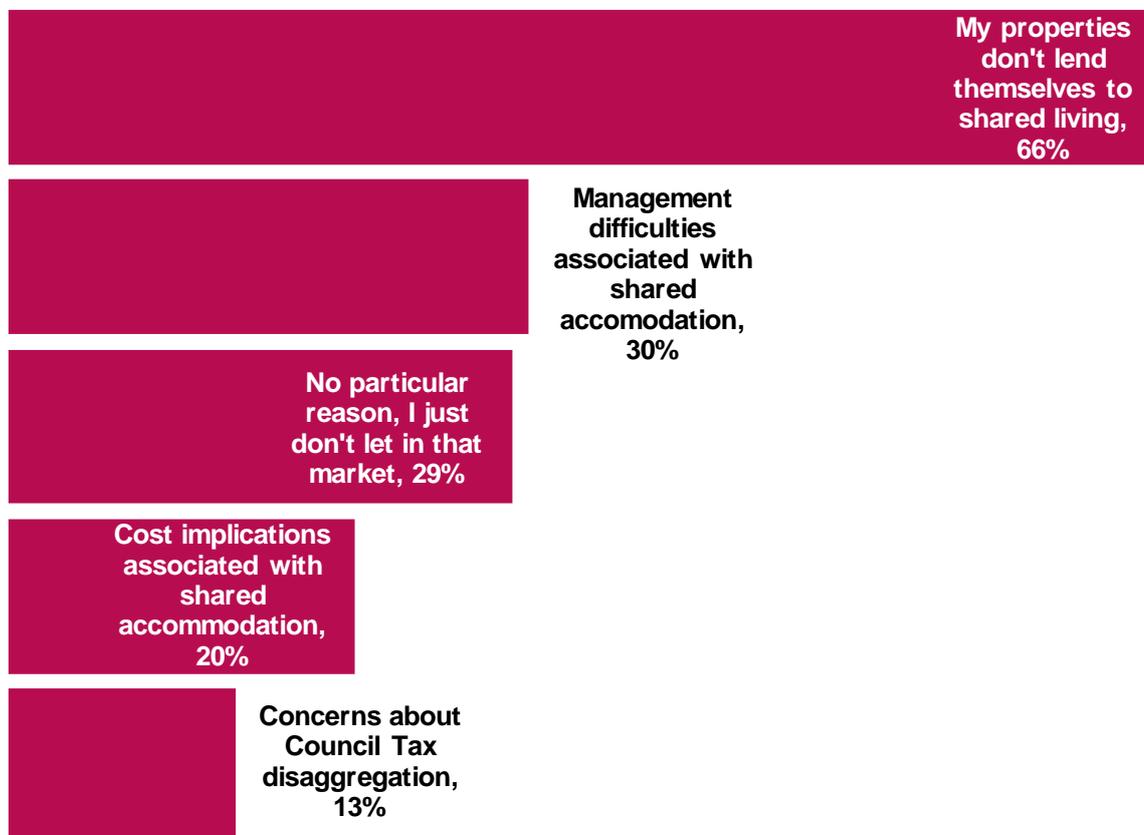
# 5

## Shared Accommodation

This chapter investigates landlords/agents perceptions of and strategies towards shared accommodation. Two-fifths of respondent (43 per cent) provided shared accommodation,<sup>24</sup> demonstrating the importance of this type of accommodation in the private rented sector.

Figure 5.1 highlights the most common reasons respondents gave for not providing shared accommodation. Practical considerations relating to existing properties were by far the most common reason.

**Figure 5.1: Why don't you provide shared accommodation? (please tick all that apply)<sup>25</sup>**



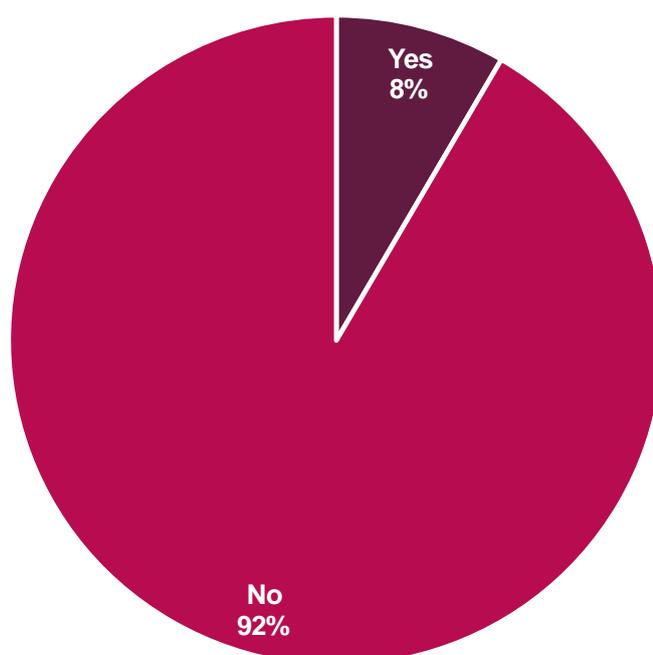
<sup>24</sup> n=1764

<sup>25</sup> n=994

One in eight respondents (13 per cent) stated that concerns about Council Tax disaggregation were contributing factor in not providing shared accommodation. Two further questions in the survey investigated Council Tax disaggregation in more detail.

The first question assessed awareness of Council Tax disaggregation. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the relatively low levels of awareness about Council Tax disaggregation amongst all landlords/agents. Less than one in ten respondents were aware of any changes in areas in which they were operating. The second question focused on whether landlords/agents had experienced Council Tax disaggregation themselves. Amongst those providing shared accommodation, 5 per cent had experience of properties being disaggregated for Council Tax.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 5.2: Are you aware of any changes to the Council Tax treatment of shared properties in areas where you operate (i.e. disaggregation)?<sup>27</sup>**



Surveys of local authorities frequently find a shortage of shared accommodation reported (or shared accommodation available at the SAR, in any case).<sup>28</sup> These results suggest that such shortages may not result from reluctance on the part of landlords to provide shared accommodation. Further investigation is needed to understand the factors that affect the supply of shared accommodation in the private rented sector.

<sup>26</sup> n=712

<sup>27</sup> n=1696

<sup>28</sup> Fitzpatrick, S. et al. (2017) The homelessness monitor: England, [http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20Monitor%20England%202017\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20Monitor%20England%202017_FINAL.pdf)

# 6

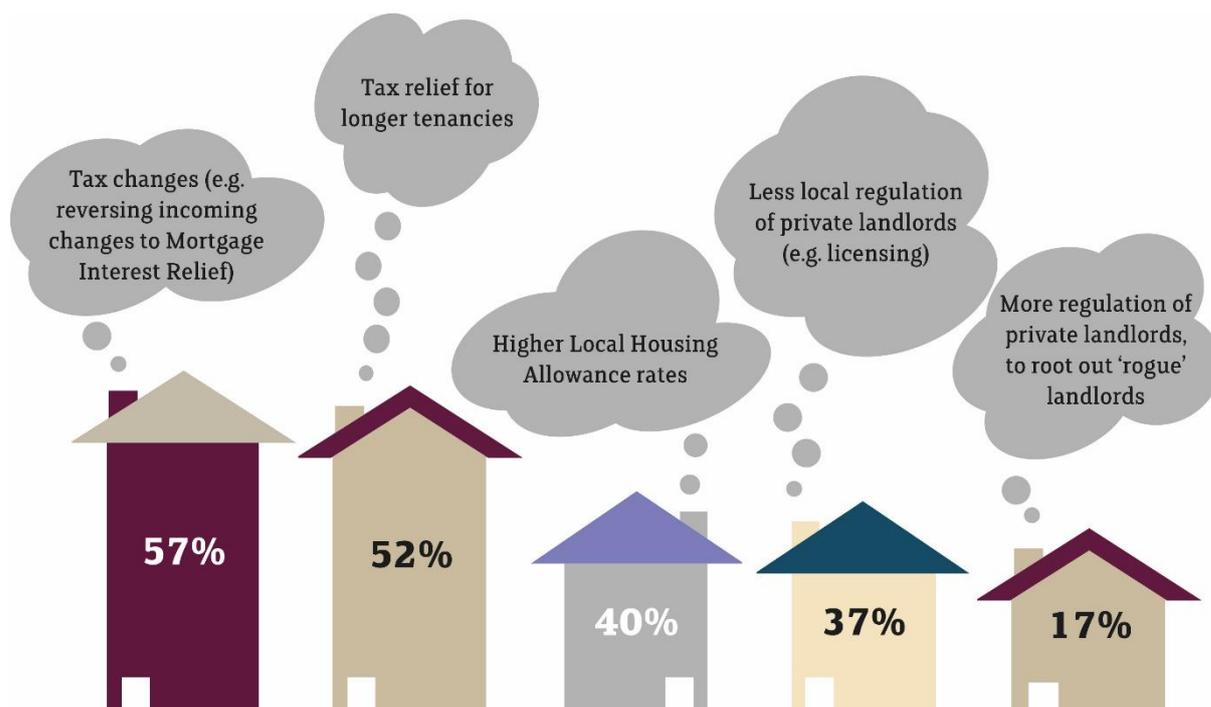
## Policies and Initiatives

This chapter explores the extent to which different policy changes and initiatives might make landlords/agents more able or willing to let to under-35s.

Figure 6.1 highlights the policies which respondents thought would make them most likely to let more to under-35s. Over half of landlords/agents (57 per cent) favoured tax changes – reversing changes to Mortgage Interest Relief and/or providing tax relief for longer tenancies. Regional variation suggests that tax changes are particularly attractive to those operating mainly in London (67 per cent).

Higher rates of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) were also popular both amongst landlords/agents who currently let to HB/UC claimants, and those who do not at present. Higher LHA rates appear to be particularly attractive to those operating in the North of England (56 per cent in Yorkshire, Humber and North East).

**Figure 6.1: Would any of the following regulatory / policy changes make you more able or willing to rent to under-35s (please tick all that apply)?<sup>29</sup>**



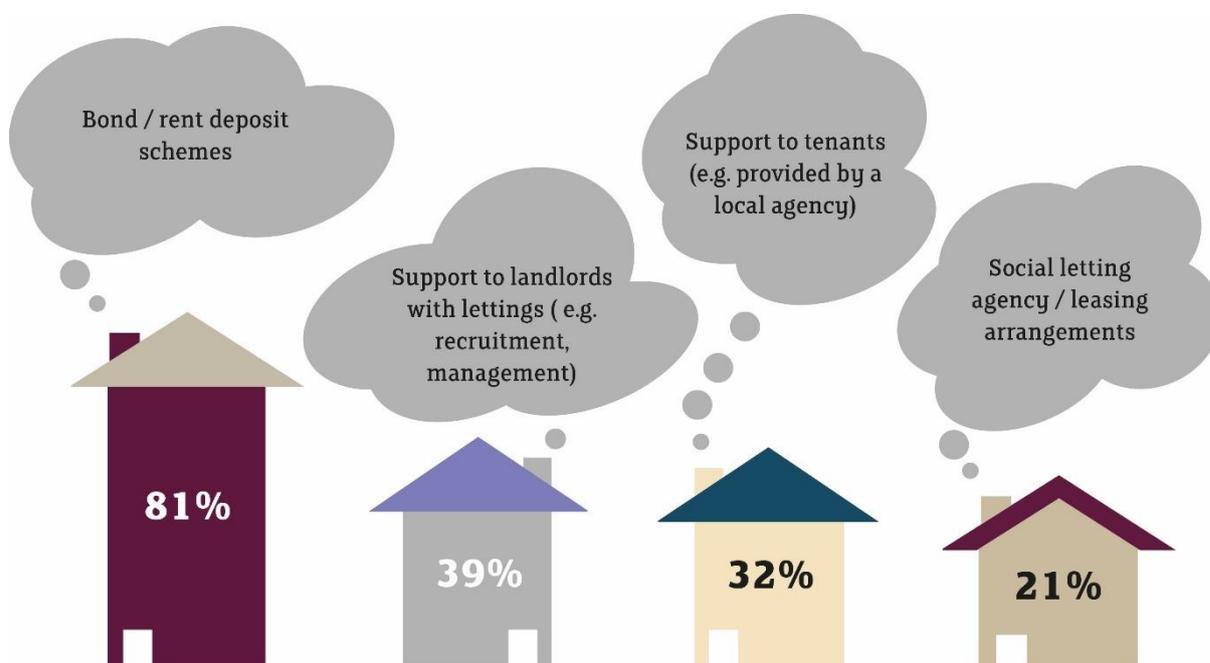
<sup>29</sup> n=1178

The licensing of landlords was another area of interest to respondents. More than one-third felt that less local regulation of private landlords would encourage more lettings to under-35s. At the same time, 17 per cent felt that more regulation of private landlords would root out 'rogue' landlords. This ambivalent attitude towards licensing is encapsulated in an additional comment from one respondent:

*"I am ever hopeful that Licensing will eventually benefit the majority of decent landlords in the area, whose attempts to provide good fair rent accommodation are often thwarted by the few who take no interest in property state or poor tenant behaviour. But I know of several good (small) landlords who cannot take many more losses and so are ready to exit. I'm only staying because I've invested and paid quite a bit off my mortgage – I can't afford to lose that so I have to stay."*

Figure 6.2 highlights the proportion of respondents who thought that particular initiatives would make them more able/willing to rent to under-35s. Bond or rent deposit schemes were by far the most popular initiative which was chosen by four-fifths of respondents (81 per cent). All four of the initiatives proposed were supported by a substantial minority of landlords/agents as a means to increase lettings to under-35s.

**Figure 6.2: Would any of the following types of initiative make you more able or willing to rent to under-35s? (please tick all that apply)?<sup>30</sup>**



It is encouraging that there are a range of policies and initiatives which could encourage landlords to let to under-35s. This suggests that it is not the inherent characteristics of under-35s that deter some landlords. Tax changes were the most popular policy change but there is evidence that other options would also be worth exploring. In relation to possible initiatives, the popularity of bond or rent deposit schemes is worth noting. It may also be the case that social lettings agencies might be worth exploring - particularly if they provide a means of providing the support to landlords and tenants which were also popular.

<sup>30</sup> n=968

## Wider Implications

This chapter assesses the wider implications of the survey findings.

There is increased policy focus on the private rented sector as a source of accommodation for younger households. At the same time a number of regulatory and taxation changes are shaping the operating environment for private landlords. It appears that there are major differences between policy aspirations and landlords' responses to them.

This survey highlights the views of landlords in response to this changing context. It suggests that under-35s represent an important group of tenants and almost all landlords are willing to let to them.

However, there are particular sub-groups of under-35s that landlords are less willing to let to. This is due to perceived difficulties in managing the accommodation and fears about financial loss. In particular there has been a notable decline in the willingness of landlords to let to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants.

The decline in landlords willing to let to certain types of under-35s represents a major challenge to the government's policy approach to the private rented sector. National and local policymakers will need to think seriously about how to address this decline. Otherwise many under-35s are likely to struggle to access any accommodation.

The survey highlights a number of potential changes which landlords think would increase the supply of accommodation for under-35s. Landlords' preferred responses for increasing lettings to under-35s would be:

- reversing tax changes or providing tax relief for longer tenancies;
- bond/rent deposit schemes;
- better administration and direct payment of HB/UC.

It is worth noting that landlords are not necessarily looking for higher rents or increased yields from their properties. Instead there is evidence that many are seeking a reduction of risk – particularly in relation to arrears and the administration of welfare payments.

In summary, there is an urgent need for policymakers to engage with landlords to ensure that under-35s – particularly those on HB/UC – can still access accommodation within the private rented sector. The introduction of the SAR for under-35s in social housing will only increase the importance of maintaining access to private renting for this group.

# Appendix 1: Sample and Statistical Reliability

This appendix provides a brief summary of the statistical reliability of the sample. An important caveat regarding statistical reliability is that the achieved survey sample is to some extent self-selecting, meaning that it is neither random nor representative in a statistical sense. The sample was selected from contacts held by the RLA. There is likely to be some 'non-response bias' in the sample, a possibility in all survey research. This refers to the disproportionate likelihood of certain groups over others to complete the survey, for instance those with sufficient time and resources to participate, thus potentially skewing the survey findings.

The characteristics of the sample from this survey can be used to assess the extent to which it is likely to be representative. However, it is not possible to measure if the sample is genuinely representative as there is no baseline information on the economic or demographic characteristics of the landlord population to compare our survey with. Scanlon and Whitehead note that "there are no reliable data about the number of private landlords across the country, either overall or by region, and there is no survey that can be grossed up to determine the overall size of the sector."<sup>31</sup> This is also the reason why it was not possible to weight the findings from our survey. Without a reliable baseline it is not possible to weight survey findings.

Despite these issues it is still possible to compare the characteristics of landlords in our survey with those found by other surveys. It is a positive sign that respondents to other, recent, landlord surveys have very similar characteristics to our survey.<sup>32</sup> One of the major difficulties is that there is limited national data on the characteristics of landlords. A key source is the survey of private landlords from 2010 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).<sup>33</sup> The landlords in our survey have broadly similar characteristics to the DCLG survey but tend to be slightly more experienced and have slightly more properties. It is worth noting that the sample in our survey (two thousand landlords) was one of the largest in recent years.

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<sup>31</sup> Page 16, Scanlon, K. & Whitehead, C. (2016) The profile of UK private landlords, <https://www.cml.org.uk/news/cml-research/the-profile-of-uk-private/the-profile-of-uk-private-landlords-20170118.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> For example: Home Let (2017) Landlord Survey 2017, [http://images.homelet.co.uk/Landlord\\_Survey\\_2017.pdf](http://images.homelet.co.uk/Landlord_Survey_2017.pdf), Scanlon, K. & Whitehead, C. (2016) The profile of UK private landlords, <https://www.cml.org.uk/news/cml-research/the-profile-of-uk-private/the-profile-of-uk-private-landlords-20170118.pdf> & Shelter (2016) Survey of Private Landlords, [https://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/1236820/Landlord\\_survey\\_18\\_Feb\\_publish.pdf](https://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1236820/Landlord_survey_18_Feb_publish.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> DCLG (2011) Private landlords survey, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7249/2010380.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7249/2010380.pdf)

More generally, the size of the sample provides an indication of the statistical reliability of the findings in this report and the likely margin of error in the respective sample groups. This is based on an assumption that the sample is random and so should only be treated as a guideline, rather than an accurate assessment of statistical significance. The full sample of 1,996 valid responses gives a confidence interval of +/- 2.1 percentage points at the 95 per cent confidence level. That means if 50 per cent of respondents select a particular response to a question, we can say that if we took 100 different samples of the same size from the same population, we would expect 95 of them to give a value somewhere between 47.9 and 52.1 per cent.

# Sheffield Hallam University

*Access to homes for under-35's : The impact of welfare reform on private renting*

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