



# GENERATION RENT

The national voice of private renters

## ANNUAL REPORT

### 2017



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## **Introduction**

Generation Rent is now in its fifth year. This is the first time we have prepared a formal Annual Report which brings together our strategy, review of the past year, summary of our activities in the current year and an overview of our finances.

We hope this is a useful starting point for anyone who wishes to understand more about what we do and is interested in supporting or working more closely with us.

## About Generation Rent

Generation Rent is the operating name of the National Private Tenants Organisation Ltd, which was established in 2013.

Our mission is to make private renting secure, safe and fair.

We are a company limited by guarantee with a board of trustees elected by members, and a full-time staff of two. We are not a charity as this would limit our ability to represent all private renters and to campaign as effectively as we want, but we do have charitable objects:

- To prevent or relieve poverty among private rented sector tenants who are in or at risk of poverty.
- To undertake educational activities and improve knowledge and expertise on the part of landlords, tenants, regulators and others so the quality, security, affordability and professionalism of management in the private rented sector is enhanced.

<b>Our organisational goals are to</b>	<b>We will do this by</b>
1. Give renters the same level of security that homeowners have	Campaigning for the government to pass legislation to restrict landlords' ability to evict tenants who are not at fault and to limit increases in rents, through Parliament, the media and helping renters to make their voices heard
2. Make every private rented home fit for human habitation	Finding ways to support improvement in enforcement among local authorities, equipping renters to exercise their rights, and identifying further necessary changes to the law
3. Make renters a powerful force in politics and markets	Supporting the development of local renter groups, promoting a political identity for private renters, and encouraging new services for the rental market that serve renters' interests

### Our values

- We represent all private renters - anyone could be made homeless, be ripped off or find themselves in an unsafe home
- We like and support landlords and letting agents who treat tenants well and want to drive out bad operators
- Renting should provide as good an alternative to home ownership and social renting as possible
- No political party is inherently good or bad for renters
- We are optimistic and pragmatic – the current system can change

## 2016-17 in Review

### Bernard Collier, Chair, Board of Trustees



The past financial year saw momentous changes for the private renter population and significant achievements for Generation Rent. But as a small campaigning organisation, we are no strangers to adversity and we had to navigate some perilous headwinds before the year was out.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016, enacted in May, contained some highly controversial measures on selling off council homes and building “affordable”

homes to buy. Less contentious were a series of new powers for local authorities and rights for renters to identify, monitor and punish criminal landlords, which are being phased in during 2017. These included policies that Generation Rent has diligently pressed the government to adopt since our 2014 launch, such as sharing deposit protection data with local councils, letting councils levy and keep fines on landlords who break the law, and banning the worst offenders.

The big political event of the year for Generation Rent was the London Mayoral Election, which saw the main candidates compete for the votes of private renters, who now comprise the largest tenure in the capital. Our work around the election included a policy comparison website, [www.votehomes2016.com](http://www.votehomes2016.com), hustings, and the viral #ventyourrent campaign, which helped cement the private rental market as a political issue in the week before polling day. Both contenders committed to improving security of tenure and tightening regulation of landlords, so whoever won would have had a mandate for renters that we could hold them to.

Following Sadiq Khan’s election, we recruited a third member of staff to hold City Hall to account. Seb Klier rejoined the organisation to fill this role, while developing our relationships with London Boroughs and supporting wider efforts to organise private renters in the capital through the Renters Power Project.

Generation Rent started a project in 2015 to record letting agent fees in local areas on [www.lettingfees.co.uk](http://www.lettingfees.co.uk), and provide house hunters with an easy comparison. Thanks to the research efforts and tech wizardry of volunteers we published an initial report in April which provided the most comprehensive snapshot of the types and sizes of fees being charged – and the sheer variation. This helped to underpin our longstanding call for a ban on fees. We then put this research to work as Vicky Spratt of the Debrief website launched a highly successful petition and Liberal Democrat peer Olly Grender introduced the Renters’ Rights Bill which included a ban on fees. Hundreds of our supporters wrote to their MPs to urge them to back the ban and we made the case for reform during the then new Housing Minister Gavin Barwell’s working group on the private rented sector.

Looking back, the Chancellor’s announcement in the Autumn Statement that the government would ban fees feels inevitable but at the time the news came as a wonderful

surprise. The campaign offers a model for how we can work with volunteers and other groups – Shelter and Citizens Advice were also important players – to convince the government and force it to act.

Despite these successes, by December our efforts to secure more sustainable funding were insufficient to allow us to continue to employ three members of staff and Betsy Dillner decided to step down as director. Her commitment to the organisation remains and she joined the board in March.

Dan Wilson Crow, erstwhile Policy and Communications Manager, took on the role of interim director and spent the remaining months of the financial year securing further funding to sustain his post. The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust agreed to fund a three-month campaign to drive renter responses to the consultation on banning letting agent fees, and, shortly after the end of the financial year, a year-long campaign on security of tenure.

We were sorry to see three trustees – Rosa Payne, Christine Wright and Maggie Cornall – step down from the board, but brought on Sean Cosgrove as Treasurer, Shiv Malik, Hannah Williams and Daniel Bentley, to ensure the board can support the team effectively. We began a process to review the organisational strategy in order to secure further grants to put us on a stable footing – and ultimately develop a diverse revenue stream.

By the end of March we had seen a shift in the government’s approach to housing in the previous 12 months. Just months after the Housing Act was given Royal Assent, Theresa May had entered Downing Street warning of the dangers of rising house prices and pledging to help the “Just About Managings”.

This informed the Housing White Paper published at the start of 2017, which recognised the lack of security for private renters, and watered down the Starter Homes policy which amounted to billions of pounds being handed to a lucky few already well-off households. This was particularly cheering as we had campaigned for the policy to be revised when the Housing Act was being debated in early 2016. Unfortunately, the government said it would rely on purpose-built rented housing to deliver long term tenancies – a sector that will house only 80,000 households in the near future. Ministers still had a great deal to do to convince us that it knew what real reform involved, but as we’ve seen so far in 2017-18, their journey has continued.

As the financial year closed, Generation Rent’s work was recognised by the Sheila McKechnie Foundation Awards, which named us Housing Campaigner of the Year. With Generation Rent in a slightly less stable position than a year before, this gave us a huge morale boost and was a testament to the hard work of our committed and talented team.

**September 2017**

## Our work in 2017-18

Dan Wilson Craw, Interim Director



Our day-to-day work remains giving renters a voice in policy debates, be that through media coverage, discussions with politicians and civil servants, and giving our supporters ways to get involved. But as a small team with more we want to do, we are also working to develop the wider renter movement as well as finding ways to make Generation Rent sustainable in the long term.

### National policy

The big focus at Westminster is the government's forthcoming Draft Tenants' Fees Bill, which was announced in the Queen's Speech but has yet to be published. When it is, we will build on our campaign work around the consultation on banning letting fees, which saw a second report of our letting fees research project and hundreds of our supporters responding to the government. A parliamentary committee will scrutinise the content of the Bill before it formally starts the legislative process. Until the ban is law, anything could happen so we will be watching out for any roadblocks that appear and will organise the renters' response to this to ensure that it goes through.

With cross-party agreement on the unfairness of letting fees, we have been on the lookout for the next opportunity for reform, and the snap General Election provided this. For the first time, both the major parties committed themselves in their manifestos to improving security of tenure – Labour with a three-year tenancy, and the Conservatives with a basic promise to “look at” it.

Following the loss of the Conservatives' majority, one vital lesson for the party is that it has to appeal to renters in order to win next time. A big part of any vote-winning housing policy will be lifting the eternal sense of precarity created by the threat of a no-fault eviction. Generation Rent is working with civil servants and parliamentarians on the government and opposition benches to ensure that renters have greater stability in their homes. As part of this we are helping local renters meet their MP, and promoting the case for reform in the media with the help of our volunteer researchers.

A growing recognition of private renters' political power is seeing closer attention for other aspects of the rental process, including deposit protection and credit scores. Any changes must be in the tenant's interest, so we will be carefully scrutinising any proposals that emerge.

### London policy

The current year will see the initial private rental market projects by the London Mayor launch, and development of longer term aspirations including the basis of new tenancy

rights. We have contributed to the development of these initiatives and will continue to press City Hall to raise its ambitions.

May 2018 sees Londoners elect local councillors, and we will be pushing Boroughs to commit to expanding landlord licensing schemes. To improve scrutiny of London boroughs by renters, we have delivered the first training session for London renter campaigners with future sessions being planned.

The Grenfell tragedy has brought housing to the top of the political agenda and as the government learns the lessons of what went wrong and what must change we will be ensuring that the voices of private tenants are heard. There is already a Private Member's Bill designed to give renters the ability to challenge negligent landlords in the courts, which we will be mobilising support for in the run up to its debate in January.

### Developing the renters' movement

With many policy changes won in the past few years, it is not enough to look to the next item on the list of laws to be changed: part of our job is to ensure that the new laws can be implemented properly. The new Rent Repayment Orders can only work if tenants can rely on council officers to carry out inspections, rely on the police to respond properly to harassment and illegal evictions, and have access to legal support if they need it. We are identifying existing good practice by councils and services that renters can already use if they cannot access legal aid.

Local renter groups play a crucial role in providing face-to-face support and campaigning against dodgy operators – we will support the development of these where we can.

The role of technology in the rental market is also growing, but it is essential that new services are not designed with only property professionals in mind, or, worse, as a new way of ripping off renters once letting fees are history. Part of our role is to guide the development of these services and get a better deal for tenants in the marketplace.

### Building a sustainable organisation

So far we have relied on the generosity of short term grant givers and donors. These have been focused largely on our campaigns and have not provided the resources to devote to develop ideas that would sustain the organisation into the future.

We are currently seeking core funding from foundations, with the understanding that the extra capacity this buys us will help us explore opportunities to sell services that support our objectives, and build up a wider donor base.

Now that we have refined our strategic direction, securing core funding is our organisational focus, but as part of this work we are already examining potential initiatives with employers, trade unions and service providers.



**COMPANY NUMBER:**  
**8731888**

**NATIONAL PRIVATE TENANTS ORGANISATION LIMITED**

**UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017**

**NOEL & CO.**  
**CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS**  
**4 PARLIAMENT CLOSE**  
**PRESTWOOD**  
**GREAT MISSENDEN**  
**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**  
**HP16 9DT**

**COMPANY NUMBER:8731888**

**NATIONAL PRIVATE TENANTS ORGANISATION LIMITED**

**BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2017**

	2017		2016	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Current assets</b>	16,954		61,786	
<b>Creditors</b>				
Due within one year	(6,909)		(6,820)	
Accruals and deferred income	(7,940)		(55,319)	
<b>Net current assets/(liabilities)</b>		2,105		(353)
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		2,105		(353)
<b>Net assets/(liabilities)</b>		£ 2,105		£ (353)
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>		£ 2,105		£ (353)

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with FRS105: The Financial Reporting Standard applicable to the Micro-entities Regime.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the micro-entity provisions and have been delivered in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

For the year ending 31 March 2017 the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006. The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

Approved by the board of directors on 21 September 2017 and signed on its behalf by:

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Bernard Collier