

Increasing Security for Renters in Brighton & Hove

- **Supporting the Government's Aim to End 'No Fault' Evictions**
- **Supporting renters who have lost income to keep their homes**

Recently, Selma¹ approached us for advice. Her landlord had told Selma that she wanted to do some major building work on the property and if Selma didn't agree they would evict them. The landlord said they could issue Selma with a 'Section 21' notice.

Because Selma was on a 'periodic tenancy', the landlord could serve her with an eviction notice, even though she had always paid her rent and kept to the terms of her tenancy agreement.

We were able to advise Selma of her rights so she could make informed decisions about her housing options. The landlord is correct in saying that tenants can in some circumstances be evicted with a 'Section 21' notice when they have kept to the terms of their tenancy agreement and there is 'no fault.'

The government stated in 2019 that they would end 'no fault' evictions. During the coronavirus crisis this, and some other steps we outline below, could go a long way to increase housing security for renters in Brighton & Hove.

¹ Names have been changed.

Renting in Brighton & Hove

Nationwide rental prices are at their highest recorded level.

The median monthly rent was £700 for England, recorded between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020; it has not been higher².

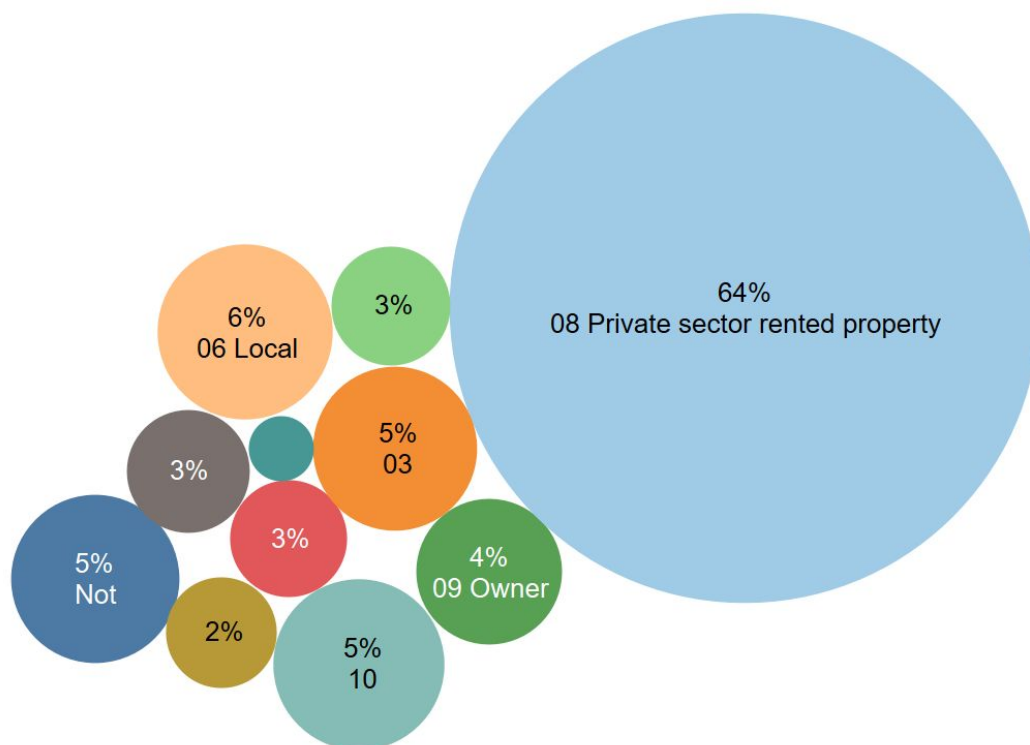
The median monthly rent for the South East of England is £900.

For Brighton & Hove, it is £1,134.

Prior to the pandemic, average renting costs in Brighton and Hove had been rising at 3% compared to the national average of 2.8%³.

Out of all housing issues we advise on at Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove, private rental sector queries dominate the concerns of our clients. In the 6 months prior to national lockdown, over 50% of our clients seeking housing advice were private renters⁴. After the lockdown that figure jumped to 64%.

Fig. 1 Housing enquiries by sector during and after national lockdown: 23/03/20 - 23/09/20



² Office of National Statistics; Private Rental Summary Statistics in England: April 2019 - March 2020 [Summary](#)

³ In England and Wales. From *Brighton and Hove Housing Market Report Q2 2018 Apr-Jun*

⁴ There were 563 recorded private rental sector issues in Brighton and Hove between 23/09/19 - 23/03/20

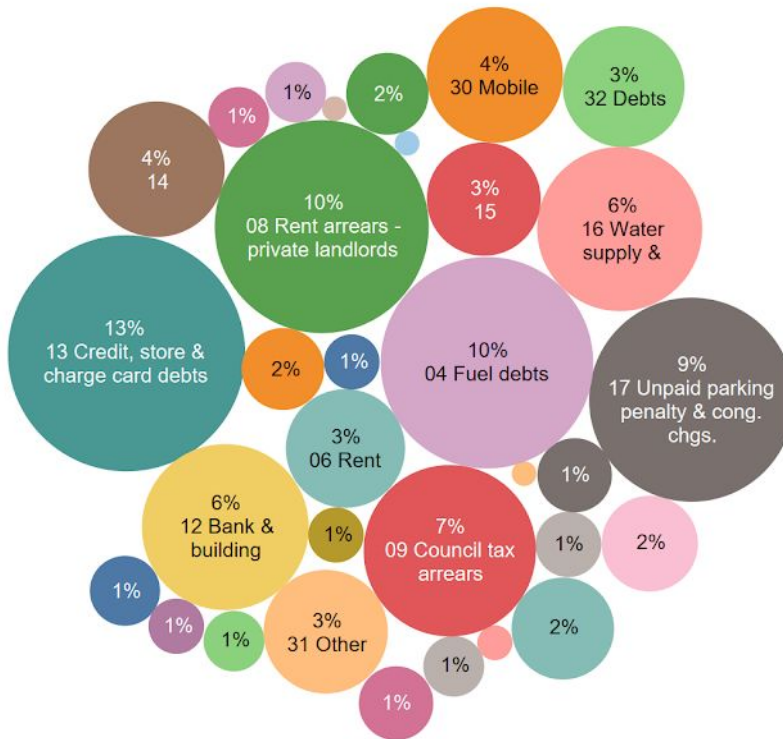
Chief Executive Officer - Jo-Anne Carden

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At Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove we have seen a 30% increase in private rental issues⁵. Rent arrears have become the third highest debt issue recorded amongst our clients.

Fig. 2 Debt enquiries during and after national lockdown: 23/03/20 - 23/09/20



→ Supporting the Government's Aim to End 'No Fault' Evictions

The Government has committed to end Section 21, or 'No Fault evictions'. We welcome this and ask the government to deliver on this urgently. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, on 21 November 2019:

"A Conservative majority government will empower renters and give them greater peace of mind. We will end no fault evictions, so that landlords can't remove tenants without good reason."

The ending of private rental tenancies is the leading cause of homelessness in this sector.⁶ We agree with the Prime Minister that people should not lose their

⁵ Taken from local Citizens Advice data. We recorded 563 issues in the 6 months prior to national lockdown (23/09/19 - 23/03/20). And 737 in the 6 months after (23/03/20 - 23/09/20).

⁶ National Audit Office, Homelessness report, 2017, <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/homelessness/>

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homes without a reason. We ask that the Government deliver on this commitment during this time of national crisis.

→ Supporting those who have lost income to keep their homes

How else can we help people keep their homes when they have lost work or income, or are working less hours due to covid-19 and have growing debt and rent arrears?

- Put in place a programme of grants to help people with rent arrears built up during the pandemic. These could be targeted at people in the most financial difficulty, such as people eligible for benefits.
- Increase the Local Housing Allowance to the average market rent in Brighton & Hove.

The Local Housing Allowance varies depending on where you live. It is used to work out how much Universal Credit or Housing Benefit you get if you live in a private rental property.

The government raised the Local Housing Allowance to cover the 30th percentile (3 in 10 properties) in each area on 01 April 2020. This hugely welcome move made a difference to many of our clients. During this crisis a further increase to the actual average rent in our area would help many more to keep housed.

We urge the government to deliver on their commitment to end Section 21 notices, to fund a programme of grants targeting private sector renters impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, and to increase the Local Housing Allowance further.

Signed:

Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove

Brighton Housing Trust

Peter Kyle, Labour MP for Hove and Portslade & Shadow Justice Minister

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About Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove

Citizens Advice Brighton & Hove provides free, independent and impartial advice to anyone who needs it.

We advise almost 10,000 on their rights and responsibilities in Brighton & Hove annually.

We generate over £3.5million in the local economy through helping people secure benefits entitlements, jobs and manage debts.

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