The PRS Database

Recommendations for the development of a sustainable and multi-purpose PRS database, driving standards in the Private Rented Sector.

The Lettings Industry Council
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Executive Summary

The Lettings Industry Council (TLIC) supports the introduction of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Database and considers it a significant opportunity to improve compliance, transparency and tenant safety across the sector.

The database should be designed not only as a registration tool, but as a practical enforcement, reporting and intelligence platform. While some functionality may sit outside the minimum viable product (MVP), these requirements should be designed, from the outset, as part of the long-term roadmap so that the system can evolve effectively.

In TLIC's view, the database should be structured around the following principles:

1. Clear identification of:
    - Properties, identified through the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN)
    - Landlords
    - Agents
    - Other linked parties

2. Flexibility to reflect legal ownership realities, including joint ownership, companies, trusts, probate, powers of attorney and complex agent-led structures.
3. Effective reporting tools enabling local authorities to target limited enforcement resources where risk is greatest.
4. Tenant access to key compliance information, supporting informed decisions and stronger safeguards against unsafe housing.
5. Digital integration of property safety records and compliance documents, reducing fraud, delay and administrative duplication.
6. Proportionate implementation, recognising operational realities for landlords and agents, including the need for APIs, bulk uploads and adequate lead-in periods.

TLIC further recommends the database is used as a communication tool with landlords and tenants, supporting better market intelligence, and includes redress membership obligations to reduce duplication of multiple databases.

This paper sets out TLIC's recommendations in detail, including case studies illustrating why design choices made now will directly affect the overall effectiveness of the database.

1. Purpose of the database

TLIC understands that the primary purpose of the PRS Database is to improve transparency and enable Government agencies and local authorities to verify that landlords are meeting their legal obligations.

For the database to achieve this, it must be designed as more than a static register. It should operate as a live compliance tool that supports monitoring, reporting and targeted enforcement.

Local authorities consistently face resource constraints when investigating rogue landlord behaviour. In that context, the reporting functionality of the database will be as important as the registration function itself. Local authorities should be able to generate real-time reports identifying non-compliant properties and landlords within their area. For example, properties with missing, expired or unsatisfactory safety certificates.

The database is also planned to capture rents for individual tenancies. To maintain accuracy, landlords, or their agents, should be required to update rent data whenever it is increased. Subject to appropriate controls, this data should be available to the First-tier Tribunal to support fair and evidence-based rent determinations. Government should also consider publishing anonymised rental data by local area and property type, to improve market transparency and help reduce avoidable disputes.

The database could also provide a reliable communication channel with landlords and tenants. It has historically been difficult to ensure that important regulatory updates reach all landlords. A central portal could provide targeted updates, guidance and reminders. Tenants could also receive important information relevant to their rights and the safety status of their home, with limited access to appropriate datasets.

There is further scope for the database to support other stakeholders with legitimate interests in property standards and responsible management, including mortgage lenders and insurers. TLIC also recommends consideration of whether the database could serve a dual purpose as an ombudsman register, reducing duplication across separate systems.

See Appendix, Case Study 1: why reporting functionality matters.

2. Roles, registration and enforcement

Property ownership in the PRS can be complex, and the database must reflect that reality. A simple one-property/one-landlord model will not be sufficient.

Many landlords hold portfolios with different ownership arrangements across different properties. A single individual may own one property personally, another jointly with a spouse or business partner, and additional properties through one or more limited companies. In some cases, the same individual may appear in different capacities across multiple registrations, including as beneficial owner, company director, trustee, executor or attorney.

The database must support many-to-many relationships, with linked records for individuals, companies and properties. This will allow the system to capture the legal and operational structure through which properties are owned or controlled, while ensuring that appropriate parties can access and fulfil their obligations in relation to the relevant property.

The system should also cater for special circumstances, including probate, powers of attorney, receivership or administration, charities with multiple trustees, and trusts with multiple trustees and beneficiaries.

From an enforcement perspective, this structure is critical. Local authorities must be able to identify patterns of non-compliance across linked entities and individuals, including where a property is let via a corporate vehicle. This is particularly important where there are concerns about repeated misconduct, banned landlords or attempts to obscure responsibility through multiple legal structures.

TLIC also recommends that MHCLG considers whether the data model should support proportionate recording of beneficial ownership information in higher-risk or more complex ownership cases, particularly where this would improve enforcement visibility. Consideration may also be needed as to how sanctions screening or restrictions affecting ownership or control should be reflected where relevant to legal compliance. Any such measures should be clearly scoped, proportionate and aligned with the wider legal framework to avoid creating unnecessary duplication.

See Appendix, Case Study 2: complex ownership structure.

3. Property identification and unique reference numbers

TLIC strongly recommends that the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) is adopted as the primary identifier for every property on the database. This will provide a consistent and practical basis for linking registration, safety records, licensing information and tenancy-related data to the correct address. Other Government departments can also benefit from integration using UPRN’s.

Landlords and agents should also be assigned unique identifiers. For agents, Government should consider whether an existing reference number could be used where appropriate, to reduce duplication and simplify identity validation.

A robust identifier structure will be essential to support accurate reporting, integration with other systems and long-term usability of the database.

4. Safeguarding tenants

The database should provide restricted and carefully designed access for tenants so they can verify whether a prospective or current home meets key legal requirements. This would improve consumer confidence and strengthen safeguards against unsafe and unlawful letting practices.

A tenant-facing view of the system should allow a tenant to confirm, at a minimum, whether:

- the landlord is registered on the database;
- a valid EPC is in place and meets the minimum standard or confirms a permitted exemption;
- required safety records, such as gas safety and electrical inspection documentation, are present and in date;
- any required HMO or other landlord licence is in place;
- a declaration that the property is in an habitable and hazard-free condition; and
- the landlord is not subject to a banning order, insofar as disclosure is legally and operationally appropriate.

Providing access to this information would help prospective tenants make informed decisions before entering into a tenancy, identifying concerns early. It would also support responsible self-reporting of apparent non-compliance to local authorities.

See Appendix, Case Study 3: informed tenant decision-making.

5. Digital safety records, property condition and enforcement

TLIC considers the EPC register a useful example of how property-related records can be digitised and held centrally in a format that is accessible, verifiable and useful to the market and regulators.

The same principle should be applied, as far as practicable, to key PRS safety and compliance records, including:

- gas safety records;
- electrical installation condition reports / electrical installation reports;
- HMO, additional and selective licences; and
- tenancy deposit protection registrations.

Where these records are digitised and linked to the UPRN, providers could upload them directly to a central system, reducing reliance on manual document handling and allowing the portal to display the accurate and real-time compliance status.

Post-MVP, TLIC recommends that the database requires landlords to upload a periodic independent assessment of property condition, which confirms that the property is free from serious hazards. The assessment would not amount to a full qualified survey but, instead, can be undertaken by an appropriate qualified assessor, using an inspection model similar to those already used by EPC assessors or inventory clerks.

The portal is also a means of communication. Auto notifications could be sent to the landlord/agent (similar to car tax reminders) reminding them of expiring safety records. If the document is not renewed, an auto notification could then be sent to the local authority to commence enforcement.

This would prevent fraudulent uploads, missing documents and the risk of unsatisfactory records being withheld. Local authorities will be able to identify properties that appear to be missing legally required documentation, reducing the current burdens they face in applying enforcement resource across the entire PRS.

See Appendix, Case Study 4: unsatisfactory electrical report.

6. Role of the letting agent or managing agent

Over 50% of PRS properties in England are let or managed by agents. The design of the database must therefore reflect the operational role agents already play in compliance, tenancy administration and landlord support.

Where authorised by the landlord, agents need to be able to populate information and upload documentation, through the landlord granting a managing agent access rights without unnecessary approval burdens.

The platform should also not assume that all agents operate in the same way. Agency structures vary greatly: from sole traders to large corporate organisations with hundreds of employees across multiple branches. Accordingly, different employees will have varying responsibilities in their respective businesses.

The access model must be flexible enough to accommodate different internal structures, permissions and workflows. If access is limited too narrowly, a small number of staff could become responsible for managing very large volumes of data, which would increase compliance risk, particularly for national agencies managing thousands of properties.

Multi-agent instructions

The database must also accommodate multi-agent instructions. Landlords may appoint several agents to market a property, but only the agent who secures the tenant will usually provide ongoing lettings or management services. In some cases, the agent instructed to let the property is not the same as the agent who manages the property long-term. MHCLG should therefore give careful consideration to timing of required information. The database should make clear what minimum property information must be provided before a property is marketed, and what can reasonably be completed once the appointed agent is confirmed and the tenancy progresses.

As the appointed agent may not be known at marketing stage, the process should allow agents to help clients provide the necessary pre-marketing information simply and efficiently.

See Appendix, Case Study 5: national agency operations.

7. Accessibility and support for landlords with limited digital capability

TLIC is concerned that some landlords may struggle to comply if the system is designed on the assumption that all users have reliable internet access, digital capability and confidence using online systems.

This may affect older landlords and those with disabilities, living overseas and for whom English is not a first language. Not all such landlords appoint letting or managing agents.

Government should therefore ensure that non-digital or assisted-digital routes are available where necessary, alongside clear communications, guidance and support arrangements. The success of the database will depend not only on the quality of the technology but also on whether users understand what they are required to do and can realistically comply.

MHCLG should also consider carefully whether any landlord approval process is proportionate where an authorised agent has submitted information on the landlord's behalf. In many cases, especially where landlords rely on agents for compliance support, mandatory dual approval could be impractical and could create delay without improving accuracy.

8. Timing, implementation and system integration

TLIC recommends that MHCLG publishes, well in advance of launch, a comprehensive list of the data fields and documents that will be required for registration and ongoing. This will enable landlords and agents to prepare in advance.

Agents in particular will need sufficient time to determine what services they will offer, design compliant internal processes, allocate resource and train staff. Although many agents already hold relevant information within their existing CRM systems, that information has often been built up over time and may require review or mapping before it can be transferred accurately to a new Government system.

It should not be assumed that agents can practically re-key the same information into a separate database on an ongoing basis. Duplicate data entry increases the risk of errors, creates inefficiency for landlords, agents and local authorities, and can undermine confidence in the quality of the data collected.

For that reason, TLIC strongly recommends system integration through APIs so that data entered into an agent's existing CRM can be transferred directly to the PRS Database where appropriate. This would mirror arrangements already used elsewhere in the property sector and would support accuracy, efficiency and adoption.

At MVP stage, bulk upload functionality should be available through CSV import for core tenancy and property information. This will be essential for agents managing medium and large portfolios and will help avoid immediate administrative overload.

TLIC strongly advocates for a minimum implementation period of six months, for each geographical roll-out, before registration deadlines take effect. This would provide a realistic lead-in period for communication, preparation and data gathering, and is broadly consistent with implementation periods commonly allowed when new landlord licensing schemes are introduced.

9. Conclusion

The PRS Database has the potential to become a valuable part of the regulatory framework for the private rented sector, improving transparency, supporting proportionate enforcement and helping tenants identify safer homes.

Its effectiveness, however, will depend on whether it is designed around operational reality. A successful system must reflect the complexity of ownership and management in the sector, support integration rather than duplication, and provide meaningful reporting and intelligence tools rather than functioning solely as a static register.

TLIC encourages MHCLG to use the development phase to establish a clear long-term roadmap, where some functionality follows after MVP. Decisions taken now on structure, identifiers, access models and integration will determine whether the database delivers practical regulatory value or simply adds administrative burden. We would welcome continued engagement as the design develops.

Appendix: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Why reporting functionality matters

A local authority receives a complaint from a tenant about the condition of a property. If the database only confirms that the property is registered, the authority must still carry out time-consuming manual checks to establish whether the gas safety record, electrical inspection, licence and deposit protection requirements are in place. These are usually indicators of a landlord's overall approach to their responsibilities.

If the database includes live compliance reporting, the authority could identify immediately whether the property is missing required safety documentation, whether other properties linked to the same landlord show similar issues, and whether urgent intervention is needed. This would allow scarce enforcement resource to be directed faster and more effectively.

Case Study 2: Complex ownership structure

An individual is involved in five lettings arrangements: one property is owned solely; one jointly with a spouse; one jointly with a business partner; one through a single-director company; and one through a company with multiple directors and beneficial owners. The same individual is also acting as executor for a sixth property in probate.

If the database cannot link these roles and interests, regulators may see six separate records with no obvious relationship. A linked-data model would allow the system to recognise the shared controlling party, support accurate access rights, and improve enforcement visibility if concerns arise across the wider portfolio.

Case Study 3: Informed tenant decision-making

A prospective tenant is considering renting a property and wants reassurance that it is lawfully let. Through a limited tenant-facing portal, the tenant is able to verify that the landlord is registered, that the property has an in-date gas safety record and electrical inspection, the required licence is in place and there is a report confirming the property is in a safe condition.

If one of those items is missing, the tenant can make an informed decision before signing a tenancy agreement, reducing the risk of moving into an unsafe property.

Case Study 4: Unsatisfactory electrical report

A property receives an electrical inspection result that identifies urgent remedial works. If the inspection outcome is uploaded digitally and linked by UPRN, the portal can flag that the property does not currently meet the relevant requirement until remedial works are completed and a satisfactory record is provided.

This prevents an unsafe property appearing compliant simply because a document has been uploaded, and it enables the local authority to intervene more quickly where necessary.

Case Study 5: National agency operations

A national agent manages thousands of properties across multiple offices. Compliance tasks are split between branch teams, property managers and central specialists. If the portal only permits access to a small number of named users, those individuals become a bottleneck for every upload, update and correction.

A permission-based access model would allow the business to allocate tasks sensibly while maintaining accountability and audit trails.

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