

## Anxious? Stroke a dog

Students get to know some canine pals at the University of Edinburgh's newly launched Paws on Campus programme.

It is designed to provide a new style of support for students suffering stress and anxiety, and combines clinical psychology with veterinary science through a series of structured activity sessions.

NEIL HANNA/UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH/PA



## SOCIETY

# Gove warned loophole in renters' bill may shift burden on to courts

By Vicky Spratt  
HOUSING CORRESPONDENT

Tory MPs and housing experts have warned that the Renters' Reform Bill has a loophole that landlords could exploit to evict tenants.

Michael Gove's bill proposes the most significant reform of private renting in England since the 1988 Housing Act deregulated the sector in favour of landlords.

It has faced a series of delays since it was first announced in 2019 but is expected to appear in Parliament for the first time this week.

The bill is expected to keep the Conservatives' 2019 manifesto promise to ban Section 21 evictions. These are also known as "no fault" evictions because they allow land-

lords to evict tenants without having to give a reason.

However, one Conservative member of the House of Commons' Levelling Up, Communities and Housing Committee told *i* that this move could have unintended consequences.

"The trouble with banning no fault evictions is that there could be a spike in Section 8 evictions, which go through the courts," the MP said.

Section 8 of the 1988 Housing Act allows evictions on the grounds of rent arrears or damage to a property or breaches of a tenancy agreement. It could, therefore, create a loop-

hole and more tenants "will get a county court judgement [CCJ] against them", the MP warned.

Tenants with CCJs would have their credit score damaged, they might "struggle to get accepted by a [new] landlord" and could be asked for something "ridiculous" such as 12 months' rent up front to "mitigate risk", the MP added.

The Commons committee has lobbied the Government to create a specialist housing court to deal with evictions fairly once Section 21 is banned and to help country courts where there is currently a huge backlog of cases.

**1m**  
Number of households on waiting lists for social housing in England

*i* understands that Mr Gove, the Housing Secretary, has faced resistance to these reforms from Tory backbenchers in spite of the changes being a 2019 Conservative manifesto promise.

"There are around 30 of my colleagues with concerns over the Bill," the Conservative MP told *i*. "They are asking why we are interfering in the right to control a landlord's own property?"

**i** England faces a severe social housing shortage with more than one million households on waiting lists. This has pushed low-income renters into the private market.

## PROPERTY

# Landlords 'will drop out and switch to Airbnb'

By David Parsley  
CHIEF NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Tory MPs and property groups have warned Michael Gove that his Renters' Reform Bill could lead to private landlords quitting the long-term lettings market in favour of unregulated holiday lets.

The bill is expected to propose outlawing no-fault evictions, but critics claim it will fail to provide a route for landlords to get rid of bad tenants without going to court.

One Conservative MP on the Levelling Up, Communities and Housing Committee told *i* that about 30 backbench Tory MPs had "issues with the

Bill" as it "solves one problem, but creates another".

The MP said: "Private sector landlords are dropping out of the market and then going into Airbnb because they can make more money there and don't have all the conditions on how they run their own properties.

"If this bill goes through then it could lead to less homes being available to rent, which, in turn, leads to even higher costs for tenants as rent will rise further."

Another Conservative back-

bencher said the Government's decision to axe its commitment to build 300,000 new homes a year "does not sit well with imposing such tough restrictions on landlords".

The MP added: "Landlords are likely to be pushed out of the market... and that does not make life easier for tenants as the lack of supply will just force rents up."

Lobbying groups are warning that the bill will backfire and result in further rent rises unless it gives landlords simple routes to evict "bad tenants".



## PEOPLE

# Brooke, who paved way for NI peace, dies aged 89

By Euan O'Byrne Mulligan

Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville, a former Conservative minister credited with laying the foundations for the Northern Ireland peace process, has died aged 89.

He passed away peacefully in Wiltshire on Saturday, his family said.

Peter Brooke (*inset*) served as Northern Ireland secretary from 1989 to 1992 under both Margaret Thatcher and Sir John Major.

He was credited with helping to bring Sinn Féin to negotiations that would eventually lead to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Sir John said last night: "Peter was the first gentleman of politics, which he elevated with his calm, gentle, yet tenacious character – not least with regard to his pivotal role in the peace process."

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Chris Heaton-Harris, wrote: "Peter played a pivotal role in laying the foundations of the peace process. We are indebted to him for his public service working for the betterment of everyone in NI."

Lord Brooke was the first Northern Ireland Secretary since the 1970s to entertain talks with Sinn Féin – and said that the UK would not oppose a united Ireland if it were the will of the Northern Irish people.



## EDUCATION

# Starmer: fees are an obstacle

By Eleanor Langford  
POLITICAL REPORTER

Sir Keir Starmer has said that he was not sure he would have attended university had he been faced with the same level of tuition fee debt as young people today.

He said that coming from a "working-class background where it's a big thing to take a big loan" meant he might have been put off going to university altogether.

His comments came after he confirmed Labour would be likely to "move on" from the promise to abolish tuition fees should it win the next election, despite it being a key pledge during his leadership campaign.

Sir Keir was responding to a question from a listener on an LBC phone-in, who asked him whether he believed it was fair that his son was facing £50,000 in student debt and a higher tax burden.

The Labour leader said he "sympathised" with their concerns and that he knew it was a "tough issue", but ruled out bringing back his pledge to scrap tuition fees.