



February 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the private rented sector.

I was deeply concerned to hear about reports of sexual exploitation of tenants, and I completely agree with you that such practices are abhorrent and have no place in our society. Let me assure you that the Government takes these offences very seriously.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes clear that 'sex for rent' arrangements are illegal, as are advertisements for any such arrangements. There are existing offences which may be used to prosecute this practice, including the Section 52 offence of causing or inciting prostitution for gain and the Section 53 offence of controlling prostitution for gain. I understand that both offences carry a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment.

Colleagues have drawn my attention to updated guidance produced by the Crown Prosecution Service on prostitution and exploitation of prostitution. This includes specific reference to the availability of charges for offences under Sections 52 and 53, where there is evidence to support the existence of sex for rent arrangements.

The Online Safety Bill will also place duties on sites that host user-generated content, such as social media companies, to protect their users from illegal content.

I am aware that, as part of the passage of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, Peers voted to introduce further provisions in law to prosecute landlords.

I completely agree that these are devastating crimes, which is why I am assured that existing offences can be used to prosecute this practice. The Government will continue to work with the police, prosecutors and others to prevent such offending and ensure that victims get the justice and protection they deserve.

To strengthen protection for tenants from rogue landlords, the Government introduced banning orders which can be served to landlords convicted of certain criminal offences. They prevent an individual from engaging in letting and property management work. When a landlord is served a banning order, the local housing authority must also place them on a dedicated database.

More widely, ministers assure me that the Government is committed to delivering a fairer and more effective rental market. This includes driving improvements in standards in rented accommodation and ensuring well targeted, effective enforcement that drives out criminal landlords. A package of reforms will be laid out in a White Paper this year.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY

Website: www.heatonharris.com