

# Rising rents risk forcing pensioners out of homes

**Louisa Clarence-Smith**

July 17 2019, 12:01am, The Times



**MPs have warned that a national strategy for renting in later life is needed urgently** DEAN MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES

Hundreds of thousands of pensioners could be forced out of their homes in the coming years because they cannot afford their rent, MPs have warned.

There could be 1.5 million pensioners in the private rented sector in the next two decades but they will struggle to pay rising costs, according to the all-party parliamentary group on housing and care for older people.

The group, led by Lord Best, the former head of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, has released a report which estimates that an extra 1.1 million low-cost rented homes will be needed for older people by the late 2040s. It calls on the next prime minister to prioritise low-cost rented housing.

About a fifth of people over 65 are tenants. That proportion is due to rise as younger people who have not been able to buy a house retire.

If rents rise at the same rate as earnings, 52 per cent of pensioners in the private rented sector could spend more than 40 per cent of income on rent by 2038, according to research by the Social Market Foundation think tank which is included in the report. It follows an inquiry funded by Peabody, a housing association.

That could force more than 630,000 older people out of their homes. Private rents in England rose an average of 60 per cent faster than wages between 2011 and 2017, according to Shelter, a housing charity.

Lord Best said: “We need action now to avoid sleepwalking into a situation where hundreds of thousands of older people will find themselves in insecure tenancies they cannot afford, fearing eviction and potentially even homelessness. The social and economic costs of this would be enormous. Housing benefit costs would skyrocket.

“We urgently need a national strategy for renting in later life. This must include a plan to build more low-cost rented homes, and a programme of investment in care and support to prevent a housing catastrophe.”

Kate Henderson, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, which represents housing associations, said: “This must be a wake-up call to the government that more money for building social housing, and especially housing that is fit for retirement, is desperately needed.”