



# Reinventing Renting: The use of digital technology in housing for 'generation rent'

Benefits to tenants in the private rented sector, property developers, technology providers, housing providers, government, tenants in the private rented sector, landlords

**"An increasing number of people in the UK have no choice but to live in rented housing. If we can unlock the potential of digital technologies to improve the sector, we could improve the lives of thousands of households."**

- Dr Gemma Burgess, Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research

## Summary

The private rented sector has grown dramatically in recent years. The percentage of people aged 25 to 35 renting in the private rented sector increased from 27% in 2007 to 46% in 2017. Digital technology is increasingly being used to facilitate greater access and convenience, efficiency in management, and sense of community.

This research aims to:

- understand how digital technology is being used to improve the rental experience in different types of housing
- understand the technology being provided to landlords and tenants in traditional buy to let housing
- investigate new models of housing such as 'build to rent' and 'co-living'
- understand how tenants engage with digital technology

## Impact and Value

This research provides an overview of how digital technologies are transforming different parts of the private rented sector. This research has the potential to inform future housing and technological developments, and to shape policy in this area.

## Key Findings

- New digital technology has the potential to transform three key areas of renting: access to properties, management of properties, and lived experience.
- The research shows that digital innovation is being used most commonly for access (finding a rental property). There is increasing use of digital services by landlords for managing their rented properties, but there is so far less impact on lived experience, e.g. using digital platforms to communicate with landlords, or using apps to split bills with house mates.
- Barriers to adopting technology and digital innovation by residents in the private rented sector relate to three main areas: knowledge about available technology, willingness to use it and issues of trust and data privacy.

## Long-term Vision

The long term vision is for digital technology:

- to reduce costs and make access to the private rented sector easier for tenants, particularly because these tend to be households with low incomes;
- to make management of properties easier and therefore improve the quality and state of repair of the rented housing stock, which is currently the worst tenure for quality and energy efficiency;
- to improve the experience of living in the private sector as, although renting is growing as a tenure, tenants express relatively high levels of dissatisfaction.

## Next Steps

The sector needs to address issues of trust and data privacy if use of digital technology is to be adopted more widely by tenants in the private rented sector. There is currently no end-to-end digital platform that meets all the needs of landlords and tenants.

## Research Acknowledgements

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Photo Credit: Co-Living Spaces