



# Strategic Plan

## 2018-2022



# About us



## What is the Residential Tenancies Board?

The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) is a public body set up to support and develop a well-functioning rental housing sector. Our remit covers both the private rental sector and not-for-profit housing providers also referred to as Approved Housing Bodies. Our role is to regulate the rental sector; provide information to tenants and landlords; maintain a national register of tenancies; resolve disputes between tenants and landlords; conduct research and provide information to inform policy.



## Information, education and research

We provide high quality information to tenants and landlords as well as to the general public to help them understand their rights and responsibilities. We also provide accurate and authoritative research and data on the rental sector, such as the RTB Quarterly Rent Index, which allows us to monitor trends in the rental sector and also allows individuals to compare rents in particular locations.



## Registrations

All private residential landlords and Approved Housing Bodies are obliged to register their tenancies. A public register is available on our website. The registration of tenancies enables us to collect important data on the sector, and is also a key part of regulating and supporting the sector and ensuring landlords and tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities.



## Dispute resolution services

Since 2004, we have replaced the courts in dealing with the majority of disputes between landlords and tenants through our Dispute Resolution Service. This service offers a choice of resolution types to parties – mediation or adjudication.



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# Foreword and Introduction from the Chair and Director

This **Residential Tenancies Board Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022** sets out how we will continue to support the development of a well-functioning rental housing sector in Ireland that is fair, accessible and beneficial for all.

There has been significant change in the rental and housing markets since we published our last strategic plan. Demand for rented accommodation is higher than ever, yet we are in a time of massively restricted supply. In many parts of the country rents are higher than they have ever been leading to significant affordability issues and a time of uncertainty for many. Coupled with this there have been considerable changes to the regulatory framework over the last number of years aimed at addressing these issues. The changes include the introduction of Rent Pressures Zones, rent certainty measures, changes to our security of tenure protections, along with many other measures.

The RTB's remit has also been extended since our last plan to include Approved Housing Bodies (not for profit housing associations). This is a significant change and an important one in terms of recognising a single residential rental sector and not distinguishing between different types of rental accommodation.

We achieved a lot during the period of our last strategic plan. We significantly reduced dispute processing times; we introduced new methods for resolving disputes, including by telephone mediation; and we significantly improved our registration and enforcement services. Our new strategic plan is intended to help improve services further and also to expand our role and these services. The rental sector has grown significantly since our last plan, there are more people renting, with over 340,000 tenancies registered with the RTB at the end of 2017 and tenancies are also lasting longer. It is likely that this growth will continue and that renting will no longer be a transitional tenure that a small percentage of the population live in. Therefore, the role of the RTB is more important than ever, but we recognise we need to change with the sector.

This strategic plan is intended to support and complement *Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* and the *Strategy for the Rental Sector* published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The Rental Strategy is a significant plan for the rental market with short, medium and long term actions which chart a pathway towards a more sustainable sector. It is the first dedicated strategy we have had for the sector since the Commission on the Rental Sector published its report in 2000 and is an important driver of our work over the next five years. The RTB will play a critical role in supporting the delivery of the vision for the sector reflected in the rental strategy.

**A significant programme of change has also been agreed with the Minister and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government since the publication of the Strategy for the Rental Sector. One of the most important changes will be the expansion of the role of the RTB to no longer just provide dispute resolution services, but to also have a new regulatory enforcement role where the law is not adhered to. This means the RTB will now be able to proactively investigate potential breaches, with the power to apply sanctions if breaches are found. This will establish the RTB as an effective regulator for the market as a whole.**

A two year change management plan which is being developed to underpin this and other changes the RTB will make over the next 2 years, to ensure the necessary structures and resources are in place for implementation. While we will be taking on a new regulatory enforcement role, we will also be putting as much emphasis into supporting landlords and tenants by an increased focus on education and awareness. The regulatory framework is complicated and has changed a lot, and supporting landlords and tenants through this change will be a central pillar of the work of the RTB.

## For 2018 – 2022 our strategic priorities are to:

- ? Focus on the customer.
- ? Deepen our understanding of the sector.
- ? Empower stakeholders with information.
- ? Be an effective regulator for the market.
- ? Ensure we have the organisational supports in place to deliver for the sector.

Other areas of priority for the next five years include continuing to deliver and improve our core services for our customers, which include landlords, tenants and those working in the sector, and to support this, the RTB will be investing over €5 million in our I.T. infrastructure. This will allow us to improve our services dramatically, but also allow for smarter regulation and better data. We will also focus using this data and research to better understand the market and inform policy for the sector.

Of course the plan also reflects the greater expectations for accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to the public need which are shared by all public bodies and central to the government's public sector reform agenda. Over the period of this plan we will continue to invest in our people and systems of governance to ensure the most effective delivery of our mandate and the best value for money in what we do.

We look forward to working together with our Board members, staff, and all of our stakeholders as we deliver this ambitious plan. We recognise that we all have a shared goal in wanting a well-functioning rental sector, and acknowledge that we need the support of tenants, landlords and all stakeholders to create one.

Finally, we want to reaffirm our strong commitment, belief and confidence in what we were created to do, which is to support the development of a well- functioning rental sector. Ireland is already unique in having the RTB as a public body dedicated to the rental sector, and we will spend the next five years as a Board and an Executive team building on this strength.



**Catriona Walsh**  
Chairperson



**Rosalind Carroll**  
Director



# Our Vision, Mission and Values



# Our Stakeholders

With nearly 30% of the population renting in a sector which is not just growing but is also changing shape, nearly everyone is affected by the rental sector directly or indirectly.

The RTB operates amongst a wide variety of stakeholders, the number of which continues to grow as the remit of the organisation expands. For example in 2016, the remit of the RTB expanded to include the Approved Housing Body sector.

We have listened to our stakeholders and have developed our strategic priorities to respond to the issues raised which include improving our IT system and website, maintaining our dispute processing times, strengthening our enforcement services, and ensuring that we are resourced to respond effectively to increased demand.

We are committed to effective and meaningful engagement with our stakeholders to improve our understanding of their priorities and opinions and will use this knowledge to shape our services.



# Our Strategic Priorities 2018 - 2022

## PRIORITY - CUSTOMER FOCUS

We will prioritise our customers and potential customers and improve their interaction with us by enhancing our technology and expanding our communications channels.

## PRIORITY - INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

We will expand our provision of information to tenants, landlords, people working in the sector and the wider public to improve understanding of the sector and create a culture of knowledge around rights and responsibilities in the rental sector.

### PRIORITY - IMPROVED REGULATION

We will expand our regulatory services to allow for more proactive regulation of the rental sector.

### PRIORITY - DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND PREVENTION

The RTB will continue to provide its key dispute resolution services and will strengthen and develop its role in the prevention and resolution of tenancy disputes.

### PRIORITY - DATA AND RESEARCH

We will use data and research to promote a better understanding of the rental sector, monitor trends, assess their impacts, and influence policy and outcomes.

### PRIORITY - ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORTS

We will invest in our people and structures, realign our organisation, and support the changes required of us to deliver on our enhanced role in the sector.

# Strategic Priorities 2018 - 2022

## Priority - Customer Focus

We will prioritise our customers and potential customers and improve their interaction with us by enhancing our technology and expanding our communications channels.

The RTB will maintain a customer-focused approach to all its services. We will reach out to stakeholders and customers to gain a better understanding of their needs. We will work to improve and develop our customer interfaces through Information Technology and the service we deliver.

### Key Actions

- ⌚ Develop our IT systems and deliver a new Tenancy Management System (TMS2) which will allow for a much more user friendly and effective service and drive online interaction.
- ⌚ Conduct regular customer surveys and stakeholder feedback and use the results to improve operations and ensure that customers receive good quality services.
- ⌚ Develop a social media platform to allow for better communication with our customers and potential customers and provide useful information to our stakeholders to complement our existing media platforms.
- ⌚ Ensure that our newer stakeholders, Approved Housing Bodies, are considered in terms of customer experience and that we provide an integrated service to all.

### Planned Outcomes

Customers will have a consistent and user friendly experience resulting in increased online engagement with the RTB. Customers and potential customers will be provided with quality and timely information, which will ultimately improve compliance with the regulatory framework.

## Priority - Information and Education

We will expand our provision of information to tenants, landlords, people working in the sector and the wider public to improve understanding of the sector and create a culture of knowledge around rights and responsibilities in the rental sector.

The RTB will continue to provide high-quality services, supporting the rental sector as a whole. A key focus of the RTB's role outlined in both *Rebuilding Ireland* and the Government's *Strategy for the Rental Sector* is to expand our provision of information to tenants and landlords, helping them to understand their rights and responsibilities thereby increasing compliance and reducing potential disputes.

### Key Actions

- ⌚ Increase the level of awareness of the RTB and its services.
- ⌚ Provide high quality, clear and accessible information to landlords, tenants and others across all communication channels.
- ⌚ Continue to develop the RTB One Stop Shop to improve access to information for tenants and landlords.
- ⌚ Introduce a voluntary landlord accreditation scheme to support landlords in accessing best practice and promoting a comprehensive understanding of the statutory rights and responsibilities of both groups.
- ⌚ Work in collaboration with Local Authorities to increase the level of awareness of the minimum standards required for rental accommodation.
- ⌚ Work together with other statutory agencies to inform and educate tenants, landlords, and other stakeholders about the information and support available from organisations involved in the rental sector.

### Planned Outcomes

Tenants, landlords, and other stakeholders will be empowered by knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, leading to better practice in the sector.



# Strategic Priorities 2018 - 2022

## Priority - Improved Regulation

We will expand our regulatory services to allow for more proactive regulation of the rental sector.

The RTB will enhance its regulatory role in the market to support a well-functioning residential rental sector. We regulate the market by ensuring all landlords are registered with us. Our evolving regulatory role will encompass not only non-compliance with registration but will allow us to regulate and directly enforce broader non-compliance with the regulatory framework for the sector. This will initially have a specific focus on the Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs). The development and implementation of this regulatory responsibility will be underpinned by a two year change management plan to ensure the RTB has the appropriate powers and resources to deliver on the range of measures planned.

### Key Actions

- ♀ Establish a new regulatory and enforcement framework to support the enhanced regulatory role of the RTB.
- ♀ Act to protect the interests of tenants and landlords effectively and efficiently.
- ♀ Actively pursue non-compliance in Rent Pressure Zones rather than wait for disputes to be referred to us.
- ♀ Continue to prioritise compliance with registration requirements, and improve information sharing to optimise this.
- ♀ Continue to advocate for a simplified and streamlined Residential Tenancies Act.
- ♀ Increase compliance across regulatory functions.
- ♀ Collaborate with other state bodies to share information and knowledge which will improve the effective regulation of the sector.

### Planned Outcomes

The RTB will be a trusted, independent voice in the sector known for proactively protecting the rights of tenants and landlords and enforcing them when necessary. The rental sector will be appropriately regulated, compliance will be improved, and rents will be moderated in the RPZs.



## Priority - Dispute Resolution and Prevention

The RTB will continue to provide its key dispute resolution services and will strengthen and develop its role in the prevention and resolution of tenancy disputes.

The RTB has replaced the Courts for the vast majority of landlord and tenant disputes in the residential sector and will continue its critical quasi-judicial role in this regard. We will develop a more holistic approach to dispute resolution and prevent disputes arising through early RTB intervention, education & awareness, and more supports for tenants, landlords, and other stakeholders. We will also focus on strengthening our enforcement role in respect of Determination Orders when they are not adhered to, enforcing such Orders in a transparent and fair manner.

We will work to introduce a new Deposit Protection Scheme to help protect deposits in the event of a dispute.

### Key Actions

- ♀ Provide a wide range of professional, accessible, high quality, and speedy dispute resolution services.
- ♀ Maintain dispute resolution processing times to support a timely, effective, and quality service.
- ♀ Develop a holistic approach to dispute prevention focused on early interaction with the customer.
- ♀ Prioritise enforcement in the Courts where there has been non-compliance with Determination Orders. This will be done in a fair and transparent way that is reflective of our regulatory role in the residential tenancy sector.
- ♀ Develop and implement a deposit protection scheme to handle tenants' deposits and efficiently resolve disputes which arise so that money is returned quickly.

### Planned Outcomes

Disputes will be resolved in an efficient and responsive manner. More tenants and landlords will be empowered through knowledge and information to resolve disputes informally. A Deposit Protection Scheme will be in place.



# Strategic Priorities 2018 - 2022

## Priority - Data and Research

We will use data and research to promote a better understanding of the rental sector, monitor trends, assess their impacts and influence policy and outcomes.

The RTB is in a unique position to increase understanding of the rental sector, identify trends, and fill knowledge gaps where they exist. A key element in supporting and developing a well-functioning rental market is the availability of reliable data, research and evidence. We will expand our research activity and gather data about the sector to influence policy and outcomes.

### Key Actions

- ⌚ Provide evidence based research to monitor, inform and advise on the sector.  
We will deliver a research programme, conduct annual surveys, and host an annual conference to disseminate information on the sector.
  
- ⌚ Continue to develop and improve our systems to ensure that accurate and appropriate data is captured and managed by the most efficient means.
  
- ⌚ Continue to develop the *RTB Quarterly Rent Index* to maintain its reputation as the most accurate and authoritative rental report and to expand it to include a broader range of data on the sector as a whole.

### Planned Outcomes

Using our data and through the delivery of high quality research, the RTB will be seen as the authoritative, independent and trusted voice on the rental sector in Ireland.

## Priority - Organisational Supports

We will invest in our people and structures, realign our organisation, and support the changes required of us to deliver on our enhanced role in the sector.

The successful realisation of this strategic plan and the expected role of RTB are reliant on our capacity as an organisation. We will deliver new services once sufficient and appropriate resources are in place. We will continue to develop structures and systems to efficiently deliver our existing work and to implement innovative new changes.

### Key Actions

- ♀ Value and recognise the contribution of our staff and invest in their development.
- ♀ Work with outsourced partners to deliver good quality and value-for-money services.
- ♀ Continually strive to lead our organisation through good governance and undertake reviews of our governance arrangements to ensure adherence to best practice.
- ♀ Work in partnership with the *Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government* on the development and implementation of a two-year change management plan which will detail how and when the RTB's new enhanced role and functions will be delivered.
- ♀ Ensure that sufficient and appropriate financial and human resources are in place to deliver services. We will deliver new services once the requisite resources are in place.
- ♀ Implement an annual registration fee to provide better data and a stronger funding model for the RTB.
- ♀ Ensure effective IT systems to support the RTB business and service provision.
- ♀ Ensure sound financial management practices and a value for money approach.

### Planned Outcomes

Our organisational capacity and skills will be appropriate to enable us to fulfil the priorities of the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan.



# Governance and Oversight

The RTB is committed to the highest standards of governance, consistent with our position as a public body and our important mandate.

The RTB will continue to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Our Board of Directors is appointed by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government. The Board is supported in its work by the Audit & Risk Committee and a number of other Committees to advise the Board on specialised matters. Our financial statements are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Director of the RTB reports to the Board on the execution of our Strategy and on how we manage risk, finances, and the general operation of the RTB. The Director works closely with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on matters of Government policy and public interest.

The team at the RTB is organised into seven directorates each led by an Assistant Director who is charged with the delivery of this Strategic Plan.

Our work is guided by legislation and we conduct all of our operations in compliance with the legislation for our sector and with the wider legislative framework which ensures equality of treatment for all people who use our services and the protection of our employees and others with whom we do business.

# Human Rights and Equality

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act was enacted in 2014.

Section 42 of the Act places a responsibility on all public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of its staff and customers.

In order to ensure that equality and human rights are considered in the day to day operations of all the business functions of the Residential Tenancies Board, we will complete a full assessment and will report fully in our annual report.

# How we will know we have been effective

The Director of the RTB reports to the Board on the delivery of our Strategy.

There are several factors contributing to the plan's success which we will carefully manage:

- ⌚ Expansion of the RTB's role and new services.
- ⌚ Funding and resourcing to fulfil our expanded role.
- ⌚ Attracting and retaining staff with knowledge and competency in the sector.
- ⌚ Understanding of our role amongst the media and general public.
- ⌚ Impact of changes in government policy for the residential rental sector.

We will know we have been effective during the timeframe of the Strategic Plan if:

- ⌚ Our customers say we have been effective.
- ⌚ Tenants, landlords, Approved Housing Bodies, and others are more fully aware of their rights, responsibilities, and the structures and supports available through the RTB.
- ⌚ We are resolving tenancy disputes in an efficient and timely manner.
- ⌚ Our dispute prevention activities are preventing tenancy disputes from escalating to the formal resolution processes.
- ⌚ Compliance with regulatory requirements in the rental sector has improved.

We will report publicly on our performance and achievements in our annual report.

By being an effective regulator, over the long term, we expect our work to have contributed to a well-functioning rental sector to the benefit of tenants, landlords, Approved Housing Bodies, the wider economy and society as a whole.



# Strategic Plan

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### This Residential Tenancies Board Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022

sets out how we will continue to support the development of a well-functioning rental housing sector in Ireland that is fair, accessible and beneficial for all.

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## Notes



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