

	FIRST - TIER TRIBUNAL PROPERTY CHAMBER (RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY)
Case Reference	MAN/30UH/MNR/2026/0154
Property	31 St James Court, Heysham, Lancashire, LA3 2BQ
Tenant	Nicola Maguire
Tenant's Representative	n/a
Landlord	Places for People Homes Ltd
Landlord's Address	2 Crescent Office Park, Clarks Way, Bath, BA2 2AF
Landlord's Representative	Touchstone CPS
Date of Application	11 March 2026
Type of Application	Determination of an Open-Market Rent sections 13 & 14 of the Housing Act 1988
Tribunal Members	Tribunal Judge Steer & Ms J Bissett FRICS
Date of Decision	10 September 2026
Rent Determined	£775.00 per calendar month
Date the new rent takes effect	1 April 2026

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

1. On 3 February 2026, the Landlord served a notice under Section 13(2) (as amended) of the Housing Act 1988 (“Act”) which proposed a new rent of £825.00 per calendar month (pcm) in place of the existing rent of £725.00 pcm to take effect from 1 April 2026 (“Notice”).
2. On 11 March 2026, under Section 13(4)(a) of the Housing Act 1988, the Tenant referred the Landlord’s notice proposing a new rent to the Tribunal for determination of a market rent (“Application”).
3. The tenancy commenced on 13 June 2019. The rental period is monthly.

Validity of Notice – Section 13B of the Housing Act 1988

4. In the Application, the Tenant has indicated that they consider the Notice to be invalid due to reasons detailed in the Tenant’s letter supporting the Application (“Letter”). The Letter makes a number of comments which are summarised at paragraph 12 below. Those relevant to the validity of the Notice appear to relate to the Tenant’s allegation that the Landlord is a registered Social Housing Provider who is only permitted to increase the rent linked to CPI and/or any associated Social Housing rent cap. For the reasons detailed at paragraph 14(a) below, the Tribunal accepts that the Landlord is a Registered Social Landlord, however, the Property forms part of an investment portfolio which is not grant funded and which forms part of the Landlord’s privately rented portfolio. Consequently, the Tribunal does not consider the Notice to be invalid on this basis and has proceeded to determine the Market Rent.

Allocation of Repairs between Landlord and Tenant.

5. As per tenancy agreement and section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Services Charges or furniture provided by Landlord (other than carpets and curtain and white goods specified below) and the costs relating to the same.

6. The Tenant confirms in the Application that the front lawn is mowed once every 8 weeks by the Landlord and that these costs are not charged separately by the Landlord. The Tribunal assumes these costs are included in the rent. The Property which was let to the Tenant on an unfurnished basis.

Liability for Council Tax

7. The Tenant is responsible for the payment of Council Tax in respect of the Property. The rent determined is exclusive of Council Tax.

Any other terms of the tenancy taken into consideration in determining the rent.

8. None.

Hearing

9. The Landlord did not request an inspection of the Property or an oral hearing. In the Application, the Tenant did not request an inspection of the Property but did request an oral hearing. A hearing was held on 10 September 2026 at 10am by video platform. The Tenant did not attend the hearing. A representative from the Landlord (Ms Freeman) and the Landlord's managing agent (Mr Graustuck) attended the hearing. The Tribunal has considered this case on the basis of an oral hearing, the papers provided by the parties and its own knowledge and specialist expertise.

The Property

10. The Property is a 2-storey semi-detached house, built in the latter of the 20th century, offering the following accommodation:

Internal: One kitchen, one reception room, two bedrooms, one bathroom.

External: Small rear garden.

In oral submissions, Ms Freeman confirmed that the Property was in a fair condition, with a new bathroom installed last year and new front doors and windows the year before.

The Property is situated in Heysham, Lancaster, close to local amenities and services. Lancaster City Centre is approximately 5 miles to the east, with Morecambe Town Centre approximately 2 miles to the north-east.

Evidence

11. The parties completed the relevant Rents 1 (Tenant) and Rents 1A (Landlord).

The Tenant

12. The Tenant made the following comments relevant to the determination of a market rent for the Property in the Application and supporting evidence:
 - (a) That the market rent payable should be between £600-£650 pcm and that the rent increase in the Notice is unmanageable.
 - (b) That the Landlord is a 'social landlord' and that this will have an impact on the market rent.
 - (c) The Tenant suggests that comparable properties provided by the Landlord are considerably larger than the Property and that the properties on the estate are all priced differently.
 - (d) That the service offered by the Landlord with regards to the management of the Property and the quality of the upgrades in the Property are poor. In particular, although the Tenant acknowledges in her written submissions that replacement bathrooms have been installed, she contends that the quality of the fixtures and fittings is "*poor*" and "*clearly the cheapest option available*" claiming that "*many had to call back for it to be fixed or replaced.*"
13. The Tenant did not provide comparable rental evidence.

The Landlord

14. The Landlord made the following comments relevant to the determination of a market rent for the Property in their Rents (1A) form which includes a 'Best Practice Guide' and in their oral submissions at the hearing:
 - (a) That the tenancy of the subject Property is a privately rented tenancy agreement. It was explained that although the Landlord is a registered social landlord, the Property is part of an investment portfolio which is not grant funded. Consequently, it forms part of the Landlord's privately rented portfolio. The Tribunal accepted this position having reviewed a letter from Ms Freeman (Head of Operations) at the Landlord company to the Tenant dated 7 April 2026 and hearing oral submissions from Ms Freeman at the hearing.
 - (b) The Landlord confirmed in oral submissions that the Property forms part of the Landlord's portfolio which is subject to an annual valuation by Savills and that the valuation for the Property by Savills this year was £875 pcm.
 - (c) The Landlord also provided a '2 bed price guide' ("Guide") identifying 7 comparable properties within 0.5 miles of the Property containing evidence of rents achieved ranging from between £795 pcm to £895 pcm. Although some of this evidence was from 2024, the Tribunal considers

this evidence helpful in establishing the market level of rent for the Property.

- (d) The Landlord confirmed in oral submissions at the hearing that whilst the rent increase in the Notice proposes an increased rent of £825 pcm, that they routinely engage with tenants who raise concerns regarding proposed rent increases and, following discussions with the Tenant after service of the Notice, did agree to reduce the proposed new rent to £775 pcm.

Determination and Valuation

15. Under section 14(1) of the Housing Act 1988 (as amended), the Tribunal is required to determine the rent at which the Property might reasonably be expected to let in the open market by a willing Landlord at the beginning of the new period specified in the Landlord's notice. Relevant Tenant improvements or failure of the Tenant to comply with the terms of the tenancy are to be disregarded. Historic issues relating to the tenancy or the personal circumstances of the Landlord are not taken into account. The personal circumstances of the Tenant are only considered if an application for hardship has been made.
16. Relying on its own expertise and general knowledge of rental values in the area, the rental evidence provided by the Landlord, the oral submissions made by the Landlord at the hearing and the written evidence provided by the Tenant, the Tribunal considers that the market rent of the subject Property modernised and in good order would be in the order of £825.00 pcm. This is the rent we would expect the Property to let for in the open market if it was in the same general condition as the comparable properties. The Tribunal placed the greatest weight on the final two comparable properties in the Guide, which are both properties in St James Court of comparable sizes, when deciding the Market Rent. The Tribunal also took into account the discussions between the parties following the service of the Notice. Although the Tenant was not present at the hearing to give oral evidence on this issue, she did refer to the reduction of £50 pcm offered by the Landlord following service of the Notice in her written submissions.
17. With regards to adjustments to the market rent, the Tribunal has taken into account the following:
 - (a) The standard of the upgrades to the Property as detailed at paragraph 12(d) above when assessing the condition of the Property relative to the comparable properties provided by the Landlord. In addition, the Tribunal considered that the Landlord confirmed in oral submissions at the hearing that the condition of the Property was 'fair'.

- (b) The size of the second bedroom relative to comparable properties. The Tribunal notes from the dimensions provided by the Tenant that the second bedroom measures approximately 8.5 sqm. Whilst this space is capable of accommodating a single occupant, the room falls below the 11.5 sqm generally associated with a double bedroom under the Nationally Described Space Standards and therefore provides less utility than would ordinarily be expected in a typical two bedroomed property.

The full valuation is shown below:

Starting Rent		<u>£825.00 pcm</u>
<u>Less</u>		
a) Items given under a) above	£ 25.00	
b) Items given under b) above	£ 25.00	<u>£ 775.00 pcm</u>
Open-Market Rent		£ 775.00 pcm

Undue hardship

18. The new rent takes effect from the date specified in the Landlord's notice unless that would cause undue hardship to the Tenant. In cases of undue hardship, the Tribunal has a discretion to fix a later starting date up to the date of its decision.
19. Although the Tenant left the 'section 13 – Financial hardship' section blank in the Application, she did confirm in the supporting evidence that the rent increase is unmanageable and they (presumably the Landlord) "*have caused a lot of financial difficulty amongst residents.*" The Tribunal received no further information or evidence from the Tenant to support her personal financial hardship. The Tribunal therefore is unable to consider that the increase in rent would cause the Tenant undue financial hardship and accordingly does not fix a later starting date.

Decision

20. Therefore, the Tribunal determines the market rent at £775.00 pcm with effect from 1 April 2026, being the date specified in the Notice.

APPEAL PROVISIONS

If either party is dissatisfied with this decision, they may apply for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) on any point of law arising from this Decision. Prior to making such an appeal, an application must be made, in writing, to this Tribunal for permission to appeal. Any such application must be made within 28 days after the issue of this statement of reasons (regulation 52 (2) of The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013) stating the grounds upon which it is intended to rely in the appeal.