

# The Conwy Landlord



October 2019



**September Forum Report  
Renting Homes (Wales) 2016  
Landlord Questionnaire.**



**Sir Conwy, yr amgylchedd iawn i helpu pobl i helpu eu hunain**

**Conwy County, the right environment to help people help themselves**

## Dear Conwy Landlord

Welcome to the first Conwy Landlord Newsletter. The Newsletter will be compiled by the Housing Strategy team on behalf of all the parts of the Council that touch on Landlord's business.

Landlords have faced many regulatory changes over the last few years. Sometimes it is hard to keep up. The aim of this newsletter is to give you up to date information and items of interest. We all want to see successful tenancies. We want to tell you about how we can support your business and what services are available to back you up as a landlord.

This is a bumper edition as we have included reports of the last two Landlord Forums.

Subscribe to our Newsletter [here](#)

If you would like to receive this newsletter in a different format, please contact us.

Tel: 01492 576274; email [Housingstrategy@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:Housingstrategy@conwy.gov.uk)

**Note: New Postal address** PO Box 1, Conwy, LL30 9GN

### We want to know more



To help improve our services, we want know more about landlords operating in Conwy. In particular we want to find out how we can help you say 'yes' to vulnerable tenants or households on low incomes. We suggest ways in which we can work together to everyone's benefit. All responses will be anonymous, but you can separately opt in to receive newsletters and forum invitations.

Click here to complete the [Questionnaire](#). Thank you for your time.

Or contact us for a paper version or if you have any questions.

Please respond by **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November**.

### Forum focus

3 times a year Conwy holds a forum for landlords.

You can expect short talks on a range of topics; local businesses offering products and services for landlords; and team reps from the Council who can provide information and answer your questions.

### The next Landlord forum

**When:** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 5.30 pm (tea and Coffee from 5.00pm)

**Where:** at the Council offices in Bodlondeb, Conwy. LL32 9DU

**Contact us** to secure your place. Tel: 01492 576274 or email

[Housingstrategy@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:Housingstrategy@conwy.gov.uk)

## September Forum Report

The September forum was held in the new Council Offices in Colwyn Bay,

On this occasion we extended the usual meeting style into a Road Show Afternoon. We had more businesses and services than usual and held seminars on 'Applying for Alternative Payment arrangements' from the DWP ; The Key to property Investment for landlords, Henry Davies RLA trainer; Energy Efficiency for Landlords from Steve Woosey, North Wales Energy Advice Centre and about the training scheme for young Conwy tenants 'Renting Ready' from Faye Willet, Conwy Housing Solutions.

Comments from attenders were very positive. Everyone responding to our survey said they would recommend the forum to other landlords.

**'I just wanted to thank you for the arrangements for the Landlord forum. The evening was excellent and I learnt a great deal. This was very valuable to me as a landlord and I hope to attend future events'.**  
GP landlord.

## Law Update

Douglas Haig Director of the [Residential Landlords Association](#) gave an update in changes, and proposed changes to the law.

## Reforming repossession rules

The Welsh Government has just consulted on plans to change repossession procedure where the tenant has not broken the terms of the tenancy agreement. The Welsh Government propose that the notice period is increased to 6 months, and notice cannot be served in the first 6 months of a tenancy. This would mean landlords could not give a 2 month notice 's21 notice' as is common now. The changes would be written into the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.

We shall provide any updates at the January Forum.

## Permitted fees.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019, [the Renting Homes \(Fees\) \(Wales\) Act 2019](#) came into effect. Landlords and Agents will only be able to charge fees that are permitted.

## What can you charge?

- Tenants cannot be charged any fees in the PRS, except for 'Permitted payments' which are:
  - Rent
  - Security Deposit (power to limit amount included no limit for now)
  - Payments in Default
  - Holding Deposit
  - Council Tax
  - Utilities
  - Broadband services
  - Green deal payments

## The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

Alex Weaver, Manager, [HAWS](#)

The Act was passed in 2016, but is yet to come into force. Ministers can though make regulations under the act resulting in the Fees provision (see above). The act makes a radical departure from current housing law and only applies in Wales.

The new act will impact on every tenancy. If you are not up to speed with it, please read on.

The Act will introduce the need for every tenancy to have a written tenancy agreement. This will apply to tenancies that have been in existence for many years. The new tenancy agreements will be referred to as contracts, and tenants will be 'contract-holders'.

There will be a reduction in the types of tenancy that can be created. Those in the private sector will be 'standard' tenancies. Although the Welsh Government (WG) will draft a model contract, landlords will be able to use their own if they include all the elements the WG require. The contract must include 'fundamental' terms and may include discretionary 'supplementary' terms. Parties can also agree additional terms.

The Act introduces new 'Fitness for Human Habitation' standards. All properties must meet the standard before a tenancy starts.

Landlords will not be able to evict a contract holder if the only reason for doing so is because the contract holder has made a legitimate complaint about the property.

The Act changes the rules for joint tenants in two important ways. It allows a joint tenants be added or removed from a contract individually. This will enable perpetrators of domestic abuse, for example, to be asked to leave rather than, as is common currently, that the victim must leave, often with children. This will reduce the number of vulnerable households made homeless by domestic abuse.

This is a brief note of the main changes, but the new Act is a detailed piece of legislation. If you want to know more about how the new Act might affect you, more information about this can be found on the Welsh Government, or RLA websites.

## RLA Merges with the NLA



Douglas Haig announced that the Residential Landlords Association and the National Landlords Association will merge to create the NRLA.

Conwy Council has worked well with both organisations and aims to include the landlord's voice at forums.

We recommend that landlords consider membership as the information and support provided can save landlords money and time.

## May Landlord forum Report



## Universal Credit: News for Landlords.

Susan Roberts from the DWP told us about their [on-line newsletter](#) for landlords.

Landlords concerned about unpaid rent can apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) by completing a [UC47 form](#). If agreed, the landlord can be paid directly, or benefits can be paid to tenants more frequently. The table below shows reasons for APAs being agreed. An application can be made from day 1 of a tenancy.

### Tier 1 - Highly likely / probable need for Alternative Payment Arrangements

- Drug / alcohol and / or other addiction problems e.g. gambling
- Learning difficulties including problems with literacy and/or numeracy
- Severe / multiple debt problems
- Homeless
- Domestic violence / abuse
- Mental Health Condition
- Currently in rent arrears / threat of eviction / repossession
- Claimant is young: either a 16/17 year old and / or a Care leaver
- Families with multiple and complex needs

### Tier 2 - Less likely / possible need for Alternative Payment Arrangements

- Third party deductions in place (e.g. for fines, utility arrears etc.)
- Claimant is a refugee / asylum seeker
- History of rent arrears
- Previously homeless and/or in temporary or supported accommodation
- Other disability (e.g. physical disability, sensory impairment etc.)
- Claimant has just left prison
- Claimant has just left hospital
- Recently bereaved
- Language skills (e.g. English not spoken as the 'first language')
- Ex Service personnel
- NEETs - Not in Education, Employment or Training

Susan explained [explicit consent](#) must be obtained from tenants before the DWP can talk to landlords.

The DWP expects all tenants to be moved onto UC by 2023.

Citizens Advice now have a contract to provide [support](#) for UC applicants.

Although it's fair to say landlords are still cautious about letting to UC claimants, after the presentation, a number of Conwy Landlords said they would be more confident to let to UC claimants now.

### Finding homes for families.

More families with children are looking for private lets, but parents can find it hard to find properties. We have a number of families who urgently need homes now. If you have a property that would be suitable for families with children, contact our property access team who are happy to put you in touch with them. In some circumstances we can help with some pre tenancy fees and referencing.

Call Lynsey or Anna on 01492 576264

## Buy with Confidence

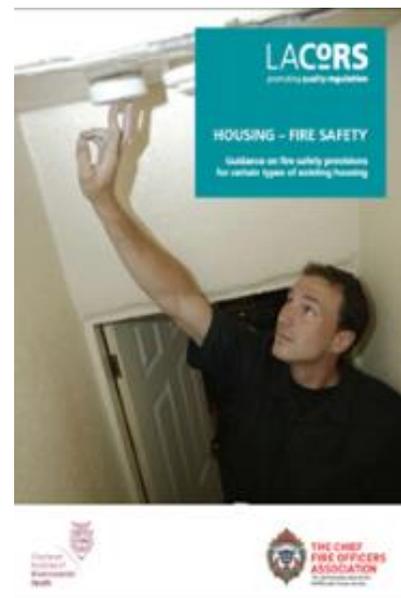


Tobi Smith from Conwy County Borough Council's Trading Standards team introduced '[Buy With Confidence](#)'. If you are looking for a reliable tradesman, try here first. This is the only recommendation scheme backed by Trading Standards. Only traders meeting strict standards can go on the list. The scheme is administered by Anglesey County Council in North Wales, and new businesses are due to be added for Conwy soon.

<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Resident/Trading-Standards.aspx>

## Fire Safety

The fire service business education advisor, Alastair Horton, directed all Landlords to the [Government Guidance](#) for private landlords.



In a very popular talk, Alastair stressed the need to check fire doors.



A successful fire door

Over the years, he has seen several that are no longer fit for purpose, or don't meet the kite mark standard. The photograph above is one of Alastair's, and shows both sides of a fire door, that met the standard, after a fire.

On a more sobering note, Alastair told the forum about a fire in a Conwy property. If the tenants had been in, they most likely would have died. The landlord would have been liable. Their bedroom was an 'inner room' with no means of escape. The LACORS guidance details how to avoid this.

The fire and rescue service are happy to advise landlords about making their properties safe.

Contact Alastair and the safety team  
Tel 01745 352772  
Mobile: 07787 578 541

Denbighshire County Safety Office  
Rhyl Coast Road, Rhyl, LL18 3PL  
E-mail: Alastair.Horton@nwales-fireservice.org.uk



A Conwy query has resulted in the GOV.UK website being corrected.

The experienced landlady called us to check about giving s21 notice to tenants if the Council had served an improvement notice or emergency remedial action notice in last 6 months. She was confident the law in Wales was different to England, and that she was still entitled to do so. However the GOV.UK webpage on Evicting Tenants gave the same guidance for both England and Wales. Once the Renting Homes Act 2016 comes into effect, there will be restrictions for Welsh landlords, but not yet.

Soon after her pointing this error out, the Website was corrected. It is worth checking carefully the differences between England and Wales, and asking if you are not sure.

## Operation Bravo

Trading standards officers are visiting all Estate Agents in Conwy to check they are registered with a Redress Scheme. With the exercise in its final stages we can say that all agents so far are meeting the requirement to be members of a redress scheme. Landlords can be confident that agents are compliant.

There are 2 approved schemes, The [Property Ombudsman](#) and the [Property Redress Scheme](#). If you cannot resolve a complaint with your agent, they will assist.



## HAWS

HAWS is a letting agency, The word HAWS means easy in Welsh, and the HAWS team want to make the business of letting as easy as possible for their client landlords.

HAWS provides a full range of letting services, and their fees are all inclusive, so no unexpected additional costs.

HAWS have a 30 person strong, fully qualified and insured maintenance team that they can call on 24 hours a day. As well as offering repairs as part of a management package, the team can provide free quotes for property improvements. They offer the full range of household maintenance trades.



## Rent Smart Wales

More than 4500 Conwy landlords letting 9300 properties are now registered with [Rent Smart Wales](#).

The RSW website is hosting more information for landlords as time goes by, if you have not visited the site recently, do check out the information pages.

This year 7 Conwy landlords have been fined for not being registered or licenced.



Take a look at their services on their [webpage](#), and if you can't find a service that meets your needs, they will be happy to tailor a bespoke service for you.



## Tenant's Page

Most landlords appreciate that from time to time their tenants may need some information, assistance or opinions to share.

Here are a few ideas you can share with your tenants.



### Tenant Pulse

[Tenant Pulse](#) sets out to become the voice of tenants in Wales. It has been created by TPAS Cymru, and is supported by the Welsh Government. It aims to find out what matters most to tenants through regular surveys with prize draws to reward participants.

Click [here](#) to see a video about Tenant Pulse.

### Help for Conwy Tenants

The Council and its partners offer advice and support for people whose tenancy is at risk. Support is very flexible and designed to meet the need of the tenant. It could be help with claiming benefits, budgeting, sorting out debts, finding help for all sorts of issues from bereavement to health problems; home adaptations to energy efficiency advice or installations.

If the tenancy is at risk of being lost, tenants should contact.

Conwy Housing Solutions on 0300 124 0050

We prevent homelessness in about two thirds of cases threatened with homelessness.

## Did you know?

Some people such as Carers and people living with severe mental impairments, which could include Dementia, stroke, and profound learning disabilities, may be entitled to reductions in [Council Tax](#). The money saved can help with day to day costs and rent. For more information phone 01492 576607 The [Carers outreach](#) service can help.

The service know how caring impacts on your life, and are there to help you.

A carer can be anyone who helps a relative or

neighbour who is dependent on them. Many people don't recognise themselves as carers and lose out on benefits and support.



## Feeling the Cold?



Vulnerable tenants can apply for help through the Nest website for help improving the energy

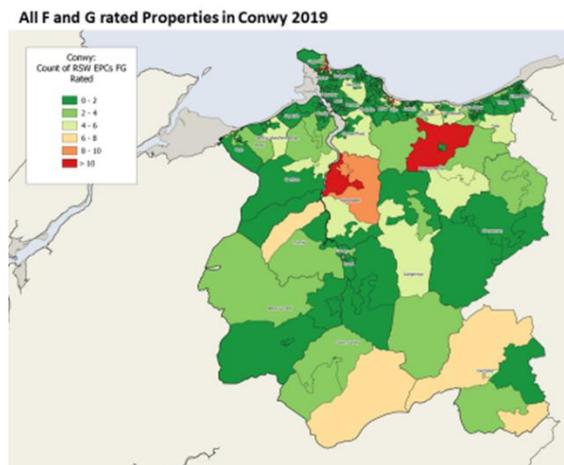
efficiency of their homes. Eligibility for help has been extended recently by ECOflex funding to include households with medical conditions made worse by cold conditions. Older tenants and those on low incomes are eligible. Tenants can contact the Council for advice about their eligibility by emailing [hsg.financial.assistance@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:hsg.financial.assistance@conwy.gov.uk) or by checking the criteria published on the Councils home improvements website. It's called the ECO statement of intent.

[Nest](#) can fund insulation, new boilers and other energy saving work. Tel: 0808 808 2244

## Energy Efficiency

### Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations

Did you know that since April it has been unlawful to let property with F or G Energy Performance Certificates? From April 2020 it will also be unlawful to continue tenancies in F and G rated properties. All let properties will need an EPC certificate. Some properties can be exempted for a range of reasons. Landlords are encouraged to ensure their properties have an EPC and [check the rules](#).



In Conwy we estimate that about 1600 rented properties have an F or G rated EPC certificate. Time is short to bring properties up to standard. Improving the energy efficiency of a property makes heating it much cheaper, making heating more affordable. More affordable heating can help low income households afford their rent and stay healthier. It makes sense from a maintenance point of view too as a warm home reduces problems associated with condensation.

### Free and Impartial Advice

At the September Forum, Steve Woosey from the North Wales Energy Advice Centre (NWEAC) came to advise landlords

NWEAC is a social enterprise that works with local authorities in North Wales to provide advice about any aspect of energy use in the home. Work is also carried out with community organisations and small businesses.

Advice includes energy use reduction through property improvements and behavioural changes, selection of heating and renewable energy options and changing energy supplier. They provide up to date information about available grants and direct referrals to local installers.  
<http://www.nweac.org.uk/>  
Tel: 0800 9549658

Nest can advise landlords too. Their North Wales rep retired recently and we are waiting for news of his successor.



<https://nest.gov.wales/en/>  
Tel: 0808 808 2244

ECOFlex funding to reduce fuel poverty is now extended to more groups. As a landlord you would need to approve any energy efficiency works.

### Home Improvement Loans

The Council can help landlords who need to undertake essential energy efficiency work through the Home Improvement Loan scheme.

Up to £25 000 can be loaned to make homes warm, safe and secure (subject to terms)

[housingstrategy@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:housingstrategy@conwy.gov.uk)

