

# The Conwy Landlord



February 2020

Rent Smart Wales update  
Tenañcies and mental health  
Pensarn additional licensing  
Cuckooing



**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,

Already its February, 2020 is well under way.

We know that 2020 will hold new challenges for landlords. In April, the domestic minimum energy efficiency standards come fully into effect. Landlords letting property with an EPC rating of F or G, which is not exempt, will be in breach and could face fines of up to £5000.

In October, Rent Smart Wales (RSW) has been going for 5 years and the first of those registered will need to re register. Over 4600 Conwy landlords are now registered and let over 10 000 dwellings.

Rent Smart Wales has developed their website to provide more information for landlords.

We aim to keep you informed and up to date. Information for landlords will be available on our webpages, in our newsletter and Forums. The last forum was well attended and everyone gave positive feedback.

### The next landlord Forum: Thursday 21 May 2020 5.30pm

(Tea and Coffee from 5.00pm) Swyddfeydd Cartrefi Conwy, Morfa Gele,  
North Wales Business Park, Cae Eithin, Abergele, LL22 8LJ

The Welsh government has put forward a bill to amend The Renting Homes Act 2016 radically changing the timing and notice period for ending a tenancy where the tenant is not in breach in the contract. We await a new timeframe for it coming into force, probably early 2021. We shall update our web pages to keep you up to date.

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

## Rent Smart Wales update.

After 4 years of operating, RSW report that nearly **10 000** Conwy properties have been registered. Those who registered first will soon be required to re register.

RSW say that legislation has resulted in more landlords having a much better knowledge of their rights and responsibilities; better management standards and more strategic information. We now also have a way of communicating with landlords.

The registration process has enabled Wales to capture information about the type of property being let in each County. Conwy has the highest proportion of HMO\* properties and the least terraced property in Wales.

**TIP** Landlords of properties split into units of flats or rooms must make sure that each individual unit is separately licensed.

Property type	%	LA with most	LA with least
 Terraced	39%	Merthyr Tydfil (69.9%)	Conwy (19.5%)
 Semi detached	20%	Flintshire (37.4%)	Cardiff (10.1%)
 Flat	16%	Cardiff (35%)	Merthyr Tydfil (5.3%)
 HMO*	13%	Conwy (26.1%)	Torfaen (6%)
 Detached	11%	Powys (30%)	Cardiff (3%)

\*House of Multiple Occupancy: Where more than 2 households share a building.

In Wales 54% of property is let through an agent and 46% are self managed. In Conwy, the proportions are flipped. More Conwy landlords manage their property.

Landlords want to know that landlords not complying with RSW are found and fined. Over 90% of landlords have registered, but since 2017, there have been

**574** Fixed Penalty Notices for landlords failure to licence or register.

**90** prosecutions with fines of £92, 320.

**53** licenses revoked

**24** licenses refused.

Landlords living outside Wales are more likely to fall foul, probably as the scheme is less well publicised over the border

The difficulties of getting through on the phone seem to be over, and timescales for licensing have reduced to 1.6 weeks for Landlords and 2.4 weeks for Agents. If you have difficulties let us, or RSW know. They welcome feedback.

If you have not been on their website since you registered/licensed, we recommend you look again. The website has a lot of information that you might find useful. Landlords can opt to be kept informed of news and changes by following the links in their account.



### **RSW Agent Audit**

RSW is now undertaking an audit of commercial agents to provide assurance that licensed agents are keeping to their licence conditions. So far, it shows that a third of agencies must take urgent action to comply with all regulation, a third are good, and the rest have minor faults or are just satisfactory.

RSW provide all the details of the information agents need to complete their audit in advance.

## **Questionnaire results**

At the September Landlord Forum we launched a questionnaire to ask about what incentives might make Landlords more likely to accept benefit claimants.

At the moment 55% of the respondents would not consider Housing Benefit claimants. We asked them whether any of 16 policies or schemes could change their mind. The 3 most popular ideas were.

*'Help to apply to the DWP for housing benefit to be paid directly to you.'*

*While we do not yet have staff dedicated to 1: 1 support for landlords, the good news is that the help around arranging Alternative Payment Arrangements has been improved since UC was introduced. Direct payments can be paid to landlords directly from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of a tenancy, if there is a reason why the tenant may have difficulty paying rent in full on time. Either tenant or landlords can apply for this. There is guidance on the Government Website and the CAB can support in individual cases. Advances of benefit on hardship grounds have been extended. Conwy support teams have good working relations with Job Centre staff.*

*The Council pays 6 months' rent up front – tenant repays the Council.*

*This kind of deal has been trialled where landlords accept tenants who have been homeless and have an additional complicating factor. One case involved a single parent subject to the benefit cap because she had more than 2 children. After the 6 months, the landlord was reassured that the family was reliable. Conwy Housing Solutions are always ready to negotiate for both landlords and tenants.*

## *Council Suggest a good choice of vetted tenants*

*As a result of the buoyant market, households can face many months in temporary accommodation. During this time we get to know them well. We can provide informed references as well as the standard credit checks for landlords who can offer a solution. We can discuss your needs and suggest tenants. There is no obligation. Tenants in temporary accommodation can move very quickly because they are not required to give notice. We can also help find deposit money and rent in advance.*

### **Forum Report – January**

## **Sustaining tenancies where tenants have mental health issues**

**Catherine May, Tyfu Tai**

*"People with mental health problems who rent privately simply aren't getting enough support and timely access to services to maintain their tenancy and live well in their own homes,"* says Catherine May, manager of Tyfu Tai Cymru, part of the Chartered Institute of Housing. Tyfu Tai Cymru identified the topic as a priority for their work.

Together with Tai Pawb (a charity that works towards making housing providers more inclusive) Tyfu Tai gathered the views of support organisations and private landlords on how to better support people living with mental health problems. The report was published last February. ([http://www.cih.org/newsarticle/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/Gap\\_in\\_provision\\_of\\_mental](http://www.cih.org/newsarticle/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/Gap_in_provision_of_mental)

## [health support services proving real barrier to vulnerable people keeping homes](#)

Private landlords often do not feel well equipped to manage a tenancy where someone has a mental health problem.

The report made practical recommendations, all accepted by the Welsh Government, including

- that comprehensive information for landlords and letting agents regarding mental health support should be provided.
- That there needs to be better cooperation between crisis services and landlords, so people do not lose their tenancies should they need a stay in hospital.

Landlords at the forum shared their experiences of tenants with mental health problems.

## **New service launched.**

Local landlord **Peter Williams**, spoke about the work of Caniad and ICAN in Conwy.



People in distress can go to Glan Clwyd or Bangor hospitals between 7pm and 2am and speak with an ICAN trained volunteer.

On 20th January a new drop in opened in Llandudno at the MIND centre, 3 days a week. Tel: 01492 873377. The service can help sustain tenancies by acting as an advocate and helping sort finances.



HEALTHY HOMES  
HEALTHY PEOPLE

CARTREFI IACH  
POBL IACH

### Joanne Seymour from Warm Wales asks...

Is your home affecting your mental or physical health?

Is your home cold or damp?

Do you struggle to heat your property?

Is adequate heating just too expensive?

If you answer YES to any of those questions, Warm Wales can probably help\*. Experienced vetted officers can visit you at home to find solutions to boost your home's energy efficiency and/or find the cheapest utility tariffs for you. Warm Wales officers are a fount of information about home safety e.g. the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning; how to minimise the risk of falls, and how to control mould growth etc. Problems with heating homes are quite common. You are not alone.

The Affordable Warmth project assists with the installation of heating systems and insulation for people who need it most - those in the least efficient homes or which have only electric heating, or never had central heating before.

Warm Wales works with Gas or Electricity companies and local authorities to ensure money the utility companies must put aside to help improve home energy efficiency finds the right people.

Contact the Warm Wales North Wales office on 01352 711751 or via the website: <http://www.warmwales.org.uk/>

\*subject to funding

## Cuckooing – North Wales Police.

Sgt, Bethan Jones and her community safety colleagues attended the forum.

The police want to raise awareness of 'Cuckooing'. This is where a vulnerable person's home is taken over by criminals. The tenant victims can be kept as a virtual prisoner. Often the tenant is groomed and 'befriended'. The County Lines Drug network has resulted in several cases of this, but it can happen in a range of scenarios.

### What to look for

- It usually takes place in a multi-occupancy or social housing property
- There may be an increase in the number of comings and goings, including people you haven't seen before
- There might be new vehicles outside the property
- An increase in anti-social behaviour in and around the property
- Unknown people in possession of keys to the property

### Please report it!

**1**  
**101**  
Need to report a new incident but it's not an emergency?  
**PHONE 101.**  
If you cannot get through to 101 then use the webchat, via the North Wales Police website.

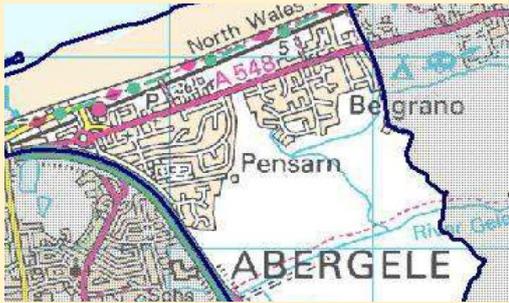
**2**  
**CHAT ONLINE**  
Have a question? Chat online. Not for emergency use.  
**USE YOUR SMARTPHONE, TABLET OR COMPUTER TO CHAT ONLINE.**

**3**  
**999**  
Is there a danger to life? Is a crime in progress? Is Police attendance required immediately?  
**PHONE 999.**

101 and webchat matters will be slowtime enquiries. All matters will be looked into and it is **NOT** a waste of time. If we don't know about an incident, we can't do anything about it.

## HMO Licensing

**NOTE** The Additional HMO licensing scheme in **Pensarn** has been extended for a further 5 years from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020



HMO properties can be subject to separate licensing conditions over and above the RSW legislation. Some types must be licensed wherever they are, and in Conwy, we have 3 areas that require additional HMOs to be licenced: Pensarn, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. If you think you have an HMO, and may need to license you can contact the Council for advice: [regulatory.services@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:regulatory.services@conwy.gov.uk) mark your email 'HMO enquiry'.



The new Council Offices in Colwyn Bay are used by different services. Often colleagues from the HAWS letting agency pop by.

Hi Amy, What are you doing today?

I have just been organising some repairs for one of our landlords. She has been on the leasing scheme for 10 years.

What's she having done?

a new kitchen, new flooring, re-plastering and works to upgrade the existing windows.

That's a lot of work

Yes, But in this case the landlord is only responsible for wear and tear. Other costs are being covered by us as they are tenant damage/neglect.

Are you doing the work yourselves?

We use the Cartrefi multi skilled repair teams

Do Cartrefi charge a lot?

Cartrefi has a fixed costs for standard jobs. So we can budget for the work. We have all the trades in one van so can save time on managing projects.

Tell me about the landlady? Why is she using the scheme?

The house is in Colwyn Bay and she lives in Denbighshire. The landlady has health problems and cannot organize the works herself.

What does she think of the work?

The works are ongoing so she has not seen the finished result yet. But I will ask for her feedback when it's complete.

## Tenant's page

**Feeling secure** in your tenancy is really important. Recent statistics show that the average length of tenancies is 4.1 years. Lately there has been much discussion in the press about 'no fault' eviction which causes anxiety. The Welsh Government consulted widely about what would work better for tenants, and we are expecting changes to be written into the Renting Homes Act. It is worth mentioning that government statistics show that only 10% of all tenancies are ended by landlords, 90% are ended by tenants. So landlords ending tenancies is less common than you might think. The main reason for ending a tenancy is rent arrears. If you are getting into difficulty paying your rent, speak to your landlord, or if that is difficult, contact Conwy Housing Solutions or Citizens Advice. Negotiating a solution may mean all the difference to keeping your home.



### Looking after the garden.

If you have a garden, check your tenancy agreement to see if certain gardening tasks are your responsibility. Generally speaking you will need to prevent it becoming overgrown and keep it litter free. Untidy gardens, noise or nuisance are sources of complaint from neighbours. Putting a garden to rights at the end of a tenancy can eat into a deposit. If you love gardening and want to 'improve' the garden, you will need your landlord's permission, or you may be liable for the cost of returning the garden to how it was before.



Energy Efficiency Rating		Current	Potential
Very energy efficient - lower running costs			
(92-100) A			
(81-91) B			
(69-80) C			73
(55-68) D			
(39-54) E		37	
(21-38) F			
(1-20) G			
Not energy efficient - higher running costs			

### Cold Homes

From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, if it has not been positively exempted, it will be unlawful for a property rating of F or G on its Energy Performance Certificate to be rented out. This does NOT mean your tenancy is at risk. Any tenancy in place can continue unaffected, but the landlord becomes liable for fines of up to £5000. All rented property must now have an EPC. You ought to be given a copy before you start your tenancy.

Tenants can check if their E or F rated home is exempt by looking on the PRS exemptions register <https://prsregister.beis.gov.uk/NdsBeisUi/register-search-exemptions>.

Nearly 20% of tenants in privately rented homes are in fuel poverty. If you are finding it difficult to afford to heat your home, contact Warm Wales to see if they can help. 01352 711751 or on line <http://www.warmwales.org.uk/>



**WARM WALES**  
**CYMRU GYNNES**