



## **Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill – Communications Approach**

There will be one communications strategy for the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, as amended by the Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill.

This paper gives an overview of the proposed communications approach and is set out using the Government Communication Service's (GCS) OASIS model. Further information about the OASIS model is available on the [GCS website](#).

Further detailed communications plans will be produced and finalised in the coming months.

### **Communications objectives**

- To encourage landlords, agents and contract-holders in Wales to comply with the new law in time for its implementation and continue to comply after its implementation
- To ensure landlords understand how to issue the written statements of contracts required under the 2016 Act (facilitated by the model written statements) and know the penalties resulting from non-compliance.
- To ensure contract-holders and prospective contract-holders are aware of the changes to contracts and their rights under the law before and after the changes come into force.

### **Audiences**

#### Renters

There are an estimated 1 million renters in Wales.

These include

- Current and new private sector contract-holders in Wales, and future private contract-holders such as those who may currently be located outside of Wales, e.g. students.
- Current and new social sector contract-holders in Wales

These audiences come from a wide range of different age groups and backgrounds and have varying communication needs. This is recognised in our overall approach which takes account of the different ways in which we may want to target these audiences.

*Key Stakeholder Contacts/Relevant networks for this audience: Tenancy Deposit Schemes, TPAS Cymru, Citizens Advice Cymru, Shelter Cymru, NUS Cymru, Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords, Universities Wales.*

### Landlords

Private Sector Landlords manage an estimated 213,000 properties that are registered with Rent Smart Wales. Within this group there are;

- Professional Landlords with 5 or more properties
- Current and new private 'hobby' landlords with 1-5 properties
- Letting Agencies who manage properties on landlords' behalves and deal with private tenancies.

*Key Stakeholder Contacts/Relevant Networks for this audience: Rent Smart Wales, National Residential Landlords Association, ARLA/Propertymark, Guild of Residential Landlords, British Landlords Association, National Association of Estate Agents, Safeagent, UK Association of Letting Agents, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors*

Public Sector Landlords collectively manage an estimated 226,000 properties in Wales and include;

- 11 Stock-retaining Local Authorities
- 35 Registered Social Landlords

*Key Stakeholder Contacts/Relevant Networks: WLGA, Community Housing Cymru*

### Relevant Professionals

- Solicitors and lawyers dealing with housing contracts and issues
- Advice Services
- Lenders

- Judges

Key Stakeholder Contacts/Relevant networks for this audience: Chartered Institute of Housing, Legal Networks, Citizens Advice Cymru, Women's Aid, Shelter Cymru

## **Strategy**

Communications activity around the Bill will begin shortly and will focus on explaining the amendments to the Bill and its key elements. This activity will continue until the new legislation comes into force.

Activity following the Bill's implementation will focus on compliance with the legislation.

### Stage 1 – Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Bill

At this point, communications activity will focus on our stakeholder networks, ensuring they are given advance notice of potential changes and ample time to consider what the changes might mean for them.

A wide range of audiences can be reached via these networks. They include landlords, letting agents, representative bodies, housing professionals and legal networks. For example, the Rent Smart Wales database allows us to communicate with 105,386 registered landlords across Wales.

Before any engagement activity begins, we will undertake a mapping exercise to make sure that we are reaching all the stakeholders that will be affected by the new legislation. This work will help us to identify channels and opportunities where we can share information, e.g. newsletters, websites, social media.

At this stage, messaging will focus on what the legislation will mean for stakeholders, especially landlords, letting agents and contract-holders.

Our initial work will begin with an introduction to the 2016 Act, as amended by the Renting Homes (Wales) Amendment Bill - informing audiences of the reasons behind the legislation, what the main changes will be and when these changes are expected to come into force.

We will provide regular updates for landlords and letting agents already registered on the Rent Smart Wales and local authority databases. Short FAQs will outline the purpose of the 2016 Act, as amended by the Bill, and its most significant elements.

We will work with the Rent Smart Wales team, local authorities, advice services and other key stakeholders, including professional and third sector networks to distribute key messages at appropriate times as the Bill makes its way through the Senedd.

If the Bill passes Stage 4, stakeholder updates will also start to include reminders about the coming into force date - promoting calls to action for landlords and letting agents to start looking at what the changes will mean for them.

### Stage 2 – Period between Royal Assent and coming into force date

At this stage, we will continue our engagement with landlords, letting agents and professionals but also target existing and potential contract-holders.

This stage will begin once the Bill has received Royal Assent and focus on explaining the key elements of the legislation, such as model contracts, the fitness for human habitation obligation and changes to current arrangements, e.g. regarding eviction. This will include advising landlords and letting agents on steps they can take to prepare.

We will also explain how the legislation will help improve the rental sector in Wales, what is required to comply and what it will mean for contract-holders and for landlords and letting agents renting out homes.

We will develop and review messaging regularly for landlords and letting agents, explaining the benefits of the new legislation, new rights and responsibilities and key actions they will need to take.

Six months prior to the implementation of the Bill we will begin a campaign targeted at landlords, letting agents and contract-holders. Calls to action for the campaign will focus on compliance for landlords/letting agents and – for both landlords and contract holders - knowing your rights and responsibilities as well as where to go for further advice and information. We will also look to develop an area on the Welsh Government website that can be updated with information on the legislation, signposting audiences to the Rent Smart Wales website where relevant.

We will work with stakeholders, such as landlord and letting agent bodies, and Rent Smart Wales to include leaflets and further information about the changes in packs for new and existing tenants, as well as providing posters and flyers that can be used in letting agents.

Options we will consider for the campaign at this stage will include digital, TV/ radio and outdoor advertising as well as regular planned social media activity using Welsh Government and stakeholder channels. We will also 'launch' the changes on the implementation day by targeting print and broadcast media through our press office.

We will consult with stakeholders to see how we can present the information in accessible, non-digital formats and seek advice on which campaign materials should be translated for non-English speaking audiences and in other formats such as braille, Easy Read and audio.

### Stage 3 – Post implementation and compliance

At this point, our engagement with stakeholders will focus on monitoring, implementation and compliance issues. We will also work with stakeholders to develop core training modules to support the longer term implementation of the Act. For example:

- Shelter Cymru already delivers a range of training that can be supplemented by these modules;
- Rent Smart Wales will develop a training module for private landlords as part of accreditation training / free continuous professional development;
- The Act will be reflected in undergraduate and LPC law training in Wales and elsewhere; and
- The Act will also be reflected in courses such as the Housing Legislation Training Programme of University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

We will also consider a second burst of campaign activity targeted at both contract-holders and landlords – focusing on understanding rights and responsibilities under the new law and promoting messages around compliance and penalties for non-compliance.

Additional activities will depend upon resources available, however the following channels will be considered when finalising strategy.

**Not-Paid For/Owned Channels:**

- Stakeholder Engagement and Channels
- Press/Media Relations
- Social Media
- Web Content
- Literature – online and potentially hard copies - posters, booklets and leaflets.

Paid for channels/activities to be used as part of any campaign will be identified in detailed planning stage.

**Evaluation**

Communications activity around the Bill will be evaluated using the Government Communications Service's Evaluation Framework.

Evaluation, focusing primarily on outcomes and outtakes, takes place throughout a campaign and helps us understand how the campaign has performed against its objectives. Outtakes typically include various data sources such as website visits, number of clicks on digital campaign adverts and other qualitative and/or quantitative research findings

These findings help us to understand whether our campaign call to action, messaging and channels have been successful.

Further information on the Evaluation Framework is available on the [Government Communications Service website](#).

## Annex 1 - Summary of communication activity

