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Local Government and Housing Committee

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Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change
Welsh Government

9 December 2021

Dear Minister,

Meeting with National Residential Landlords Association

I recently met with Ben Beadle, Chief Executive Officer of the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) to discuss matters relating to the private rented sector in Wales. I agreed to raise some of the issues we discussed with you.

Tenancy Hardship Grant

Whilst the NRLA supports the Welsh Government's Tenancy Hardship Grant, Mr Beadle raised concern at the low take up among tenants and suggested that increasing promotion and accessibility of the scheme could improve this. A particular concern raised with me is that the only information available on the Rent Smart Wales website is in the form of a PDF document, which can be difficult to locate; NRLA suggested that a clear and easy to access web page on the Rent Smart Wales website would be beneficial. They also noted that, although the Welsh Government's website contains a number of contact email addresses for local authorities about how to apply for the Grant, it does not include a function to enable someone to make an application. It was suggested that enabling someone to make an application through the Welsh Government's website and then selecting the relevant local authority to send it to could improve accessibility and increase take up.

It would be helpful if you could provide updated figures on the uptake of the Tenancy Hardship Grant and consider the feasibility of implementing the suggestions made by NRLA in order to promote the scheme and increase take up.

Developing a Welsh housing survey

NRLA also raised concern that improved evidence is needed for developing PRS related policies in Wales, and called for the development of an annual housing survey for Wales, similar to the one conducted in England. NRLA suggested that the Welsh Government could develop an expert group of housing organisations to draw up detailed plans for what a survey should look like including what it should measure and when it should be published.


Please could you outline what work the Welsh Government is currently undertaking to improve the evidence base on housing, particularly in the private rented sector, and what consideration you have given to developing an annual housing survey for Wales.

Support for low income renters

NRLA also expressed concern about the number of private renters in Wales whose Universal Credit award is insufficient to meet their rent payments. They referred to figures for May 2021 which show that 67.5% of private rented households in Wales who relied on Universal Credit to help pay their rent had a gap between the housing cost support element and the rent they paid and that according to the UK Government, where such a gap exists, the average shortfall is £80 a month. NRLA believe this is likely to worsen as a result of the decision to freeze the Local Housing Allowance in cash terms from April 2021, which is used to calculate the housing cost element of Universal Credit. NRLA would like the Department for Work and Pensions and the Treasury to unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance and restore the rate so that it is pegged to the 30th percentile of market rents, as happened during lockdown.

Please could you provide assurance that the Welsh Government will continue to raise this matter with the UK Government.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.