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SUMMARY

RENT SETTING CONSULTATION SURVEY

OCTOBER 2023
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Ariennir yn Rhannol gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Part Funded by
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ABOUT THIS RESEARCH:

This time last year, at the request of the Welsh Government, we undertook our first dedicated Tenant Pulse which focused on rent setting. At the time, tenants and wider society were experiencing a double whammy: Spiralling price inflation and their energy tariffs escalating fast. Despite forecasts that inflation will reduce significantly this year, there is no indication that costs themselves will return to pre pandemic levels.

Rent setting is a challenging subject. Landlords need a specific level of rent to continue services, due to their own increases in costs of building materials, repair contractors, staff wages etc. However, tenants must be able to afford these increases, particularly in such uncertain times, whilst we face a cost-of-living crisis.

After discussions with Welsh Government, we decided to repeat this Pulse survey to understand tenants' views on their increasing rents and if they knew the reasoning behind such increases.

RESEARCH METHODS

- A survey was live from the 24th August – September 12th, 2023. This was over a 2-and-a-half-week window, which gave tenants a longer chance to respond to the survey than compared to our inaugural rent consultation survey in 2022. This length of time also allowed TPAS Cymru to consult with other third-sector organisations in Wales to promote the survey, ensuring it reached as diverse a tenant population as possible.
- We delivered Tenant Pulse via the QuestionPro online survey platform.
- TPAS Cymru posed 16 questions to Pulse database members and members of the public.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Our response was more than double compared to last year, leading to more meaningful tenant insight.
- We had an increased number of younger people and more tenants living in Local Authority (LA) Housing, enabling comparisons between HAs and LAs
- Black Asian and Minority Ethnic tenant respondents were not representative and this needs to be improved.
- Almost half of respondents identified as having a disability.

KEY FINDINGS

- There was an almost even split between tenants who rely on universal credit as their main source of income and those that rely on earned income.
- Tenants aged 35-55 and relying on earned income have been most impacted by the rent increases.
- There was a 9% decrease in the number of people who felt that their rent was unaffordable this year.
- Tenants want more communication from their landlords regarding what their rents are spent on.
- Those wanting lower rent settlements are working tenants. Those more accepting of higher rent rises are typically in receipt of Universal Credit/Welfare Benefits



- Out of all the Local Authority Areas, Swansea seems to be impacted most by the rent increases.
- For tenants on Universal Credit, many find their rent increase unaffordable, arguably a consequence of bedroom tax, or the 'Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy'.
- We were unable to analyse the impact of bedroom tax as we didn't ask tenants about their household size.
- 80 tenants indicated they would be interesting in attending a dedicated focus group on this subject if we were to discuss further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More work is needed in communicating and engaging tenants with rent and service charges during these challenging times.
2. To do that, the sector needs communication and engagement professionals to be challenged and resources to go further than they have before. This should enable further tenant reach to explain rent changes and how rent is used.
3. We need to continue to invest in support for those struggling particularly the self-payers (people working) who are in that middle period of working age 34-55. The sector needs better insight into their profiles and challenges, who else is reliant on their tenants (unpaid carers, families, children) so that better targeting on support can take place.
4. Rent setting is a challenging subject; where rents may need to rise again to maintain services, the sector needs to show that it is delivering on its promise of well maintained, affordable, warm homes.
5. We would be interested in exploring the themes of this report in more detail with tenants to get more insight and recommendations from them. If you are a policy maker who is interested in being involved do get in touch.

TO DISCUSS FURTHER, PLEASE CONTACT:
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