

POLICY BRIEFING



HOUSING POLICY UPDATES

- Twenty Year Vision for Development
- WHQS Phase 2
- New Law Passed Giving Tenants More Protection
- Welsh Budgets
- Floored - The Update

POLICY AND INFLUENCING

TPAS Cymru work with the Welsh Government and other key decision makers. We are contributing to policy change by informing about policy developments and issues, channeling the experience and needs of tenants and landlords to policy makers, and working with partner organisations to influence policy.

TWENTY YEAR VISION FOR DEVELOPMENT

On the 24th February, Julie James MS, Minister of Housing and Local Government launched a vision for development in Wales to 2040, called 'Future Wales'. This sets out where housing, employment and infrastructure should be developed to support Wales to achieve decarbonisation and climate resistance; as well as improving health and well-being in our communities.

Key points:

- Focuses on growing existing urban areas and ensuring that homes, jobs and services are located in the same area
- Identifies Wrexham and Deeside; Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys, and Swansea Bay and Llanelli as nationally significant areas for growth;
- Gives councils stronger tools to refuse planning permission for new out of town retail parks and other developments that would be better located in town centres.
- Sets out new priority areas for large-scale wind and solar energy development

WHQS PHASE TWO

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard was introduced in 2002 to ensure that all social housing in Wales (homes rented from a local council or housing association) is good quality, safe, secure and suitable for the needs of tenants. As we near the end of the current phase of the programme, the majority of social homes now meet the standard. The programme has improved homes and made them healthier and provided training and investment in communities.



Welsh Government are currently evaluating the existing standard and this included a tenant survey in Autumn 2020. The evaluation aims to ensure that we learn the lessons from the past, maintain the improvements to date and make the standard fit for the next generation. This will include an increased energy efficiency requirement for homes. We aim to launch the new standard in 2022.

NEW LAW PASSED GIVING TENANTS MORE PROTECTION

On the 23rd Feb, new legislation was passed in the Senedd, which will give tenants more protection, stability and security in their homes. The Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill will also bring greater clarity on landlord and tenant responsibilities, helping to avoid disagreements and difficulties.

The changes mean that from spring 2022, rental contracts in Wales will change so that:

- Tenants will have the security and stability of a minimum of 12 months contract
- Minimum notice periods will be extended from 2 to 6 month in the case of 'no fault evictions', previously known as a Section 21 notice. Landlords will only be able to serve this notice 6 months after tenants have moved in
- Rental contracts will be simplified and a standard template for contracts will be made available.
- Although the notice period that landlords have to give will be longer, they will still be able to seek to repossess their property if there is a breach of contract.

See press release here: <https://gov.wales/new-law-passed-giving-more-protection-tenants-wales>

WELSH BUDGET 2021-2022

On the 2nd March, Rebecca Evans MS Minister for Finance and Trefnydd announced the Welsh Government's Final Budget for 2021 -22. They have named this, 'Protect, Build, Change which reflects the commitment to housing, reconstruction, development, public services, the economy and of course, the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of Social Housing Grant, there has been an additional £50 million, creating a total of £250 million in 2021- 22. 5 years ago, the investment was £67 million, showing the record-breaking level of investment. This investment will enable the much needed 20,000 new, affordable and energy efficient homes to be built over the next five years.

Key points:

- £50mn additional funding for Social Housing Grant
- £50mn investment into the optimised retrofit programme
- An additional £3mn to Building Safety regulations
- £12mn to support adaptations for disabled people, boosting the Physical Adaptations Grant.
- £206mn for the Local Government Hardship fund. This includes funding for adult social care, care home testing and homelessness support.

Find out more here: <https://gov.wales/final-budget-2021-to-2022>

FLOORED - THE PROVISION OF FLOORING IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Following the launch of our Floored report, we have been working with WG to help influence WHQS standard to ensure flooring is essential. These conversations are ongoing. In addition to this, we have been working with Registered Social Landlords and Local Authority Landlords to move forward with putting flooring into VOID properties. The response has been very positive, with a number of landlords committing budget for this for the next financial year. We have also been asked to deliver sessions in England to raise awareness of this issue.



If you want to be part of Wales' largest tenant voice panel, and have your say in shaping national policy, join our Tenant Pulse Panel. Tenant Pulse is the voice of tenants in Wales. It has been created by TPAS Cymru and is supported by Welsh Government. The main aim is to find out what matters most to tenants in Wales. The results of their surveys are used by Welsh Government and decision makers to create housing policy which works for tenants, and which makes housing in Wales safer and fairer.

Click here to join: www.tpas.cymru/pulse

