



Renting in Wales; Key Themes

Rob Simkins – Shelter Cymru

Renting in Wales; Key Themes



- A snapshot of what our advice and support services are seeing currently and have seen over the last year;
- Combining stats and figures with stories and case studies- the humans behind the homes;
- What can tenants do about some of the issues we've covered today?
- Next steps...



Who on earth are Shelter Cymru?

- We exist to defend the right to a safe home;
- Our advice and support services drive and inform our campaigning work;
- Supported over 16,500 people during 2019-20 across every local authority area in Wales;
- 62% of households we supported were facing or already experiencing homelessness;
- We offer free, independent and confidential advice from advice online through to representation in court;
- Our Advice Online contains a huge bank of resources to help educate people on their housing rights, available 24/7 and gets hundreds of thousands of hits per year.



Who on earth are Shelter Cymru?

- Campaigns team, focus on using the data from our casework to make the case for change to politicians;
- We work with councils, MSs, MPs and other stakeholders to make people's voices heard when it comes to housing;
- We conduct research, respond to enquiries and keep housing front and centre of people's minds;
- Our network of thousands of registered supporters often help us to pile on the pressure for change.



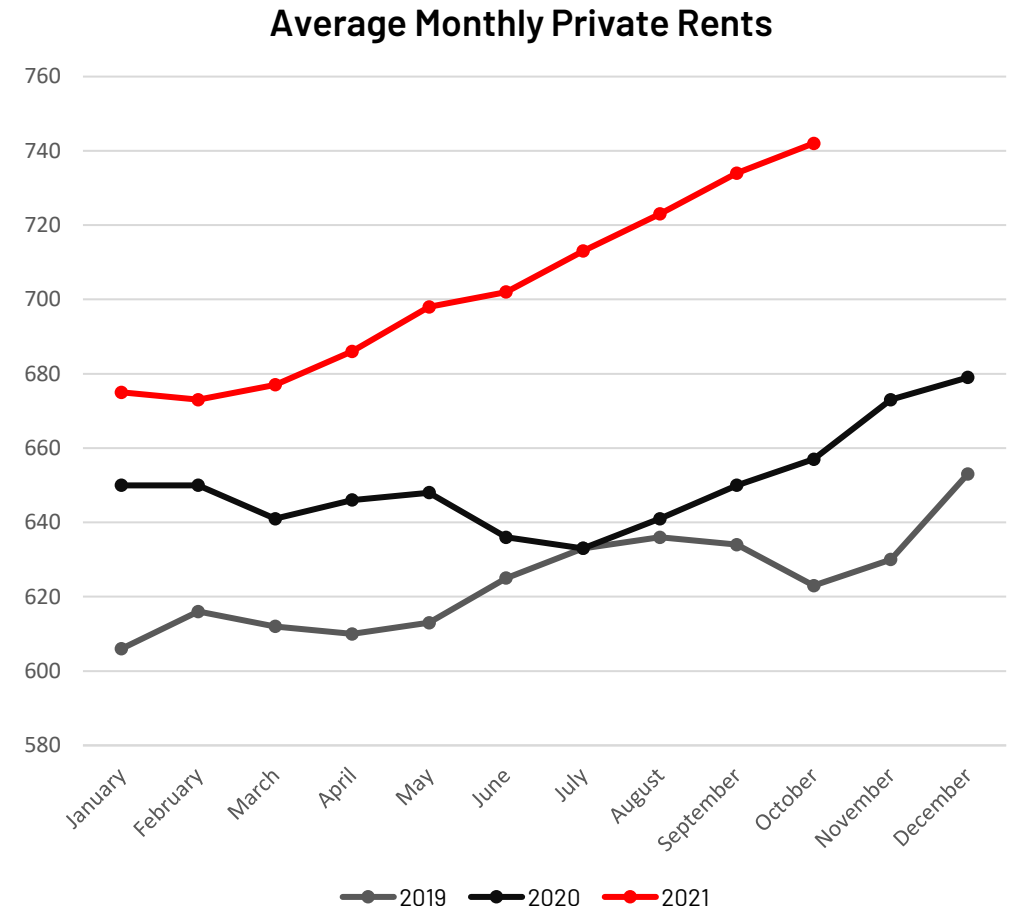
'Shocking' new figures demonstrate scale of housing crisis in Wales amidst calls for immediate Welsh Government action



So, what's happening in the rented sector?

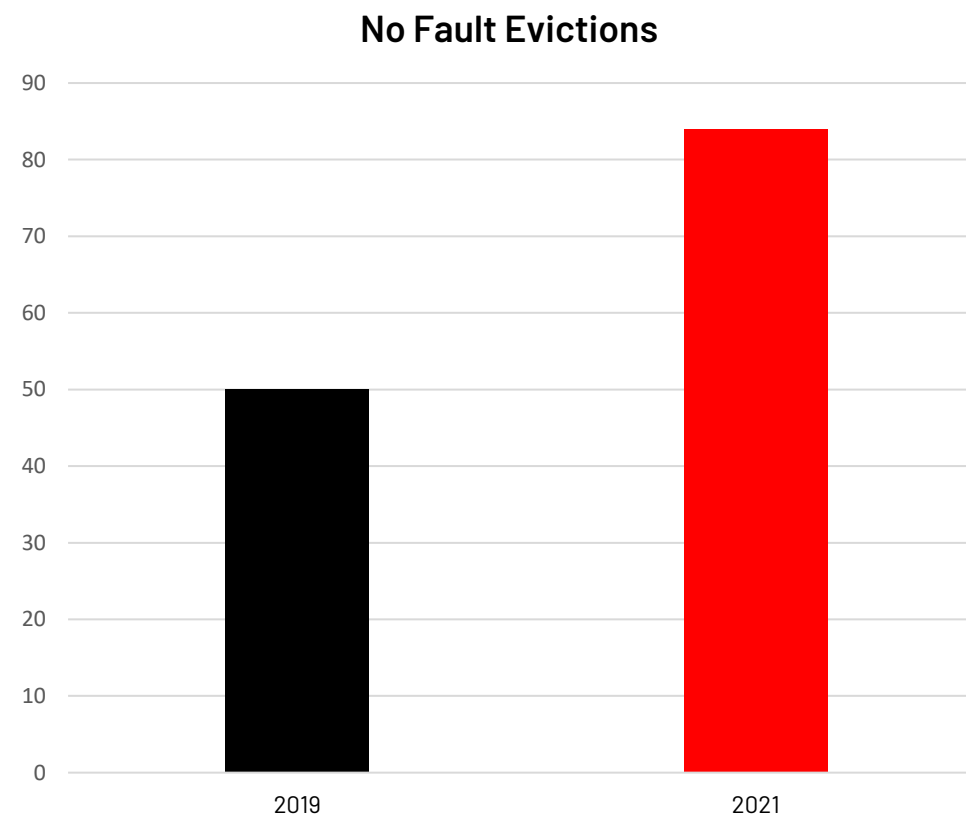


- Rents increasing sharply in the private rented sector (PRS);
- HomeLet calculate that between October 2020-21, average private rents rose by 12.9% in Wales;
- One example from our casework saw a tenant receive a rent rise from around £700pcm to nearly £1400 pcm;
- Concerns regarding the cut to UC, end of furlough, utility cost increases and wages not keeping pace with the cost of living.
- April 2022 rent settlement;



So, what's happening in the rented sector?

- Since the evictions ban ended, we've seen the number of Section 21/no fault evictions increase compared to the same point in 2019;
- The graph shows September 2019 compared to September 2021;
- Many tenants are reaching our services with invalid notices (wrong notice period, landlord not registered with Rent Smart Wales etc).



So, what's happening in the rented sector?

- Instances of illegal eviction and harassment are still prevalent in the private sector;
- We have reported on this recently, including occasions of police involvement/inaction contributing to illegal evictions;
- One of our cases saw a tenant whose illegal eviction was prevented by Shelter Cymru, however their landlord cut off utilities for a number of days in retaliation;
- Another case saw a landlord change the locks on the property and refuse to allow the tenant access to retrieve their belongings.

Covid: Wales' police helped evict people illegally, charity says

4 October



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Alarming trends

It's time to strengthen our response to illegal evictions and harassment in Wales, says Rob Simkins.

So, what's happening in the rented sector?

- Debt and arrears remain a problem, for social and private renters;
- Former tenant arrears policies are adding barriers to people finding a home, either on council registers or managed moves;
- We've seen bailiffs serving "virtual warrants of control" and other dehumanising practices;
- Support doesn't seem to be getting where it's needed fast enough.



So, what's happening in the rented sector?

- Disrepair remains a common issue for social and private renters;
- Our research from earlier this year showed 26% of people in Wales live in homes with significant damp, mould or condensation problems;
- 13% live in homes that are not structurally sound or have hazards such as faulty wiring and fire risks;
- We see the same sort of issues illustrated in the recent TPAS Tenant Voice report.

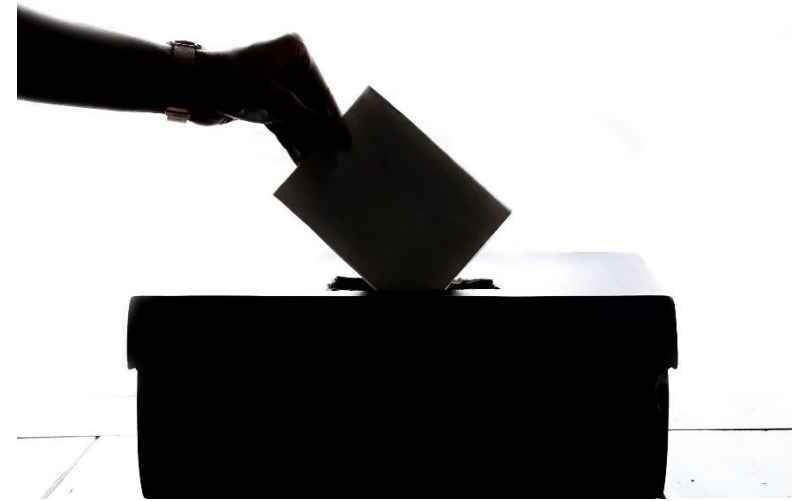


Seems pretty grim, right?



So what can we do about it?

- Tenants often have more power and influence over decisions which affect them than they know;
- There are a range of ways to tackle some of the issues we've seen today;
- Support is available for anybody experiencing difficulty with housing;
- Use organisations like Shelter Cymru & TPAS to channel your voices and experiences to policymakers across Wales and the UK.





You never have to face housing issues alone!

Next Steps

- Tenant notice periods;
- Delivery of the 20,000 social home commitment from Welsh Gov;
- Retrofitting, bring down those fuel costs;
- Social rents, reforming the current approach;
- Renting Homes (Wales) Act;
- The affordability crisis – what steps will be taken to stabilise rents and house prices?





Thank you/diolch – any questions?

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