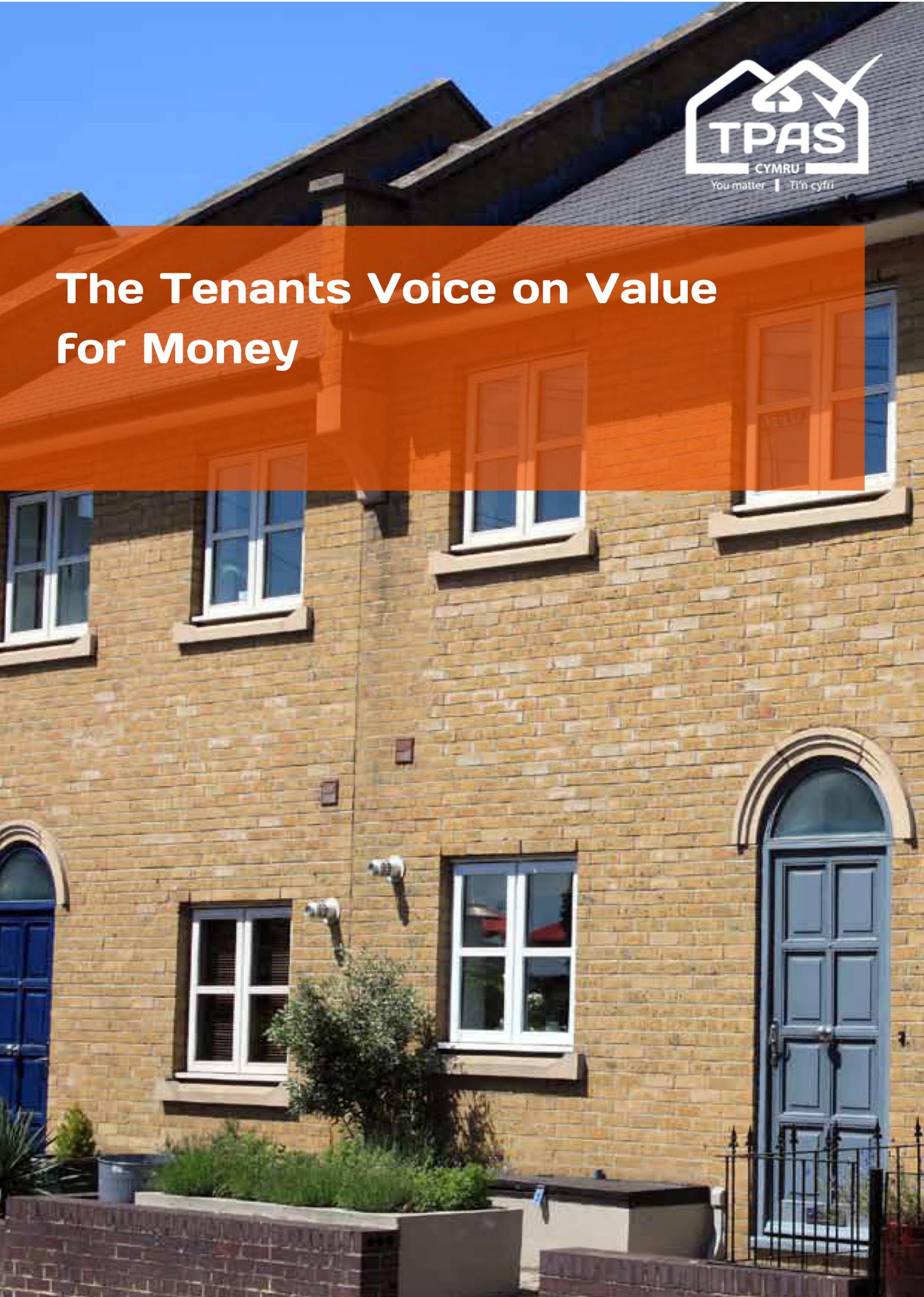


# The Tenants Voice on Value for Money



# Introduction

In 2017 the Welsh Government's Value for Money Thematic Review Steering Group identified the need to develop an effective approach to gather tenant perspectives of value for money. TPAS Cymru agreed to assist the Steering Group in this work.

Having agreed to assist the Steering Group in its work, TPAS Cymru developed a survey to gather the views of social housing tenants from across Wales and a methodological approach was agreed.

## Methodology agreed:

1. Tenant Pulse – on-line and postal survey for Tenant Pulse members, issued January 2018.
2. Completion of agreed survey questionnaires at TPAS Cymru events: 3 Regional Tenant Networks and annual conference held during October & November 2017.

## Survey questions

The standard questions that were set out in the survey questionnaire were developed in conjunction with the Steering Group. The questions asked were as follows:

1. Do you think that your rent provides value for money?
2. Which aspects do you think about when considering if your rent provides value for money? (multiple choice question)
3. When landlords are looking at how to provide better value for money in the future what is most important to tenants? (multiple choice questions)
4. What could landlords do to provide better value money for their tenants?
5. How do you think tenants could be involved in helping and ensuring landlords provide value for money?
6. Would you be interested in having information from your landlord about how it provides value for money?

## Response rates:

In total 235 tenants completed the survey. 166 members of Tenant Pulse tenants completed the survey. At the time 398 tenants were signed up to Tenant Pulse meaning that the response rate was 42%. An additional 69 tenants completed the survey at TPAS Cymru events.

## The information gathered:

In February 2018 TPAS Cymru presented the Regulatory Board for Wales (RBW) and the Welsh Government Regulation Team with a report, setting out the

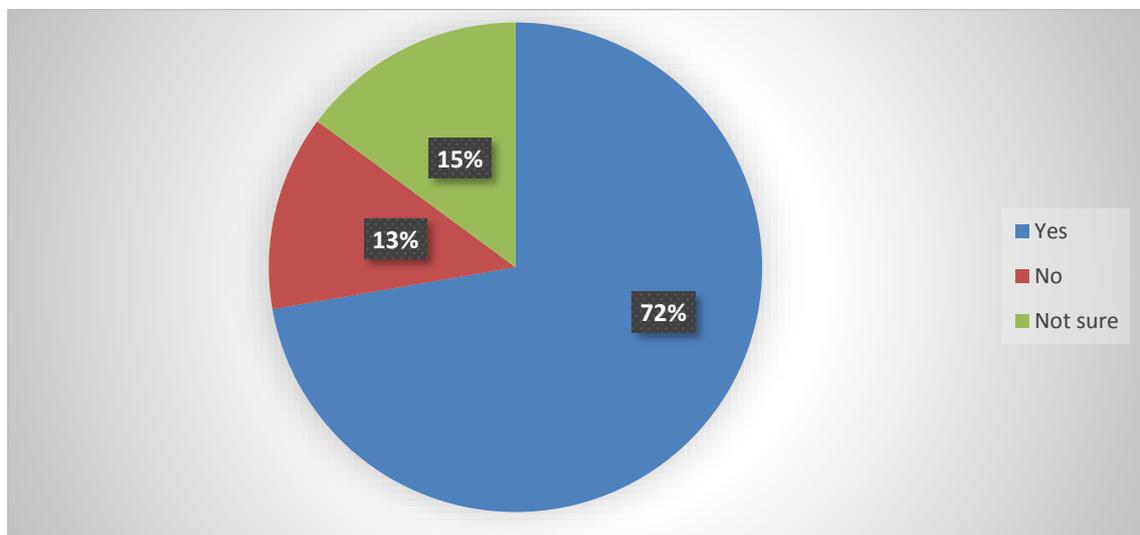
findings from the survey. This document summarises the responses TPAS Cymru received and the information that was presented to RBW.

## Survey Results

### 1. Do you think that your rent provides value for money?

As can be seen from the chart below, the majority of social housing tenants in Wales are satisfied that their rent currently provides them with good value for money, with only 13% believing that this was not the case. TPAS Cymru believes that it is important, however, that landlords continue to monitor whether their rent provides good value for money.

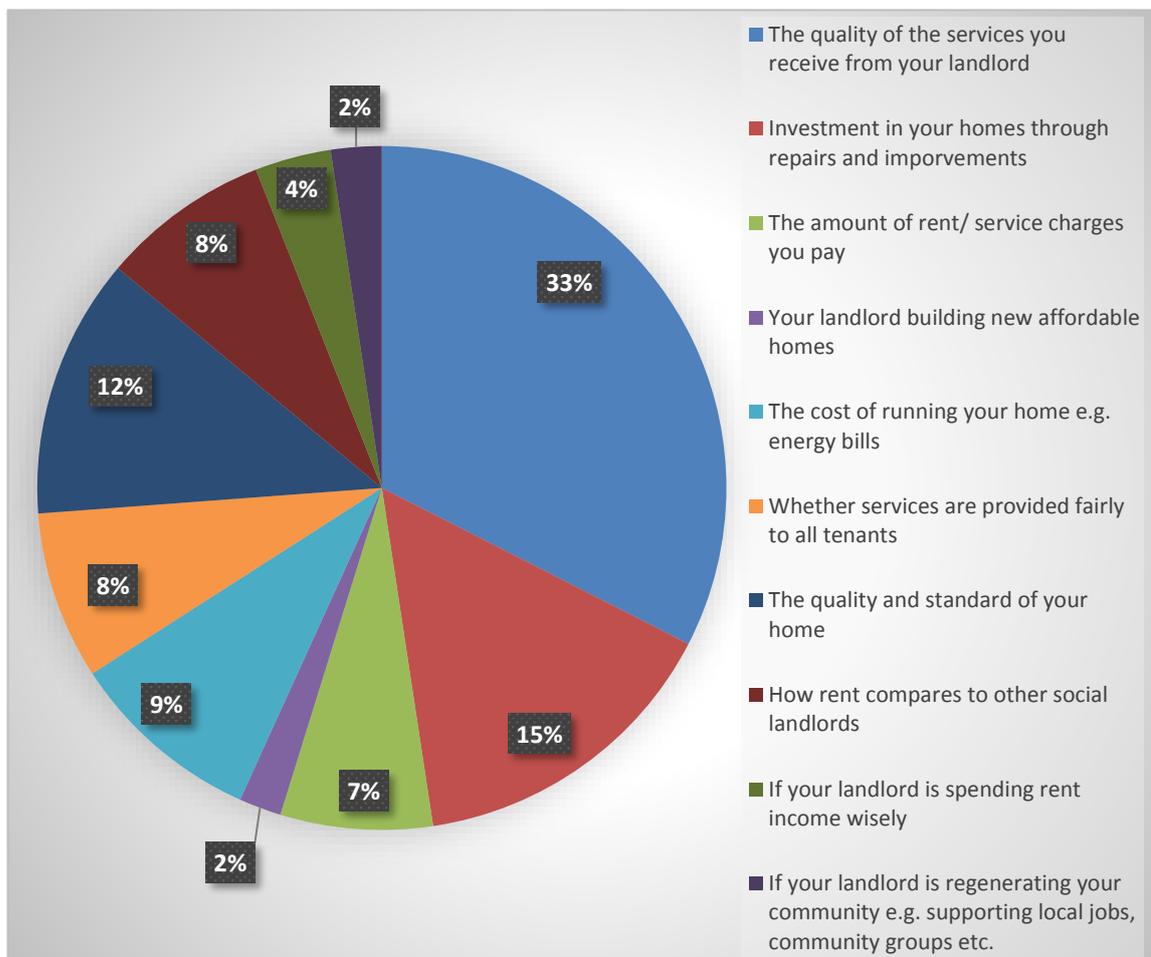
A number of tenants at our Regional Tenant Networks and at our Annual Conference raised concerns that future rent increases might affect whether their rent continues to provide good value for money.



## 2. Which aspects do you think about when considering if your rent provides value for money? (multiple choice answers)

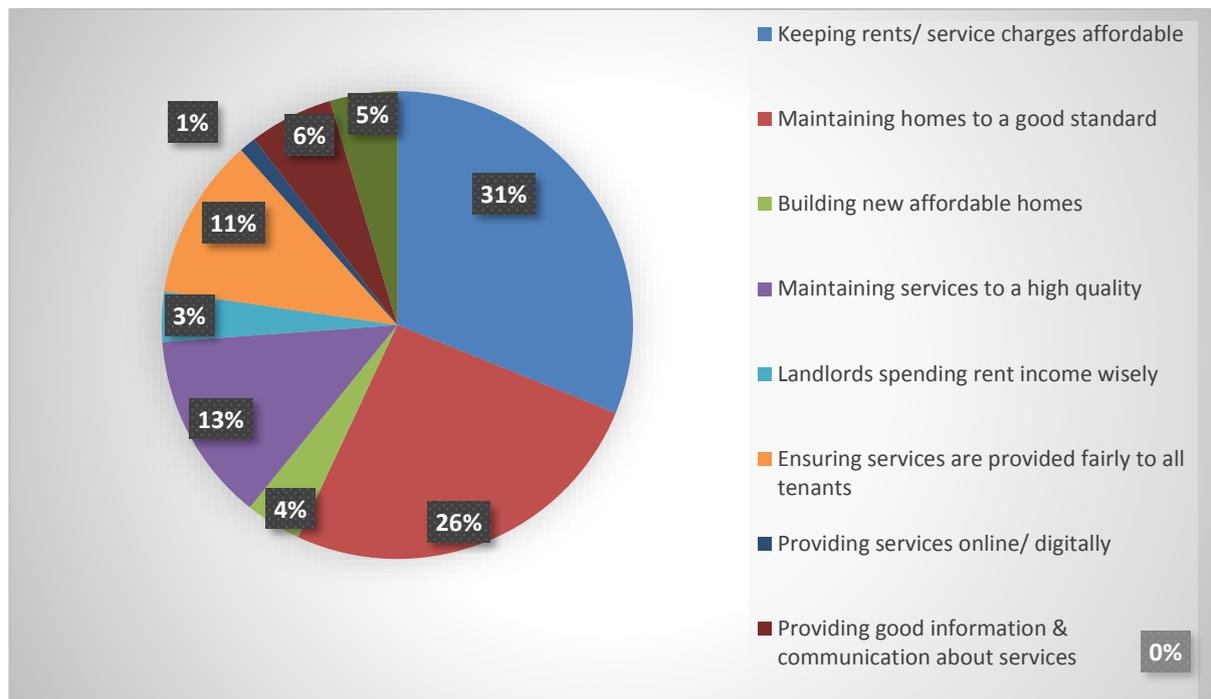
The survey asked respondents to list up to three issues or aspects of their landlord's services that they consider when asked to judge whether they receive value for money.

As can be seen from the chart, survey results suggest that value for money perspectives are influenced by a broad range of factors. The quality of services received, investment in homes through repairs and the quality and standard of homes appear to be the main drivers of views on value for money. However, a number of respondents also mentioned amount of rent/service charges paid, the cost of running the home and if services are provided fairly to all tenants as key issues.



### 3. When landlords are looking at how to provide better value for money in the future what is most important to tenants? *(multiple choice answers)*

When asked about priorities for value for money in the future the results differ slightly. Survey results suggest keeping rents/services affordable whilst maintaining homes to a good standard and delivering quality services are important to tenants. Many respondents also mentioned the importance of ensuring services are provided fairly to all tenants and good information as a key for landlords to consider.



### 4. What could landlords do to provide better value money for their tenants? *(open question)*

Whilst there was a huge variety of responses given by tenants in relation to this question, there were some common themes. These included:

- Helping to *reduce the running costs of a home* - Reducing heating costs through improved insulation, energy efficient boilers & heating systems, installing showers where there's demand as cheaper to run
- Provision of *effective & efficient repair and maintenance service* - work completed to a high standard to avoid needing work to be repeated; checking on quality of repairs completed by contractors; responding early to repair problems to avoid issues becoming worse.

- *Keeping rents and service charges low* by involving tenants in shaping the service so that rent income is focussed on meeting tenants needs and priorities.
- Regular *monitoring and inspecting* of *services paid for through service charges* in terms of quality and standards delivered
- *Reviewing landlord's wider spending activity on internal costs* such as new landlord offices, marketing/ publications; AGM venues. This spending should also be demonstrating a commitment to value for money when spending restrictions on services to tenants and investment in homes are in place.
- Recognising the importance of *tenant involvement: listening to tenant's views to shape and prioritise services and budgets*; ensuring genuine involvement that informs service provision and how money is spent.

**5. How do you think tenants could be involved in helping and ensuring landlords provide value for money? (open question)**

As with question 4, tenants provided a range of different responses to question 5. Common themes included:

- Enabling tenants to *challenge VFM*, for example through Tenant Scrutiny, Tenant Assessors.
- More *transparency and information about service charges* so that tenants can monitor and report where service are providing poor VFM .
- Make better use of *questionnaires and on-line surveys* to ask what is important to tenants and how tenants think budgets should be prioritised and *how money should be spent*.
- By being *open and transparent* with tenants about how *rent and service charge income is spent, prioritised and why*.
- Tenant groups/ forums/ meetings and networks to *talk to tenants about VFM and identify what is important to them*.

**6. Would you be interested in having information from your landlord about how it provides value for money?**

The final survey question asked tenants about whether they would be interested in having more information from their landlord about how they provide value for money. As can be seen from the chart below, a significant majority, 71% responded that they would be interested in being provided with this information. Tenants who attended our Tenant Networks and Annual Conference emphasised, however, the importance that such information was shared in a way that tenants could easily access and understand.

