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Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

John Griffiths MS
Chair
Local Government and Housing Committee

10 January 2022

Dear John

Thank you for your letter of 9 December following your meeting with Ben Beadle, Chief Executive Officer of the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA).

Tenancy Hardship Grant (THG)

The uptake of the THG has been lower than anticipated and, as a consequence, I have asked my officials to consider what action could be taken to communicate the scheme more widely. Action is currently being taken both locally and nationally to promote the scheme more widely to both tenants and landlords. This has included filming a panel of key stakeholders and I am grateful for Ben's involvement in this, along with Citizen's Advice, Shelter Cymru and PropertyMark. Promotional material is being developed from this panel and will be shared on social media in the near future. I have also asked my officials to consider what further support is needed for tenants who are in rent arrears.

In addition, local authorities are carrying out targeted local promotion and advertising campaigns as well as continuing to contact local landlords and agents to publicise the scheme. They are monitoring the impact of promotional activities and sharing information on successes with other local authorities.

Rent Smart Wales have promoted the THG directly to landlords through newsletters and were instrumental in a direct mail-drop to private rented sector properties in two local authorities in December. The success of the mail-drop will be monitored and, if successful in driving up numbers of applicants, it will be rolled out to other local authorities.

I can confirm that as at 15 December 2021, 189 THG applications have been received. There have been 70 grants awarded, which brings the total amount of grants paid to £158,638.81. A number of applications are still being progressed, and 65 applications have been redirected to DHP as a more appropriate funding stream.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The majority of tenants turn directly to their local authorities for housing support. It is therefore preferable that tenants continue accessing the THG via this route rather than through Rent Smart Wales. The expertise available within the local authorities ensures that tenants are quickly supported to access not only THG, but the wide range of other support available which may be appropriate for their needs.

Developing a Welsh housing survey

I recognise that Wales does not have a dedicated survey focused on wider housing topics. The last survey we conducted specifically on housing was the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2017-18. We do, however, have the annual National Survey for Wales which incorporates a number of housing topics as required. The Welsh Government also makes use of administrative data from a wide variety of sources such as Rent Smart Wales to help strengthen the evidence base. Access to sources of administrative data is constantly being widened; this supports officials to improve the evidence base in the PRS, and wider housing arena, on which policy is based.

Officials will be considering the business case for a future housing survey during 2022.

We have a number of housing-related expert evidence groups that are regularly consulted. These groups include the Housing Conditions Evidence Programme Board and related Technical Advisory Groups, of which NRLA and other housing organisations are members, and the Housing Information Group.

In order to support the delivery of our Programme for Government commitments in relation to the private rented sector, it will continue to be a priority area for research and evidence. In the current and previous government term, research that specifically focused on the private rented sector included:

[Evaluation of the Private Rented Sector Leasing Scheme pilot](#)

[Understanding tenant experiences in the private rented sector](#)

[Evaluation of Rent Smart Wales](#)

[Rent to Own – Wales: research with private rental sector tenants](#)

[Research into letting agent fees to tenants](#)

[Understanding the characteristics of low income households most at risk from living in cold homes](#)

Support for low income renters

I agree wholeheartedly with the NRLA's concerns regarding the number of private renters in Wales whose Universal Credit is insufficient to meet their rent payments. I have written to the Rt. Hon Thérèse Coffey MP, highlighting the affordability and accessibility issue for tenants in the private rented sector, and asking that the decision to cap Local Housing Allowance be reconsidered. I attach a copy of that letter for your information.

I can assure you that I will continue to raise these issues with the UK Government.

I am committed to ensuring that access to private renting is fair, and one main aspect of this is the affordability of rent. The Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru makes clear our intention to publish a White Paper on new approaches to making homes affordable, affordable rents for local people on local incomes, and a right to adequate housing. This paper will explore the role rent control could have in making the private rental market more affordable.

Yours sincerely



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