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Tenants report unaffordable rents as changes to rent-setting policies are needed, says TPAS Cymru

Wales' leading tenant voice organisation, TPAS Cymru, calls for Welsh social landlords to enhance their communication with tenants and revise rent-setting practices to ensure affordability and transparency during these challenging times.

With the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and financial pressures, many social housing tenants in Wales struggle with rent increases and unclear service charges. The TPAS Cymru's Tenant Pulse Survey reveals a need for improved communication between landlords and tenants and greater transparency regarding rent expenditure and service charges.

The Tenant Pulse Survey, which captures the voices of social housing tenants across Wales, shows that a significant majority (62%) of tenants believe their rent is no longer affordable - a drop from 78% in 2023. In addition, a considerable number of tenants express frustration over service charges, with 39% feeling that recent increases were unreasonable compared to the service they are receiving.

David Wilton, Chief Executive of TPAS Cymru, said:

"Tenants are clearly feeling the strain of continuous rent increases without sufficient justification or service improvement. Our survey shows that more needs to be done to enhance communication, ensure transparency, and consider the affordability of rent-setting policies."

The survey revealed that tenants in Wales are facing the following:

- **Radio silence from landlords:** While 89% of tenants received communication about rent increases, 46% remain unaware of available financial support from their landlords.
- **Unreasonable service charges:** 39% of tenants believe recent service charge increases are unreasonable, citing poor transparency and a lack of value for money.
- **Unaffordable rents:** A majority of tenants (62%) now find their rent unaffordable, with those on fixed incomes particularly affected.
- **Uncertainty to rent variations based on property:** Tenants oppose increasing rents for new energy-efficient properties or properties in desirable areas, with 71% against rent increases linked to energy efficiency improvements.

TPAS Cymru's report recommends ways for landlords in Wales to tackle these issues and ensure that tenants do not continue to choose between heating and eating. Recommendations include:

- 1) **Enhancing communication:** Landlords should improve their communication strategies to ensure all tenants are informed of rent increases, service charges, and available support.
- 2) **Policy changes:** Following tenant concern, landlords should consider rent formulas that better reflect tenants' ability to pay. These formulas should focus on affordability rather than linking rent to local private market rates.

- 3) **Accountability and service quality:** Landlords must ensure service charges are justified by delivering high-quality and consistent services and conducting regular contractor performance reviews.
- 4) **Supporting the most vulnerable:** Enhanced support is needed for vulnerable tenant groups, including those with disabilities and those on fixed incomes, to ensure they are adequately informed and assisted.

David Wilton added:

“We believe these changes are necessary to create a fairer and more transparent rent-setting process. Listening to tenant voices through initiatives like Tenant Pulse is crucial to shaping housing policies that truly reflect the needs and realities of those living in social housing.”

Ends.

Note to Editors:

TPAS Cymru has supported tenants and landlords in Wales for over 35 years. Based on responses from tenants across Wales, this report provides valuable insights into the challenges facing social housing tenants today.

For a full copy of the report, executive summary and comments from tenants, please visit www.tpas.cymru/pulse.

Contact:

For further comments, please contact Eleanor Speer, Engagement and Communications Officer at TPAS Cymru, at eleanor@tpas.cymru or +44 29 2278 9218