

RCT Landlord Forum Newsletter



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Welcome to the winter issue of the RCT Landlord Forum Newsletter

The newsletter is here to bring you up to date information that we hope will be informative and helpful to all our members.

If you have a subject or article you would like to see featured in the next issue, please get in touch.



Pets: creating a longer, successful letting



The benefits of owning a pet are vast. Apart from the giving someone comfort, owning a pet can boost your immune system and with the obesity epidemic continuing to blight many peoples' lives owning a dog, in particular, can help to encourage people to get more regular exercise. Older people especially benefit from walking their dog regularly being able to walk faster for longer periods and have better mobility in their homes. And children, as long as parents follow the RSPCA's Six Golden Rules, may have improved social skills with pets encouraging children to develop compassion, understanding and respect for living things.

It is therefore not surprising that, according to the National Survey for Wales carried out by the Welsh Government, over 47% of people in Wales own at least one pet. However, with 1 in 3 people in Wales living in rented accommodation, the issue of whether or not to allow pets in your properties is a risky one but can lead to a major reward.

Landlords can be apprehensive about allowing pets into their properties and it is completely understandable as in many cases, they are investments for retirement and if anything goes wrong it is the landlord who ends up losing money paying out for repairs. However, by following some of RSPCA Cymru suggestions below and allowing the keeping of pets, where appropriate, landlords can benefit from happier and healthier tenants, creating a longer-term, successful letting.

Landlords and tenants should agree, in writing, and form part of the tenancy agreement what is expected of the tenants if they are allowed to keep pets in the property. This should include:

- A clear outline of the expected behaviour of the tenants and pets
- The tenant's legal responsibilities of care under the Animal Welfare Act 2006
- The number of animals and the species of animals allowed at the property
- A ban on breeding or selling animals from the property
- The process which will be undertaken if unauthorised animals are discovered.

RSPCA Cymru is working with local housing associations across Wales to develop pets policies so that tenants and landlords are clear on what is and isn't allowed. For the last 8 years the RSPCA has been running the Community Animal Welfare Footprint (CAWF) awards, which recognises best practice by councils, housing associations and emergency planners. More information about the CAWF awards can be found at politicalanimal.org.uk/cawfhome. Rhondda Housing Association won bronze in the housing category at the CAWF awards 2016.

There is advice for private landlords with RSPCA Cymru producing a best practice guide for landlords called "Homes for All" which can be found online at goo.gl/Yzc5TQ. We would be delighted to work with any landlord or letting agent in developing positive processes to allow pets in their accommodation. You can contact RSPCA Cymru on 0300 123 8912 or email paul.smith@rspca.org.uk.

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Energy Performance Certificate



EPC Rating graph

[Here is the link to the guidance](#)

From April 2018 under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) it will be unlawful in England and

A Wales to grant a new tenancy on a property with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of less than E.

C The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, have

D issued guidance for landlords and local authorities,

E because it is believed up to 1 in 20 properties

F would not achieve an EPC rating

G of E.

A message from the RLA



Daniel Bellis
Policy Officer Wales

Late November and no doubt the local Christmas lights have gone up, presents are being bought (unless you leave it to the week before) and you've seen this year's edition of the John Lewis advert a few hundred times already. As landlords begin to wind down towards the end of the year and look forward to the festivities, the Residential Landlords Association already have one eye on 2018.

In a few days (30th of November) the RLA will have our first UK Future Renting Conference in Cardiff where, as the name suggests, we will be looking at a whole host of topics affecting the future of renting in Wales.

The new Minister for Housing and Regeneration Rebecca Evans will be addressing the audience, as well as a panel discussion where you can put your questions to Assembly Members and industry experts.

Over the Christmas period itself the RLA will be responding to the Fit For Human Habitation consultation that was recently published. The new regulations are part of the Renting Homes Act, which will set out the new standards for Private Rented Sector property.

At present, it's proposed that landlords will have to do three main things to meet the standard; electrical safety tests, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms. The exact details of this are subject to the consultation.

There will also be a lot of other consultations on the Renting Homes Act through 2018, as the new rules and regulations begin to take shape.

The much talked about Mortgage Interest Relief (MIR) changes will also hit at the start of 2018, when landlords sit down with accountants to put together the tax returns for the last year. Although announced a few years ago, it is this financial year when the first trench of cuts to MIR will hit.

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Managing the Risk of Legionella

As a landlord, what are my duties?

Organisations, or self-employed individuals, who provide residential accommodation or who are responsible for the water system(s) in their premises, are responsible for ensuring that the risk of exposure to legionella in those premises is properly assessed and controlled. All water systems require an assessment of the risk which they can carry out themselves if they are competent, or employ somebody who is.

In most residential settings, a simple assessment may show that the risks are low and no further action may be necessary. (An example of a typical lower risk situation may be found in a small building (e.g. housing unit) with small domestic-type water systems, where daily water usage is inevitable and sufficient to turn over the entire system; where cold water is directly from a wholesome mains supply (no stored water tanks); where hot water is fed from instantaneous heaters or low volume water heaters (supplying outlets at 50 °C); and where the only outlets are toilets and wash hand basins). If the assessment shows the risks are low and are being properly managed, no further action is needed but it is important to review the assessment regularly in case anything changes in the system.

Simple control measures can help control the risk of exposure to legionella such as:

- flushing out the system prior to letting the property
- avoiding debris getting into the system (e.g. ensure the cold water tanks, where fitted, have a tight fitting lid)
- setting control parameters (e.g. setting the temperature of the calorifier to ensure water is stored at 60°C)
- Make sure any redundant pipe-work identified is removed.

Tenants should be advised of any control measures put in place that should be maintained e.g. not to adjust the temperature setting of the calorifier, to regularly clean showerheads and to inform the landlord if the hot water is not heating properly or there are any other problems with the system so that appropriate action can be taken. If there are difficulties gaining access to occupied housing units, appropriate checks can be made by carrying out inspections of the water system, for example, when undertaking mandatory visits such as gas safety checks or routine maintenance visits.

Where showers are installed, these have the means of creating and dispersing water droplets which may be inhaled causing a foreseeable risk of exposure to legionella. However, if used regularly (as in the majority of most domestic settings) the risks are reduced but in any case, tenants should be advised to regularly clean and disinfect showerheads. Instantaneous electric showers pose less of a risk as they are generally coldwater-fed and heat only small volumes of water during operation.

It is important that water is not allowed to stagnate within the water system and so there should be careful management of dwellings that are vacant for extended periods (e.g. student accommodation left empty over the summer vacation). As a general principle, outlets on hot and cold water systems should be used at least once a week to maintain a degree of water flow and minimise the chances of stagnation. To manage the risks during non-occupancy, consideration should be given to implementing a suitable flushing regime or other measures such as draining the system if it is to remain vacant for long periods.

www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires

LANDLORD SENTENCED

after endangering tenants with unsafe gas work



The landlord of a property in Ilfracombe has been given a suspended sentence for risking the lives of his tenants by undertaking dangerous gas work.

Exeter Crown Court heard that in September 2016 Allan King replaced a boiler at his rented property on Arcade Road despite have no training in gas work and not being registered with Gas Safe Register. The boiler developed faults and a month later King called in a gas engineer for help.

The engineer immediately recognised the boiler was risking the tenants' lives and isolated it to make it safe. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was informed and launched an investigation.

The HSE had previously warned King in July 2016 that only a member of Gas Safe Register should work on gas appliances.

Allan King of Arcade Road, Ilfracombe pleaded guilty to breaches of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He was sentenced to nine months imprisonment suspended for 18 months and fined £3,000. He was also ordered to pay costs of £12,184.14.

HSE Inspector, Simon Jones, speaking after the hearing, said:

“Landlords have a legal duty to ensure that any gas work at their rented properties is only undertaken by a member of Gas Safe Register.”

“In this case, Mr King ignored previous warnings and undertook his own DIY gas work for which he had neither the competence nor credentials.”

“His actions were dangerous and put his tenants' lives at risk’

‘BE GAS SAFE, NOT SORRY’
Always use a registered Gas Safe engineer.



Further information about landlords' responsibilities for gas supply can be found on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/landlords/index.htm>

HOUSING ADVICE CENTRE

The Housing Advice Centre provides an impartial Housing Advice and Assistance Service to all those who may be in need of housing advice.

The service operates within the legislative framework of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 with the aim to prevent homelessness and give appropriate advice to landlords and tenants where homelessness is threatened.

The team is made up of eight core Housing solution Officers, our temporary accommodation officer, team leader, and team manager who are available to provide independent advice and assistance on a range of housing tenancy matters.



Housing Advice Centre, Sardis House, Pontypridd

Areas of our work that can benefit landlords directly include working with our designated Housing benefit assessor to assist with fast tracking assessment on Housing benefit claims, reviewing back dated Housing benefit requests, supporting applications for Discretionary Housing benefit payments where applicable and applying for direct payments of the local housing allowance to be made to the landlord.

The service where applicable is also able to consider financial assistance toward accrued rent arrears through a one off agreed payment if the case circumstances warrant the payment and the payment would then result in the tenant being able to remain in the home and a new tenancy agreement issued by the landlord for six months or more. This payment is discretionary and is looked at on a case by case basis and will take into account the circumstances of how the arrears accrued and the long term affordability of the home.

We also offer a scheme where financial assistance can be considered to help secure private rented accommodation where the applicant has been deemed to be either at risk of homelessness, is home-

less or where the local authority have concluded that it is no longer reasonable for the applicant to remain long term at their current home. Any agreement for financial assistance is subject to both affordability checks and an inspection via the local authority public health team. Where applicable following tenancy sign up, the Housing Advice Centre will also look to ensure that the application for local housing allowance is submitted and that a direct payments request is submitted to assist with the sustainability of the tenancy. In addition to the above we are also able to make appropriate and timely referrals to relevant tenancy support agencies to provide tenancy support to tenants where this is identified as a need. In addition to this the Centre also has attached to it three support services who provide urgent and critical Homeless intervention and support to those who are deemed to be at risk of homelessness. The purpose of these three services is to support tenants in addressing any urgent or critical issues that are affecting their sustainability of tenancy or are leading to their potential loss of accommodation with a view of trying to resolve this immediately. This again can include interventions regarding rent arrears, breakdown in the communication and relationship with their landlord or letting agent and any support around tenancy debt related matters to name just a few.

We would also welcome direct referrals from landlord and agents who may be experiencing some difficulties with tenants and this referral can be made direct to the centre where contact will be made with the tenant to try and engage them to work with us positively to resolve the identified tenancy issues for both parties.

These referrals can be made to one of two email addresses homelessness@rctcbc.gov.uk or HACduty@rctcbc.gov.uk. Alternatively direct advice can be sought via the allocated duty worker at the centre who is available daily on 01443 495188.

Should you have any queries regarding the centre or the services we are able to offer then please do not hesitate to get in touch with me on 01443 495188. We will also be attending the Landlord forum in January and providing a more detailed overview of our service and then going forward members of the team will be providing an advice clinic surgery at each of the forums should any landlords have any tenancy issues that would like to discuss. We look forward to working in partnership with many of you in the future and look forward to meeting you at the next landlord forum.

Landlord Forum 21st September 2017

The September meeting of the RCT Landlords Forum was the first to be held in the Pontypridd Rugby Club. The prestigious venue was given the thumbs-up by landlords who appreciated the ambience of the club house and the history and memorabilia on display. It was attended by 56 landlord member's representative of the Private rented sector in RCT, together with representatives from our sponsors Property Plus and RCT Council.

Presentations were provided by Welsh Government and Cartrefi Hafod on the subject of Land Transaction Stamp Duty and the Home Share Scheme and shared accommodation. Unfortunately the presentation from the RSPCA on Pet Policies had to be cancelled due to illness.

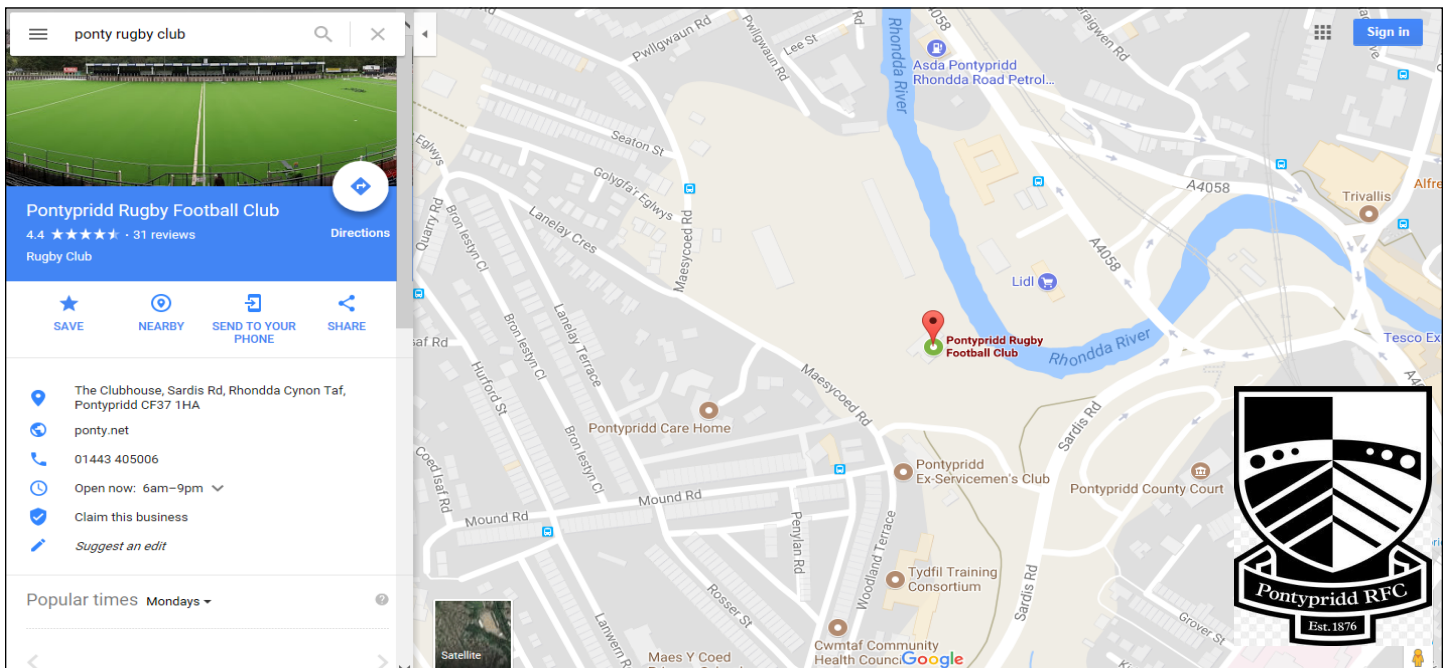
The chair, Vince Botham, provided updates in regards to current issues and generated debate in regards to the need to engage in consultations and use the forum as a collective voice for the benefit of its members.



New Venue for the Forum Meetings

We have secured a new venue and dates for the RCT Landlords Forum meetings. Pontypridd Rugby Club is located in Pontypridd, close to the train station with easy access to all parts of Rhondda Cynon Taff. Free Parking is available.

Forum meeting dates	
24th January 2018	5:30—8:30pm
16th May 2018	5:30—8:30pm





When your landlord says no dogs



Raising your Business Profile in Rhondda Cynon Taff

If you would be interested in sponsoring the RCT Landlords forum or advertising through this newsletter then please contact:

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"Raise your
profile in RCT!!"

