



Rhondda Cynon Taf

Private Rented Sector Strategy

2026 - 2031

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Foreword

The private rented sector plays a vital role in meeting the housing needs of our communities. For many residents, it provides an essential and flexible housing option at a time when access to both homeownership and social housing can be increasingly challenging.

As demand for housing continues to grow, and with rising costs affecting both landlords and residents, it is more important than ever that we support a private rented sector that is fair, accessible, and sustainable. This means ensuring that homes are not only available, but safe, well-managed, and affordable for those who rely on them.

This Strategy builds on the progress we have already made in working alongside landlords, partners, and residents to strengthen the sector. Through continued engagement, targeted support, and practical interventions, we have enhanced relationships with landlords, improved access to advice and services, and expanded initiatives such as the Social Lettings Agency to support those in housing need.

Looking ahead, this Strategy sets out our clear direction for the years to come. It focuses on increasing the supply of affordable homes, supporting residents to access and sustain occupation contracts, improving standards across the sector, and strengthening the partnerships that underpin its success. Just as importantly, it reflects our commitment to prevention by helping residents to maintain their tenancies and reducing the risk of homelessness.

Above all, this is a commitment to our communities. It is about ensuring that the private rented sector works for everyone - supporting residents, valuing responsible landlords, and contributing to safe and sustainable communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

By continuing to work in partnership, we can ensure that the private rented sector continues to play a positive and important role in meeting local housing need now and into the future.

Executive Summary

The importance of having a distinct private rented sector (PRS) strategy is in recognition of the increase in demand for housing, across all tenures in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). The PRS plays an important role in helping the Council meet its housing need and provides an alternative housing option to social rent or owner occupation.

The PRS in Wales has grown over the last two decades and according to most recent estimates as of March 2024, now accounts for 14% of the Welsh housing stock (Stats Wales 2024). According to Census (ONS 2021) data, there are 103,339 dwellings in RCT, of which approximately 18,362 or 17.8% are privately rented. This is up from 13.7% (13,604) at the 2011 Census (ONS 2011). These figures show that the percentage of privately rented properties in RCT is broadly in-line with the Welsh national average of 17% recorded at the 2021 Census (ONS 2023).

The PRS in RCT has faced several challenges over the past decade. These include:

- Reforms to the welfare system including the introduction of Universal Credit.
- Increase in contract holders with support needs.
- Poor property standards.
- Introduction of legislation aimed at regulating the PRS.

These challenges have intensified further because of the ongoing legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, increase in the cost of living and the current interest rate uncertainty caused by events around the globe. Despite these challenges, the PRS has continued to be invaluable as a housing option for residents in RCT and to enable the Council to discharge its homelessness duty.

The Council's current approach to the PRS aims to ensure the following:

- An increased availability of affordable PRS properties.
- Contract holders are supported to access and maintain PRS occupation contracts.
- To work with landlords to ensure that PRS properties are safe, attractive and where residents want to live.

RCT's overall vision for the PRS is **'To ensure the private rented sector in RCT provides safe, affordable, well-managed homes that support sustainable and accessible occupation contracts.'**

The following strategic aims have been identified to achieve this vision:

1. Increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation.
2. Support residents to access and sustain occupation contracts to prevent homelessness.
3. Improve quality and management standards in the private rented sector.
4. Strengthen partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector.

These strategic aims will ensure that the PRS in RCT provides a suitable housing option for all residents and contributes towards a functional housing market which will result in prosperous communities.

Introduction

With cost-of-living increases, geopolitical events and interest rates at a level that is higher than they have been seen for some time, securing housing can be a challenge. Owner-occupation is increasingly unaffordable for many in Wales, with average house prices in RCT being £164,000 in March 2026, an increase of 6.2% on the previous year (ONS 2026). Furthermore, a shortage of social housing relative to demand, with the waiting list at the end of the 2025/2026 financial year standing at 4,687, with 917 properties allocated (RCT 2026), has meant long waits for social housing.

Considering the above, it is no surprise that the PRS has seen considerable growth since the 2011 Census as it offers a flexible third alternative to owner-occupation and registered social landlords (ONS 2011). However, the sector is facing several challenges that affect both landlord and contract holder. These include increased costs in both time and money for landlords due to increasing overheads and the need to comply with new legislation. They also include increased life costs for contract holders, which can lead to difficulty in affording PRS rents which, as of 2025, have risen faster in Wales than any other part of the UK (Bevan Foundation 2025).

Due to this, it is of vital importance that the Council has a productive working relationship with private sector landlords, to ensure that the housing needs of the County Borough are met.

Our vision

To ensure that the private rented sector in RCT provides safe, affordable, well-managed homes that support sustainable and accessible occupation contracts.

This Strategy outlines the Council's plan to work with landlords, residents and other partners to improve access to good-quality, affordable PRS accommodation.

Background

RCT is one of the largest authorities in Wales with a population of 237,700 (ONS 2023) and 103,339 dwellings (ONS 2021). Of these dwellings, at the 2021 Census 18,362 were in the private rented sector, an increase of 4.1% since 2011 (ONS 2011), the second highest increase in Wales. Of these PRS properties, 356 are Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (ONS 2023). The HMO market is changing, with HMO's in RCT historically having been the domain of students, with the highest concentrations developed in areas adjacent to the University of South Wales' Treforest campus. There has been a reduction in the number of students living in Treforest, which has been instrumental in a significant change in the use of HMOs in the Treforest ward. HMO landlords have had to adapt to this change in the market and are turning to the non-student, single person demand and this trend is likely to continue.

With the owner-occupier market out of reach for many and social housing demand outstripping supply, the only tenure for many people to access is the PRS. This competitive market means that landlords can demand higher rents, with average private rents in Wales increasing by 5.5% between February 2025 and February 2026 compared to 3.6% in England and 2.4% in Scotland over the same period (ONS 2026).

As a result of the above, the main reason for homelessness continues to be loss of tied or rented accommodation, with 33 homelessness presentations for this reason in 2025/2026. At the same time Rent Smart Wales data shows that there is an average of 1.93 properties per landlord. For many, that property may have been inherited or bought to supplement their income rather than property rental being their main business focus. For these smaller landlords, increased regulation through mandatory registration, the changes introduced by the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 and increased interest rates have understandably led many of them to question whether they want to remain in the sector with 109 landlords leaving the PRS between March 2025 and March 2026 in RCT, resulting in 179 fewer PRS properties (Rent Smart Wales 2026).

The Private Rented Sector Strategy forms part of the overarching RCT Housing Strategy 'Prosperous Homes, Prosperous Lives (2024 – 2030) and outlines how the Council will work in partnership with landlords, residents and statutory bodies to

understand the profile of homes across the PRS in RCT. This is particularly important given the increasing importance of the PRS in meeting housing need, due to the increasing barriers to entry of the other tenures. The Strategy provides a framework for all activity in RCT aimed at improving housing conditions and management standards to ensure the PRS is an accessible housing option for residents of RCT.

The need to have a distinct PRS Strategy in RCT is in recognition of the increase in the demand for housing, the changing PRS landscape and the important role that the PRS plays as a key partner in meeting housing need.

Key achievements

The previous Private Rented Sector Strategy was launched in 2023. Since its introduction, several key achievements have been made, including:

- Continued engagement with landlords through the Landlords Forum. Since the beginning of 2024, 7 forums have been held, providing landlords with the opportunity to engage with council staff and a range of stakeholders including energy compliance support, legal services and Rent Smart Wales.
- Creation of a landlord 'one-stop shop' section on the Council's website providing information for landlords on topics such as contract holder matching, energy efficiency support, the Social Lettings Agency and contract holder support.
- Carried out focus groups with a small number of landlords to ascertain their views on certain topics.
- Creation of a Private Rented Sector Liaison Officer role within Community Housing Services. This post was created in response to feedback from landlords via the focus groups and forum that a single point of contact within the council would be helpful for landlords in dealing with various occupation contract issues that may arise.
- Promotion of energy efficiency grants such as ECO 4 Flex through the landlord's forum, newsletter, council website and operationally through the Heat and Save Team.
- Continued to deliver RCT's Social Lettings Agency which currently manages 53 private rented properties on behalf of private landlords, ensuring suitable allocations of clients in housing need.
- Secured 8 private rented properties with a private landlord to provide 33 managed, temporary accommodation units.

National Context – Welsh Government Policy

This strategy is underpinned by the following legislation that impacts upon the PRS in Wales:

- [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation Bill:](#)
- [Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- [Renting Homes \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)
- [Renting Homes \(Fees etc.\) \(Wales\) Act 2019](#)
- [Mandatory Licensing Scheme \(Housing Act 2004\)](#)

Local Policy

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Corporate Plan 'Working with our Communities 2024 – 2030' is the Council's key strategic document.

The plan has four wellbeing objectives which can be seen below:

1. People & Communities:

- Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

2. Work & Business:

- Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy.

3. Nature & The Environment:

- A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.

4. Culture, Heritage & Welsh Language:

- Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.

RCT's Housing Strategy 'Prosperous Homes, Prosperous Lives 2024 – 2030' sets out how the Council will work with partners to shape and deliver safe, good quality, affordable homes and housing services. The Strategy has established the following four key objectives:

1. To enable a functional housing market that meets the need of our communities.

2. To promote sustainable communities and create homes that are safe, warm and healthy by improving housing conditions and investing in community regeneration.
3. To enable access to all types of suitable and affordable housing that meets the needs of residents.
4. To create prosperous communities by ensuring residents have access to housing advice and support that meets their needs.

In addition, the Council continues to recognise through the RCT Housing Strategy 'Prosperous Homes, Prosperous Lives 2024 – 2030, its corporate parenting responsibilities for children and young people with care experience. This is in alignment with Welsh Government's Corporate Parenting Charter 'A Promise for Wales', which includes ensuring a stable, comfortable and safe home environment both during their time in care and as they transition out of care.

RCT's Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy, which feeds into both the overarching RCT Housing strategy 2024 - 2030 and this PRS Strategy, sets out the Council's approach to support the most vulnerable residents – those at risk of experiencing homelessness and those who need support to maintain their occupation contracts and live as part of their communities. The HSP strategy has four strategic priorities:

1. Strengthening early intervention and prevention approaches and specialised support to prevent homelessness.
2. Ensuring people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness access the right home at the right time and in the right place, as part of our Rapid Rehousing approach.
3. Providing high quality support to people who are or may become homeless, fully utilising available technology and ensuring effective cross-agency working.
4. Work collaboratively to provide holistic, person-centred support with effective specialist interventions where necessary.

The Strategy

There is clear evidence that good progress has been made with the PRS and assisting landlords and contract holders in RCT. However, increased demand on housing means that the PRS plays a vital role in meeting housing need.

To deliver our vision, four strategic objectives have been identified:

- 1. Increase the supply of affordable private rented homes.**
- 2. Support residents to access and sustain occupation contracts to prevent homelessness.**
- 3. Improve quality and management standards in the private rented sector.**
- 4. Strengthen partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector.**

Strategic Objective 1: Increase the supply of affordable private rented homes.

The Local Housing Market Assessment (RCT 2022) has projected that 1,119 additional affordable housing units across all tenures are required per annum. 17.8% of properties in RCT are privately rented (Census 2021), an increase of 4% from 2011 (Census 2011). With the current shortfall in social housing and affordability issues related to owner-occupation, demand is likely to continue to increase. Therefore, it is vital that the council work with key external partners and landlords to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation.

How will we do this:

- Work with Welsh Government and partners to secure funding and develop new delivery models.
- Expand the Social Lettings Agency to provide more affordable rental options.
- Support the review of the Local Housing Allowance rates, particularly where these fall below market rents.
- Bring empty homes back into use through direct targeted initiatives such as the Houses into Homes loan.
- Maintain strong links with current private landlords and look to work with new landlords, offering support and incentives to encourage them to work with the

Council to increase the number of homes available to our residents to prevent homelessness.

- Work with partners including Welsh Government to introduce an 'intermediate product' with revised standards, different to those determined by Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS). This would enable more use of the PRS for medium term use and reduce time spent in emergency accommodation.

Strategic Objective 2: Support residents to access and sustain occupation contracts to prevent homelessness.

Part 2 of The Housing Act (Wales) 2014 requires local authorities to take steps to prevent homelessness. According to the most recent Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2025), RCT has 18 Lower Super Output Areas within the top 10% of most deprived areas in Wales. With high levels of deprivation locally, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and shortage of affordable housing, it is crucial that opportunities exist for contract holders to access support to sustain an occupation contract. RCT's Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 – 26 sets out how the Council will work with a range of partners to do this.

How we will do this:

- Provide advice on debt, contract holder rights, homelessness and related issues.
- Implement the RCT's Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 – 2026 through RCT's Housing Support Planning Group whose focus is to support adults, children and people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.
- Offer energy advice and referrals to appropriate services.
- Raise awareness of available support to landlords via the landlord forum by increasing attendance and sharing the landlord newsletter.
- Produce a clear guide for landlords on available contract holder support services.

Strategic Objective 3: Improve quality and management standards in the private rented sector.

All homes within the PRS must comply with certain standards set out in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) (Gov.UK 2006). This looks at a range of areas such as temperature, damp and mould, gas safety and risks of slips, trips and falls. The Council can inspect properties against this standard and can take action if any risks are identified such as issuing warning and/or enforcement notices. In addition to HHSRS, the Fitness for Human Habitation standards introduced by the Welsh government as a part of the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016, provide further metrics that private rented sector properties must comply with.

In addition to legal standards that properties must comply with, there are a variety of sources of financial support that can be accessed by contract holders and landlords to ensure that PRS properties continue to be appropriate for the contract holder and of a good quality. RCT Council Housing Grants department for example can provide Disabled Facilities Grants to fund necessary adaptations to properties such as wet rooms or stair lifts to ensure that properties remain suitable for the needs of their inhabitants.

Research carried out by Tyfu Tai Cymru (July 2022) (Part of CIH Cymru) revealed that the PRS in Wales is the worst performing tenure in terms of energy efficiency, with 20% of private renters living in fuel poverty, compared to 11% of owner occupiers and 9% of social housing contract holders. The Council's Heat and Save Team can assist with this and are able to provide advice and signposting towards grants which can assist with the energy efficiency of properties through installation of measures such as Solar PV and insulation.

The Council will continue to offer support to contract holders and landlords to ensure that the private rented sector offers good quality and managed housing.

How we will do this:

- Deliver in-house schemes to ensure tighter regulation in the private rented sector to raise housing standards, i.e licensing and accreditation schemes and the Social Lettings Agency.
- Raising awareness of housing condition standards and available support.
- Engage and support private landlords to access advice and grant assistance to support their compliance with the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard Regulations (MEES) 2018.

- Utilise Council funding to attract a range of external investment from public and private sources to complement the Council investment to improve housing standards.
- Increase education and awareness of housing condition issues including potential hazards in the home and signpost households to assistance and support available.
- Deliver the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2025 – 2030.
- Raise Awareness of the Disabled Facilities Grant with Landlords which is an adaptations grant that contract holders can apply for in order to remain safe in the home.

Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector.

Considering the range of challenges that currently face the PRS both in RCT and nationally, it is of paramount importance that the Council continue to engage with landlords and to strengthen relationships to facilitate a functional PRS that works for both contract holder and landlord. This engagement must be pro-active to deal with issues before they arise. A significant source of landlord engagement is the quarterly landlord forum and landlord's newsletter that the Council operates. The aim of these activities is to provide a mechanism to raise awareness of Council services and strategic objectives and to directly influence the provision of PRS accommodation options. The Council has also recently created a Private Rented Sector Liaison post as a direct result of landlord engagement, to act as a single point of contact for landlord queries.

How we will do this:

- Enhance collaboration with landlords to increase housing supply to alleviate pressure on the Common Housing Register waiting list.
- Increase engagement with private landlords to support them to increase the supply of good quality affordable private rented accommodation through the Private Rented Sector Liaison Officer role.
- Maintain regular communication with Landlords through forums and newsletters.

- Build upon the landlord focus group to ensure that we can canvass detailed opinions regarding several topical issues so that the Council can act on these where possible.
- Promote the Private Rented Sector Liaison Officer role to act as a single point of contact for landlords to deal with a range of occupation contract related queries and to provide advice and guidance.

Measures of success

Delivering the four objectives, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

By identifying opportunities, funding and vehicles to increase the supply of affordable, private rented accommodation, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation to prevent homelessness.
- More households prevented from becoming homeless through access to PRS Accommodation.
- Developed an intermediate product with revised standards different from the WHQS to enable medium-term use as an alternative to emergency accommodation.
- Increase the number of PRS homes available through bringing empty properties back into use through the Houses into Homes loan.
- An increased number of private rented properties managed by the Social Lettings Agency and let at affordable rates, allowing lower income and vulnerable residents to access PRS housing.
- An increased supply of affordable private rented accommodation through the use of incentives and provision of support to landlords via the newly created PRS Liaison Officer role.
- Increased landlord participation through the landlords forum.

By supporting residents to access and maintain well managed privately rented accommodation, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Continued delivery of an updated Housing Support Strategy, ensuring that vulnerable contract holders, including care experienced young people in line with the Council's corporate parenting pledge, have the support they need to sustain successful and long-term occupation contracts.
- Development of a landlord guide of available occupation contract related support for vulnerable contract holders, used by landlords to refer contract holders for support with contract holder consent before they reach crisis point.
- Strong partnership working with support organisations in the third sector to supplement council capacity and to provide an alternative choice for housing support.
- Provision of advice and guidance including targeted schemes, to raise awareness of support available to improve the energy efficiency of private rented properties.
- Continued delivery and growth of the landlord forum and newsletter to maintain links with landlords and to pass on relevant information to improve practice.

By ensuring that the private rented sector offers good quality and managed housing, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Deliver RCT council's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2025 – 2030 to ensure that residents of RCT have the opportunity to live in warmer and safer homes, improving both physical and mental health.
- Privately rented properties in the County Borough are compliant with legislation such as the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and that reported concerns are investigated by Environmental Health so that they can be promptly rectified.
- Increased housing standards achieved through the attraction of external investment to deliver in-house schemes.
- Increased awareness of common housing conditions and hazards and knowledge of where to report them.
- Privately rented homes that are suitable for the occupants' needs, with grant funding such as the Disabled Facilities Grant used where necessary to fund installation of necessary adaptations.

By developing strong partnerships and by carrying out engagement to support the private rented sector, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased supply of PRS accommodation to provide an alternative to social housing, thereby alleviating pressure on the common housing register.
- A regular and active landlord focus group, providing the opportunity for RCT council to canvass landlord views on a range of initiatives in-depth, to inform future schemes, policymaking and to enhance the local authorities understanding of the PRS in RCT.
- Continued engagement with landlords through the landlord's forum and a refreshed newsletter.
- Development of the recently established role of the Private Rented Sector Liaison Officer through raising awareness of their function through landlord forums and the council's mailing list, creating an approachable single-point of contact for PRS issues and improving landlord relations with the local authority.

Making it Happen:

This Strategy will provide the impetus for delivering on the Council's priorities, contained within the Corporate Plan "Working with our communities 2024-2030". The Council will provide a strategic and operational focus across all departments with responsibility for improving the PRS offering in RCT.

The Strategy strongly supports the Welsh Government's sustainable development approach, and it has been developed to reflect the "five ways of working", which include:

1. Involvement:

A wide range of internal and external stakeholders have been involved in the development of the Strategy, and this will provide a sense of local ownership.

2. Long-Term:

The Strategy has been developed to provide sustainable objectives to tackle the prevalent issues within the PRS in RCT, and outlines how this will be achieved.

3. Prevention:

The Strategy aims to help prevent landlords leaving the market, by defining the problems in the PRS and outlining the Council's responses and intentions to foster productive relationships with landlords.

4. Integration:

The Strategy is synonymous with both corporate and national priorities, including the wider strategic aims associated with the delivery of affordable housing, prevention of homelessness, providing housing support and alleviating fuel poverty in our communities.

5. Collaboration:

The Strategy promotes a collaborative method of working and further reflects the Council's commitment to working with our residents and both private and third sector partners.

Action Plan and Monitoring.

A PRS Action Plan accompanies this Strategy, with the purpose of driving forward its strategic aims, whilst also developing mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the pro-active work being undertaken. The Action Plan echoes the strategic aims outlined above and is monitored by the Private Rented Sector Working Group which contains council officers from associated departments. The Working Group meets quarterly and provides cross team governance for workstreams related to the PRS.

Monitoring reports will capture both quarterly and annual performance data and contribute to national performance indicators and delivery plans. Success will also be reflected in the positive outcomes and impact that our work has on the lives of people living in RCT.