

COVID-19 Impact Monitoring

January 2021

This summary highlights the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social housing sector in Wales up to the end of December 2020.

Based on 10 months of data collection, our analysis focuses on submissions made by Welsh members. With Wales experiencing different phases of lockdown to other UK nations, this analysis highlights the similarities and differences compared to the rest of the UK.

To find out more about the detailed impact reports, HouseMark's new forecasting solutions and the wider ways we're supporting the sector through COVID-19, please contact data@housemark.co.uk.

As the UK's leading data-driven solutions provider for the sector, HouseMark remains the only UK-wide organisation monitoring and forecasting the impact of these unprecedented times on the social housing sector.

Only with HouseMark can you access this essential level of analysis.



Repairs

Non-emergency repairs reduce and completions rise as Wales enters lockdown 3

Non-emergency repairs reporting fell by 24% between November and December as increased restrictions and the Christmas break interrupted normal service – this coincides with an increase in completion rates.

We found that almost all Welsh landlords have acted to restrict responsive repairs during the January lockdown.



Sickness absence

Around 1 in 25 housing workers has 'had COVID'

Welsh landlords estimated that about 4% of employees have reported sick with COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

Figures vary between landlords, with some small landlords reporting zero cases while one housing association estimated around 14% of staff had suffered from the virus.

Building safety compliance

Landlords 'continue with safety work' through the latest period of lockdown

While some Welsh landlords have reported halting safety checks deemed as 'non-essential' during the January lockdown, most participants have continued safety assessments and periodic inspections.

Our research shows that UK landlords are using consistent safety regulations but approaches vary in terms of timescales and types of checks.



Arrears 3.7%

Current arrears stabilise

There was a negligible rise in current tenant arrears rates in December – with the overall rate staying at 3.7%. We have found that arrears increases have been mitigated through planned rent-free weeks during the Christmas period.

Our research shows a link between increased COVID-related restrictions and a rise in arrears. We forecast arrears to increase across the sector in January by up to 5%.

Gas safety

'Full compliance' for gas safety inspections continue

Following steady improvements over the last three months, median compliance rates continued at 100% in December. All participants reported full or near full compliance with gas safety regulations at the end of the month.

We expect the sector to maintain high compliance during the latest lockdown as access for gas servicing continues as an essential activity.



Lettings

Lettings reduce by 28%



The number of lettings fell by 28.2% in December 2020, which is a pattern replicated across the UK. It is likely due to fewer working days and house-moves taking place over the Christmas period.

We expect the January lockdown to reduce confidence about moving home, resulting in more vacant properties.