

Welsh Senedd Briefing: Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill

October 2020

1. Key Messages

- The Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill is a necessary final step to ensure that tenants are secure in their rented homes in Wales. It will introduce security of tenure for tenants and in turn will complement the Fitness for Human Habitation measures found in the original Renting Homes (Wales) Act, “The Act”. **Electrical Safety First welcomes the Bill.**
- **Electrical Safety First is the only Charity in Wales that works to reduce deaths, fires and injuries caused by domestic electrical accidents and incidents.** Electrical Safety First has campaigned to ensure that tenants in Wales receive mandatory electrical safety checks every five years in their rented homes.
- This amendment Bill, together with the implementation of the original Renting Homes (Wales) Act, will go a long way to ensuring security and safety for people in Wales but we need to ensure the Welsh Government implements the rest of the Act as quickly as possible. The Act included the requirement for **mandatory electrical safety checks but they have not yet been implemented in Wales.** In England, they are already being implemented through the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.ⁱ
- **We urge Members of the Senedd to support this Bill and ensure that the important Fitness for Human Habitation Measures – including security of tenure and critical safety aspects such as mandatory electrical safety checks - are implemented as quickly as possible in order to keep Welsh tenants both safe and secure.**

2. Background

- The Welsh Government is introducing the Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill as part of a commitment to Welsh tenants to improve their security of tenure. The Bill’s main aim is to increase the period at the start of a new let during which a landlord’s notice cannot be issued to six months. It will also increase the minimum notice period a landlord must give when seeking to end a contract where there has been no breach of its terms, from two months to six months. Combined, these changes will provide 12 months’ security of occupation for contract holders where there is no breach of contract.
- Whilst the Bill does not include further measures on Fitness for Human Habitation, the Amendment Bill will help further protect tenants who raise concerns with their landlords on safety issues – such as electricity. This is particularly important given that 27,000 houses in Wales have dangerous electrical problems.ⁱⁱ
- Over 1million people in Wales rent their homesⁱⁱⁱ and our ethos at Electrical Safety First is to keep people safe regardless of where they live across the country. Following Electrical Safety First’s campaigning the Welsh Government accepted the need to introduce mandatory checks. Electricity causes fires and can kill. **In 2018/19 in Wales, 62% of domestic fires were caused by electricity.**^{iv}
- England has already started implementing their own regulations for the Private Rented Sector including mandatory electrical safety checks but tenants in Wales still await this protection.
- Many people in Wales are spending more time in their homes due to Covid-19 restrictions and localised lockdowns. So the need for those homes to be electrically safe regardless of their tenure is increasing.

- Electrical Safety First will work with Welsh Government and the Fire and Rescue Services to raise awareness of safer living with electricity across the Welsh winter period 2020/21. We hope that mandatory electrical safety checks will be implemented in Wales before the end of 2021 – and we need to ensure that politicians continue to work together to achieve this goal.

3. Our asks for Welsh Senedd Members

- Electrical Safety First welcomes this Bill – but the Government needs to implement the regulations for electrical safety from ‘The Act’ to protect millions of people in Wales. **We ask that Members of the Senedd support this Bill and ensure mandatory electrical safety checks are not delayed any further and are implemented as soon as possible.**
- A full timeline of implementation needs to be published by the Welsh Government when the Stages of this Bill are completed. **There has been no clear timeline of implementation for mandatory electrical safety checks for the last two years.**
- The Welsh Government has identified that more vulnerable people are now living in the private and social rented sectors in Wales.^v Whilst the Act will protect people living in the private and social rented sectors in terms of electrical safety, we should not forget vulnerable home owners who are unable to afford electrical safety improvements. **We need to ensure that vulnerable home owners receive ‘Home Safety Visits’ by the Fire & Rescue Services and that these provide an ability for referrals to Care & Repair services where electrical safety hazards need to be resolved.**
- Whilst ensuring this Bill’s progress we also ask Members of the Senedd to support Electrical Safety Week Wales, which commences on 30 November 2020. This is an annual event aimed at promoting the safe use of electricity in Wales - **and ultimately to protect the lives of your constituents.**

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ⁱ MHCLG PRS Regulations <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities/guide-for-landlords-electrical-safety-standards-in-the-private-rented-sector>

ⁱⁱ Electrical Safety First - <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2019/10/up-to-27-000-households-in-wales-at-extreme-electrical-safety-risk-after-electrical-repair-funding-deemed-woefully-inadequate/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Welsh Government – Renting Homes (Amendment) Wales Bill - <https://gov.wales/new-law-provide-greater-security-occupation-people-who-rent-home-wales-unveiled>

^{iv} Electrical Safety First analysis of Welsh Government statistics <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/wales/statistics-wales/>

^v Renting Homes (Amendment) (Wales) Bill – 3.6 <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/pri-ld12310-em/pri-ld12310-em%20-e.pdf>