

Understanding Social Housing Evictions in Wales



Presentation of Findings

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- **Background**
- **Methodology**
- **Findings**
- **Conclusions**

Housing Research Portfolio

STATUS/PLACE/STAR Surveys

Older people's housing

Customer Insight & Journey Mapping

Qualitative Research: Stakeholder Consultation

Strategic & Local Housing Market Assessments

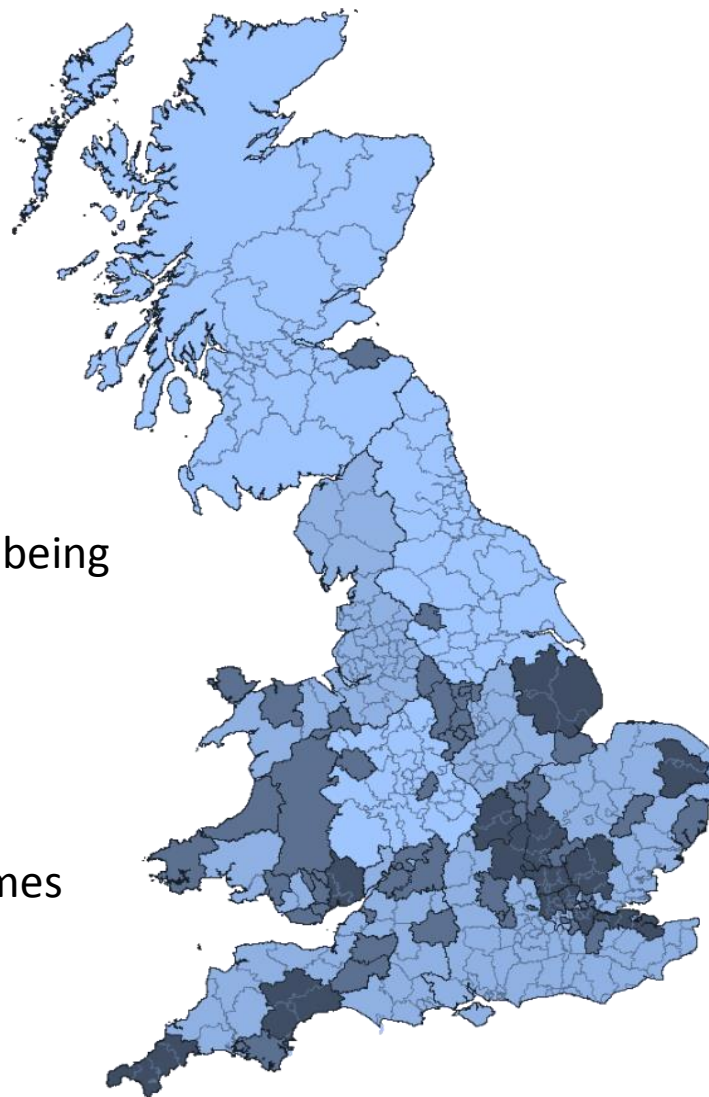
Stock Condition Surveys including health and wellbeing

Housing Needs and Requirements Studies

Local and Sub-regional Housing Strategies

Intermediate Affordable Housing Analysis

Demand Modelling for All Types of Housing Schemes



- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 demonstrated the commitment of Welsh Government to strengthen homelessness legislation
- Reports suggest
 - good practice is not consistent and
 - recommendations around improving tenancy sustainability are not being implemented
- The Welsh Govt stopped collecting eviction data in 2010/11
- Data is still collected by the Ministry of Justice

- Collate current rates of social housing evictions & reasons for them
- Understand current practice, criteria & processes around evictions
- Explore steps taken to prevent evictions

Online Survey

Emailed 47 Social Landlords

Asked for

- 2018 possession order,
- eviction warrants &;
- eviction data

38 responses
(7 LA's and 31 RSLs)

Depth interviews

45 minute interviews

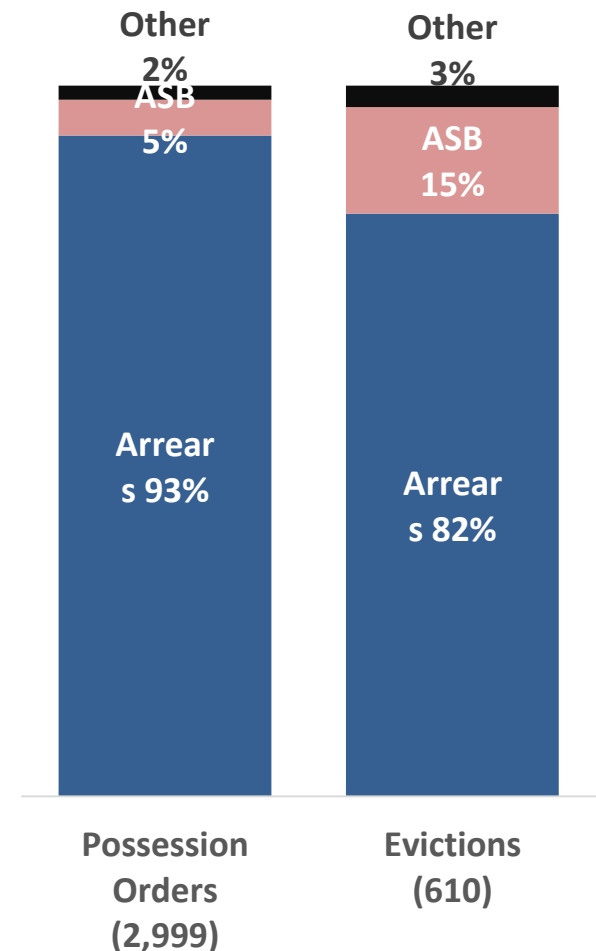
- 24 with Social Landlords
- 9 with key stakeholders

Explored eviction process in more detail

CURRENT PICTURE



- Rent arrears most common reason for possession orders & evictions
 - Threat of court action encourages engagement with arrears
 - ASB is hard to evidence thus only used for severe cases
- Single males identified as most at risk of eviction
 - Inexperience at managing money
 - Higher proportion from homelessness (with related issues)
 - Poor at engaging





Are rent arrears a symptom of major underlying issues?

Welfare reform identified as major factor in rent arrears

- Five-week waiting period for first payment
- Vulnerable people receiving money directly
- Non-British tenants sometimes refused UC due to failing habitual residency test
 - receives no income at all
- Welfare Reform making social housing unaffordable
 - no's of possession claims, warrants & evictions predicted to increase



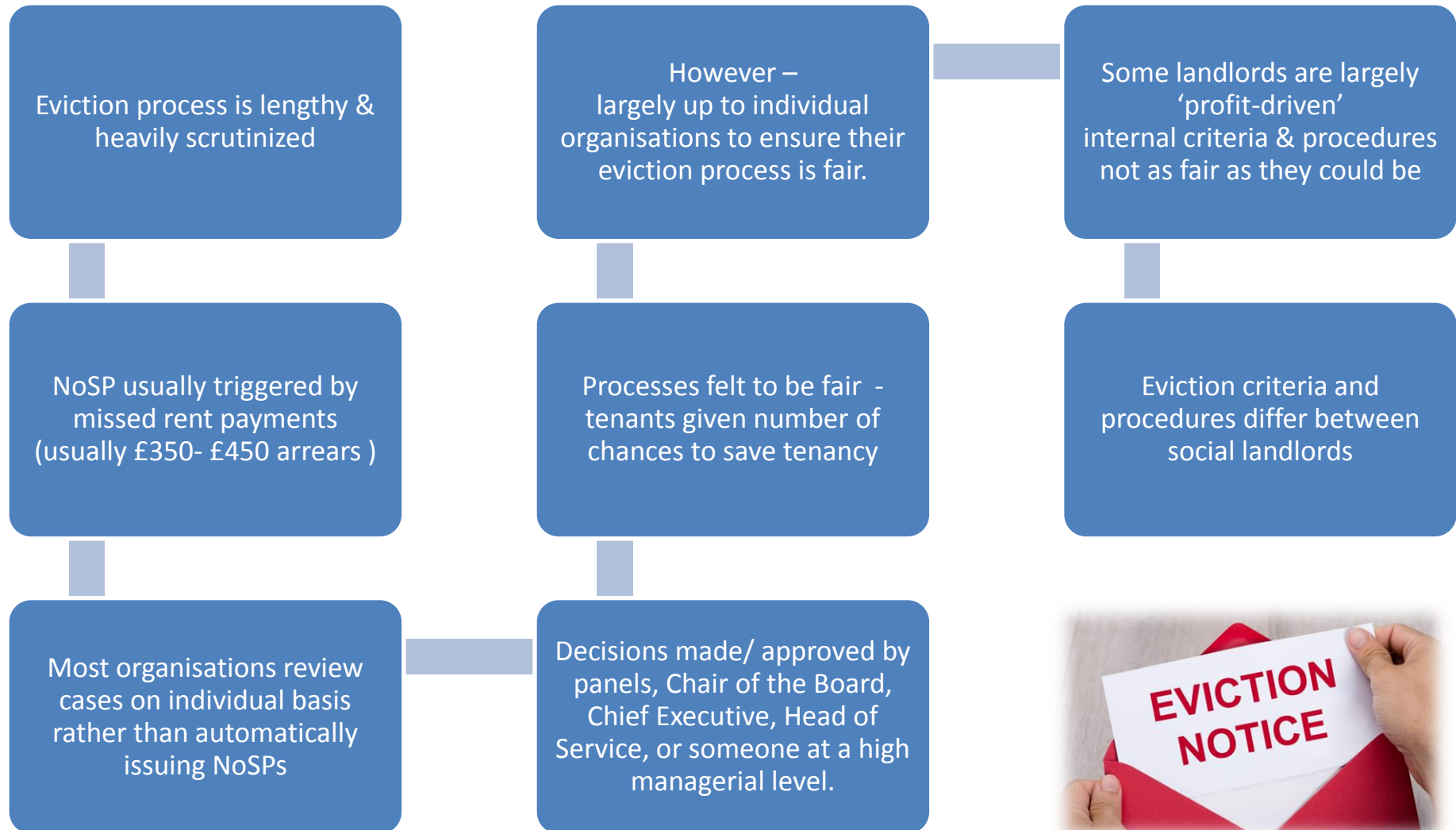
Failure to engage with Landlords

- Reasons for tenants not engaging with landlord are complex & multifaceted, but not because they do not want to
 - mental health problems
 - addiction
 - domestic abuse
 - chaotic lifestyles
 - 'burying their heads in the sand'
 - language barriers

- Reports of increasing numbers of tenants with unmet complex support needs...
 - such as poor mental health, substance misuse issues, learning difficulties, offending & victims of domestic abuse
 - difficulties around tenants accessing appropriate statutory & third sector one-to-one support

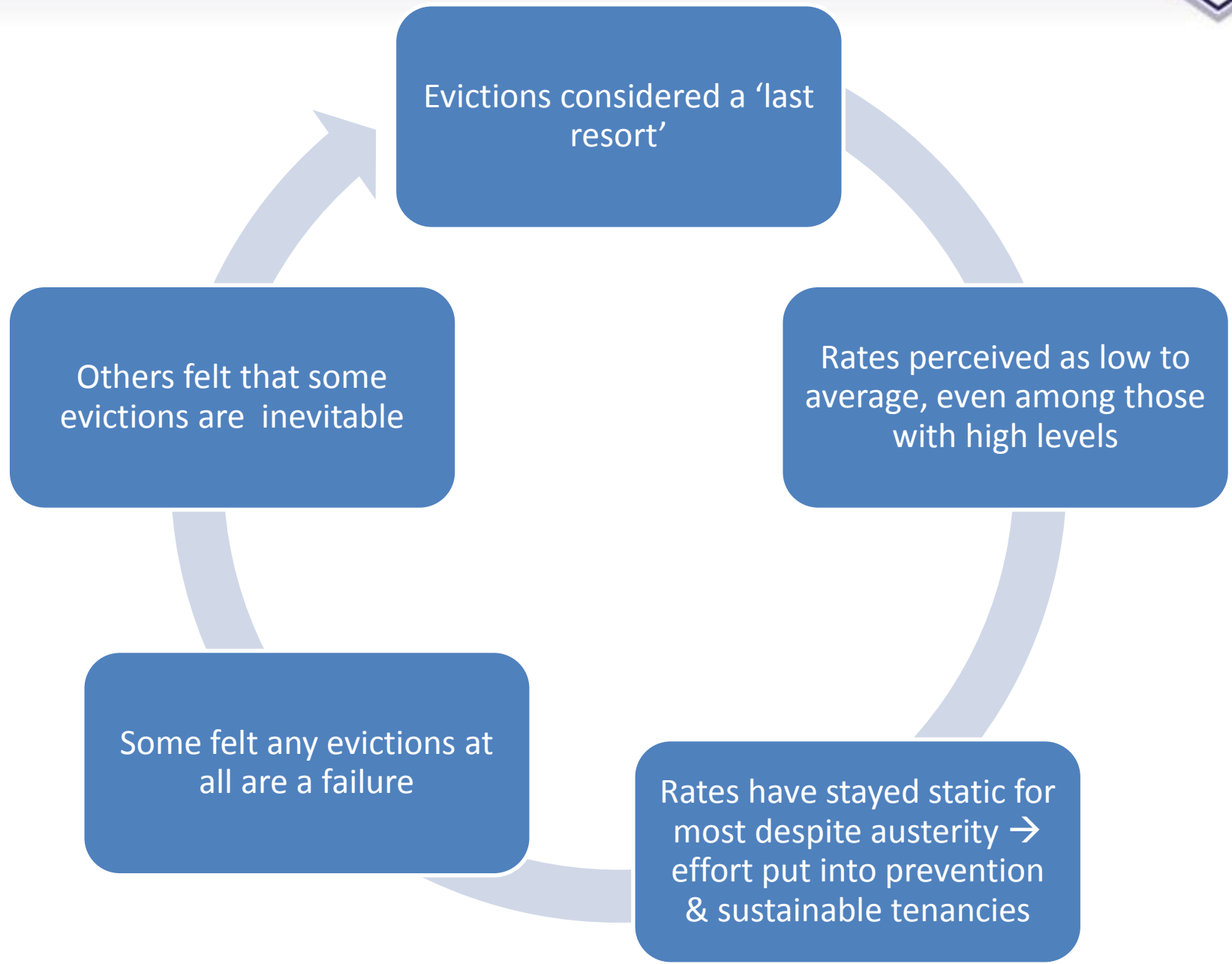


Eviction processes generally considered fair & accountable



- Around 18% of possession orders due to rent arrears lead to an eviction
- Around 66% of ASB due to rent arrears lead to an eviction
- Some organisations consistently high across all three measures, while others were consistently low
- Others → more mixed picture
- Medium size housing stock & RSLs → linked with lower eviction rates
- Large & small size housing stock, LAs & LSVTs → linked with higher eviction rates
- Less than half of organisations were able to negotiate settlement before court very / fairly often

Differing attitudes towards evictions from social landlords



KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

**EVICTON
NOTICE**



Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims



- All survey respondents said their organisation *always* uses the Protocol...
- ...Although Shelter Cymru regularly witness the Protocol not being adhered to
- However, only around half (17 out 32) felt it was at least moderately useful in reducing possession claims

- Provides further accountability to housing officers' decisions
- Offers assurance that tenants have been treated fairly
 - Provides an objective, consistent procedure

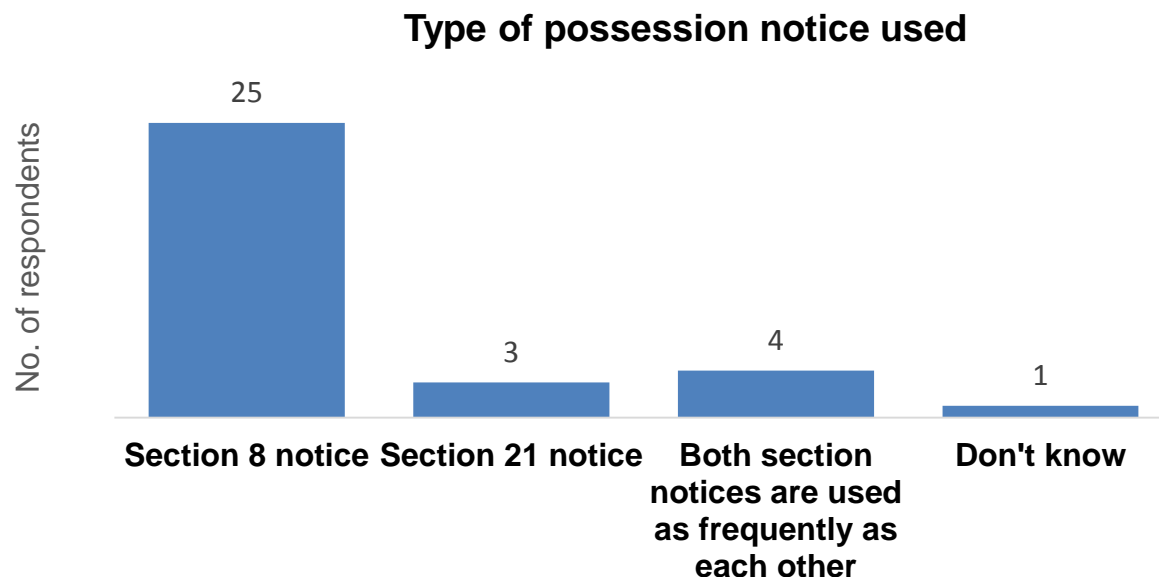
- Majority would follow the procedures set out in the Protocol anyway
- Not in line with changes to Welfare Reform (e.g. UC) nor with the way landlords want to engage with their tenants

- Social landlords should be involved in developing updated version
- Protocol should be replaced by 'pre-action requirements' → similar model to Scotland which has additional preventative steps

Section 8 and 21 notices



Source: ORS online questionnaire (n=33)



- Housing providers claim Section 21 notices very rarely used & decision to do so 'is not taken lightly'
- However, Shelter Cymru see quite a few RSLs using Section 21 notices in court → cheap, easy solution & masks bad practice
- Social landlords claim having the option of serving a Section 21 is useful for dealing with serious ASB issues → an alternative to long, drawn out court cases
- Therefore, some concern possible abolition of Section 21 in social housing

MITIGATING RISK OF EVICTION & BEST PRACTICE



- Identifying & working with vulnerable tenants
 - Tackling non-engagement
 - Reducing/preventing arrears
- Reducing impacts of welfare reform



Systems-thinking approaches

- Led to tenant-led, restorative approaches
- Less emphasis on rent collection
- Eradicating performance monitoring based on arrears
- Empowering & educating tenants
- Listening to & acting on tenant feedback
- Holistic, individual approaches

Psychologically informed environment (PIE) & trauma-led approaches

- Most widespread approach
- Understanding what has happened in tenants' lives
- PATH training = housing officers *wanting* to know tenants better
- Tailored, holistic services = support & empower tenants to take back control
- Increases social landlords' responsibility of keeping tenants in their homes



- Act as an intermediary between landlords & tenants
- Strong relationships with LA services

- However, external services under a lot of pressure
- CAB predict social housing clients will increase to significantly increase Level of demand → unable to offer early intervention
- Bureaucracy & cutbacks within LAs homelessness, drug & alcohol, mental health services etc.
- Rural areas particularly impacted
- Statutory mental health teams hardest to engage with

- Increase of in-house services in response
- However, some specialist support is outside of landlords' remits

Best practice: recommendations



Social landlords should be working more closely together to make sure that all have similar eviction prevention policies and procedures in place

Ongoing monitoring at what social landlords are facing from the benefit system, with specific focus on smaller organisations with more traditional business models

More focus on helping the homeless, reducing the number of people in temporary accommodation & working with social landlords to identify the pathways which have led to these situations

Advantages of making changes need to be clearer (e.g. saving money and resources in the long-term).

Targeting / monitoring tenants who are most at risk (i.e. single males)

Continually reviewing processes & services

Look at housing as a legal right insofar as everyone in Wales has got the human right to an adequate & affordable home.

WG → promote a more joined-up approach between statutory & third sector services as well as different types of landlord (i.e. local authorities and RSLs)

WG could assist with supporting social landlords in replicating the approaches which have been successfully embedded within specific organisations by overseeing a systems review.

- Possession, warrant & eviction rates vary between social landlords
- Reasons for evictions are complex
 - rent arrears the main cause of kick-starting the process, but many underlying factors
- Lack of engagement is ultimate cause of not being able to save a tenancy
- There is a need for a consistent, reliable data on eviction activity across social landlords in Wales
- A cultural change shift to more holistic systems
 - Still lot of work to be done - landlords at different stages of change
- WG to take a more active role in supporting joined-up working
- Follow-up research needed

Any questions?



Ranked rates of possession orders, eviction warrants & evictions



	SIZE (high to low)	POSSESSION ORDERS	EVICTON WARRANTS	EVICTONS
	No. of units	Rank (1=highest)	Rank (1=highest)	Rank (1=highest)
Local Authority A	13,500	3	1	2
Local Authority B	13,500	23	12	29
Local Authority C	10,700	11	6	28
RSL A	10,400	34	33	35
RSL B	10,200	27	22	22
LSVT A	10,200	5	3	3
LSVT B	9,000	31	16	15
LSVT C	8,900	14	9	9
LSVT D	7,900	12	2	5
LSVT E	6,300	N/A	17	23
LSVT F	6,100	18	30	26
Local Authority D	5,700	N/A	N/A	4
RSL C	5,600	N/A	N/A	11
Local Authority E	5,300	19	19	17
RSL D	4,600	15	N/A	13
LSVT G	4,100	22	28	24

Ranked rates of possession orders, eviction warrants & evictions



	SIZE (high to low)	POSSESSION ORDERS	EVICTON WARRANTS	EVICTONS
	No. of units	Rank (1=highest)	Rank (1=highest)	Rank (1=highest)
Local Authority F	3,800	6	N/A	27
RSL F	3,800	28	14	31
Local Authority G	3,800	N/A	24	38
LSVT H	3,500	32	21	34
RSL G	3,200	29	32	32
RSL H	3,200	30	31	36
RSL I	3,100	16	7	30
RSL J	2,900	10	10	8
RSL K	2,800	26	27	21
RSL L	2,700	21	29	33
RSL M	2,300	25	26	19
LSVT I	2,300	17	25	18
RSL N	2,200	8	8	14
RSL O	1,800	24	23	25
RSL P	1,700	1	11	12
RSL Q	1,600	9	13	10
RSL R	1,400	33	20	16
RSL S	1,200	20	18	20
RSL T	1,100	2	4	6
RSL U	900	13	15	7