

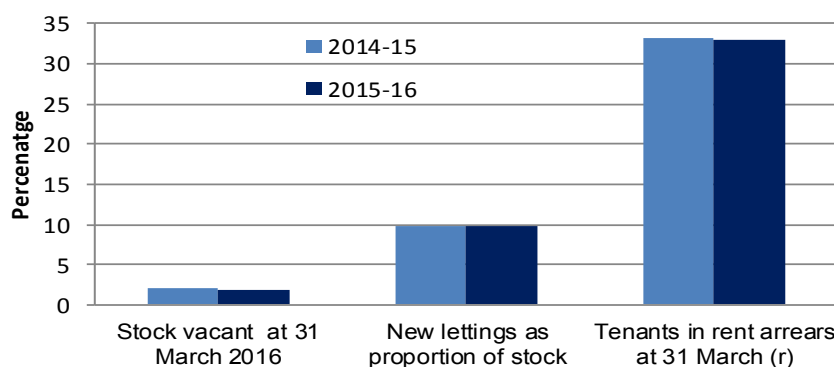


Social Housing Vacancies, Lettings and Rent Arrears, 2015-16 - Revised

12 April 2017
SFR 22/2017(R)

Social housing refers to dwellings, bedsits and bed spaces (i.e. housing units) owned, or partly owned, by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), who are otherwise known as social landlords.

Vacant stock, new lettings and rent arrears



Source: Annual social landlord, stock, vacancies and rent arrears returns

- Both the number and the percentage of vacant social housing stock decreased during 2015-16. At the 31st March 2016, a total of 4,340 social housing units (1.9 per cent of all social housing stock) were vacant, down by 4 per cent on the previous year.
- Housing units vacant for more than 6 months decreased by 13 per cent, compared to the end of March 2015 and accounted for 28 per cent of all vacant social housing compared with 31 per cent a year earlier.
- The number of new lettings of social housing stock increased by 1 per cent during 2015-16, to 22,246. The majority (62 per cent) of these continued to be from housing waiting lists, with a further 24 per cent through transfers and exchanges and 14 per cent through priority lettings to homeless households.
- Both the number and the percentage of all social housing tenancies in rent arrears decreased slightly during 2015-16. At the end of March 2016, there were 73,469 (r) tenancies in arrears, accounting for just under a third (32.9 (r) per cent) of all social housing tenancies. Around 2 per cent of tenancies had been in rent arrears for 13 weeks or more.

About this release

This annual statistical release has been revised following the receipt of revised figures for rent arrears for one local authority. Wales figures for rent arrears in 2015-16 shown in this release have been revised accordingly.

This release presents information about the number of social housing units that were empty (vacancies), the number of housing units rented to tenants (lettings) and the number of social housing tenants who were in rent arrears during 2015-16. The information is used to assess the effectiveness of social landlords in managing their stock and to gauge turnover rates for social housing. The information on rent arrears is used to monitor the number of social housing tenants in debt across Wales.

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1. Background

Social housing stock is the number of dwellings, bedsits and bedspaces (i.e. housing units) owned by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), otherwise known as social landlords. In recent years, social housing stock has been increasing at a rate of less than 1 per cent annually, with 227,347 dwellings¹ at 31st March 2015. The majority (62 per cent) of this stock was owned by RSLs, with RSLs owning all social housing in half of the local authorities across Wales. Detailed data sets for social housing stock can be found on [StatsWales](#).

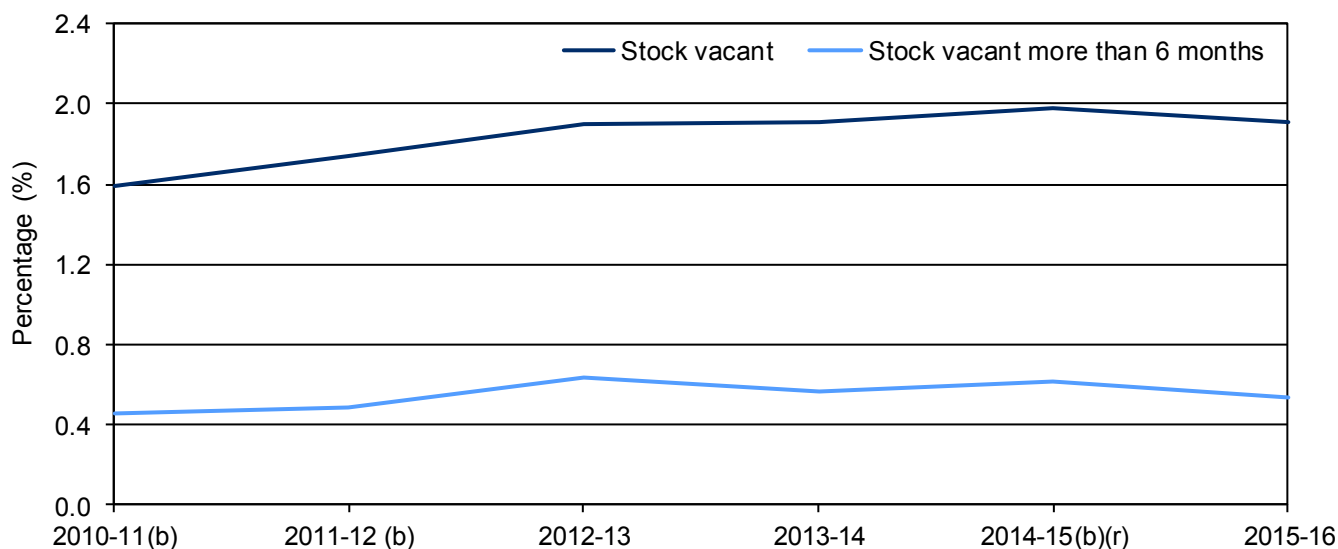
2. Social housing vacancies

This section of the release looks at the amount and proportion of housing at social rents which was empty at 31st March 2016 and how long those dwellings had been empty for. This will include vacant general needs, sheltered, other supported and extra care housing units.

There may be a number of reasons why the housing units are vacant, and why some of these are not available for letting, such as awaiting sale, demolition or undergoing improvements and repair.

Following increases since 2010-11, at 31 March 2016 there were a total of 4,340 social housing units vacant across Wales which is down by 4 per cent on the previous year ([Table 1](#)).

Chart 1. Percentage of social housing stock vacant and vacant for over 6 months at 31st March (a)



Source: Annual social landlord stock and vacancies returns

- (a) As a percentage of total social housing stock.
- (b) For 2010-11 and 2011-12 and 2014-15, a landlord was unable to either submit data or to resolve validation errors and the best available estimate has been used. Further details are available in the 'Quality information' section.
- (r) 2014-15 data has been revised since previously published.

¹ This figure includes general needs, sheltered, other supported and extra care. It excludes intermediate tenures and other social housing not at social rents.

The number of vacant units during 2008-09 and 2009-10 are not directly comparable with other years, as during these years vacancy figures for RSLs were not collected from Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies.

As seen in Chart 1, the percentage of stock vacant had been increasing each year since 2010-11 however in 2015-16 it decreased slightly to 1.9 per cent of all social housing stock.

The number of social housing units which had been vacant for more than 6 months also decreased slightly during 2015-16 accounting for 0.5 per cent of all social housing stock compared with 0.6 per cent a year earlier.

At 31 March 2016, a total of 1,214 social housing units had been vacant for more than 6 months. This is a decrease of 13 per cent on the previous year and represented 28 per cent of all vacant housing stock ([Table 1](#)).

At 31st March 2016, stock owned by RSLs had the same percentage vacancies as stock owned by local authorities. However RSLs continued to have a higher percentage of stock which had been vacant for more than 6 months than was the case for local authorities. At 31 March 2016, 0.7 per cent of all RSL stock had been vacant for more than 6 months compared with 0.3 per cent of all local authority stock ([Table 1](#)).

Prior to 2011-12, RSL stock generally had lower vacancy rates. The increase in vacancy rates for RSL stock from 2011-12 onwards may be partly due to the transfer of local authority housing stock to RSLs over recent years ([Table 1](#)).

Table 1 - Social landlord vacancies by type of social landlord at 31st March (a)

| Type of social landlord | Total social housing stock | Total vacancies | Percentage (%) of stock vacant (a) | Stock vacant for more than 6 months | Percentage (%) of stock vacant for more than 6 months (a) |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Local Authorities: | | | | | |
| 2009-10 | 110,829 | 2,306 | 2.1 | 612 | 0.6 |
| 2010-11 | 88,826 | 1,442 | 1.6 | 320 | 0.4 |
| 2011-12 | 88,471 | 1,400 | 1.6 | 382 | 0.4 |
| 2012-13 | 88,333 | 1,586 | 1.8 | 311 | 0.4 |
| 2013-14 | 88,159 | 1,592 | 1.8 | 340 | 0.4 |
| 2014-15 (c) | 87,891 | 1,611 | 1.8 | 319 | 0.4 |
| 2015-16 | 87,407 | 1,692 | 1.9 | 264 | 0.3 |
| RSLs: | | | | | |
| 2009-10 (b) | 113,660 | 1,594 | 1.4 | 444 | 0.4 |
| 2010-11 (c) | 136,733 | 2,143 | 1.6 | 710 | 0.5 |
| 2011-12 (c) | 137,181 | 2,523 | 1.8 | 706 | 0.5 |
| 2012-13 | 137,406 | 2,707 | 2.0 | 1,111 | 0.8 |
| 2013-14 | 138,110 | 2,720 | 2.0 | 940 | 0.7 |
| 2014-15 | 139,082 | 2,888 (r) | 2.1 (r) | 1,072 | 0.8 (r) |
| 2015-16 | 139,940 | 2,648 | 1.9 | 950 | 0.7 |
| All social landlords: | | | | | |
| 2009-10 (b) | 224,489 | 3,900 | 1.7 | 1,056 | 0.5 |
| 2010-11 (c) | 225,559 | 3,585 | 1.6 | 1,030 | 0.5 |
| 2011-12 (c) | 225,652 | 3,923 | 1.7 | 1,088 | 0.5 |
| 2012-13 | 225,739 | 4,293 | 1.9 | 1,422 | 0.6 |
| 2013-14 | 226,269 | 4,312 | 1.9 | 1,280 | 0.6 |
| 2014-15 (c) | 226,973 | 4,499 (r) | 2.0 (r) | 1,391 | 0.6 (r) |
| 2015-16 | 227,347 | 4,340 | 1.9 | 1,214 | 0.5 |

Source: Annual social landlord stock and vacancies returns.

(a) As a percentage of total social housing stock.(a)

(b) Figures for 2008-09 and 2009-10 do not include Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies and stock figures shown for RSLs and all social landlords have been adjusted accordingly.

(c) For 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2014-15 a landlord was unable to either submit data or to resolve validation errors and the best available estimate has been used. Further details are available in the 'Quality information' section.

(r) 2014-15 data has been revised since previously published.

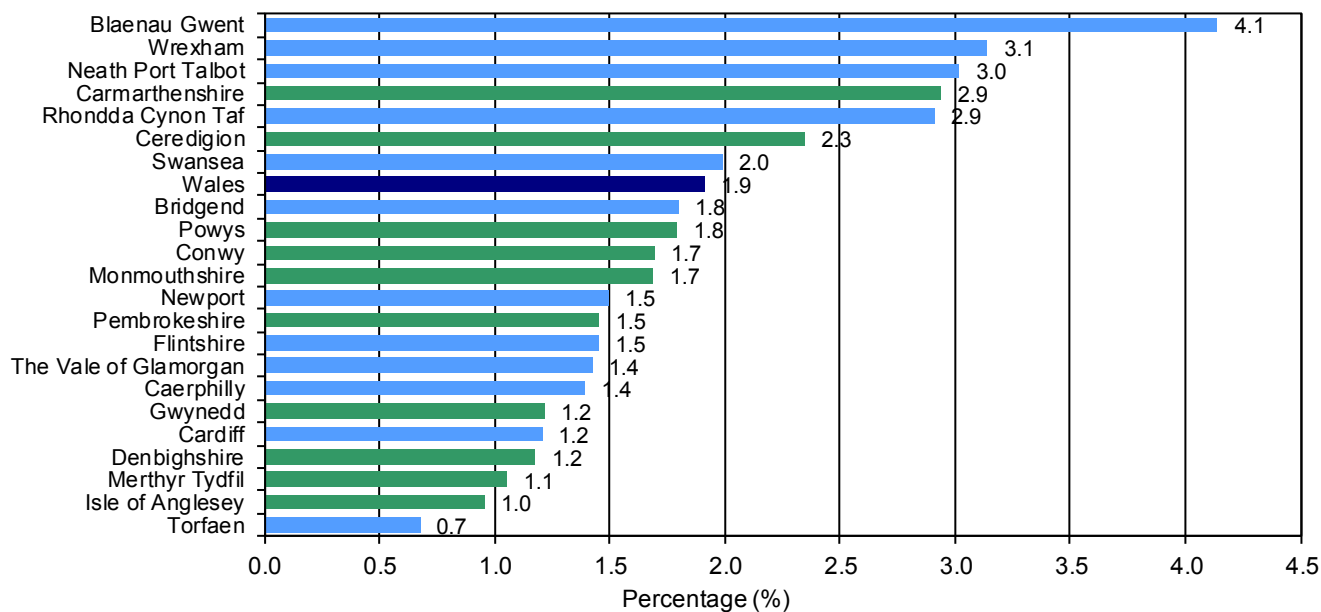
At 31 March 2016, most social housing stock (84 per cent) was general needs and the majority of vacant stock continued to be general needs housing stock at 74 per cent. The percentage of vacant general needs stock remained similar to 2014-15 as did the percentage of vacant sheltered housing, other supported, and non self contained housing, whilst the percentage of vacant extra care housing increased to 2 per cent.

The percentage of social housing that was vacant at 31st March 2016 varied across Wales, ranging from 4.1 per cent in Blaenau Gwent to 0.7 per cent in Torfaen. 15 of the 22 authorities recorded a percentage of vacant social housing below the Wales average of 1.9 per cent. As Chart 2 below shows, there is no particular pattern associated with rural or urban authorities.

Of those 11 local authorities who have transferred their stock, 4 transfer authorities had vacancy levels above the Wales average and 7 below ([Chart 2](#)).

Further details, including a list of the large scale voluntary transfers of local authority stock and dates of transfer to registered social landlords, are shown in the [Key Quality Information](#) section of the release.

Chart 2 - Percentage of social housing stock vacant at 31st March 2016, by local authority



Source: Annual social housing stock and vacancies returns

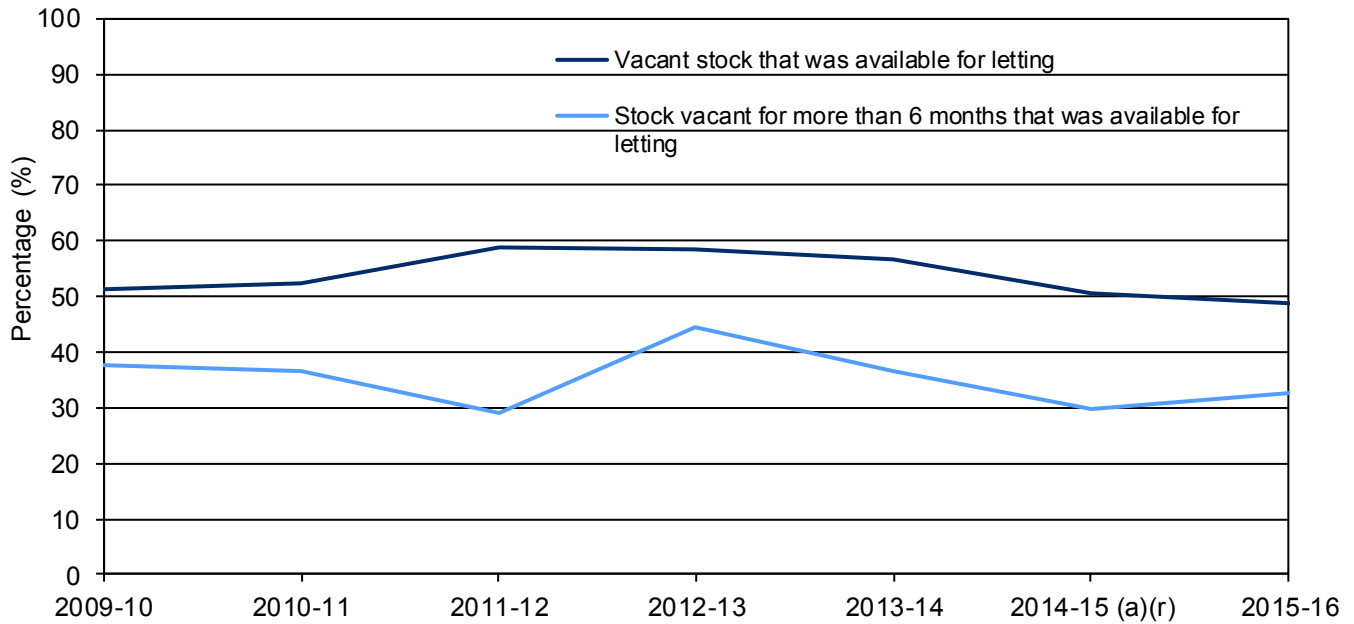
Note: Rural authorities are in green and urban authorities are in blue. Details of which authorities are in which group, can be found in the 'Key Quality Information' section at the end of this release.

2.1 Vacant social housing available for letting

Not all stock that is vacant at 31st March 2016 will be available for letting. Possible reasons why social housing stock may not be available for letting include the housing units undergoing or awaiting improvements, or awaiting sale or demolition.

The percentage of vacant social housing stock which was available for letting decreased to 49 per cent at 31st March 2016, compared with 50 (revised) per cent a year earlier. Across Wales, vacant stock available for letting varied between 97 per cent in Torfaen to 21 per cent in Wrexham.

Chart 3 - Percentage of vacant social housing stock available for letting at 31st March



Source: Annual social housing stock and vacancies returns

- (a) One local authority (Flintshire) was unable to submit data on vacancies in 2014-15. Therefore information provided by Flintshire for 2013-14 has been used to calculate a Wales total.
- (r) 2014-15 data has been revised since previously published

When looking at stock which has been vacant for more than 6 months, the percentage available for letting has been fluctuating in recent years. At 31st March 2016, 33 per cent were available for letting, up from 30 per cent a year earlier.

At a local authority level, this varied considerably. In Torfaen and the Isle of Anglesey, all of the stock which had been vacant for more than 6 months was available for letting. In Newport, however, none of the 78 social housing units which had been vacant for more than 6 months were available for letting and, similarly, in the Vale of Glamorgan none of the 20 social housing units vacant for more than 6 months were available for letting. A detailed data set for vacant social housing available for letting by local authority can be found on [StatsWales](#).

3. Social housing stock let and lettings

This section of the release covers the proportion of social housing let by landlord type and the number of lettings made to social housing tenants during the year. Whilst the amount of social housing stock let covers all housing units occupied by tenants, lettings relate to all lettings made to new tenants of local authorities and RSLs during the financial year, as well as re-lets, transfers and exchanges within their stock.

3.1 Social housing stock let

A total of 223,007 social housing units were let at 31st March 2016 which is 98 per cent of all social housing stock. The number of local authority social housing units let decreased slightly during the year, compared with a slight increase in the number of RSL units let. However the percentage of stock let remains at around 98 per cent for both local authorities and RSLs.

Table 2 - Social housing stock let, by type of social landlord (a)

| Type of Social landlord | Total number of social housing stock (a) | Total number of social housing stock let | Percentage (%) of social housing stock let |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Local Authorities: | | | |
| 2009-10 | 110,829 | 108,523 | 97.9 |
| 2010-11 | 88,826 | 87,384 | 98.4 |
| 2011-12 | 88,471 | 87,071 | 98.4 |
| 2012-13 | 88,333 | 86,747 | 98.2 |
| 2013-14 | 88,159 | 86,567 | 98.2 |
| 2014-15 | 87,891 | 86,280 | 98.2 |
| 2015-16 | 87,407 | 85,715 | 98.1 |
| RSLs: | | | |
| 2009-10 (b) | 113,660 | 112,066 | 98.6 |
| 2010-11 (c) | 136,733 | 134,590 | 98.4 |
| 2011-12 (c) | 137,181 | 134,658 | 98.2 |
| 2012-13 | 137,406 | 134,699 | 98.0 |
| 2013-14 | 138,110 | 135,390 | 98.0 |
| 2014-15 | 139,082 | 136,194 | 97.9 |
| 2015-16 | 139,940 | 137,292 | 98.1 |
| All social landlords: | | | |
| 2009-10 (b) | 224,489 | 220,589 | 98.3 |
| 2010-11 (c) | 225,559 | 221,974 | 98.4 |
| 2011-12 (c) | 225,652 | 221,729 | 98.3 |
| 2012-13 | 225,739 | 221,446 | 98.1 |
| 2013-14 | 226,269 | 221,957 | 98.1 |
| 2014-15 | 226,973 | 222,474 | 98.0 |
| 2015-16 | 227,347 | 223,007 | 98.1 |

Source: Annual social landlord stock and vacancies returns

(a) Stock includes self-contained and non self-contained units but excludes intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(b) Lettings figures for 2009-10 do not include Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies and stock figures shown for RSLs and all social landlords have been adjusted accordingly.

(c) For 2010-11, 2011-12 a landlord was unable to either submit data or to resolve validation errors and the best available estimate has been used. Further details are available in the 'Quality information' section.

3.2. Social housing lettings

New lettings² of social housing stock increased by 1 per cent during 2015-16 to 22,246 lettings. As in previous years, the majority of these (62 per cent) were via housing waiting lists³ which were also up by 1 per cent on the previous year (Table 3).

Lettings for households re-housed on a priority basis, due to being homeless were also up at 3,160 lettings. This was 4 per cent more than during 2014-15 and accounted for 14 per cent of all lettings (Table 3).

During 2015-16, there were a total of 5,369 transfers and exchanges, where existing tenants transfer within a social landlord's stock (transfer) or moves from another social landlord's stock (exchange), accounting for almost a quarter (24 per cent) of all lettings. Whilst the number of transfers was up by 7 per cent compared to 2014-15, the number of exchanges fell by 20 per cent.

Table 3 - Social housing lettings

| Social Housing Lettings | Housed from waiting list (a) | Re-housed on a priority basis due to homelessness | Transfers | Exchanges | Total |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| All social landlords: | | | | | <i>Number</i> |
| 2009-10 (b) | 12,869 | 4,480 | 3,724 | 1,576 | 22,649 |
| 2010-11(c) | 12,989 | 4,097 | 3,434 | 1,807 | 22,327 |
| 2011-12 (c) | 11,943 | 4,196 | 3,346 | 1,961 | 21,446 |
| 2012-13 | 11,948 | 3,663 | 3,665 | 2,216 | 21,492 |
| 2013-14 | 14,421 | 3,131 | 4,659 | 2,260 | 24,471 |
| 2014-15 | 13,516 | 3,051 | 3,602 | 1,892 | 22,061 |
| 2015-16 | 13,717 | 3,160 | 3,857 | 1,512 | 22,246 |
| | | | | | <i>Percentage</i> |
| 2009-10 (b) | 56.8 | 19.8 | 16.4 | 7.0 | 100.0 |
| 2010-11(c) | 58.2 | 18.3 | 15.4 | 8.1 | 100.0 |
| 2011-12 (c) | 55.7 | 19.6 | 15.6 | 9.1 | 100.0 |
| 2012-13 | 55.6 | 17.0 | 17.1 | 10.3 | 100.0 |
| 2013-14 | 58.9 | 12.8 | 19.0 | 9.2 | 100.0 |
| 2014-15 | 61.3 | 13.8 | 16.3 | 8.6 | 100.0 |
| 2015-16 | 61.7 | 14.2 | 17.3 | 6.8 | 100.0 |

Source: Annual social landlord stock and lettings returns

(a) Housed from the waiting list includes: Lettings from a landlord's or another waiting list; non-priority homeless; lettings resulting from a nomination from another landlord; and lettings resulting from resettlement/move-on strategies or disabled registers.

(b) Lettings figures for 2009-10 do not include Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies.

(c) For 2010-11, 2011-12 a landlord was unable to either submit data or to resolve validation errors and the best available estimate has been used. Further details are available in the 'Quality information' section.

² New lettings include lettings to new tenants, re-lets, transfers and exchanges.

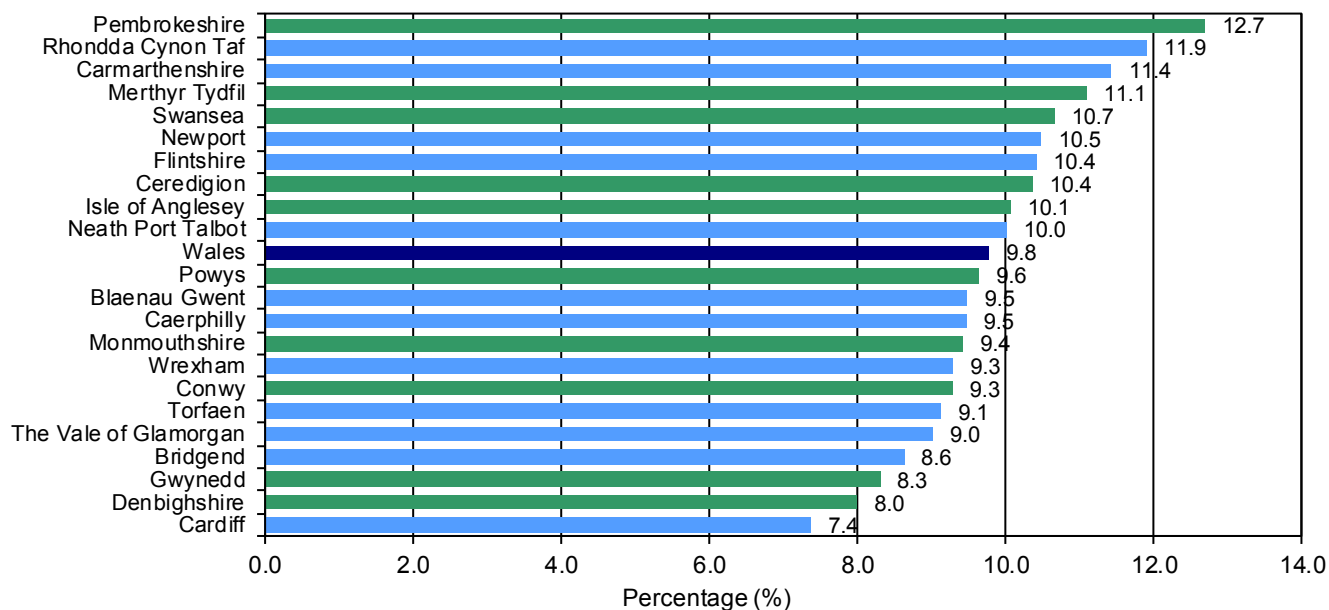
³ Includes lettings from a landlord's or another waiting list; non-priority homeless; lettings resulting from a nomination from another landlord; and lettings resulting from resettlement/move-on strategies or disabled registers.

Looking at the number of lettings per 100 units of social housing stock gives an indication of the turnover rate of social housing stock. At the local authority level, Swansea had the highest number of lettings (2,238) in 2015-16, whilst Pembrokeshire had the highest number of lettings per 100 units of stock at 12.7.

Ceredigion had the lowest number of lettings of social housing during 2015-16 (345) whilst Cardiff had the lowest number of lettings per 100 units of all social housing stock at 7.4. The social housing letting rate for Wales was 9.8 per 100 units of stock during 2015-16 (Chart 4).

In 10 of the 22 local authorities, the number of lettings per 100 units of stock was above the Wales average and there was no clear distinction between the urban and rural authorities (Chart 4).

Chart 4 – Social housing lettings per 100 units of social housing stock as at 31 March 2016, by local authority



Source: Annual social housing stock returns (Social Housing Stock data is available on [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/))

Note: Rural authorities are in green and urban authorities are in blue. Details of which authorities are in which group, can be found in the 'Key Quality Information' section at the end of this release.

At a Wales level, the majority of lettings during the year (62 per cent) were made to those on housing waiting lists and this was also the case across most of the 22 local authorities varying from 79 per cent in Blaenau Gwent to 43 per cent in Cardiff.

During 2015-16, Cardiff and Swansea had the highest rates of priority lettings to the homeless at 25 per cent followed by Bridgend at 24 per cent. During 2015-16, Cardiff had the second highest rate of households assessed as homeless per 10,000 households (under Section 73 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014) and the rate in Bridgend was also well above the Wales average whilst Swansea had the highest rate of households prevented from homelessness (under Section 66 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014). However, it is possible that households accepted as homeless or threatened with homelessness may not be re-housed on a priority basis in the same year, due to the timing of processes or households initially being placed in temporary accommodation.

Whilst Cardiff had the highest number of lettings through transfers and exchanges during 2015-16 at 613 lettings, the highest percentage was in Monmouthshire, where over a third (35 per cent) of all lettings were through transfers and exchanges.

During 2015-16, the Vale of Glamorgan had both the lowest number of lettings through transfers and exchanges (43 lettings) and the lowest percentage (7 per cent).

During 2015-16, 19 of the 22 local authorities had higher rates of transfers within their own stock than exchanges from other social landlords. Of the 3 local authorities with more exchanges than transfers, Cardiff had the highest percentage of exchanges which accounted for 21 per cent all its lettings during the year.

A full data set for social housing lettings by local authority is available on [StatsWales](#).

4. Social housing rent arrears

This section provides information on the number of social housing tenancies where there was a failure to pay the rent due at the appropriate time and therefore the tenancy would be in rent arrears at 31st March 2016. Tenancies refer to the tenancy agreements between an individual (or individuals, in the case of joint tenancies) and the social landlord. A tenancy, as referred to in this release, relates to the tenancy agreement for an individual social housing unit. It is not a count of the number of social housing tenants living in a property.

Both the number and the percentage of all social housing tenancies in rent arrears decreased slightly during 2015-16. At the end of March 2016, there were 73,469 (r) tenancies in arrears, accounting for just under a third (32.9 per cent) (r) of all social housing tenancies. This was a decrease of less than 1 per cent (r) per cent on the 73,556 (r) tenancies in arrears at the end of March 2015.

The increases in the number of social housing tenancies in arrears seen at the end of March 2014 and 2015 may have been influenced by welfare reforms in particular the changes to housing benefit legislation introduced in April 2013 (Table 4). Further information is available in the [key quality information](#) section.

Table 4 - Number of social housing tenancies in rent arrears at 31st March (a)

| Tenancies | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------|
| Local Authority: | | | | | | | |
| Number of tenancies | 108,523 | 87,384 | 87,071 | 86,747 | 86,567 | 86,280 | 85,715 |
| Tenancies in rent arrears | 33,442 | 26,804 | 26,986 | 26,800 | 29,308 | 29,584 | 29,071 |
| Percentage of tenancies in rent arrears | 30.8 | 30.7 | 31.0 | 30.9 | 33.9 | 34.3 | 33.9 |
| RSLs: | | | | | | | |
| Number of tenancies | 112,066 | 134,590 | 134,658 | 134,699 | 135,390 | 136,194 | 137,292 |
| Tenancies in rent arrears | 39,873 | 44,709 | 42,791 | 43,017 | 43,865 | 43,972 | 44,398 (r) |
| Percentage of tenancies in rent arrears | 35.6 | 33.2 | 31.8 | 31.9 | 32.4 | 32.3 | 32.3 (r) |
| All Social Housing: | | | | | | | |
| Number of tenancies | 220,589 | 221,974 | 221,729 | 221,446 | 221,957 | 222,474 | 223,007 |
| Tenancies in rent arrears | 73,315 | 71,513 | 69,777 | 69,817 | 73,173 | 73,556 | 73,469 (r) |
| Percentage of tenancies in rent arrears | 33.2 | 32.2 | 31.5 | 31.5 | 33.0 | 33.1 | 32.9 (r) |

Source: Annual rent arrears returns from local authorities and registered social landlords

(a) As at 31 March each year.

(b) The total number of tenancies is calculated as total stock minus vacant dwellings at 31 March. Total stock includes all self-contained and non self-contained units but excludes intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(r) Data has been revised since previously published; Tai Calon Community Housing previously recorded there were 1,432 tenancies in rent arrears in 2015-16. This figure has now been revised to 2,806 tenancies.

The revisions have affected the Wales totals and the corresponding percentages.

At a Wales level, the number of RSL tenancies in rent arrears at 31st March 2016 remains higher than the number of local authority tenancies in arrears. There are, however, more tenancy agreements with RSLs than with local authorities, particularly following the large scale voluntary transfer of local authority stock since 2008.

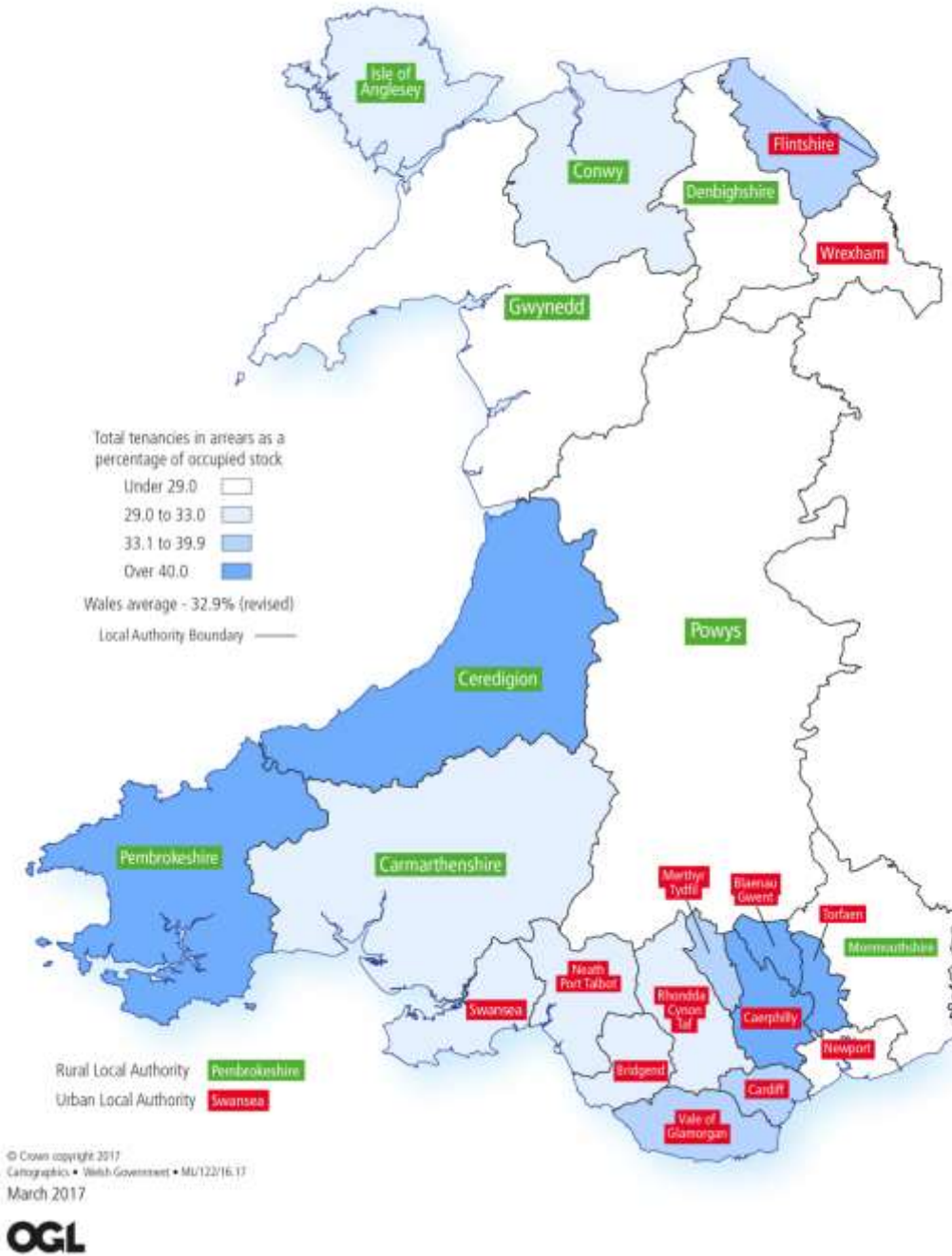
The percentage of local authority tenancies that were in rent arrears had remained relatively stable, prior to 2013-14 when it increased to 34 per cent. During 2015-16, whilst the number of local authority tenancies in arrears decreased by 2 per cent to 29,071 it continued to account for 34 per cent of all tenancies.

This was slightly higher than the percentage of RSL tenancies in rent arrears which remained at 32 per cent at 31 March 2016 ([Table 4](#)).

Across Wales, the highest percentage of social housing tenancies in arrears was seen in Ceredigion (45.7 per cent) and the lowest in Powys (20.9 per cent). There was considerable variation in the percentage of tenancies in arrears amongst both the rural and urban authorities with 13 authorities recording arrears below the Wales average of 32.9 per cent (r) and 9 above ([Map 1](#)).

Map 1

Percentage of social housing tenancies in arrears at 31 March 2016



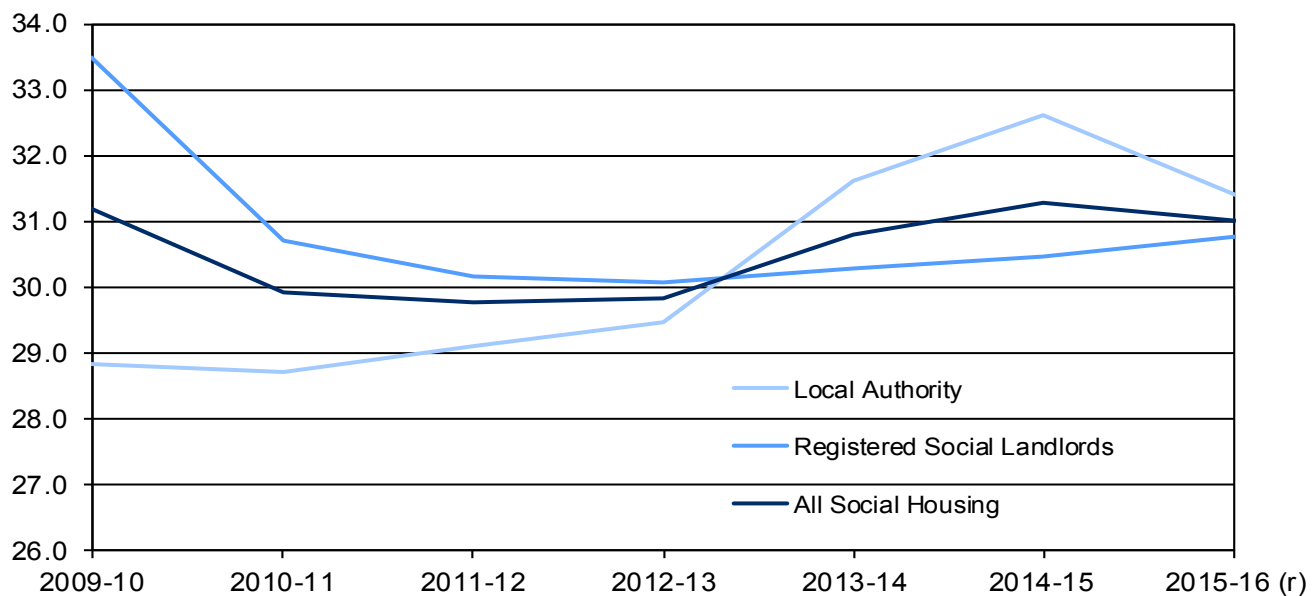
Source: Annual rent arrears returns from local authorities and registered social landlords
 (a) Arrears are shown for tenancies in self-contained and non self-contained units only. Arrears data is not collected for intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

4.1 Length of time of rent arrears

At 31 March 2016, 31.0 per cent (r) of all social housing tenancies had been in arrears for less than 13 weeks and 1.9 per cent (r) had been in arrears for 13 weeks or more. This represents a slight decrease in those social housing tenancies which have been in arrears for less than 13 weeks, but a slight increase for those in arrears 13 weeks or more.

The percentage of local authority tenancies in arrears for less than 13 weeks decreased by just over one percentage point compared to the previous year to 31.4 per cent. However a slight increase (r) was seen in the percentage of RSL tenancies in arrears for less than 13 weeks which rose to 30.8 percent (r) compared with 30.5 per cent a year earlier. Since 2013-14 a higher proportion of local authority tenancies have been in short term rent arrears of less than 13 weeks than was the case for RSL tenancies (Chart 5a).

Chart 5a – Percentage of all tenancies in rent arrears for less than 13 weeks at 31st March (a)(b)



Source: Annual rent arrears returns from local authorities and registered social landlords

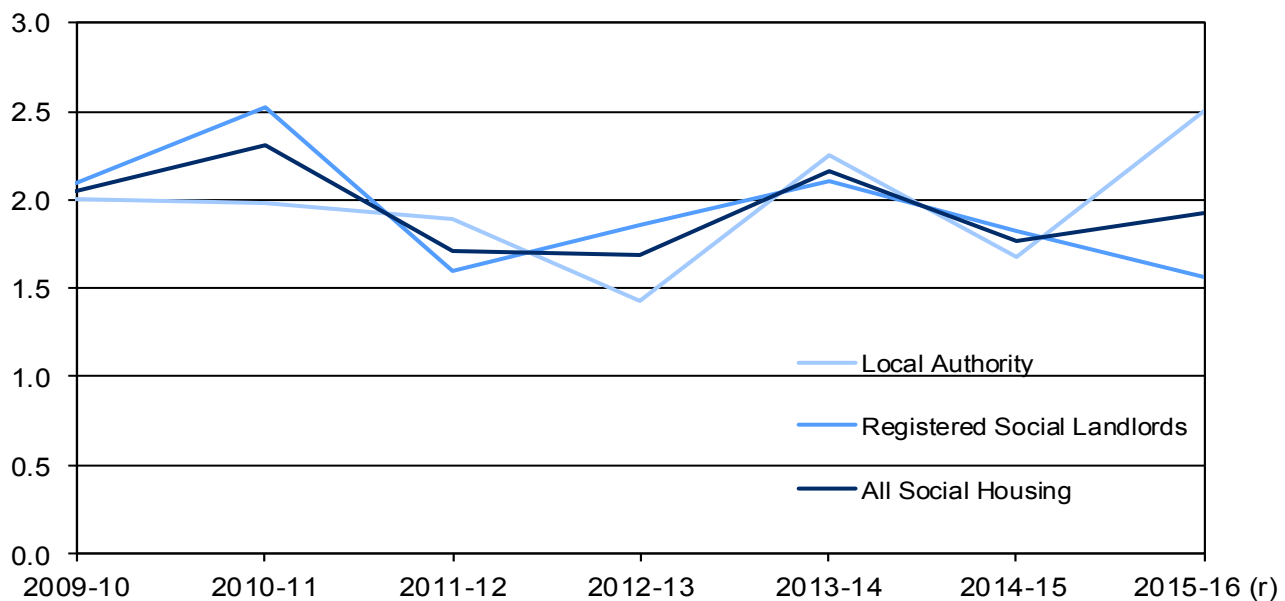
(a) Arrears are shown for tenancies in self-contained and non self-contained units only. Arrears data is not collected for intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(b) The total number of tenancies is calculated as total stock minus vacant dwellings. Total stock includes all self-contained and non self-contained units but excludes intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

Note the y axis does not start at 0

(r) Data has been revised since previously published; Tai Calon Community Housing previously recorded there were 1,432 tenancies in rent arrears in 2015-16. This figure has now been revised to 2,806 tenancies. The revisions have affected the Wales totals and the corresponding percentages.

Chart 5b – Percentage of all tenancies in rent arrears for 13 weeks or more at 31st March (a)(b)



Source: Annual rent arrears returns from local authorities and registered social landlords

(a) Arrears are shown for tenancies in self-contained and non self-contained units only. Arrears data is not collected for intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(b) The total number of tenancies is calculated as total stock minus vacant dwellings. Total stock includes all self-contained and non self-contained units but excludes intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(r) Data has been revised since previously published; Tai Calon Community Housing previously recorded there were 1,432 tenancies in rent arrears in 2015-16. This figure has now been revised to 2,806 tenancies.

The revisions have affected the Wales totals and the corresponding percentages.

At 31st March 2016, 2.5 per cent of local authority and 1.6 per cent (r) of RSL tenancies had been in rent arrears for 13 weeks or more. This represents an increase compared to the previous year in the percentage of local authority tenancies in arrears for 13 weeks or more but a slight decrease (r) in the percentage of RSL tenancies (Chart 5b).

At an individual local authority level, Cardiff (r) recorded the highest percentage of all social housing tenancies in longer term rent arrears of 13 weeks or more at 31 March 2016 at 5.2 per cent (r) whilst the lowest was recorded in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea at just 0.9 per cent (Table 5).

Table 5 below also covers the number of tenancies in arrears for more than 13 weeks as a percentage of all those tenancies that are in rent arrears. This shows that at 31 March 2016, the highest percentage of tenancies in arrears, where the arrears lasted for 13 weeks or more, was in Cardiff (14.3 per cent of all tenancies in arrears) (r) whilst the lowest percentage was in Pembrokeshire (2.5 per cent of all tenancies in arrears).

Table 5 - Rent arrears at 31st March 2016, by length of time and local authority (a)

| Local Authority | Total number of tenancies (b) | Percentage (%) of all tenancies in arrears for 13 weeks or more | Number of current tenancies in arrears at end of period | | | Of those in arrears, percentage (%) of tenancies in arrears for 13 weeks or more |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|------------------|-------------------|--|
| | | | Less than 13 weeks | 13 weeks or more | Total | |
| Isle of Anglesey | 4,669 | 2.8 | 1,361 | 129 | 1,490 | 8.7 |
| Gwynedd | 8,620 | 1.2 | 1,801 | 106 | 1,907 | 5.6 |
| Conwy | 6,158 | 2.2 | 1,654 | 137 | 1,791 | 7.6 |
| Denbighshire | 5,716 | 1.7 | 1,421 | 95 | 1,516 | 6.3 |
| Flintshire | 9,712 | 2.5 | 3,453 | 238 | 3,691 | 6.4 |
| Wrexham | 12,966 | 1.3 | 2,838 | 165 | 3,003 | 5.5 |
| Powys | 8,173 | 1.2 | 1,607 | 100 | 1,707 | 5.9 |
| Ceredigion | 3,248 | 1.3 | 1,441 | 42 | 1,483 | 2.8 |
| Pembrokeshire | 8,077 | 1.1 | 3,365 | 86 | 3,451 | 2.5 |
| Carmarthenshire | 11,867 | 2.0 | 3,637 | 240 | 3,877 | 6.2 |
| Swansea | 20,560 | 0.9 | 6,431 | 186 | 6,617 | 2.8 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 12,090 | 0.9 | 3,681 | 106 | 3,787 | 2.8 |
| Bridgend | 8,528 | 1.3 | 2,479 | 111 | 2,590 | 4.3 |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 6,587 | 1.4 | 2,214 | 89 | 2,303 | 3.9 |
| Cardiff | 25,041 | 5.2 | 7,777 | 1,293 | 9,070 | 14.3 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 14,962 | 1.4 | 4,461 | 211 | 4,672 | 4.5 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 5,821 | 2.1 | 2,088 | 121 | 2,209 | 5.5 |
| Caerphilly | 14,543 | 1.8 | 5,706 | 259 | 5,965 | 4.3 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 7,646 | 1.9 (r) | 3,317 (r) | 147 (r) | 3,464 (r) | 4.2 (r) |
| Torfaen | 9,857 | 1.6 | 4,301 | 157 | 4,458 | 3.5 |
| Monmouthshire | 5,303 | 2.0 | 1,240 | 108 | 1,348 | 8.0 |
| Newport | 12,863 | 1.2 | 2,910 | 160 | 3,070 | 5.2 |
| Wales | 223,007 | 1.9 (r) | 69,183 (r) | 4,286 (r) | 73,469 (r) | 5.8 (r) |

Source: Annual rent arrears returns from local authorities and registered social landlords

(a) Arrears are shown for tenancies in self-contained and non self-contained units only. Arrears data is not collected for intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(b) The total number of tenancies is calculated as total stock minus vacant dwellings at 31 March 2016. Total stock includes all self-contained and non self-contained units but excludes intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

(r) Data has been revised since previously published; Tai Calon Community Housing previously recorded there were 1,432 tenancies in rent arrears in 2015-16. This figure has now been revised to 2,806 tenancies. The revision has affected Blaenau Gwent's total and the corresponding percentages.

Key quality information

1. In addition to the information below, further information can be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#).

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

2. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information can be found at [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

3. Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).
4. The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

National Statistics status

5. The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.
6. It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Policy and operational context

7. The information on vacant dwellings and lettings is used to assess the effectiveness of social landlords in managing their stock and to gauge turnover rates for social housing. The information on rent arrears is used to monitor the number of social housing tenants in debt across Wales and to assess their requirement for advice and financial assistance. The information is used by the Welsh Government to monitor the effectiveness of policy including progress against the [National Housing Strategy](#) and for future policy development. The information may also be used to monitor the affect of welfare reform and recent changes to housing benefit.

Housing benefit

8. Since April 2011, a number of policy changes have been introduced which affect those residents of social housing in Wales who are in receipt of housing benefit. In April 2013, size criteria for new and existing working-age Housing Benefit claimants were introduced in the social rented sector, which means that working-age social housing tenants that are claiming Housing Benefit will see a reduction in their entitlement if they are deemed to be living in accommodation that is too large for their needs.

Users and uses

9. Generally the information is used for:
 - Monitoring housing trends;
 - Policy development;
 - Advice to Ministers;
 - Informing debate in the National Assembly for Wales and beyond; and
 - Geographic profiling, comparisons and benchmarking.
10. There are a variety of users of these statistics including national and local government, researchers, academics and students. For further information on the users and uses please refer to the the Housing Statistics Quality Report.

Data source and coverage

11. Information is collected annually via Excel spreadsheets downloaded from the Afon file transfer website, which provides a secure method for users to submit data. Copies of the [vacancies](#), [lettings](#) and [rent arrears](#) data collection forms are available.
12. Further information on the data processing cycle can also be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#) which is available on our website.
13. Data for 2015-16 were collected from all of the Local Authorities who retained stock at 31 March 2016 and all Welsh Registered Social Landlords at 31 March 2016, including Abbeyfield societies, Almshouse Charities and Co-ownership societies.

14. The proportion of social housing stock managed by registered social landlords will have been influenced by the large scale voluntary transfers of local authority stock. All transfers covered 100 per cent of the local authority housing stock. A list of the large scale voluntary transfers of local authority stock and dates of transfer to registered social landlords are shown below.

| Local authority | Date of transfer | Registered social landlord |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bridgend | 12 September 2003 | Valleys to Coast |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 10 December 2007 | RCT Homes |
| Monmouthshire | 17 January 2008 | Monmouthshire Housing |
| Torfaen | 01 April 2008 | Bron Afon Community Housing |
| Conwy | 29 September 2008 | Cartrefi Conwy |
| Newport | 09 March 2009 | Newport City Homes |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 20 March 2009 | Merthyr Valleys Homes |
| Ceredigion | 30 November 2009 | Tai Ceredigion |
| Gwynedd | 12 April 2010 | Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd |
| Blaenau Gwent | 26 July 2010 | Tai Calon Community Housing |
| Neath Port Talbot | 05 March 2011 | NPT Homes |

15. The information shown in the release excludes vacant dwellings where an offer of tenancy has been accepted, even if no rent is being paid at the end of the financial year.
16. Stock let covers all housing stock let at the end of the financial year. This is calculated by subtracting the number of vacancies from the social housing stock.
17. Lettings cover all new lettings during the financial year and include new lets, re-lets, transfers and exchanges.
18. Current tenants arrears is the gross indebtedness of the then current tenants, in respect of rent and excluding other landlord charges, included in the gross debit at the end of the financial year, not deducting payment received in advance, but deducting the following amounts:
- Amounts received but not applied to tenants' accounts, for example in respect of housing benefit or rebate.
 - Amounts receivable other than from tenants, for example from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
 - Other adjustments, for example amounts debited to tenants' accounts but not yet contractually payable by tenants.

19. The arrears amount for each account at the end of the year is divided by the weekly gross rent for that account to give the number of weeks in arrears.
20. Rent arrears data excludes arrears on garages and arrears for court costs or rechargeable repairs.
21. The local authority groupings used in the charts are as follows:

Rural authorities: Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire.

Urban authorities: Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Flintshire, Wrexham, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, The Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff and Newport.

Quality

22. Welsh housing statistics adhere to the Welsh Government's [Statistical Quality Management Strategy](#), and this is in line with the European Statistical System's six dimensions of quality, as listed in Principle 4 of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Further detail on how these are adhered to can be found in the [Housing Statistics Quality Report](#) which covers the general principles and processes leading up to the production of our housing statistics. The report covers various topics including definitions, coverage, timeliness, relevance and comparability.
23. More detailed quality information relating specifically to social housing vacancies, lettings and rent arrears, which is not included in the quality report, is given below.

Administrative data quality assurance

29. This release has been scored against the UK Statistics Authority Administrative Data Quality Assurance matrix. The matrix is the UK Statistics Authority regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data. The Standard recognises the increasing role that administrative data are playing in the production of official statistics and clarifies what producers of official statistics should do to assure themselves of the quality of these data. The toolkit that supports it provides helpful guidance to statistical producers about the practices they can adopt to assure the quality of the data they receive, and sets out the standards for assessing statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The matrix assesses the release against the following criteria:

- Operational context and administrative data collection
 - Communication with data supply partners
 - Quality assurance principles, standards and checks applied by data suppliers
 - Producer's quality assurance investigations and documentation.
30. Data are collected from local authorities and Registered Social Landlords via Excel spreadsheets. These are downloaded from the Afon file transfer website which provides a secure method for users to submit data.
 31. The spreadsheets allow respondents to validate some data before sending to the Welsh Government. Respondents are also given an opportunity to include contextual information where

large changes have occurred (e.g. data items changing by more than 10% compared to the previous year). This enables some data cleansing at source and minimises follow up queries.

32. Local authorities and Registered Social Landlords are notified of the data collection exercise timetable in advance. This allows adequate time for local authorities to collate their information, and to raise any issues they may have. There is guidance in the spreadsheet, which assists users on completing the form.
33. Examples of validation checks within the forms include year-on-year changes, cross checks with other relevant data tables and checks to ensure data is logically consistent. We pre-populate the forms with stock figures as an additional quality assurance check, and therefore if they include vacancies where they have not reported stock, an error is flagged.

Accuracy

34. During the 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2014-15 data collection and validation, some landlords were unable to either submit data or to resolve validation errors. Where this was the case, the best available estimate of the missing or incorrect data has been used. Whilst this should have only a small effect on data at a Wales level, care may be needed when using data for specific areas and providers.
35. On receipt of the data collection forms, the data collection team carry out secondary validation and worked closely with the different types of data providers to ensure information provided was accurate and on a consistent basis. Copies of the data collection forms for [vacant social housing](#), social housing [lettings](#) and social housing [rent arrears](#) can be found on the website.

Revisions

36. This release contains the final data for vacancies and lettings for the financial year 2015-16 and for rent arrears as at 31 March 2016. Revisions can arise from events such as late returns from a local authority or RSL or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information and resubmits this. Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes. In all of these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release.
37. Where changes are not deemed to be significant, i.e. minor changes, these will be updated in the following year's statistical release. However, minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to that next release.

Revised data is marked with an (r) in the statistical release

38. The data shown in this release for the number and percentage of social housing stock that was vacant as at 31 March 2015 has been revised since previously published following the receipt of revised data being provided by one registered social landlord, Gwalia Housing Group. Gwalia Housing Group previously recorded 61 self contained sheltered properties which were vacant for less than 6 months. This figure has now been revised to 22 properties. The revision has affected the Wales total as well as the corresponding percentages including the number and percentage of stock that were available for letting at 31 March 2015.

39. The data shown in this release for the number of registered social landlord tenancies as at 31 March 2015 as well as the number and percentage of those tenancies that were in rent arrears has been revised since previously published following the receipt of revised data Cynon Taf Community Housing Group. This registered social landlord had previously recorded 24 tenancies in rent arrears for 13 weeks or more. This figure has now been revised to 39 tenancies. The revision has affected the Wales total and the corresponding percentages.
40. The data shown in this release for the number of tenancies in rent arrears as at 31 March 2016 has been revised following the receipt of revised data from one registered social landlord. Tai Calon Community Housing previously recorded there were 1,432 tenancies in rent arrears in 2015-16. This figure has now been revised to 2,806 tenancies. The revisions have affected Blaenau Gwent's total as well as the Wales totals and the corresponding percentages.
41. We follow the [Welsh Government's statistical revisions policy](#).

Accessibility

42. A full set of social housing vacancies, lettings and rent arrears data, including information by individual local authority, individual RSL and property type and size, back to 2003-04 is available to download from our [StatsWales website](#).

Coherence with other statistics

43. Prior to April 2016, the National Strategic Indicator PSR/004 collected annual information from the 22 local authorities across Wales covering the total number of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April each year. It also collected information on the number and on the percentage of those vacant private sector dwellings that were returned to occupation during the year through direct action by the local authority. The data is available on our [StatsWales website](#).

Related statistics for other UK countries

Vacancies and lettings

England

44. England collect information on local authority owned stock and stock management via the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) return. The latest information is published in an [annual release and associated tables](#).
45. The LAHS is the source for information on local authority stock, whilst for stock owned by housing associations in England, the [Homes and Communities Agency Statistical \(HCA\) Data Return](#) (SDR, formerly the Tenant Services Authority's Regulatory Statistical Return) is the preferred data source.
46. The latest published information on [social housing lettings for 2014-15](#).

Scotland

47. The Scottish Government collect information on local authority housing stock, including information on lettings and vacancies via its [Housing Statistics Annual Return](#).

The Scottish Housing Regulator each year produces Performance tables based on information collected in the Annual Performance and Statistical Return (APSR), and Financial tables based on information input by RSLs from their audited accounts.

48. Information on social housing statistics, specifically:

- Stock – General needs; Special Needs; Low demand and vacant stock
- Social lets and rents

Can be accessed for both local authorities and RSLs via the Scottish Government's [Housing Statistics for Scotland](#) webpage.

Northern Ireland

49. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Social Development produces an [annual publication which brings together housing statistics](#) collected by the Department including statistics on social housing.

50. In Northern Ireland, council owned vacant figures are published at a national level in the Northern Ireland Housing Statistics publication. These figures are provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) but published alongside other tenures – including Housing Associations and the public sector. Lettings or allocations of Local Authority / council stock are also published at a local authority area level by Northern Ireland based on collections from NIHE for Northern Ireland. The local authority figures are an annual snapshot at 31 March.

Rent arrears

England

51. The [latest published data available for England](#).

Scotland

52. The latest published data available for Scotland can be accessed here:

- [LA data from the Housing Revenue Account returns by local authorities to the Scottish Government](#).
- RSL data from the [Scottish Housing Regulator Registered Social Landlord Annual Performance and Statistical Return](#).

Northern Ireland

53. The Department for Social Development in Northern Ireland publishes an [annual compendium on housing statistics](#).

This includes information on average weekly rents and levels of rent arrears.

Glossary

Exchanges

Lettings through exchanges involve units let to tenants of other social landlords through mutual exchanges during the financial year; and existing tenants enabled to move within the local authority's stock through mutual exchange agreements during the financial year.

Housed from the waiting list

This includes lettings from waiting lists, lettings to non-priority homeless, lettings resulting from a nomination from another landlord and lettings resulting from resettlement/move-on strategies or disabled registers.

New-let

A new-let is the letting of a dwelling that comes under registered social landlord or local authority management for the first time and will include newly built dwellings.

Re-let

A re-let is the lettings of an existing registered social landlord or local authority managed dwelling but does not include the renewal of a tenancy.

Tenancies

Tenancies refer to the tenancy agreements between an individual (or individuals in the case of joint tenancies) and the social landlord. The number of tenancies only includes the tenancy agreement for each individual social housing unit and not all social housing tenants living in that property.

The total number of tenancies shown in this release is calculated as total stock minus vacant dwellings at 31st March. Total stock includes all self-contained and non self-contained units but excludes intermediate tenures and tenures not at social rents.

Transfers

Lettings through transfers involve tenants transferring within the organisation's stock, i.e. where an existing tenant is transferred to another tenancy under the organisation's policy for transfers.

Further details

The document is available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/social-housing-vacancies-lettings-arrears/?lang=en>

Next update

Annual release March 2018.

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to

stats.housing@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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