SSP 29

Ymgynghoriad ar flaenoriaethau'r Pwyllgor Llywodraeth Leol a Thai ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd

Consultation on the Local Government and Housing Committee's priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Ymateb gan: Electrical Safety First

Response from: Electrical Safety First

1. Overview

1.1. Electrical Safety First is the leading charity committed to reducing the number of deaths, injuries and fires caused by electricity in the home. We welcome the re-establishment of the Local Government and Housing Committee and the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the priorities for the Committee during the Sixth Senedd.

1.2. Electrical Safety First believes the Committee should prioritise the following issues:

i. Ensuring the Welsh Government fulfils its commitment to introducing mandatory five-yearly electrical safety checks across the rented sectors. This could include inviting the Minister to give an update on the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.
ii. Considering how to address the electrical safety risks that may be associated with the net zero transition and aging housing infrastructure in Wales to ensure its effective implementation.

2. Electrical Safety Checks in the Rented Sectors

2.1. The Welsh Government has committed to introducing mandatory electrical safety checks in both the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and Social Rented Sector (SRS)[i]. However, it has been several years since this commitment was made and during this period 207,700 tenants[ii] are still not afforded this basic level of protection from electrical risk.

2.2. An electrical installation safety check carried out at intervals at least every five years and conducted by a registered electrician, competent in periodic inspection and testing, will identify most serious electrical hazards in any domestic dwelling[iii1]. These checks will also result in a report being issued that details the condition of the installation and any remedial works required to make it safe for continued use.

2.3. The benefits of mandatory five-yearly electrical safety checks are well recognised by Governments across the other nations of the UK. Currently, mandatory electrical safety checks are required by law in the PRS in England[iv] and Scotland[v]. These periodic checks are also in place in the SRS in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, legislation is currently passing through the Assembly which would mandate

electrical safety checks in the PRS[vi]. On this basis, it is vital that the Welsh Government fulfils its commitment to introducing electrical safety checks for renters in Wales. Tenants deserve the same protections regardless of their geographical location.

3. Decarbonisation of Homes in Wales

3.1. The Welsh Government has committed to a target of net zero by 2050[vii] which will mean an inevitable change to our housing stock and the way we use our energy. A net zero ready or future-proofed home is likely to consist of a highly insulated building fabric and include many technologies and solutions that are not commonplace within homes in Wales today. Features may include low carbon heating, on-site renewable electricity generation and highly efficient building services installed to make homes comfortable and functional, such as improved ventilation and lighting. It is also increasingly likely that many homes will have an electric vehicle and associated on-site charging.

3.2. Despite the importance of ensuring that electrical wiring is safe and capable of embracing low carbon solutions, the safety and capability of an electrical installation in a home is not captured by the national Welsh Housing Conditions Survey. As such, it is unclear what proportion of homes fail to meet the minimum standards due to the electrical wiring or whether homes can safely adopt low carbon technologies due to capacity constraints.

3.3. The Welsh Government must ensure that housing standard reporting contains references to the condition of electrical wiring and seek to understand capacity constraints. This would enhance their understanding of the suitability of building stock for the future and identify where improvements are needed to assist with planning net zero transition.

3.4. As a first step to considering the electrical safety risks associated with the transition to net zero, the Committee should consider the current preparedness of electrical installations in homes in Wales for future demands. This could form part of an inquiry by the Committee on the wider safety risks that may be associated with the transition to a low carbon future.

---

i https://record.senedd.wales/WrittenQuestion/82657
ii https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/property-market-wales-rental-mortgage-20261947
iii https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/find-an-electrician/periodic-inspection-explained/guide-to-condition-reports/
iv 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
v https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2016/12/electrical-installations-and-appliances-private-rented-properties/documents/guidance-electrical-installations-appliances-pdf/guidance-electrical-installations-appliances-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/SG%2BSTATUTORY%2BGUIDANCE%2BON%2BELECTRICAL%2BINSTALLATIONS%2BAND%2BAPPLIANCES%2BIN%2BPRIVATE%2BRENTED%2BPROPERTY%2B%2528updated%2B15%2BFeb%2B2021%2529.pdf
vi http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/legislation/bills/executive-bills/session-2017-2022/2private-tenancies/private-tenancies-bill---as-introduced---full-print-version.pdf
vii https://gov.wales/wales-commits-net-zero-2050-sets-out-ambitions-get-there-sooner