

# Public Document Pack



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To: Cllr Ian Dunbar (Chairman)

Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

20 September 2018

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee which will be held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 26th September, 2018 in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA to consider the following items

## A G E N D A

### 1 APOLOGIES

**Purpose:** To receive any apologies.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

**Purpose:** To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

### 3 MINUTES (Pages 3 - 16)

**Purpose:** To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 27 June and 17 July 2018.

### 4 SINGLE ACCESS ROUTE TO HOUSING (SARTH) (Pages 17 - 58)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing

**Purpose:** To consider the Allocations Policy for social housing

5 **WHQS CAPITAL PROGRAMME – DELIVERY REVIEW UPDATE** (Pages 59 - 110)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing

**Purpose:** To provide an update on progress of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), that the Council is delivering through its Capital Investment Programme

6 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE)** (Pages 111 - 118)

Report of Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

**Purpose:** To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Robins', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Robins  
Democratic Services Manager

## **COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** **27 JUNE 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 27 June 2018

### **PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)**

Councillors: Sian Braun, David Cox, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Dennis Hutchinson; and Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Aaron Shotton and Andy Dunbobbin attended as observers, together with Councillor Adrienne Jeorrett of Wrexham County Borough Council

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; and Service Manager, Enterprise & Regeneration

Service Manager, Housing Programmes and Councillor Sean Bibby, Deputy Chair of North East Wales (NEW) Homes (for minute number 13)  
Chief Executive and Senior Auditor (for minute number 15)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

### **10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **11. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2018 were submitted.

#### **Matters Arising**

Minute number 64: Year-end Council Plan 2017/18 Monitoring Report - as requested by Councillor Hardcastle, the Facilitator confirmed that an update on rent arrears would be incorporated in the report on homelessness scheduled for July.

Minute number 65: Forward Work Programme - the Facilitator agreed to follow up the request for a briefing note on tenants' Service Level Agreements to share with the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**12. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman indicated that there would be a slight change in the order of business to bring forward agenda item 6. The Service Manager, Housing Programmes, was due to leave the meeting early to travel to a national awards ceremony where the Council's Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP) had been nominated in the Best Social Housing Development category. The Chairman commended the achievements of the programme in the provision of high-quality housing.

**13. NORTH EAST WALES (NEW) HOMES BUSINESS PLAN 2018/27**

The Service Manager, Housing Programmes, introduced a report on the North East Wales (NEW) Homes Business Plan 2018/27 which had been approved by Cabinet in May. The report detailed progress on the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP) and the process for approving new lending to NEW Homes for the development or purchase of affordable homes. The Business Plan - which was included as a confidential appendix on the agenda - detailed housing to be developed through the SHARP programme, Section 106 properties and potential properties acquired through borrowing against existing assets.

As Deputy Chair of NEW Homes, Councillor Sean Bibby provided an overview of the key points. He referred to the financial appraisal requirements and commented on positive working relationships between partners to facilitate the delivery of high-quality housing at affordable rents. An update was also given on the managed lettings service which contributed towards the Council's corporate objective on the provision of affordable housing in the private sector.

In response to a question from Councillor Dolphin, the Service Manager explained the approach to managed lettings and advised that no major repairs to properties had been required to date. He added that the practice of undertaking quarterly inspections helped to identify any issues at an early stage.

Councillor Attridge commented on the effectiveness of the high-intensity management programme by NEW Homes to deal with tenancy issues.

In welcoming the positive report, Councillor Hardcastle thanked the Service Manager and his team for their achievements.

Councillor Paul Shotton said it was pleasing to note the affordability of rent levels set by NEW Homes and that new regulations on letting fees could be of benefit.

Councillor Ron Davies praised the partnership with the appointed contractors, Wates, who were providing an excellent service.

Councillor Palmer asked if the Committee could be represented on the NEW Homes Board. The Service Manager explained the composition of the Board which included cross-party representation from five Members.

Councillor Attridge alluded to the former Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) as a key driver in the establishment of the new company, along with the Service Manager and his team. He spoke about the prospect of future growth of the company.

**RESOLVED:**

That the NEW Homes Business Plan 2018/27 be noted.

**14. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

In presenting the current Forward Work Programme for consideration, the Facilitator referred to a special meeting in Flint on 17 July to consider the Food Poverty Strategy, details of which would be confirmed by email. She also advised that the meeting scheduled for 19 September would need to be moved to 26 September.

Councillor Dolphin requested an item on enforcement of rental agreements and checking of properties. Councillor Attridge advised that this could be covered in a report on housing management in general.

Councillor Hardcastle asked whether the practice of estate walkabouts could be reinstated - where local Members were invited to accompany officers carrying out checks on properties in their ward. Councillor Attridge said that this work was the responsibility of Housing Officers.

During discussion, Members spoke about their individual experiences of reporting housing issues.

Following comments by Councillor Ron Davies, Councillor Attridge said that the issue of discarded supermarket trolleys had been raised at the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He agreed that a copy of the briefing note would be shared after the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme, as amended, be approved; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

**15. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017**

The Senior Auditor presented the report summarising the findings of the 2017 Internal Audit report into the operation of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) scheme and the management responses being put in place to address these findings.

She explained that the scope of the audit covered the administration of the scheme from the tender stage through to completion of work, asking Members to note that the service had been through period of transition. The areas highlighted for improvement were detailed in the report, along with the management control action plan which had been developed to respond to the findings.

The Service Manager, Enterprise & Regeneration provided explanation on a number of processes which were being rolled out to strengthen controls and compliance. These would also enable a better understanding of timescales to help improve performance against targets. Progress on other actions included a new procurement framework to speed up the process, hold contractors to account and achieve value for money. The establishment of a professional oversight board would help to review processes and monitor progress on the action plan. The Audit Committee had accepted the findings of the report and had scheduled an update in six months' time, therefore it was suggested that this Committee may wish to consider an update at a later stage.

The Chief Executive cited the key issue as performance and he gave assurance that the report had been of particular concern and demonstrated the value of audit work. Due to concerns about the ownership and speed of responses to the findings, the professional oversight board had been set up to give a good response to the findings and were now tasked with reviewing and improving processes through a well-managed leaner mechanism and to seek improvement in performance and Flintshire's ranking on DFGs over the longer term. A commitment had been given to show transparency of work and to review roles and responsibilities involving both Housing and Social Services.

Councillor Attridge agreed that the findings of the report were of concern and were being addressed within the action plan, and that the Audit Committee had been content with progress to date. He went on to give a commitment to seek an improvement in the DFG service which was a long-standing issue.

Councillor Palmer spoke about the need to maximise opportunities for local companies. Officers explained that the procurement framework would allocate work to local and regional companies.

In response to remarks by Councillor Dolphin on previously adapted Council owned properties that were now void, the Service Manager gave assurance that there was a process in place for reviewing options and matching up with the most appropriate applicant. He also responded to a similar query by Councillor Hardcastle on recycling stair lifts removed from properties to be used by others in need.

The Service Manager provided clarification to Councillor Paul Shotton on relocation grants and top-up loans which were available for more complex DFGs exceeding the £36K threshold - neither of which were widely requested.

During discussion, Councillor Attridge suggested that the Committee receive the same update report as the Audit Committee in six months' time. The Chief Executive agreed and said that to give further assurance to Members, progress would also be reported as part of the Council Plan monitoring report.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the content of the Disabled Facilities Grants Internal Audit report and the service control action plan be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee receives an update report in six months' time following consideration of the service control action plan by the Audit Committee.

**16. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the press and one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.05am)

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**Chairman**

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**COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE O &S COMMITTEE**  
**17 JULY 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in The Old Court House Café, Flint on Tuesday 17 July 2018

**PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)**

Councillors: Sian Braun, Jean Davies, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, George Hardcastle, Ted Palmer, Mike Reece, Paul Shotton and David Wisinger

**SUBSTITUTE:** Councillor Patrick Heesom (for Ray Hughes)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Adele Davies-Cooke

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Christine Jones, Cabinet Member for Social Services; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management; Chief Officer (Housing and Assets); Benefits Manager; Customer Support Manager; Commissioning Officer; Systems and Training Team Leader and Modern Apprentice  
Mr. Robbie Davison, Can Cook was in attendance prior to the start of the meeting

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Support Officer

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Benefits Manager introduced Mr. Robbie Davison from Can Cook to the meeting, who were currently supplying the Good Food Hubs in Flintshire. Mr. Robbie Davison thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address Members and provided a brief overview of Can Cook and a general overview of food aid/food poverty. It was proposed that Can Cook would provide between 650 and 700 free meals to children across Flintshire during the summer holidays.

Councillor George Hardcastle asked if Can Cook provided meals for homeless people and rough sleepers. Whilst the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing advised that there were no rough sleepers in Flintshire, Mr. Robbie Davison explained that the clear focus for Can Cook was to work directly with people who use food banks to ensure that they had access to fresh meals and across Liverpool 39,000 meals had been provided through this channel.

In response to a question around how the Holiday Hunger Programme was being funded, the Benefits Manager explained that the majority of the funding had been provided by Travis Perkins as part of their Legacy Fund – Community Payback. Cllr Rosetta Dolphin suggested that a letter be sent to Travis Perkins on behalf of the Committee thanking them for the funding provided. This was supported by the Committee. Councillor Paul Shotton suggested that the Deeside Business Forum be approached to request donations for future programmes.

In response to a question around food allergies, Mr Davison explained that on the first day of the playscheme children would have to submit completed consent forms which included a question on any food allergies. Once this information had been collated the food provided would be adapted to accommodate those allergies, which included the availability of vegetarian and gluten free options.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Mr Davison for the opportunity to sample the food which would be provided to children over the summer, which had been excellent and for his attendance and answering questions from Members.

## **17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **18. FOOD POVERTY STRATEGY**

The Benefits Manager introduced the Food Poverty Strategy report which outlined the strategic priority of working towards addressing food poverty.

The draft Strategy, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report, had recently been presented and adopted by the Public Services Board (PSB) and would be published shortly. Flintshire's Public Service Board supported the development of partnership initiatives aimed at the reduction of poverty within the County and recently endorsed the development and implementation of a Community Benefit Strategy which covered a range of strategic priorities, as detailed within the report.

As outlined within the report, there was clearly a high degree of agreement between the challenges and objectives identified by the multi-agency board and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), as well as the positive work currently undertaken by individual organisations in the community, e.g. food banks. Given the level of work currently on going within the County and the strategic and aspirational symmetry between the Flintshire's multi-agency PSB and BCUHB, there was a need to explore and agree collective next steps and the contributions partners would make in achieving the goals associated with the reduction of food poverty.

The Benefits Manager outlined a number of key deliverables for year one, as set out within the report. One of the key deliverables was the introduction of the Holiday Hunger Programme which would be rolled out over the school summer holidays. Details of the Programme had been provided by Mr. Robbie Davison to the Committee prior to the start of the meeting.

In conclusion, the Benefits Manager reported that Flintshire had taken the lead in developing an alliance for North Wales to help better understand the regional issues around food poverty and food insecurity. It was hoped that engagement across the region in tackling these issues through sharing best practice; learning from experience and working cross sector would be considered during a food poverty conference to be held in North Wales in September, 2018.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members for Housing thanked the Benefits Manager for the report but outlined his sadness at the need for such a report and the

number of families across Flintshire who were in food poverty. He commented on the launch of the Holiday Hunger Programme which would be held on 19<sup>th</sup> July and hoped that the initiatives set out within the report would end food poverty, not just for children, but for unemployed people and pensioners in the future.

The Cabinet Members for Corporate Management said that as a Board Member for NEWydd who provided healthy school meals during term time he was pleased to see a scheme being provided during the school summer holidays for children to access healthy hot meals. The Cabinet Member for Social Services congratulated the Benefits Manager and her team and was pleased to see the joint working with the multi-agency PSB and BCUHB. She referred to the requirements which had been placed on Local Authorities by the Children's Commissioner to tackle child poverty and was pleased that the Council's initiatives were meeting those requirements and those within the Older People's Strategy also.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin questioned the value for money given the cost of some of the meals and said that families and pensioners may be reluctant to pay for the cost of the meals. She also asked if furniture and equipment were being provided at the Community Food Hubs. The Benefits Manager explained that she had not seen the meals in question but said that as the Council had not introduced such a scheme previously, feedback on pricing would be essential for future schemes. Pricing had been set in comparison with the largest similar food supplier and whilst the prices were comparable, the meals provided through the Council did not include additives or sugar and are not frozen but remain fresh in the fridge for 4-7 days. Also rather than the food being delivered to homes, the principle behind the scheme was to bring communities together. She also advised that opportunities were being looked into to access equipment via community funds.

Councillor Paul Shotton welcomed the report, in particular the collaborative work which had been carried out but raised concerns around reports that supplies at food banks were running low due to increased demand. He commented on a scheme which had been introduced in Yorkshire where food nearing its expiry date was distributed to those in need and also the gardens at Pen Y Llan, Connah's Quay where residents were growing their own vegetables.

Councillor Ron Davies commented on a similar provision for hot meals provided at Riverside Church, Shotton and asked if they could be contacted to expand their current scheme. The Benefits Manager advised that focus was currently on raising the profile of the Community Food Hubs and Holiday Hunger Programme but it was hoped that organisations across Flintshire would contact the Council to allow the schemes to link and grow in the future. She said that she was confident that there were many excellent schemes already in place across Flintshire, especially within the third sector.

Councillor George Hardcastle concurred with previous comments made and thanked the Benefits Manager for a positive report. He asked whether the number of meals required each day had been estimated. The Benefits Manager explained that the Programme planned to deliver 800 hot meals per day over 20 play scheme sites over the school summer holiday period. The figures had been based on last year's

play scheme attendance figures but a 30% increase had been factored in to ensure all children attended had access to a hot meal.

In response to a question from Councillor Sian Braun, the Benefits Manager confirmed that the Holiday Hunger Programme would be available to play scheme aged children but any feedback received from the Programme would be taken into consideration for next year's provision.

Councillor Mike Reece suggested a notice be placed in Member's Services asking Members for donations towards the Holiday Hunger Programme. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee continue to support the ongoing work to address food poverty and food insecurity in Flintshire.

**19. UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HOMELESS LEGISLATION WITHIN THE HOUSING (WALES) ACT 2014**

The Customer Support Manager introduced a report which provided an update on how the requirements of the new Homelessness Legislation within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 were being met and some of the projected challenges that faced the Council.

In 2017/18 the Council saw an increase in the number of households presenting at risk of homelessness and increased use of temporary accommodation. The Council was committed to prevent rough sleeping and had worked to model the services and grant funding to mitigate the risk of increased temporary accommodation costs, as detailed within the report. The focus of the Housing Options Team, wherever possible, was to prevent homelessness and enable a household to remain in their home and to achieve a successful homeless prevention outcome the service needed a supply of housing options that were affordable, and could be made available to households accessing the service. The shortage of available options had been highlighted as a growing issues within the Flintshire Homeless Review and would be a focus of the action plan and the initiatives, as detailed within the report.

The Customer Support Manager provided a detailed update on the challenges facing the Council, as outlined within the report, which focused around:-

- The Social Housing Register;
- Increasing the Availability of Private Rented Sector Properties;
- Interim Accommodation;
- Preventing Rough Sleepers;
- Single Households; and
- Vulnerable and Complex Needs

In conclusion, the Customer Support Manager reported that in June 2016, the Heads of Housing of all six North Wales Local Authorities together with the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru, undertook a commitment to work together to develop a

regional homelessness strategy. The strategic approach, as detailed in the report would be presented to Cabinet at the end of the current financial year as the Regional Homelessness Strategy and each North Wales Local Authority was developing its own local action plan based on the priorities of the regional strategy.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) commented on the need to increase the availability of Private Rented Sector properties and advised that the Council needed to be mindful of construction works starting at Wylfa Newydd, Anglesey which could have a negative impact on private rented accommodation if there wasn't enough availability in Anglesey and Conwy. He said that it was vital that house building continued across Flintshire through the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP) as the Council remained one of the few Local Authority's building new social housing accommodation.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing advised that Cabinet had considered the report in the morning but any comments from Members during the meeting would be fed back to Cabinet and taken on board. He advised that the Council provided support to people who presented themselves as homeless through the provision of temporary accommodation but it was important that Welsh Government continued to provide funding to ensure the continued use of temporary accommodation.

The Chairman welcomed the reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Councillor George Hardcastle echoed the comments and congratulated the Customer Support Manager and her team for achieving this reduction.

Councillor Paul Shotton raised concerns around the 39% increase of people presenting themselves as homeless due to changes to the welfare system and on a recent study which had been carried out that showed that 75% of tenants were in debt due to the introduction of Universal Credit. He welcomed the work being undertaken by the Customer Support Manager and her team to mitigate these challenges and asked how many private landlords across Flintshire had registered with Rent Smart Wales. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing suggested that the Facilitator contact the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) to provide a response on the number of landlords registered with Rent Smart Wales. The Chief Officer confirmed that tenants were only placed in private accommodation where the landlords were registered with Rent Smart Wales.

Councillor Patrick Heesom said that he welcomed the comprehensive report which he felt addressed how the issues around the increase in the number of households presenting themselves at risk of homelessness. He referred to the Chief Officer's comments on ensuring the future of the SHARP which he felt was critically important and ensuring the need for an appropriate affordable housing supply, but raised concerns around developers finding loopholes which saw them providing less affordable housing than needed through submitting a number of development applications on the same site. He said that there was a need for the Council to develop a closer working relationship with private landlords and sought an assurance that the Regional Homeless Strategy would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee prior to approval by Cabinet.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing assured the Committee that the Regional Homeless Strategy would be presented to Scrutiny prior to adoption at Cabinet. He said that he agreed with the comments around closer working relationships with private landlords and said that together with the Chief Officer, he was working on further developing the Landlord Forum.

In response to a question from Councillor Heesom around the Triage Service, the Customer Support Manager explained that everyone was treated equitably and when letters were sent out to applicants details of the appeals process were provided.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin agreed with previous comments and said that the Council needed to focus its attention on the SHARP. She referred to 'hard to let' properties in her own ward and suggested that they be re-modelled to one or two bedroomed properties which were most needed. The Chief Officer agreed with the suggestion and commented on the issues which had arisen following the introduction of the 'bedroom tax'. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing said that there was also a shortage of larger properties in some areas of the County and commented that there was a need for affordable housing developments across all communities in Flintshire.

Councillor Heesom commented on the increase in planning applications for Houses of Multiple Occupancy across Flintshire and raised concerns around private landlords housing 5/6 people but paying council tax for only one property. He said that this matter needed to be addressed. He also suggested that the Council needed to work more closely with multi-national building developers to ensure larger developments of affordable homes. The Chief Officer commented that Waites, who were delivering SHARP were a national building development company but said that it was important to acknowledge the contribution smaller building development companies made in providing good homes.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the update on the management of the new legislation within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 be noted;
- (b) That the emerging themes within the Regional Homeless Strategy, and challenges that the Council had faced finding suitable housing options for households and the plans to mitigate further risks be supported;
- (c) That the proposals to alleviate homelessness in the County be supported; and
- (d) That the Regional Homeless Strategy and Action Plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, for consideration, prior to adoption by Cabinet.

**20. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.15 pm)

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**Chair**

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## COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
<b>Report Subject</b>	Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH)
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Strategic

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) is a partnership project between all the major social landlords in North East Wales, covering the local authority areas of Conwy County Borough, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

SARTH introduced a banding allocation system and a policy that shifted away from a focus purely on social housing towards one which provides advice on realistic housing options.

SARTH went live in Flintshire in April 2015 and following a successful bid the Council has hosted SARTH for Denbighshire from April 2017.

The Council manages the housing register on behalf of Denbighshire County Council. This includes the housing solutions triage as well as managing the social housing register. The Council are developing new contracts for Denbighshire County Council and the partners with revised performance targets.

Demand for the social housing register has grown over the past three years. This is putting increasing pressure on the management of the register and leading to increased wait times for properties.

A review of the policy was carried out in 2017 following a year of operation. The review was necessary to ensure the policy was compliant with new legislation. It also allowed any issues raised to be addressed and to develop the policy into a more user friendly document.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To continue to support the management of the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) policy in Flintshire
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## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SARTH POLICY</b>
1.01	<b>Background</b>
1.02	SARTH is a partnership project between all the major social landlords in North East Wales, covering the local authority areas of Conwy County Borough, Denbighshire and Flintshire.
1.03	In addition to the above Councils, the partnership also includes Cartrefi Conwy, Clwyd Alyn, Grwp Cynefin, North Wales Housing, Wales and West and Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd housing associations.
1.04	The SARTH policy introduced a banding allocation system and a policy that moved away from a focus purely on social housing and more towards providing advice on realistic housing options. The regional policy was developed in recognition that there is a high demand for rented homes in the region and too few vacant properties to meet demand.
1.05	It was agreed that partners will provide the best, most useful, consistent and accessible advice and information to everyone who approaches them looking for housing. The aim is to enable customers to make the most informed choice about how to find a home to meet their needs. This advice covers a whole range of affordable housing options, including social housing, private rented accommodation, home ownership and other alternatives.
1.06	The policy provides the following commitment:  <i>“All partners in the region will allocate housing stock in a transparent, fair, consistent and accessible way, which prioritises the people in our communities according to their housing needs and which meets our legal requirements. Working together in this way, partners can share strengths and good practice and place the customer at the heart of everything we do.”</i>
1.07	SARTH went live in Flintshire in April 2015 and following a successful bid. The Council has hosted SARTH for Denbighshire from April 2017.
1.08	<b>New Policy</b>
1.09	A review of the SARTH policy was carried out in 2017 following the first year of operation. The review identified that the policy required updating to ensure compliance with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
1.10	The allocation policy is principally governed by The Housing Act 1996 and the Code of Guidance for Homelessness and Allocations 2016 and Welsh Statutory Instruments 2014 No. 2603 (w. 257) – Housing Wales – The Allocation of Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014. Other relevant legislation includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of Information Act 2000</li> <li>• Equalities Act 2010</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Care and Well Being Act 2014</li> <li>• Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014</li> <li>• Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015</li> </ul>
1.11	A review of issues raised at the operational panel and steering group established that there were no significant changes required to any of the key principles of the policy.
1.12	<p>The requirement for an updated policy provided an opportunity to develop a document that is easier to read and understand. The policy (attached at appendix one) sets out the key commitment of the partners to a common regional approach to social housing allocations. There are three main sections within the policy:</p> <p><u>Part one</u> - policy statement including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aims and objectives</li> <li>• equality information</li> <li>• legal context;</li> <li>• commitment to preference and choice;</li> <li>• how the application will be handled;</li> <li>• eligibility for the register;</li> <li>• how to apply and how to review decisions.</li> </ul> <p><u>Part two</u> - the banding scheme;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how applications are prioritised.</li> <li>• circumstances in which additional preference is given</li> <li>• circumstances where an application may be given reduced priority.</li> </ul> <p><u>Part three</u> - allocation of properties;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• matching a household to a property;</li> <li>• making an offer;</li> <li>• offer refusals</li> <li>• specialist housing requirements.</li> </ul>
1.13	<b>Regional Collaboration</b>
1.14	A regional panel has been in place from the outset to maximise the benefit of collaboration through the SARTH partnership. The panel is formed of operational managers from each partner. The primary purpose of the panel is to ensure consistency in the application of the policy across the three counties and to review complaints and appeals from applicants.
1.15	The panel has been instrumental in addressing wider topics than the register such as approaches to changes in legislation and issues arising from welfare reform. The panel led the review of the policy to ensure that policies and working practices remain compliant.
1.16	The SARTH steering group includes senior officer representatives from all partner organisations across all three counties. The group meets on an ad-hoc basis to serve as an escalation point for strategic issues arising out of the panel. The group has further developed partnership arrangements

	between landlord organisations across the region and agreed spend of the regional SARTH budget for IT developments such as Flintshire's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) integration and staff support where necessary.
1.17	Flintshire has been managing the triage and housing register for Denbighshire since they went live in April 2017. There are many tangible benefits of Flintshire hosting both registers including consistency of approach, reduced management and ICT costs and an income stream for Flintshire. The Council receives £74,345 from external partners for delivering this service.
1.18	Flintshire's legal department are drafting contracts for Denbighshire and the other partners which will meet all the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and include detailed performance targets expected from the Council as host for both Flintshire and Denbighshire.
1.19	<b>Social Housing Demand</b>
1.20	In 2017/18, there were 3495 triage applications completed for customers approaching for housing assistance which represents a 3.9% increase in enquiries when compared to the same reporting period in 2016/17.
1.21	The numbers on the social housing register are increasing and as such waiting times for properties are becoming longer. There were 960 households on the list in April 2016, this increased to 1,478 in April 2017 and increased again to 1,649 in April 2018. The households that were let properties in quarter four of 2017/18 for one, two and three bedroom properties had been waiting on average between twelve to eighteen months to be allocated a property.
1.22	The current process for administrating applications is manual and extremely labour intensive and this was becoming a pressure as volumes increased. Work is currently underway to introduce automation of the process which will streamline processes and allow the limited resources available to focus on the more critical aspects of the service. This is a high priority action for the service and we expect CRM integration to be complete in the Autumn which brings further benefits such as improved housing demand information.
1.23	The chart below shows the breakdown of all the applicants on the register by their band. It is expected that the vast majority of cases will be in band two (B2) which is for applicants with a local connection and a housing need. Band one (B1) applicants are those with an extreme urgent need and Band three and four (B3 and B4) are for applicants with no local connection or those who have had their banding reduced as a result of their behaviour, not addressing rent arrears or it has been identified that they have adequate resources to resolve their own housing need.

	<table border="1"> <caption>Data for Line Graph</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>B1</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B2</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B3</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B4</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Percentage	B1	5%	B2	75%	B3	0%	B4	15%	
Category	Percentage											
B1	5%											
B2	75%											
B3	0%											
B4	15%											
1.24	<b>Audit Update</b>											
1.25	<p>An audit of SARTH was undertaken during September 2017 as part of the approved Internal Audit Plan for 2017/18. This was a follow up to an audit on Housing Allocations undertaken in 2016/17. A report was brought to Overview and Scrutiny committee in January 2018 to update on progress with recommendations which showed that all urgent actions had already been implemented. Outstanding actions reported at the time have been completed within the agreed timescale.</p>											
1.26	<p>A key area of work was the need to develop updated and more comprehensive operational guidance and procedure documents that sit beneath the policy for staff involved in the management of the register and housing allocations. Comprehensive guidance and procedures have been finalised. A robust implementation process is being rolled out providing small group training sessions for all staff that have any part managing the register or making allocations. This is mandatory training which will improve consistency, ownership and engagement across the teams.</p>											
1.27	<b>Specialist Housing</b>											
1.28	<p>The vast majority of applicants' housing need will be met from the available housing stock. However, some applicant households require properties to meet needs arising from disability or household size; for example, to accommodate wheel chairs, fit bed hoists, stair lifts and accessible bathing rooms and some households require more than four bedrooms. Such housing is in particularly short supply within the social housing stock and these requirements would not necessarily be met within reasonable timescales or within existing stock without some further intervention.</p>											
1.29	<p>In Flintshire, the current specialist register has 56 applicants awaiting adapted properties of which 16 have an urgent need in band one. In addition, there are 12 applicants awaiting large properties (five beds or more).</p>											
1.30	<p>The Specialist Housing Group's purpose is to keep a track of complex cases and work to identify solutions where there are specialist requirements. Since its relaunch in 2017 the group have found long term suitable housing solutions for 35 specialist cases with a further eight provisional allocations</p>											

	in progress.
1.31	Sourcing suitable accommodation for applicants with specialist needs and identifying properties that are suitable for complex adaptation work within our housing stock is difficult and budget constraints makes this even more challenging. The 35 cases that have received specialist housing have been delivered through a mixture of new builds and adapting existing stock.
1.32	Although good progress has been made in this area the level of demand for specialist housing is growing and appropriate solutions cannot always be achieved quickly which often means applicants who do have specialist requirements have a considerably longer wait for properties than those without. A full report on Specialist Housing will be brought to committee early in 2019.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	There are no specific resource implications arising from this update report.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	There were no consultations required for this update report.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	The growing demand for social housing and increased wait times presents a risk of increased pressure on the Homeless Service.
4.02	Flintshire receives income from Denbighshire County Council and the social landlords to deliver the register on their behalf. If any of the partners terminated this arrangement it would result in a reduced income to the Council. This risk is managed within existing business planning approaches.
4.03	The updated policy has been subject to an equality impact assessment carried out by Tai Pawb.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix One: Single Access Route to Housing Policy 2018 attached.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
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6.01	None.  <b>Contact Officer:</b> Katie Clubb, Customer Support Manager <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 7035518 <b>E-mail:</b> katie.clubb@flintshire.gov.uk
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<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<b>Housing Solutions Triage</b> – the initial discussion with the customer about their circumstances and housing need.
7.02	<b>Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) Policy</b> – the regional common policy for all major social landlords allocating social housing properties across Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham.
7.03	<b>CRM</b> – the Council’s customer facing case management system

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# Flintshire Housing Solutions and Flintshire Housing Register

## The Common Housing Allocation Policy





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**This document is available in Welsh and can be provided in other formats on request.**

**June 2018.**



## The Allocation Policy for Social Housing in Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

The major social landlords operating in Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire have come together, with the Local Authorities, to form a Partnership to manage applications for and allocations of social housing.

The partners in the scheme are

- Conwy County Borough Council
- Denbighshire County Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Cartrefi Conwy
- Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd
- North Wales Housing Association
- Grwp Cynefin
- Wales and West Housing Association
- Clwyd Alyn Housing Association
- Ty Glas Housing Society, part of the Pennaf Group

All partners agree that there is a high demand for rented homes in the region and too few vacancies to meet demand. We must be realistic about this. It requires us to do two things:

Firstly we will provide the best, most useful, consistent and accessible advice and information to everyone who comes to us looking for housing. We aim to help customers make the most informed choice about how to find a home to meet their needs. This advice must cover the whole range of affordable housing options, including social housing, private rented accommodation, home ownership and other alternatives.

Secondly, we will allocate our housing stock in a transparent, fair, consistent and accessible way, which prioritises the people in our communities according to their housing needs and which meets our legal requirements

Working together to these ends, we can share our strengths and good practice and place the customer at the heart of everything we do. We will simplify the access route to advice and to housing with one clear purpose: to help people find a home to meet their needs.



## PART 1 – POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Aims & Objectives

This document states how all applications for social housing will be prioritised for allocations in Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

Social housing is housing provided by some local councils and registered, not for profit, organisations. Rent levels, property standards and management standards are regulated by government.

This allocation policy has been adopted by the major social landlords operating in the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

The partners in the scheme are

- Conwy County Borough Council
- Denbighshire County Council
- Flintshire County Council
- Cartrefi Conwy
- North Wales Housing Association
- Grwp Cynefin
- Wales and West Housing Association
- Clwyd Alyn Housing Association
- Ty Glas Housing Society, part of the Pennaf Group
- Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd

The Partners agree to prioritise applicants and allocate social housing in the same way. Each County will hold its own register of applicants. Applicants can apply for housing in different Counties, but applicants will not necessarily have the same priority in all areas, because they may not have a local connection to all areas.

The key objectives of the policy are that it-

- helps meet housing need in Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire
- gives priority to those in greatest housing need and with the strongest connection to the area to which they are applying
- is easy for applicants and staff to understand
- consistently prioritises applicants in similar circumstances
- enables all applicants to be considered by all social housing providers with just one application
- accommodates applicants preferences as far as possible
- makes best use of housing stock
- takes into account local circumstances



- provides all applicants with advice about all their housing options
- provides support for applicants to make an application as required

## 1.2 Legal Context

The allocation policy is principally governed by The Housing Act 1996 and the Code of Guidance for Homelessness and Allocations 2016 and Welsh Statutory Instruments 2014 No. 2603 (w. 257) – Housing Wales – The Allocation of Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Other relevant legislation includes

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Equalities Act 2010
- Social Care and Well Being Act 2014
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015

## 1.3 The roles of the partners

- Councils

The Councils in the Partnership are local Housing Authorities required by law to carry out housing related duties and functions. They have a role to ensure that Social Housing is an effective housing option for people on low incomes or who cannot rent or buy privately. Each Council in the partnership must ensure social housing properties in their area are allocated according to this policy.

The Councils must ensure that the allocation policy is fair. Fairness will include treating all applications in a consistent manner, ensuring all applicants have an equal opportunity to apply, and in a way which suits their personal needs.

So that everyone can see that allocations are made fairly, information about how properties have been allocated will be published on Council websites, and there will be regular checks to ensure the procedures are giving fair results.

Councils work in partnership with social housing providers to plan new housing developments and the best use of housing stock. Councils monitor the activity of social landlords to make sure standards are maintained and allocations are fair.

A Council can delegate the task of administering the housing register. The organisation acting as the register administrator will be monitored by the Council to ensure banding and allocation decisions meet the standards required. The register administrator can be a social housing provider.

- Housing Providers

Non-council social housing providers have a duty to co-operate with Local Authorities to support the delivery of certain housing objectives e.g. to prevent and relieve homelessness. The housing providers have agreed to allocate their vacant property in line with the policy.



#### 1.4 Equality

All Partners are committed to serving all applicants fairly and work positively to avoid discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, disability or ethnic origin.

In order for us to monitor allocations for fairness, applicants are asked to provide details: age, disability, gender and race.

All policies and changes in policy are assessed to ensure there is no unjustifiable negative impact on sections of our community.

All partners are required to meet the Welsh Language Standards 2015. Applicants are encouraged to use either Welsh or English. Applicants can express a preference for correspondence or service in either language.

For applicants requiring information in an alternative format, e.g. large print, audio versions etc. arrangements will be made to meet their needs on request

Prospective applicants who require support to complete the application process will be assisted, according to their needs, on request.

The application process does not require an applicant to complete a form. Applicants will be spoken to over the telephone, or face to face at our offices, or in exceptional circumstances, at another place, e.g. hospital, by appointment.

#### 1.5 Management of Information

Information provided by applicants will be confidential and kept securely.

However, applicants will be asked to allow their application information to be shared so that all partners can consider their application.

Applicants may request a copy of information held by partners about their application, which will include information provided by third parties unless there are exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to protect the identity of the third party concerned. In such exceptional circumstances, every effort will be made to convey to the applicant the information that has been obtained from a third party in a reduced form.

#### 1.6 Monitoring and Review of Allocations policy

The Allocations Policy is adopted and subject to the approval of Council members in the individual Local Authorities.

The Boards of partner Housing Associations have signed up to the policy. The Boards ensure the policy meets with the social objectives of their organisations. Each Housing Provider must report its activities to its governing Boards and government regulator.

Senior officers of both the Council and housing provider organisations meet together as required to form the Steering Committee. This Committee formally approves planned adjustments to the policy recommended by the Operational Panel. The Operational panel meets regularly to discuss any aspect of the implementation and delivery of the allocation policy.

Should the policy require major adjustment, the adjustment will not be made without consultation.





Regular meetings with all partners are held to discuss operational decisions, information management systems, and complex cases to ensure effective communication across the providers.

Statistical Information will be reported annually and published on the Local Authority websites.

### 1.7 Local Letting Policies.

The policy recognises that partners may wish to include policies designed to tackle local housing issues through the use of local letting policies. All local lettings policies will be based on a sound evidence base. Examples of local housing issues which may require local lettings policies include:

- Tackling localised anti-social behaviour
- Correcting under occupation or overcrowding
- Facilitating tenant employment through job related moves
- Creating a sustainable community on new housing developments
- Helping people to stay close to their own rural communities

Local lettings policies will be approved by the appropriate Local Authority and will be assessed for fairness and equality of opportunity. Local letting policies may allow transfers for existing social tenants even where they do not have priority under the allocation scheme.

Some properties, usually in defined locations, can only be let subject to additional occupation criteria as they are subject to a Planning Obligation under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, for example in regeneration areas or, rarely, on new developments.

A list of housing schemes with Local Letting Allocations Policies is available on Council Websites, [LINK](#)

## 2. The Housing Register

### 2.1 The Register

The housing register is a list of households who require housing. Each Local Authority has a register. The register is ordered in accordance with this policy. Households on the register are prioritised in bands according to need and local connection, and within bands by waiting time. Housing providers with a vacancy go to the register to see who in the greatest need has been waiting the longest.

Decisions about where a household is placed on the register are taken by the register administrators.

The register is kept up to date. Households on the register will be reviewed every 6 months, or upon a change in circumstances. New applicants join the register when their application is complete. Applicants may move between priority bands. The date on which an applicant moved into a band with greater priority will be the relevant date to determine their priority in that band. If an applicant moved to a band with lower priority, the date of their original application will be the relevant date.

Applicants are responsible for keeping their application up to date. Failure to do so may result in a reduction in priority.

If applicants in urgent housing need are not rehoused within 3 months, consideration will be given to whether current housing stock will be able to meet the household's needs. In cases where the



housing requirements are complex or not catered for in current stock, Partners will consider options to procure, adapt or commission property to meet a need.

Prospective tenants not accepted onto the register because they are not in housing need, may apply for vacancies where there is no demand from applicants on the register. Such vacancies are advertised by the housing providers on the open market, e.g. at housing solutions using on-line property rental sites or Council websites. Applicants not accepted onto the register can reapply at any time if their circumstances change.

## 2.2 Who can Apply?

Anyone over 16 can apply for social housing, either as a sole or joint tenant. Households of more than one person will have a lead applicant. Part of the application process will be to check that the applicant household does not contain someone ineligible due to their immigration status or because they are unsuitable to be a tenant because of serious unacceptable behaviour. All applicants will need to show that they intend to occupy any social housing allocation as their only or principal home.

## 2.3 Who can be included in the applicant's household?

An applicant household can include:

- a) members of the applicant's family who normally resides with them,
- b) any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

The circumstances of a child who is dependent both on the applicant and someone who does not live with the applicant, will be looked at. For example, where there is a shared parenting arrangement, a child who is reasonably accommodated with another parent will not be included within the applicant's household.

## 2.4 Transfer Applications

This policy applies to existing tenants seeking to transfer accommodation. Existing tenants who want to move, will need to apply for a new allocation through the register. The same rules about housing need will be applied to determine their priority.

## 2.5 Applications from Employees of Partner Organisations, Elected Members and their close family relatives

Applicants must declare if they (or anyone in their household) are, or are close relatives of

- Employees of partner local authorities or housing providers;
- Elected Council Members; or
- Members of a Tenants' or Residents' Associations.
- The following are close family member for the purpose of this policy:-
- Spouse or civil partner
- Co habiting partners (including same sex partners)
- Parent
- Son/Daughter
- Brother/Sister



- Grandparent/Grandchild
- Aunt/Uncle
- Step & Half Relations

Where 2.5 applies, the allocation policy will not treat applicants differently, but their applications will be subject to review to ensure the policy is followed in all cases.

### 2.6 Applications to amend existing social housing tenancies

This allocation policy does not cover situations where an existing tenant needs to amend their existing social housing tenancy agreement. For example, adding a partner to the agreement.

## 3. Applying for Accommodation

### 3.1 Making an Application

Information about how to contact the housing register administrators in each County will be publicised on the Council website and in other public areas.

There is no form to complete when applying for housing under the Common Allocation Policy.

Enquirers can attend Council offices in person, or discuss their needs by telephone. In exceptional circumstances, arrangements can be made to visit prospective applicants, e.g. in hospital.

All enquirers will be asked about their household circumstances. We call this process 'Triage'. Where an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, their application will form part of the service offered by the Local Authority to prevent and relieve homelessness.

The administration of the social housing allocation and the delivery of services to those threatened with, or who are faced with, homelessness are closely related. Staff from either the homelessness and/or housing provider teams may be involved with a case

### 3.2 Housing Options

All enquirers will receive advice about all the housing options which might be suitable for them. This may include advice about

- Affordable ownership schemes
- Intermediate rent schemes
- Private renting
- Schemes to help people move out of the district
- Home improvement schemes or adaptation services which enable people to stay in their existing home
- Supported housing or support at home
- Sheltered housing or extra care housing
- Gypsy and Traveller sites with permanent pitches

Enquirers will receive information about the application process and how homes are allocated.



Those who wish to make an application for social housing will be advised about

- whether they are likely to have a priority for housing and
- whether housing suitable for their needs is likely to be available for them in the areas of their choice and
- how long until such housing is likely to be available

### 3.3 Eligibility

All applicants and their household members will be verified to ensure they are eligible for an allocation of social housing.

The Housing Act 1996, as amended by more recent legislation (Housing Act (Wales) 2014) states that a Local Authority must not make an allocation of social housing to an ineligible person.

Applicants can be ineligible due to their immigration status or due to unacceptable behaviour. See Box A.

Applicants will need to provide evidence of their identity and former conduct.

The Register administrators will act reasonably and consider each application on its merits. Decision makers will take into account the applicant's personal circumstances (and those of the applicant's household), including health and medical needs, dependent's needs and any factors relevant to the application. In particular, the partners will consider any mitigating circumstances relating to mental or physical disability, or mental health.

Previous seriously unacceptable behaviour may not justify a decision to treat the applicant as ineligible where the applicant can show that the behaviour has improved.

Applicants whose unacceptable behaviour does not meet the criteria to make them ineligible, will be able to apply for housing, but their household may be given a reduced priority until the register administrator is satisfied that their behaviour has improved to the extent that it will no longer have a detrimental impact on their conduct of a tenancy.

Applicants deemed ineligible for housing will be provided with advice and guidance regarding their housing options from the Housing Options Team when they contact the service.

Applicants deemed ineligible for housing will be notified of the decision and the reason(s) in writing. They will also be informed of their right to request a review and their further right to appeal any decision made after the review.

Applicants found ineligible because of unacceptable behaviour can reapply at any time, but will not be eligible until they can show that their behaviour is now satisfactory.

### 3.4 Choice and Preference

Applicants will be asked to express a preference for the area they wish to live in, and the type of property. Not all areas have social housing. Not all areas can provide properties of the preferred type. Applicants will be advised about the potential availability of properties when they apply, and on request. Applicants can change their preferences. However, when considering the suitability of vacant properties for an applicant, it may not be possible to accommodate all an applicant's





preferences. Applicants' preference for areas where there is currently no social housing provision will be noted and considered when planning new developments.

### 3.5 Support to make an application

Partners will ensure that applicants with support needs are provided with appropriate support to make their application. Where necessary, partner housing providers will work with social care, Supporting People, health services and other agencies to agree how to support the applicant.

### 3.6 Decision timescales

Once all the necessary supporting information has been received by the register administrator the decision about whether the applicant will be placed on the register and in which priority band will be taken within 20 working days.

### 3.7 Notification of decision

Applicants will be informed in writing of acceptance onto the register and their priority banding.

### 3.8 Applicant's rights to be informed, to request a review and make a complaint

An applicant has the right to be informed, upon request, of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to them.

### 3.9 Requesting to see what information is held on a housing application

Applicants may request a copy of all information held by partners about their application as a 'Subject Access Application'. This will include information provided by third parties (unless there are exceptional circumstances and the identity of the third party must be protected). Should third party information require protection, every effort will be made to convey information in a reduced form. A Subject Access Application will normally be free. Unwarranted, unfounded or repetitive requests may incur an administration fee.

### 3.10 Requesting that a decision relating to an applicant's priority on the housing register, or any allocation of housing, is reviewed.

An applicant has the right to request a review of any decision made in relation to their housing application, including any decision:

- a) about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to them;
- b) as to their eligibility for the allocation of social housing;
- c) as to the assessment of their application in relation to the banding scheme;
- d) made in relation to removing an applicant from the register
- e) made in relation to reducing priority;

Applicants will have 14 days to request a review, during which time they shall be suspended from the register.



The decision to be reviewed will be considered by a different or senior officer from the relevant register administrator. The reviewing officer has 28 days to consider the circumstances and respond.

If the applicant is not satisfied by the decision of the reviewing officer, the matter can be considered by the Operational Panel which meets at least monthly. The panel have up to 28 days to consider the circumstances and respond.

### 3.11 Requesting a review of a decision made in relation to a decision outside of the scope of this policy

Decisions made by a local authority partner in relation to an application for assistance because an applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, are subject to different review procedures. Applicants will be told about how to request a review of these decisions in the decision notification letter.

### 3.12 Making a Complaint about how an application has been handled

An applicant who is unhappy about the way their application has been handled, or the behaviour of staff, should make a complaint using the complaints procedure of the organisation handling their application. Information about how to do this will be available from the organisation concerned. If an applicant is not satisfied by the response to a complaint they can take the matter to the Local Authority

Ombudsman (details of making such a complaint are available from the relevant Local Authority).

### 3.13 False or misleading information

Applicants who give false or misleading information may have their application rejected or their tenancy terminated. In some cases this may also result in criminal prosecution, substantial fines and even imprisonment.

### 3.14 Keeping an application up to date

It is the responsibility of the applicant to keep their information up to date.

Applicants must contact their local Authority if, for example,

- they change their contact information: telephone numbers or email address
- if they move house,
- a person leaves or joins their household;
- their financial circumstances change
- Their immigration status changes

### 3.15 Keeping the register up to date

When applications are reviewed by the Register Administrator, applicant households will be contacted to confirm they are still in housing need. Those still in housing need will have their details checked and their priority banding reviewed.

Applicants who fail to respond to letters asking about their current needs may be removed from the register.



### 3.16 Removing applications from the register.

Applicants may be removed from the register if

- they have provided false or misleading information or not told the Partnership about relevant information
- they have refused 2 reasonable offers
- they don't reply to application review letters within 14 days

Applicants will be advised in writing of a decision to remove them from the register. They have a right to request a review of the decision, and details of how to do so will be noted in the decision letter. After 14 days, if no request for a review is received, the applicant will be removed from the register.

Applicants will be able to reapply but may be subject to reduced priority. Their application date will be the date of the new application.



## BOX A Eligibility for a social housing allocation

### Ineligible applicants

There are two classes of ineligible person.

#### 1) Persons from abroad

Unless the applicant is already a secure, introductory or assured tenant of housing allocated by a Welsh housing authority, applicants will be ineligible if they are

- subject to immigration control, unless they belong to a group granting them eligibility e.g.
- those with refugee status; those granted Humanitarian Protection; and those with Discretionary or Exceptional Leave to Remain.
- persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control and who are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (i.e. The UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland) (Exceptions apply)
- excluded from entitlement to Universal Credit or Housing Benefit by the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Further Information for applicants and advisors can be found in  
Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014, and  
Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2017

#### 2) Persons who have engaged in serious unacceptable behaviour

If applicants, members of their household, or their visitors have engaged in serious unacceptable behaviour that renders them unsuitable to be a tenant of a partner landlord.

The only behaviour that can be regarded as unacceptable is behaviour by the person that would have entitled a local authority to an outright possession order, if the person had been a secure tenant of the local authority at the time.

In assessing whether an applicant is ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour, the partner landlord will consider:

1. Where there is evidence of unacceptable behaviour, was it serious enough for a possession order to have been granted (which includes consideration of the statutory discretionary grounds for possession and questions of reasonableness)?
2. Was the behaviour serious enough to render the applicant or household member unsuitable to be a tenant (which involves consideration as to whether an immediate possession order was made or might have been made as opposed to a suspended order)?
3. Does the behaviour continue to be unacceptable at the time of application?





## PART 2 – THE BANDING SCHEME

This policy is founded on the principle that vacancies will be allocated to eligible applicants in housing need, with priority going to applicant households who have a local connection.

### 4.1 Priority Bands

The policy uses a banding scheme to prioritise applicants according to their circumstances.

The priority bands and local connection

Band	Degree of Housing need	Local Connection
1	Urgent housing need according to the criteria in Box C	Yes (unless homeless as a result of abuse)
2	Housing need according to the criteria in Box D	Yes
3	Urgent housing need according to the criteria in Box C	No
4	Housing need according to the criteria in Box D and Reduced priority cases	No  Yes

Priority can change as circumstances change, so applicants may move between bands. Applicants within each band will be prioritised according to the date order of their application or the date on which they moved from a lower to a higher band.

### 4.2 Local Connection

Eligible applicants with a local connection to the Council area to which they are applying, will be prioritised above those with no local connections (unless an applicant is fleeing abuse and relocation is required to keep them safe).

An applicant may have a local connection to one partner local Authority, but not to another, resulting in a different banding decision on the different housing registers.

An applicant's local connection can change over time. Applicants must keep their applications up to date.



Housing Provider partners are able to specify additional local connection criteria for certain vacancies in line with Local Lettings policies.

### BOX B Local Connection

A local connection is created when the applicant or a household member

- Has been resident in the Local authority area for the previous 12 months.
- Has been resident in the local Authority area for 3 out of the previous 5 years.
- Has family associations in the area. Family association normally arise when the applicant or household member has either a parent, adult child, brother or sister who live in the local Authority area, and have done so for at least 5 years, at the date of application. Both the applicant and locally residing relative must indicate a wish to be near each other.
- Provides support for or receive support from some person or specialist provision in the local authority area.
- Has been in employment in the local authority area for the last twelve months.
- Has been offered a job in the local authority area but have a disability and are unable to take up the job offer because of the difficulty of finding adequate accessible housing in the area.
- Needs to move to the local authority area so that a member of their household with a disability can attend a school or receive specialist support, but are unable to do so because of the difficulty in finding adequate accessible housing in the area. The need must be as a consequence of the disability and the need to move to that local authority area must be evidenced.
- Is serving in the Armed Forces and is either employed or resident in the local authority area.
- Is serving in the Armed Forces or is a former members of the Armed Forces, not currently employed or resident in the local authority area but has previously been resident in the local authority area, including residency as a result of a former posting in the area while serving in the Armed Forces.

### 4.3 Housing Need - Reasonable Preference

The allocation policy bases an applicant's priority on their housing need.

The law states that the following applicants must be given 'reasonable preference' under any allocation scheme:

- a) those who are homeless within the meaning of part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- b) those owed any duty by a Local Authority under s 66; s 73 or s 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 or  
(if they applied for help because they were homeless before 27 April 2015),  
those owed a duty by a housing authority under section 190(2), 192(3), 193(2), or



195(2) of the Housing Act 1996)

- c) those occupying insanitary or overcrowded conditions or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- d) those who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability
- e) those who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.

A local authority can identify other types of household in housing need so long as such classes of household do not dominate.

#### 4.4 Urgent housing need

A Local Authority can determine households with urgent needs. Additional priority will be given where the applicants have an urgent housing need. Applicants with an urgent housing need and a local connection to the area will be in Band 1. Applicants in urgent housing need but lacking a local connection will be in Band 3. Examples of an applicant in urgent housing need are given in Box C.

#### 4.5 Housing need

Households with a housing need that is not urgent will include those in the reasonable preference categories, except those subject to reduced priority, and displaced agricultural workers. They will be placed in Band 2 if they have a local connection and Band 4 if they lack a local connection. Examples of households in housing need are given in Box D.

#### 4.6 Reduced priority

The Register Administrator can reduce priority for a social housing allocation in certain circumstances, for example

- Applicants deemed to be unsatisfactory tenants or those who may have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances;
- Applicants with sufficient financial resources to meet their housing needs in the housing market.
- Homeless applicants who are deemed intentionally homeless. Examples of where priority is reduced are given in box E.

When deciding whether to reduce priority, the register administrator will act reasonably and consider each application on its merits. It must have regard to the applicant's personal circumstances (and those of the applicant's household), including health and medical needs, dependents and any other factors relevant to the application. The decision maker must consider any mitigating circumstances relating to mental or physical disability, or mental health.

When considering applicants with previous poor behaviour, a decision to reduce priority may not be justified, if the applicant's conduct can now be shown to have improved.

Applicants who have their priority reduced because of unacceptable behaviour, who can present satisfactory evidence of an improvement in their behaviour can have the reduction in priority



removed. In this situation, the date of the application for determining priority within the new band will be the date they are placed into the new band.

Decisions to reduce priority must be approved by a senior officer of the administering organisation. Cases of reduced priority will be monitored and the process held under review.

Where a decision to reduce the priority of an application is taken, the applicant will be placed in Band 4. Applicants already in Band 4 cannot have their priority reduced.

In circumstances where an applicant has their priority reduced, applicants will be provided with appropriate advice, guidance, and support.

Applicants will be notified in writing of any decision to reduce the priority of their application and the reasons for it. If an applicant wishes to appeal the decision, applicants have the right to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The applicant will be informed about the outcome of a review.

#### 4.7 No priority

Applicants who are not in housing need according to the reasonable preference criteria (examples of which are given in Box C or D), will not be given any priority. They will not be placed in an allocation band or recorded on the housing register.

Should any vacancies not be filled from housing applicants on the register, properties will be advertised on the open market. Applicants with no priority will be able to apply for these tenancies but will need to satisfy the eligibility and local connection criteria.





## BOX C Urgent Housing Need

Applicant households with Urgent housing need will be in  
BAND 1 (with a local connection) or BAND 3 (with No local connection)

Examples of URGENT housing need

### 1) Urgent medical, welfare or disability related need.

Applicants whose household includes someone who

- a) has a medical condition which is life threatening or likely to become so, and which is directly linked to their housing conditions and is likely to improve with re housing.
- b) has been assessed by the relevant practitioner as having a need to move urgently to an accessible property.
- c) has a serious physical or mental illness, disability or medical condition or behavioural disorder which is causing serious dysfunction to themselves or the family unit such that they are completely unable to cope at their present accommodation and re housing would alleviate the problem. For example a terminal illness or advanced progressive condition.
- d) is hospitalised and is unable to return to their home as it is totally unsuitable for their long term needs by way of design, location and/or is unsuitable for disabled adaptations.
- e) is disabled and unable to access essential facilities within the property e.g. bathing or WC, or access to the property itself is totally unsuitable. The property cannot be economically adapted to meet their needs.
- f) needs to move to provide support to a relative or person with serious illness, disability or medical condition and that person can only cope in their present accommodation with the applicant's support.
- g) is living in overcrowded accommodation which leaves a person vulnerable to serious infection.

### 2) Leaving the Armed Forces

- A member of the applicant's household needs to move to suitable adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces.
- An applicant needing accommodation because of leaving the armed forces and the loss of military accommodation, who has had no settled accommodation in the last 12 months. People who have left the armed forces under Discharge as of Right.

### 3) Applicants accommodated in accredited supported housing where the applicant is able to sustain a tenancy independently.

### 4) Young people leaving the care of the Local Authority.



**5) Urgent Cases where the household needs access to social housing to prevent a child from being taken into/remaining in care.**

Examples include

- Foster parents who urgently need accommodation to take a child
- Where a child care plan identifies the need for accommodation to prevent the child being looked after by the Authority.

**6) Existing tenants who are either under occupying by one or more bedrooms and wish to transfer to a smaller property, or who are occupying an adapted property which they do not need**

provided that one of the following applies:

- They are suffering financial hardship as a result of welfare reform;
- Their moving would release a property for someone in urgent need who would otherwise have to wait an unreasonably long time to be re-housed.

**7) Homeless due to abuse or probable abuse requiring urgent re-housing**

Those deemed homeless as a result of abuse as defined by s 58 (1), Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and owed a duty under s75 of the Act. This includes those who have experienced abuse at, or outside, the home; and those who, if they remained in their accommodation, would probably experience abuse. This includes instances of hate crime and threats arising from acting as a witness.

**8) Exceptional cases of urgent need where the circumstances or the urgency of the circumstances are not dealt with elsewhere in this scheme**

Such cases may include transfer tenants. Cases will be decided on an individual basis. Exceptional cases will be monitored.



## BOX D Housing Need

Applicants with a Housing need will be placed in

BAND 2 if they have a local connection (see Box A) or

BAND 4 if they do not have a local connection (except homeless households requiring rehousing due to abuse) or despite their housing need, have had their priority reduced.

### 1) Applicants who are homeless

Households who have been assessed by a Local Authority Housing Options Team and found to be homeless within the meaning of s.55 Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 defines a person as homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy.

Accommodation is available for a person to occupy only if it is available for occupation by them together with:

- a) any other person who normally resides with them as a member of the family, or
- b) any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

A person is also homeless if

- they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or
- the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is nowhere where it can be placed legally in order to provide accommodation.
- A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where a Local Authority determines it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation

### 2) Applicants who are threatened with homelessness

Applicants owed a duty by a local Housing Authority under s66, of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, for whom an application for social housing has been deemed an appropriate 'reasonable step' in their personal housing plan by the Local Authority.

### 3) Applicants living in unsatisfactory conditions

Applicants whose current property:

- lacks a bathroom with facilities or the facilities are located in an insanitary location e.g. within kitchen.
- lacks a kitchen and/or appropriate facilities; or lacks an inside W/C.
- lacks a hot or cold water supply to the property due to defect with the property;
- lacks an electrical supply due to defect with property;





- lacks a gas supply due to defect with property where such a supply is required to operate existing or necessary services, such as heating.
- Applicants who share facilities with other persons who are not part of their household on a permanent basis. This applies to the sharing of a kitchen, bathroom/shower or toilet.
- Applicants living in overcrowded housing. A housing situation is deemed to be overcrowded if it lacks at least one bedroom. This must be on a permanent basis. Please see the table 'Bedroom requirements by household type' below.
- Applicants who have been referred by Environmental Health for re-housing because they are living in accommodation where category 1 hazards exist.

**Note:** All applicants residing in insanitary or hazardous housing will be referred to environmental health in order to resolve the problem and enable the applicant to remain in their home. The applicant would only be referred for re-housing if, despite their best efforts, it is the opinion of Environmental Health that the problem cannot be resolved within a reasonable period of time.

**5) Medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability)**

- Applicants whose household includes someone with a medical condition which is directly linked to unsuitable housing and where rehousing is necessary to significantly improve their health.
- Current accommodation presents access problems to a member of the household which have a detrimental impact on their welfare, which cannot be resolved in the current property and would be significantly alleviated if they were suitably re-housed. Such cases would be assessed by the relevant practitioner as requiring a move to an accessible property.
- Applicants whose household includes someone who has social care needs which are not being met and re-housing is necessary to significantly improve their care.

**6) People who need to move to a particular locality, where a failure to do so would cause hardship** For example

- It is unreasonable for the applicant to stay in their current property due to exceptional financial hardship.
- The applicant or member of their household is at risk of being admitted to residential care or hospital if they cannot be rehoused.
- The applicant needs to move due to a relationship breakdown and there is a need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- The applicant is a vulnerable care leaver, and it is determined that their housing is best met by the provision of long term settled housing. Applicants must be a former 'relevant child' as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.
- The applicant or member of their household has permanent employment which cannot continue unless they live in a specific locality within the area and are otherwise adequately housed.
- The applicant is giving or receiving essential support, which can only be delivered if they live in a specific locality within the area.





**7) Displaced Agricultural Workers**

The dwelling from which an agricultural worker is displaced is needed to accommodate another agricultural worker and they need to re-house the displaced worker in the interests of efficient agriculture.

**8) Exceptional case of housing need where the circumstances are not dealt with elsewhere in this scheme**

Such cases may or may not be existing tenants seeking a transfer. Each case will be judged, authorised and recorded according to the agreed procedure and regularly monitored



## BOX E Reduced Priority

Applicants with reduced priority will be placed in Band 4

### 1. If an applicant household's behaviour affects their suitability to be tenants.

For example

- Applicants who have engaged in anti-social behaviour and who have not maintained a satisfactory undertaking to address that behaviour
- Applicants who have been convicted of using their home for illegal or immoral purposes
- Current tenants who have been subject to action for a breach in the terms of their tenancy agreement.
- When current tenants are wishing to transfer, but their current property is in such poor condition, that it cannot be re-let within a reasonable timescale
- Applicants who have rent arrears owing to a current or previous landlord and who have not maintained a satisfactory arrangement to repay the debt.
- Applicants who have deliberately provided false or misleading information or failed to disclose information relevant to their application. In these cases applicants will be asked to complete a new application. The date of this new application will be taken and they may be given reduced preference for the new application.
- Applicants who have refused two reasonable offers. In this case, applicants will be removed from the register and if they re-apply may be given reduced priority.
- Applicants who are deemed to have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances. For example, this may apply where an applicant gives up settled accommodation in order to move into less settled or overcrowded accommodation.
- Applicants who have behaved in a way which affects their suitability to be a tenant (or whose household contains a member who has done this).

### 2. If an applicant household has sufficient financial resources to meet its own housing need;

- this will be assessed on a case by case basis.
- Applicants with sufficient financial resources to meet their housing needs. This may apply, for example, when the person has legal or financial interests in a property, or sufficient income or savings.

### 3. If an applicant household is found to have deliberately worsened its own housing circumstances



For example

- by deliberately moving to a property they know will make them overcrowded;
- by deliberately damaging their accommodation to make it uninhabitable or resulting in eviction; by not prioritising affordable rental payments, resulting in eviction;
- Asking a landlord to start procedures to repossess property with the intention of becoming homeless;
- Deliberately doing something (or not doing something) they knew could lead to the loss of their accommodation.

#### 4. Homeless applicants found intentionally homeless

Partner Local Authorities have decided to have regard to whether households have become homeless intentionally for all classes of applicant households when considering their duty to the household under s 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act. A homeless applicant can be found intentionally homeless if they deliberately do or fail to do anything, in consequence of which, they cease to occupy accommodation which is available for their occupation, and which it would have been reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

Acts done in good faith by someone who was not aware of any relevant fact does not amount to a deliberate intention to become homeless. Applicants' circumstances at the time they acted or failed to act will be taken into consideration.



## PART 3 - ALLOCATIONS

### 5. Allocating Properties

#### 5.1 Allocating Properties according to banding priority and waiting time

Vacant properties will be offered first to applicants in Band 1. Of all applicants for whom the vacant property is suitable, the household who has been waiting in that band the longest will be offered the property. The applicant has an opportunity to refuse the offer, but if accepted, subject to circumstances being verified, will be allocated the property.

If the property is not suitable for any household in Band 1, the property will be matched with suitable applicant households in Band 2.

Only if there is no suitable household in Band 2 will households in Band 3 be considered and so on.

#### 5.2 Matching applicants to properties

Properties will be matched according to the household's preferences for location and household make up.

#### 5.3 Confirming the members of the household

The housing provider will ensure that the household members are reasonably part of the household. This would normally include:

- c) a member of the applicant's family who normally resides with them,
- d) any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

The circumstances of a child who is dependent both on the applicant and someone who does not live with the applicant, will be looked at. For example, where there is a shared parenting arrangement, a child who is reasonably accommodated with another parent, will not be included within the applicant's household.

Applicants will need to provide evidence that family members normally reside with them, or that it is reasonable for a person to reside with them.

An applicant will be able to ask for a review of any decision about who is in their household.

#### 5.4 Duplicate applications

Individuals can only be included on one application at a time.

#### 5.5 Household make up and entitlement for bedrooms

The table below details the property size suitable for each household type. However, each property will have variations in layout and bedroom sizes which may impact on how many people it can accommodate.





### Bedroom requirements by household type.

Household make up	Number of Bedrooms
Single person	1 or bedsit
Pregnant Woman (in couple or single)	1 or 2
Couple	1
Couple or single person with baby under 12 months	2
Couple or single parent with 1 child under 16	2
Two person household (not in a couple)	2
Couple or single parent with 2 children under 16 of the same sex.	2
Couple or single parent with two children of the opposite sex under 10	2
Couple or single parent with 2 children under 16 of opposite sex, with at least 1 child over 10	3
Couple or single parent with 3 children under 16	3
Couple or single parent with 4 children under 16 if the children are: -all same sex -2 boys and 2 girls -3 one sex and 1 of the other where 2 children of different sex are under 10.	3
Couple or single parent with 4 children under 16 comprising 3 of one sex and 1 of the other sex, where either the 3 of one sex are all over 10 or the child of the other sex is over 10	4
Couple or single parent with 5 children under 16	4
Couple or single parent with more than 5 children under 16	4



### Bedroom requirements by household type.

Household make up	Number of Bedrooms
Single person	1 or bedsit
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Couple	1
Couple or single person with baby under 12 months	2
Couple or single parent with 1 child under 16	2
Two person household (not in a couple)	2
Couple or single parent with 2 children under 16 of the same sex.	2
Couple or single parent with two children of the opposite sex under 10	2
Couple or single parent with 2 children under 16 of opposite sex, with at least 1 child over 10	3
Couple or single parent with 3 children under 16	3
Couple or single parent with 4 children under 16 if the children are: -all same sex -4 boys and 2 girls -5 one sex and 1 of the other where 2 children of different sex are under 10.	3
Couple or single parent with 4 children under 16 comprising 3 of one sex and 1 of the other sex, where either the 3 of one sex are all over 10 or the child of the other sex is over 10	4
Couple or single parent with 5 children under 16	4
Couple or single parent with more than 5 children under 16	4



- Families with a child due to turn 10 within 12 months, where there is currently a boy and girl sharing, may be considered for an additional bedroom, or where pregnancy, or the age of household members mean that the household would qualify for a larger property within a reasonable period of time. In such circumstances, applicants may be allowed to register for properties which they would currently under-occupy.
- Due to the shortage of 4 bedrooed properties, households requiring 4 bedrooms may be considered for larger 3 bedrooed properties with a second reception room. E.g. a separate dining room, that could reasonably be used as a bedroom.
- Same sex family members over 16 years (not couples) are entitled to their own room.
- Applicants who require an additional bedroom for a non-resident carer will normally be registered for properties with an additional bedroom
- Where there is a limited supply of properties with fewer bedrooms relative to demand, and a reasonable supply of properties with more bedrooms relative to demand, applicants may be considered for, and offered, properties with more bedrooms than they require;
- Where an applicant is in urgent need, but the supply of suitable properties is limited, they may be considered for, and offered, properties with more bedrooms than they require;
- Where an applicant is homeless, but the supply of suitable properties is limited, they may be considered for and offered properties with more bedrooms than they require.

NOTE: should applicants be considered for a property with more bedrooms than they require, the applicant's ability to afford the rent would be taken into account in determining whether to offer the property.

### 5.6 Homeless Applicants to whom a statutory homeless duty is owed.

Offers of accommodation made to homeless applicant households to discharge a duty under the Housing (Wales) Act need to be suitable taking into account all the relevant circumstances of the applicant household. Homeless applicants will be advised in a letter at the time the offer is made that the accommodation offered is considered suitable, and the consequences of unreasonably refusing the offer.

### 5.7 16 and 17 year old applicants

Applicants of 16 or 17 years of age cannot hold a tenancy in their own right. They will need to provide a Guarantor. The Guarantor agrees to ensure that the responsibilities of the tenant are met and legally holds the tenancy 'on trust' for the young person. If the young person does not pay the rent, or other charges arising from the tenancy, the Guarantor will be responsible. When the young person turns 18, the tenancy will become their full responsibility. The housing provider will need to check that a prospective Guarantor (a person or an organisation) can afford to take that role. If the applicant is unable to provide a Guarantor, the housing provider may refuse to offer a tenancy. Young applicants will be advised about this at their housing options interview.

### 5.8 Older applicants

Applicant households who meet criteria for schemes designated for older persons will be considered for vacancies as they arise and according to their priority. In some circumstances a younger applicant may be considered if an allocation to them would not detract from the purposes of the housing



scheme. Warden and tenancy support services may be available to applicants in general needs properties.

Social Housing Providers operate 'Extra Care' Housing schemes for older households needing social care support. Allocation of Extra care housing is not through the Common Allocation Policy. Prospective applicants apply directly to the housing provider. Applicants for social housing for whom Extra Care schemes are appropriate will be advised about them at the Housing Options interview.

### 5.9 Gypsy and Traveller applicants

Applicant households who are Gypsies, Irish Travellers or other Travellers can, in addition to the Housing Register in their Local Authority, apply to be included on the register for Gypsy and Traveller pitches on designated permanent sites. Information about the services available in an Authority area will be provided at the Housing Options interview.

### 5.10 Applicants accommodated in care or approved supported housing

Applicant households who are in local authority care or accredited supported housing will be advised about all suitable housing options. Social housing cannot meet the needs of all persons leaving care or accredited supported housing. Applicants may apply before they are ready to move on.

### 5.11 Applicant households requiring adapted or accessible properties

Applicants on the housing register with a disability will be assessed by an Occupational Therapist to determine their needs. Wheel chair users and those with restricted mobility or other conditions requiring adaptations will be identified on the register.

The existing home of applicants may be assessed for the suitability of adapting it for the applicant.

Where a property has been adapted for wheelchairs, when it becomes vacant, suitable applicants on the register who need a wheel chair accessible home will be considered first.

Where a property has features which would suit those with restricted mobility such as level entry, stair lifts, grab rails, a decision to override an allocation to a household not requiring such adaptations may be made with the approval of a senior officer, in order to offer the property to a household with a need for the adaptations.

Where a general needs property becomes vacant and it can be adapted, it will be offered to the household highest on the register. Any adaptations required will be planned at that point if it is feasible for the housing provider to carry them out.

Current tenants not requiring an adapted property, where someone requiring an adapted property is in urgent housing need and would otherwise wait an unreasonably long time to be rehoused, can apply to be rehoused and placed in Band 1 to facilitate freeing up the adapted property.

Arrangements are in place in each local Authority to consider the response to applicants whose needs are not currently being met by the local housing stock see 5.14.

### 5.12 Verification

Applicants are required to inform the register administrator of any relevant changes in their circumstances, and the register is reviewed regularly to check that applicants on the register are still in housing need. Every applicant household will also have their circumstances verified by housing a provider before an allocation is made. Verification checks may include a visit to an applicant's





current home, and making enquiries of third parties such as former landlords and health professionals.

### 5.13 Receiving an offer

Applicants who receive a suitable offer of housing will have that offer in writing, but this does not mean they will not also be contacted by telephone or email to discuss the offer and arrange for viewings.

Changes in circumstances rendering an offer unsuitable, discovered at the offer stage, will be referred back to the Register Administrator.

### 5.14 Accepting an offer

Applicants will be asked to respond to the offer and before the deadline provided in the offer letter.

Applicants will be given a reasonable time to consult with all household members and consider the offer. Applicants will have 3 working days before the offer is withdrawn, and the next applicant is considered.

### 5.15 Refusing an Offer

Applicants can refuse an offer of housing but there may be serious consequences in doing so. A refusal may affect the applicant's banding or eligibility to remain on the register.

The applicant will be asked the reason(s) for declining the offer. The housing provider will consider if the reason for refusal is reasonable or not.

Applicants who have unreasonably refused 2 offers will be removed from the register on the grounds that the applicant's requirements are unlikely to be met from the housing register

The applicant will be able to request a review of the decision that any offer has been unreasonably refused or to remove them from the register.

### 5.16 Specialist housing provision

The vast majority of applicants' housing need will be met from the available housing stock.

Some applicant households require properties to meet needs arising from disability or household size: for example, to accommodate wheel chairs, fit bed hoists, stair lifts and accessible bathing rooms and some households require with more than 4 bedrooms. Such housing is in particularly short supply within the social housing stock.

Where an applicant households' needs cannot be met from the available stock or they have been in Band 1 for 3 months, their case will be considered by the Local Authority housing and social care teams and partner landlords to explore, if cost effective and appropriate,

- whether any available, or soon to be available, properties can be adapted,
- Whether a suitable property in the private sector could be secured for the applicant, either directly with the private landlord or indirectly through a social lettings service; leased and sublet by a social landlord or (rarely) purchased by a Housing Association to use for a specific household or household type.
- Whether opportunity exists to plan specific adaptations for a household when building new properties.



- Whether the applicant household could form separate households facilitating the timely accommodation of a member requiring adaptations with no detriment to the wider household.

However, it is possible that some households will not be able to be housed by a social landlord. Housing Options staff will assist these households.

### 5.17 Applicants subject to public protection agreements

Housing applicants with an offending background may be subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Agreements (MAPPA). In these cases, allocations will be informed by appropriate risk management requirements to the Community and individuals.

### 5.18 The Involvement of Council Members

Elected Council Members are not allowed to be directly involved in decisions to allocate properties. They may act as advocates or advisors to constituent applicants making an application, only if the applicant has given written authority for them to do so. Information about applicants on the register is not shared with Council Members.

Council members and Housing Provider Board Members have the opportunity to scrutinise the policy prior to its adoption.

### 5.19 Allocations made by the Housing Provider

In exceptional circumstances, a housing provider may allocate properties to facilitate the management of its stock, for example, to move a household whose current home needs major work, or to protect a vulnerable household. The number and reasons for such moves are recorded and scrutinised by the Local Authority to ensure that they are kept to a minimum and do not impact on the fairness of allocations overall.

June 2018



## COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
<b>Report Subject</b>	WHQS Capital Programme - Delivery Review Update
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Strategic Update

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on progress of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) the council is delivering through its Capital Investment Programme.

The report focuses on achievements to date and maps the journey thus far.

The WHQS Programme of Works has reached its halfway milestone moving into the final three years of delivery. The report focuses on what has been delivered to date and what is left to be completed before the 2020 deadline.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Scrutiny to note the report and progress made in delivering the Housing Capital Investment Programme.
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## REPORT DETAILS

1.00	<b>BACKGROUND &amp; OVERVIEW</b>
1.01	<p>The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is a national standard which seeks to improve the quality of the Councils retained social housing stock. This standard is set by the Welsh Government (WG).</p> <p>The Housing Capital Works Team is responsible for delivering Internal &amp; External upgrades to all Council owned properties, complying with the WHQS by the year 2020. The modernisation and refurbishment programme seeks to provide the opportunity for all tenants to live in good quality homes which meet the requirements of that household.</p>
1.02	<p><b><u>WHQS Programme</u></b></p> <p>The Capital Works Team were tasked with delivering a major investment programme for its council owned properties and have implemented the Capital Investment Programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreeing the 2020 Business Plan with Welsh Government.</li> <li>• Completing an independent Stock Condition Survey.</li> <li>• Consulting with Members and holding Member Workshops in 2014 setting out what the programme was seeking to achieve and how it would be delivered.</li> <li>• Conducting workshops with the Tenant Federation.</li> <li>• Conducting Tenant Consultation Workshops in our Connects Centres.</li> <li>• Sending over 7,200 Tenant Questionnaires asking for feedback and comments on the proposed Capital Programme.</li> <li>• Determining the various workstreams and the New District Areas for Project Delivery as a result of consultation feedback.</li> <li>• Packaging the workstreams into Years based upon Manageable Numbers and Geographical Locations.</li> <li>• Tendering each work stream separately.</li> <li>• Completing over 50 interviews with Contractors utilising Tenants &amp; Volunteers.</li> <li>• Awarding the contracts, commencing and managing the works onsite.</li> </ul>
1.03	<p>The WHQS Programme has been created to ensure all Flintshire County Council housing properties will comply with the WHQS by the year 2020, as required by Welsh Government.</p> <p>Each year the Capital Works Team are required to report progress to the Housing Asset Management Team, Housing Board Members and Welsh Government. Our annual returns to Welsh Government track our progress in terms of how many components are WHQS compliant and how many properties achieve the WHQS status overall.</p>

	<p>For several years the Capital Works Team have been attempting to fully implement the Housing Assets software system with a view to procuring a more robust and consistent approach to data collection and contract management. A solution has now been procured and we are in the final phases of testing and implementation. We have recently completed a major data cleansing exercise of all asset and component data, based on work undertaken to date this has resulted in our overall compliancy figure increasing from <b><u>0.3%</u></b> to <b><u>27.9%</u></b>.</p> <p>From our 7,200 Housing Stock, we are currently reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WHQS Compliant Kitchens: <b><u>100%</u></b></li> <li>• WHQS Compliant Bathrooms: <b><u>77%</u></b></li> <li>• WHQS Compliant Roofing &amp; Associated Components: <b><u>69%</u></b></li> <li>• WHQS Compliant Windows / Doors: <b><u>75%</u></b></li> <li>• WHQS Customer Satisfaction Average: <b><u>95.8%</u></b></li> </ul> <p>The WHQS project team is nearing the end of the Internal Work programme (Kitchens &amp; Bathrooms) and as a result the remaining properties are proving to either be Tenant Refusals or No Access (<b>Acceptable Fails</b>). Welsh Government classes any property subject to an Acceptable Fail as compliant in terms of achieving the WHQS. The team have allowed a 10% Acceptable Fail scenario within the Capital Programme.</p>
1.04	<p>The WHQS project team have now procured all of the main WHQS Contracts moving into Year 4 (2018-19) of the Capital Programme. We are currently ahead of target in relation to the number of components installed and are now looking at implementing our Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) Solution sometime in Quarter 4 (Q4) of this financial year which should bring further efficiencies and be a more effective approach when collecting asset information, stock condition information and other data.</p>
1.05	<p>From the first delivery year of the Capital Investment Programme, the team have delivered many contracts varying from internal upgrade works through to large external refurbishment and environmental schemes. The Council has invested circa £60m to date within its housing stock and is currently ahead of target in meeting the WHQS 2020 deadline.</p>
1.06	<p><b><u>Welsh Audit Office Report</u></b></p> <p>Flintshire County Council received notification from the Welsh Audit Office that they proposed to undertake a review of the WHQS. The review focused on the experience of council tenants in the degree of choice experienced within the delivery of WHQS both before, during, and after the work was commissioned. It also reviewed how tenants have been consulted on the future plans of the council to achieve WHQS by 2020.</p> <p>In undertaking the review, the Audit Office sought to answer a key question;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Whether the needs, experience and aspirations of service users</li> </ol>

	<p>inform the design and delivery of services to more closely meet their needs?</p> <p>As a supplement to the main question, the Audit Office also explored;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are services designed with the needs, views and aspirations of service users in mind?</li> <li>2. Are services users satisfied with the quality of services they received?</li> <li>3. Are services users able to access the services they need?</li> <li>4. Does the Council have effective two-way communication with service users?</li> <li>5. Does the Council have a robust project plan for continuing to meet WHQS, which sets out key actions, responsibilities and resources?</li> <li>6. Does the Council have effective arrangements in place to monitor and challenge the council's progress in continuing to meet WHQS?</li> <li>7. Is the Council's progress towards WHQS making a positive difference to the lives of its housing residents and achieving the Council's intended wider benefits of the programme?</li> </ol> <p>Prior to the commencement of the audit, a meeting was convened between Flintshire County Council Housing Service and the lead auditor from WAO.</p> <p>Areas covered within the meeting included;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arrangements and the content of meetings with the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Chief executive.</li> <li>2. Meeting with Flintshire tenants association</li> <li>3. Identification of 600 addresses (not personal details) of properties which have experience of the WHQS installation programme to date and from these WAO will select from across section of properties from general needs to sheltered accommodation.</li> <li>4. Interviews with key staff members</li> </ol> <p>As can be noted above the audit covered a number of areas relating to our service users. Having undertaken the surveys considered the feedback from users and moderated their findings WAO concluded that:-</p> <p><b><i>“Overall, we found that the Council is making good progress towards achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and most Council tenants are satisfied with the quality of the service and their homes.”</i></b></p>
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<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	With large programmes of activity such as this there are always concerns that staff retention may be challenging particularly as this programme was being implemented across those stock retaining local authorities in Wales at the same time which could have led to market overheat. In this context we have been able to retain staff and recruit to specialist positions so that the programme can continue on plan and in doing so reducing the potential risk of resources leaking from the programme delivery teams.



2.02	<p>When creating our delivery programme, budget estimates were made for the required upgrade works to our existing properties. These estimates were made with certain contingencies for any unforeseen works such as Structural Repairs etc. When working on new build properties there is a degree of certainty with regards to condition and the materials utilised during the construction process etc. as everything is an absolute measure.</p> <p>When working on properties over 60, 70 &amp; 80 years of age, there is a higher degree of uncertainty when it comes to the condition and the materials that may have or may not have been used at the time of construction phase. This could or could not include the use of asbestos or substandard working practices and other materials i.e. substandard copper.</p> <p>The Capital Budgets were based on an independent stock condition survey. Prior to works commencing onsite, the Capital Works Team also completed scoping surveys to validate that the stock condition data was consistent with the original survey.</p>
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<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	<p>Prior to the Capital Investment Programme commencing, the team held Member Workshops in 2014 where the majority of Members attended and were actively involved in the design and delivery of the Capital Programme.</p> <p>We also held Tenant Federation Workshops where we engaged with the federation with regards to what priority and which order the works should be completed along with discussing the potential to merge certain workstreams, i.e. Internal Works were prioritised first with both the Kitchen and Bathroom Upgrade works merging into one work stream.</p> <p>We also held Tenant Consultation Workshops in our FCC Connects Centres and community centres engaging with our tenants and discussing the Capital Programme along with ascertaining what order tenants would prefer to have components of their home upgraded first.</p> <p>We also sent over 7,200 Tenant Questionnaires asking for feedback and comments on the proposed Capital Programme.</p> <p>We initially completed circa 50 interviews with Contractors utilising Tenants &amp; Volunteers. This has increased year on year when new contracts are awarded.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	The quality and availability of Contractors and Tradesman who are open and willing to work within tenant properties as opposed to New Build

	Contracts continues to be challenging to procure. Engaging with our supply chain early on and sharing our Capital Investment Programme aspirations with our Contract Framework Partners assists us to procure longer term contracts and therefore reduces risk of inflated costs based on longer contract arrangements. The longer term arrangements makes the Council an attractive client to work for and with.
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<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 - WHQS Guidance Document 2008 - PDF

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p><a href="https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Housing/Welsh-Housing-Quality-Standard-WHQS.aspx">https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Housing/Welsh-Housing-Quality-Standard-WHQS.aspx</a></p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Sean O'Donnell (Capital Works Manager)  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 701642  <b>E-mail:</b> Sean.O'Donnell@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<b>Capital Programme:</b> The Council's financial plan covering capital schemes and expenditure proposals for the current year and a number of future years. It also includes estimates of the capital resources available to finance the programme.
7.02	<b>The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS):</b> is a national standard of quality for homes. This is set by the Welsh Government. It means that all tenants in Wales should have the opportunity to live in good quality homes which meet the requirements of that household.
7.03	<p><b>Acceptable Fail:</b> Welsh Government understand that some homes cannot receive the WHQS works due to 4 reasons, listed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Works are physically impossible carry out,</li> <li>2. It is not cost effective to do the works,</li> <li>3. Timing (works due in near future already)</li> <li>4. Tenant refuses the improvements.</li> </ol> <p>These are called 'Acceptable Fails' and the Welsh Government will accept that 20% of our properties will be in this group. FCC have reduced this figure for the area to 10%; which is our current target</p>
7.04	<b>Wales Audit Office:</b> works to support the Auditor General as the public sector watchdog for Wales. They aim to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public

	bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes.
7.05	<b>Financial Year:</b> the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April
7.06	<b>Budget:</b> a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.
7.07	<b>PDA Solution:</b> Mobile hand held device used for capturing stock data directly linked to our asset database.
7.08	<p><b>Contract Framework:</b></p> <p>A Contract Framework is an agreement between one or more contracting authorities and one or more economic operators. These frameworks have Contractors, Consultants and Suppliers that have been successful in joining the specific work categories.</p> <p>The Council often uses these frameworks to procure works that have already gone through a tender process in line with OJEU and can be utilised to procure works or services.</p> <p>They often offer the most economic advantage in terms of value for money and local training provision.</p>

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# The Welsh Housing Quality Standard

Revised Guidance for Social Landlords on Interpretation  
and Achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

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July 2008

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# Overview of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

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# 1.0

'Better Homes for People in Wales' states the National Assembly for Wales' vision that "all households in Wales ... shall have the opportunity to live in good quality dwellings that are:

1. in a good state of repair
2. safe and secure
3. adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated
4. contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms
5. well managed (for rented housing)
6. located in attractive and safe environments
7. as far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)"

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to bringing all existing social housing up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by the end of 2012.

# Background and purpose of the Revised Guidance

# 2.0

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (the Standard) was introduced in 2002 and subsequent progress and implementation by landlords has been variable. There have been calls from landlords for help in defining aspects of the Standard that are seen as interpretive.

In 2004 HouseMark was approached by Cardiff City Council followed by a number of local authorities to provide additional guidance in interpreting the Standard. As a result, HouseMark invited key stakeholders from across the social housing sector, including representatives from the Welsh Assembly's Housing Directorate, to form a technical steering group to provide further clarification to the Guidance.

HouseMark and the Welsh Assembly Government would like to thank the following organisations for their valuable input into the revision of this Guidance:

- Cardiff City Council Housing Department for their initial request for HouseMark to undertake this piece of work
- The Technical Steering group comprising the Welsh Local Government Association, representatives of local authorities, representatives of housing associations and Community Housing Cymru
- Welsh Local Government Data Unit

In parallel with the working party, the Living in Wales Property survey 2004 (LIW) included an assessment on a sample basis of progress against the measurable items within the Standard. The results reported in June 2006, showed poor progress with only 0.8% of Registered Social Landlord (RSL) dwellings, and no Local Authority (LA) dwellings, complying with the measurable aspects of the Standard.

The experience gained in measuring progress against the Standard during the LIW survey and the experience gained from social landlords' implementation of the Standard, have been used to inform this Revised Guidance.

## Updates in the Revised Guidance

This Guidance provides updates to the original guidance in several ways:

### Changes to legislative requirements and responsibilities

The Housing Act 2004 changed the way in which landlords assessed the standard and safety of their dwellings. The Act replaced the Fitness Standard with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Landlords will need to include HHSRS into their inspection process and stock condition surveys. 'The new system links house conditions with the health and safety of the occupants' (source: Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance).

### Clarification on the Minimum Requirements through an expanded interpretation section

The issues raised around interpretation of the Minimum Requirements have been dealt with through the introduction of an interpretation section for each element incorporated into the Standard. The intention is to reduce inconsistency in interpretation and clarify the purpose of the Minimum Requirements.

## How to use the document

This document has been revised to help social landlords understand and interpret the elements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard as well as the planning and monitoring that needs to take place on a continuous basis.

The first six sections of the document set out the policy context to the Standard, and provide some useful information for the timetabling, planning and implementation of improvement programmes to meet the Standard.

Section seven sets out the Standard itself and is broken down into seven main parts numbered 1-7. For each part of the Standard, readers will find:

- the text of the Standard
- the Minimum Requirements expected for a dwelling to meet the Standard

- interpretation guidance on the Minimum Requirements. This section also includes good practice references pointing some additional good practice resources and organisations. The good practice references are not mandatory and will be updated as and when further resources and good practice examples become available

The purpose of including interpretation within each part is to expand upon the Minimum Requirements and provide a detailed explanation of the elements within the Standard.

Section eight is the Assessment section. This provides guidance on how to assess dwellings against the Standard and each element contained within the Standard. Section nine provides updated guidance on carrying out stock condition surveys.

Appendix 1 includes Standard Layout Drawings for Furniture and Appendix 2 provides a table for determining Nominal Occupancy of dwellings and worked examples according to floor space. Appendix 3 provides a 'Standard checklist' as a quick reference point for landlords.

## The Welsh Assembly Government's objectives

In July 2001 the National Assembly approved the National Housing Strategy for Wales 'Better Homes for People in Wales'.

'Better Homes for People in Wales' sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's long-term vision for housing in Wales. Central to that vision is the expectation that all households in Wales shall have the opportunity to live in good quality homes. To achieve this, the physical standard and condition of existing housing must be maintained and improved to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

The Standard has been developed to provide a common target standard for the physical condition of all housing in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that the Standard represents a major challenge for the social housing sector in Wales, but believes that aiming for anything less than the Standard would mean that second best is acceptable for the people in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government therefore expects all social landlords in Wales to adopt the Standard and to devise realistic programmes for bringing all of their dwellings up to it by the end of 2012.

As part of the 'One Wales' agenda, the Welsh Assembly Government will keep the WHQS under review. Where, having secured the agreement of their local populations, individual local authorities put forward a case for compliance with the WHQS to be achieved through an extended compliance timetable, and where applications are backed by a robust business plan, the Assembly Government will consider such applications on their individual merits.

Guidance for social landlords on the assessment process and achievement of the Standard explains what social landlords will need to do in order to meet the Standard. A number of useful publications, as sources of good practice are listed in each section of the Good Practice Guidance.

The guidance is intended to help social landlords interpret and implement the Welsh Assembly Government's requirements in relation to the physical standards of their existing dwellings and their improvement.

Whilst the Standard and minimum requirements remain constant, the guidance document may evolve over time to include more examples of good practice and illustrations to guide interpretation.

# Understanding Minimum Requirements

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# 3.0

The Standard will ensure that dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents. It is recognised that it will not be economically or practically feasible to bring all existing dwellings up to the standard expected in a modern dwelling.

Minimum Requirements which develop the Standard in greater detail are considered to be an acceptable minimum. Each element of the Standard has been categorised as either a Primary or Secondary element:

- a Primary element is one that impacts on the safety of the residents
- a Secondary element is more focussed around the comfort of the residents

The requirements are not intended to be exhaustive and social landlords should always consider whether they are satisfied that the best possible solution has been achieved.

# The Milestones

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Social landlords are expected to carry out an assessment of the stock in relation to the Standard, analyse the information, and plan the management of their property assets as part of their normal business and financial planning.

This will ensure that landlords are aware of the work required to meet the Standard, their future liabilities, when dwellings and their components are forecast to be replaced and when funds need to be in place to meet these liabilities.

In developing programmes, social landlords should take account of the views and aspirations of residents. However, in doing so, social landlords should not raise their residents' concerns unnecessarily about the future of their homes. The programme should be the product of dialogue and mutual understanding through the development of initiatives such as the Wales Programme for Improvement and Tenant and Resident Participation Compacts.

Social landlords should plan to integrate their various policies and strategies for responsive and planned maintenance, estate improvements, improving energy efficiency, void management and re-let works. The outcome of this will determine the corporate targets and objectives within the overall framework of the Standard and be a key factor in the business planning process. This will lead to the development of an improvement programme that takes into account the views of their tenants, but should, in the main, set priorities on the basis of tackling the worst dwellings first.

The following are elements or 'Milestones' of the social landlord's programme to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by the end of 2012.

## **By the end of 2002, landlords should have:**

- established the current state of their housing stock relative to the Standard based on best available information
- estimated the investment needs to achieve the Standard
- assessed the work programmes necessary to meet the Standard

## **By the end of 2006:**

- landlords should have gathered comprehensive information on the whole of their housing stock. Gathering data on stock condition is a priority to inform and enable the assessment process. Further information on undertaking stock condition surveys can be found in section five

## **By the end of 2007 landlords should have:**

- completed their tenant consultation on the draft programme
- finalised and implemented a programme for the repair and improvement of the stock
- updated the Business Plan to include the tenant consultation results and the repair and improvement programme

## **By the end of 2012 landlords should have:**

- reviewed and monitored the programme as a part of the business planning process
- confirmed that all of their housing stock meets the Standard

# What social landlords need to do to meet the Milestones 5.0

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## Complete tenant consultation on the draft programme

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that to foster pride, belonging and 'ownership', tenants and residents should be encouraged to take the opportunity to be involved in making any decisions that affect their community and environment.

The precise process social landlords should go through to put together their programme for repairs and improvements is a matter for the individual landlord, but it must include tenant consultation.

Social landlords should develop a draft programme after the analysis of data on current standards and condition, estimated costs, financing requirements and an established set of priorities. The Welsh Assembly Government will expect the social landlord to consult with, and show its tenants how it has arrived at its draft programme, the choices made and how the views and priorities of their tenants have influenced the agreed final programme.

The Welsh Assembly Government would like to see consultation on a local level, but does not wish to over prescribe the process a social landlord should follow to achieve this. However, the joint development and update of Tenant Participation Compacts by landlords and their tenants could provide the appropriate mechanism.

Tenants should be offered the opportunity to take part in all project groups, set up by their landlord, working on assessing, implementing and monitoring progress towards achieving the Standard. Such groups should include those dealing with strategic issues such as strategy and business planning, right through to those groups deciding on the specification of components and appointment of contract partners.

Tenants should have equal status with every other participant and should share in agenda setting and decision making. Tenant representation should reflect the diversity of the communities in which they live.

The variety of methods used to elicit information from tenants on their views could include, but should not be confined to tenant's representation on project groups, a tenant aspirations survey, tenant focus groups, tenant forum and consultation with local tenant associations.

Tenants' views should be asked for on a variety of topics including current service levels, current investment, planned investment and management of their homes. If current or expected future resources are insufficient to meet legal requirements and the Standard, they should also be consulted on future management and ownership options, which would allow the landlord to meet legal requirements and the Standard. Should they wish to achieve higher tenant aspirations, then they should be consulted on the investment, management and ownership options which would allow their landlord to achieve that higher standard.

## Finalise and implement a programme for the repair and improvement of the stock

Following the consultation exercise, the landlord should prepare a draft implementation programme which sets objectives that take into account such matters as stock profile, location, tenants' views, physical constraints of the buildings, changing demographics, demand, financial constraints and its overall Business Plan. It is also important that the programme reflects local authorities' housing strategies and other relevant strategies for the reduction of crime, improvement of health, reduction of poverty, and increase in employment and training opportunities etc.

If there are dwellings where compliance with the Standard cannot reasonably be achieved, these should be identified with the reason highlighted. It is suggested that landlord assessment and reporting systems need to include the ability to monitor and report on individual dwellings which can be categorised in the following terms: 'Pass' or 'Fail'.

When assessing individual elements of the Standard it may be appropriate to assess individual elements which do not fit into Pass or Fail as 'Not Applicable' or as 'Acceptable Fail'. Further information on individual element assessment is located in Section eight - Assessment.

Undertaking improvements which fall short of the Standard, setting aside and securing of void dwellings (mothballing) and disposal of dwellings are amongst options that can be considered. From the analysis it should be possible to produce a list of work required to:



## 5.0

- improve the standard and condition of individual dwellings
- undertake major improvement works to groups of dwellings or estates
- enable the landlord to estimate the cost associated with these works

It will assist in the programme planning process if lifecycle renewal of components, stock, improvements and the different costs associated are kept separate. This will help to identify the different ways in which they will be funded.

### **Update the Business Plan to include the tenant consultation results and the repair and improvement programme**

The programme for repairs and improvements and the process leading up to it should be published and show the stages the landlord has gone through, highlighting the choices that have been made along the way and the rationale behind them. The programme should set out the priorities for the various items of work with a forecast of finance required and sources of finance available.

The programme will also need to be clear how it will be implemented and at what stages it will be reviewed.

The programme is unlikely to remain static. Examples of factors influencing the development and implementation of the programme could include:

- changes to statutory requirements, e.g. Building Regulations and other environmental standards
- new technologies
- people's changing needs and expectations of the standards of their homes
- the landlord's progress on implementing their strategy
- unforeseen major repairs
- changing government policy
- demographic changes
- changing housing needs and community sustainability

The Welsh Assembly Government will expect to see that landlords have provided information and consulted residents on the detail of the programme of works to their dwellings. Landlords will also be expected to take account of the needs of disabled residents and residents from black and minority ethnic communities in relation to bespoke adaptations when preparing its programme of improvement works.

#### **By the end of 2012:**

### **Review and monitor the programme as part of the business planning process**

The landlord's programme for repairs and improvements must be dynamic and responsive to changes. The programme must be reviewed annually or at such times as following an update of stock information and condition data, but must be based on the principle that all social housing stock meets the Standard by the end of 2012.

It is accepted that landlords have different recording systems and information technology to deliver reports and there is currently no single approach provided by the Welsh Assembly Government on reporting progress towards meeting the Standard that can be adopted. However, some guidance and the resources currently available are highlighted below.

A Microsoft Excel toolkit has been designed to help landlords demonstrate their intentions and plans to the Welsh Assembly Government and report progress towards the Standard via Business Plans. The Welsh Housing Quality Standard Toolkit can be accessed from the following link: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/social/whqs/toolkit/?lang=en>

The annual works programme should be published and made easily available to residents so that they can see what will be happening to which dwellings during the year. If feasible and expected future resources are sufficiently well known, then the landlord should publish a forward programme which sets out planned investment in years beyond the next financial year e.g. a five year plan.

# Glossary

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## Dwelling

A dwelling is any form of accommodation owned by the landlord and provided in return for rent to residents and which is used for human habitation, or intended or available for such use. It includes:

- a “house”, whether it is detached, semi-detached or terraced
- a “flat”, “maisonette” or “apartment”; that is a self-contained dwelling on one or more floors in a building containing other dwellings
- a “bed-sit”, or “flat”, and which is not self-contained. For example some facilities such as a bath or shower-room, or kitchen may be shared

Included as part of the dwelling are gardens and outbuildings for use with that dwelling. Gardens should be considered to be any outside space associated with the dwelling plot. In addition rights of way, paths, yards, easements, and common or shared parts and services necessary for the occupation and use of the dwelling, are included unless otherwise stated in the interpretation of an element.

Where the dwelling is a flat, maisonette or bed-sit, as well as including those means of access, amenities and services, the dwelling also includes any rooms, passageways, circulation areas, and facilities that are shared or used in common with others.

## Garden

A garden is an area associated with the dwelling that may consist of a hard and/or soft landscaped area. This area will be for use by the residents of the dwelling but will not normally be a shared area.

## Household Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

HHSRS assesses twenty nine categories of housing hazard, including factors which were not covered or were covered inadequately by the previous Fitness Standard. It provides a rating for each hazard. It does not provide a single rating for the dwelling as a whole or, in the case of multiply occupied dwellings, for the building as a whole. A hazard rating is expressed through a numerical score which falls within a band. There are 10 bands. Scores in Bands A to C are Category 1 Hazards. Scores in Bands D to J are Category 2 Hazards.

HHSRS provides a means of identifying faults in dwellings and the potential impact of those faults on the health and safety of the occupants. It also provides a means of grading the sensitivity of dangers that may be present in dwellings and differentiating the sensitivity of those dangers and the extent of any risk to the resident.

As a minimum, the elements set out in the Minimum Requirements as being measured by HHSRS must be free from HHSRS Category 1 Hazard. Any element categorised with a HHSRS Category 1 Hazard would automatically result in the dwelling ‘Failing’ the Standard.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System Guidance for Landlords can be obtained from the Welsh Assembly Government website and is free to download <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/ho-using/publications/healthsafetyratingoperate?lang=en>

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## **Good condition - free from deficiency**

This definition is taken from the Household Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Deficiency: This is a failure of an element to meet the Ideal (The perceived optimum standard, at the time of the assessment, intended to prevent avoid or minimise the hazard). The failure could be inherent, such as a result of the original design, construction or manufacture, or it could be a result of deterioration, disrepair or a lack of repair or maintenance (HHSRS Operating Guidance ref: page 7).

## **Primary and Secondary elements**

Each element of the Standard has been categorised as either a Primary or Secondary element.

- A Primary element is one that impacts on the safety of the residents.
- A Secondary element is more focussed around the comfort of the residents.

See section eight - Assessment for further information.

## **Tenants and residents and occupants**

These terms are used interchangeably in some places of the document depending on the context and influence of other documents and policy statements. The meanings of the word tenant and resident for the purposes of this guidance are the same. In addition, the term occupants is used specifically in reference to the Housing Health and Safety Rating Operating Guidance.

# The Welsh Housing Quality Standard

# 7.1

## PART 1

## In a good state of repair

### The Standard

The dwelling must be structurally stable, free from damp and from disrepair. The key building components must be in good condition. The walls must be in good condition as must the roof structure and coverings. External windows, doors and chimneys must also be in good condition.

### Minimum Requirement

All dwellings must be in a good state of repair. The assessment of whether or not the dwelling is in a good state of repair will be carried out using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Elements that will need to be assessed are:

- 1(a) structurally stable and free from disrepair (Primary)
- 1(b) free from damp (Primary)

### Interpretation

The elements of section one will in part be assessed by landlords using the new Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

#### 1(a) Is the dwelling structurally stable and free from disrepair (Primary)?

This is referred to in the HHSRS Operating Guidance as HHSRS Hazard 29.

Key building components, which have an immediate impact on a dwelling's integrity, must be in good condition by being free from fault, deficiency and not result in an HHSRS Category 1 Hazard. These components include:

- external walls
- roof structure(s) and covering(s)
- external windows and doors
- chimneys

This hazard covers the threat of whole dwelling collapse, or of an element or a part of the fabric being displaced or falling because of inadequate fixing, disrepair, or as a result of adverse weather conditions. Structural failure may occur internally or externally within the curtilage threatening occupants, or externally outside the curtilage putting at risk members of the public (HHSRS Operating Guidance ref: pages 168-171).

All other building components that have a less immediate impact on the integrity of the dwelling must be in reasonable condition and have reasonable component life remaining.

#### 1(b) Is the dwelling free from damp (Primary)?

This is referred to in the HHSRS Operating Guidance as HHSRS Hazard 1. This hazard assessment covers threats to health associated with increased prevalence of house dust mites and mould or fungal growths resulting from dampness and/or high humidities. The hazard incorporates threats to mental health and social well-being which may be caused by living with the presence of damp, damp staining and/or mould growth.

There are many variables to understanding the causes, likely impact and potential hazards relating to the dwelling being free from damp, which means that the assessment should be one of professional judgement rather than measurement. Consideration should be given to the design, condition and state of repair of the dwelling. The location, extent and duration of any dampness identified are important determinants of the effect it may have on dust mite populations and mould growth, and the consequent potential for harm (HHSRS Operating Guidance ref: pages 48-53).

## 7.2

**PART 2****Safe and secure****The Standard**

Staircases are a frequent source of accidental injury, particularly to elderly people and young children and every opportunity must be taken to improve safety. There is a high risk of accidents in kitchens and bathrooms that can be reduced by careful consideration and improvement of the layout.

Fire can cause death or serious injury and every opportunity must be taken to improve existing installations to ensure easy escape routes and sufficient fire alarms are provided.

Electrical and gas installations in poor condition are a frequent cause of injury. Inadequate and poorly located outlets can be inconvenient and dangerous. Inadequate heating installations can cause discomfort and be detrimental to good health. All opportunities must be taken to modernise existing installations and ensure they are safe.

An inadequate level of security increases the fear of crime and makes people feel insecure in their own dwellings. All dwellings must provide tenants with a reasonable level of physical security and every opportunity to improve the physical security through the provision of locks and other hardware should be taken.

Poorly enclosed and laid out gardens may be unsafe and inconvenient for the occupants. All opportunities must be taken to make gardens safe and suitable for young children to play in, convenient to use, easy to maintain and reasonably private.

**Minimum Requirement****Stairs and landings**

- 2(a) Stairs must have at least one handrail and not be considered hazardous (Primary).

**Kitchens and bathrooms**

- 2(b) The kitchen should have adequate space for appliances (Secondary).

- 2(c) The kitchen should be a well organised working area with adequate work surfaces for resting pans and food preparation (Secondary).
- 2(d) The kitchen should have sufficient storage to meet the needs of the residents (Secondary).
- 2(e) The kitchen should have sufficient and conveniently located power sockets (Secondary).
- 2(f) The dwelling should have flooring suitably designed for kitchens and bathrooms, and, where necessary, flooring suitable for use in wet areas (Secondary).

**Fire escape**

- 2(g) The dwelling should have an external fire escape (Secondary).
- 2(h) The dwelling must have adequate fire alarms and equipment (Primary).
- 2(i) The dwelling should have an escape route from the rooms used for sleeping to an external door which does not pass through another room (Secondary).
- 2(j) The dwelling must have a suitably located, mains powered, smoke alarm (with a back up secondary power source such as a sealed lithium battery) on each floor (Primary).
- 2(k) The dwelling should not have windows fitted with locks with an automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping. (Secondary).

**Electrical installations, heating installations and appliances**

- 2(l) The gas, solid fuel or oil service and safety inspection certificate must be current. All heating installations and appliances must be checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person at least annually and as required by law (Primary).
- 2(m) Electrical lighting and power installations must be checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person at least every 10 years as a minimum (Primary).

## 7.2

**Security**

- 2(n) The dwelling must have a reasonable level of physical security (Primary).

**Outside the dwelling**

- 2(o) All opportunities must be taken to make gardens safe and suitable for young children to play in, easy to maintain and reasonably private (Primary).

**Interpretation****2(a) Is the staircase and balustrade safe (Primary)?**

This is referred to in the HHSRS Operating Guidance as HHSRS Hazard 21.

Staircases and balustrade must be free from deficiency and be free from HHSRS Category 1 hazard. This is referred to in the HHSRS Operating Guidance as HHSRS Hazard 21 (HHSRS Operating Guidance ref: pages 133 - 138).

For example, a staircase must have at least one handrail and must not be considered hazardous. Where winders have been used or where the pitch is very steep, structural modification or replacement may be required. Where safety can be materially improved at modest cost (for example, by adding an extra handrail), this ought to be considered.

**For good practice reference: safety in the home**

There are in excess of two million injuries from accidents in the home each year many due to trips and falls. Dwellings should be designed and maintained to reduce the risk of accidents and all opportunities should be taken by landlords to improve building related safety.

The Building Research Establishment Centre for Safety Health and Environment publish a Digest (458) 'Safe as Houses' that provides a useful checklist: [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

**2(b) Is there adequate space for kitchen appliances (Secondary)?**

Kitchens should have 600mm wide spaces for a cooker and a refrigerator and enough clear space in front of the cooker and other units and appliances to operate safely (1200mm in front of the cooker, otherwise 1000mm).

Kitchens should be sensibly and logically laid out with a minimum walking distance between major working areas. To plan a practical kitchen, employ the 'Work Triangle'. The 'Work Triangle' is formed by putting units and appliances, with appropriate work surfaces, in such a position as to allow the user to work in a logical sequence through the major work areas (food storage, preparation, washing/cleaning, cooking and serving). Ideally the length of the three sides of the triangle, when added together ought to be between 3600mm and 6600mm.

The space for a refrigerator can be located in a utility area.

**2(c) Is the work surface sufficient for safe food preparation (Secondary)?**

Kitchens should have an adequate work surface for safe and convenient food preparation. Additionally, the work surface should be permanent, non-porous and a minimum of 500mm deep, 800mm along the front edge if straight or 1000mm if 'L' shaped.

**2(d) Is the cupboard storage convenient and adequate (Secondary)?**

Kitchens should have convenient and adequate storage cupboards for food, crockery and pots and pans. This should be 1.1m<sup>3</sup> in a two person dwelling, increasing by 0.2m<sup>3</sup> for each additional person as determined by Nominal Occupancy referred to in Part 7 of this section.

**2(e) Is the number of convenient power sockets in the kitchen sufficient (Secondary)?**

Kitchens should have at least one convenient power socket close to the main food preparation worktop in addition to that used for the refrigerator.



## 7.2

**2(f) Is the flooring in the kitchen and bathroom safe and suitable for use (Secondary)?**

Kitchens and bathrooms should have flooring that is safe and suitable for use in these rooms. Where necessary flooring should be safe and suitable for use in wet areas. Untextured linoleum or vinyl is not suitable.

**For good practice reference: bathroom safety**

When planning a new bathroom, safety within the bathroom environment is an important consideration. Due to the close proximity of water, heat and electricity there are a number of safety hazards that need to be considered.

Bathrooms are quite often small rooms with confined space; careful planning and the installation of helpful safety features can help to diminish the risk of accidents occurring, for example:

- water and condensation cause slippery surfaces. The installation of non-slip mats or surfaces inside the bath, together with the fitting of grab rails at suitable positions could reduce the risk of nasty falls
- hot water can cause burns and the temperature of the water should be considered carefully. Consider whether there will be any dramatic change in temperature should other water appliances be used around the house
- all light fittings operated from within the bathroom should be fitted with a pull cord. If a light switch is used, it should be situated outside the bathroom
- any electric heaters should be fitted with fixed and permanent wiring. Electric heaters should be situated out of reach of the bath

**2(g) Is there an external fire escape (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should have an external fire escape where there is habitable space more than 7.5m above ground level and there is only one protected stairway or route, or comply with a Fire Officer's alternative recommendations for an additional fire escape route.

**2(h) Are there adequate fire alarms and equipment (Primary)?**

Common areas of flats must have adequate fire alarms and equipment as defined in current Building Regulations Part B.

**2(i) Do rooms used for sleeping have escape routes not passing through another room (Secondary)?**

Dwellings should be easy to escape from by having an escape route from the rooms used for sleeping to an external door which may be via a landing and staircase to a front door, back door or fire escape. Rooms used for sleeping which cannot be normally exited except by passing through another room should be capable of providing an alternative means of escape as agreed with the Fire Officer.

**2(j) Are mains powered smoke detectors on each floor (Primary)?**

Dwellings must have a suitably located, mains powered (with a back up secondary power source such as a sealed lithium battery) smoke alarm on each floor.

**2(k) Are window locks without automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping (Secondary)?**

Dwellings should not have windows fitted with window locks with an automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping. This could pose an obstacle to escape.

## 7.2

**2(l) Is the gas, solid fuel or oil service and safety certificate up-to-date and have all heating installations and appliances been checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person as required by law (Primary)?**

Gas, solid fuel, oil heating installations and appliances must have a current safety certificate which has been issued by an appropriately qualified person.

Additionally current regulations require landlords to ensure landlord supplied electric appliances are certified safe. The regulations impose the obligation on the supplier of such goods to ensure that they are 'safe' so that there is no risk of injury or death to humans or pets, or risk of damage to property. The regulations cover all mains voltage household electric goods including cookers, kettles, toasters, electric blankets, washing machines, immersion heaters, etc. It is generally accepted good practice that landlords will inspect appliances:

- when first supplied
- annually
- at the beginning of each new tenancy

**2(m) Have electrical lighting and power installations been checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person (Primary)?**

Electrical lighting, wiring and power installations should be checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person as required by law.

**For good practice reference: electrical installations, heating installations and appliances**

The Institution of Electrical Engineers recommends that electrical installations be inspected at least once every 10 years (every five years for Houses in Multiple Occupation) or as required by law. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 also requires landlords to ensure electric installations are safe at the beginning of the tenancy.

Under-provision of power sockets will lead to dangerous overloading of circuits with adapters and excessive use of trailing flexes and extension leads.

The following is the minimum provision of power sockets in a new home. Where a home is being rewired it is recommended that the minimum requirements set out below are complied with:

Room Type	Minimum No. of Sockets
Living rooms	4 double in houses and in flats
Dining rooms	2 double or 1 double in the dining area of a kitchen/ dining room
Double and twin bedrooms	3 double
Single bedrooms	2 double
Halls and landings	Further single sockets are required

# 7.2

**2(n) Do external doors and windows give a reasonable level of physical security (Primary)?**

External doors and windows must have a reasonable level of physical security. A “reasonable level of security” is defined as being capable of complying with Secured By Design (SBD), although may not necessarily have an SBD certificate.

Where it is necessary to replace doors, windows or fencing, the replacements must comply with the Police Force’s ‘SBD specification and be certified as such.

On replacement landlords should consider a ‘door set’ which complies with SBD.

SBD is the Police initiative to encourage the adoption of crime prevention methods in new and existing housing and aims to achieve a good standard of security for both the dwelling and the surrounding environment. In summary the Secured By Design standard for new properties and the Secured By Design standard for refurbished properties (as agreed with the local Police Architectural Liaison Officer) would normally include:

**For good practice reference: security**

**Doors**

- Doors and locks complying with BS: PAS 23-1: 1999, BS: EN 1303:1998, BS 3621:1998, BS: PAS 24-1: 1999, LPS 1175: Issue 4, 1998.
- Door chains or opening limiters, except warden controlled housing which should be discussed with the local Police Architectural Liaison Officer.
- Door viewer unless the door includes unobscured glazing.
- A letter plate located at least 400mm away from any locks, or if not possible a letterbox aperture to BS2911/1974 (1980), or if not possible another measure preventing access to door locks via the letter plate.
- Glazed panels, adjacent to external doors, must be laminated (outer pane) to a minimum of 6.4mm and securely fixed in accordance with GGF guidelines.
- Door frames should be securely fixed to the structure of the building at maximum 600mm centres and 300mm from each corner.
- Recessed doors in excess of 600mm should be avoided.

Secured By Design: Standards and Testing: Doors & Locks (<http://www.securedbydesign.com/standards/doorslocks.aspx>)

**Communal entrance doors**

- Communal entrance doors, should in addition, have an automatic closing and be fitted with an automatic deadlocking lock, with an internal thumb turn, knob or handle. External entry must be by latch withdrawal by use of the key, not by lever. On outward opening door’s hinges should be protected by hinge bolts or similar.
- Where four or more flats are served by a common entrance the doors must be fitted with an access control system, with an electronic lock release and entry phone linked to the flats.
- Where nine or more flats are served by a common entrance consideration must be given to the use of CCTV, for facial identification, to be used in conjunction with the unit access control release or concierge system.

## 7.2

**For good practice reference: security continued****Windows**

- Windows complying with BS: 7950, BS 4873: 1986, BS 7412:1991, BS 644-1: 1989, BWF:TWAS, BS 6510: 1984, LPS 1175: Issue 4, 1998.
- Ground floor windows and those that are easily accessible to entry must have key operated locks. Where necessary, opening restrictors or similar built-in mechanisms will be required. Where windows are required under the Building Regulations to act as a fire escape route, the opening window must not have key operated locks. In these circumstances glazing must be laminated to 6.4mm minimum thickness.

Secured By Design: Standards and Testing: Windows (<http://www.securedbydesign.com/standards/windows.aspx>)

**Security lighting**

- Security lighting should be designed to cover all external doors and other vulnerable areas, such as rear garden, controlled by photo electric cell, a time switch or passive infra red detector. Low consumption lamps should be used and positioned to reduce glare, light pollution and possible attack. Similar provisions are required to light common entrances, corridors to flats / maisonettes - press button time switches are not recommended.

**Intruder alarms**

- Intruder alarms - a 13 amp non switched fused spur should be installed. If the landlord chooses to install an alarm it should be in accordance with BS4737 (wired system) or BS6799 (wireless system). All installations should comply with the current electrical regulations.

**2(o) Is the rear garden easy to maintain, reasonably private, safe and suitable for young children to play in (Primary)?**

The rear garden must be easy to maintain. This should be assessed in relation to the intended occupants and will consider issues such as:

- poor design
- space constraints
- steep topography

The rear garden must be reasonably private. For example:

- landlords must ensure gardens have proper/secure boundaries. Secured By Design guidance advises that easy access to the back and sides of the dwelling can be prevented by the provision of locked gates. The use of post and wire fences, low level shrubs or walls is not considered suitable. Trellis topping also makes climbing difficult and will add security.

The rear garden must be safe and suitable for young children to play in. This also includes allowing supervision from the dwelling. Issues that may be considered in relation to this element are:

- boundaries should be suitable to prevent children leaving the garden and should not encourage climbing
- if the garden is on an incline, the landlord must ensure that the retaining walls are structurally stable and have an appropriate guard rail/balustrade
- ensure pathways are even and unobstructed

Landlords will have to assess each garden individually and where possible undertake improvement works despite constraints.

## 7.3

**PART 3****Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated****The Standard**

All dwellings must be capable of being adequately heated at an affordable cost to the residents. Dwellings with inadequate heating cause discomfort and can pose a health risk.

Whether the dwelling can be adequately heated depends on the cost of providing the heat required and the ability of the resident to afford it. The eradication of fuel poverty, the inability to afford to heat one's dwelling, is a strategic priority for the Welsh Assembly Government as set out in 'Better Homes for People in Wales'.

Landlords need to consider whether or not a dwelling is deemed to be adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated.

Meeting the cost of heating bills can be difficult for many residents. Landlords should do whatever they reasonably can to minimise the cost of heating dwellings to a comfortable level.

**Minimum Requirement**

- 3(a) Heating systems must be reasonably economical to run and capable of heating the whole of the dwelling to a comfortable level in normal weather conditions (Primary).
- 3(b) External doors and windows must be sufficiently well fitting so that they do not cause severe draughts (Primary).

- 3(c) The main entrance door should not open directly into the living room (Secondary).
- 3(d) The hot water tank must be effectively insulated (Primary).
- 3(e) Kitchens and bathrooms should have an adequate amount of mechanical ventilation (Secondary).

**Interpretation****3(a) Is the heating system reasonably economical and capable of heating the dwelling to a reasonable level (Primary)?**

Existing heating systems must be reasonably economic to run. A "reasonably economic to run" heating system would be one that is programmable (i.e. residents can control the temperature and timing), and of a size recommended for the dwelling it serves.

The annual energy consumption for space and water heating must be estimated using the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings 2005 (SAP 2005) method. A minimum rating of 65 out of 100 must be achieved. For further information on SAP 2005 and calculating the energy performance of dwellings go to: [www.projects.bre.co.uk/SAP2005](http://www.projects.bre.co.uk/SAP2005).

Lack of adequate ventilation and poor thermal performance of external walls and windows, in addition to inadequate background heating levels, are significant contributors to condensation in older dwellings. Of particular concern are kitchens and bathrooms in which large amounts of moisture are generated. All cost-effective opportunities to upgrade the thermal and ventilation performance of the dwelling must be taken.

## 7.3

Other factors that will impact on the overall SAP for the energy rating of a dwelling are as follows.

- Loft insulation

It is recommended that at least 200 mm of glass wool insulation, or the thermal equivalent, is provided in the loft. Whenever replacing or topping up existing insulation this thickness could be reduced when using materials with greater insulation, such as thermal quilting.

- Ensuring that all the pipes and tanks in the roof space are lagged

All pipes and tanks in the roof-space should be lagged. 20-25mm is the minimum thickness of pipe insulation that should be used. There are two types of insulation. The preferred industry type is pre-formed foam cylinders that are split along their length so that they can be easily slipped onto the pipe. Insulating tape is used to seal the splits and join the sections. If using the pre-formed cylinders is not practical, then felt can be used. This should be double thickness and closely wrapped to the pipe.

- Ensuring that the thermal performance of the external walls is adequate to avoid the likelihood of condensation

All necessary steps should be taken to ensure the thermal performance of external walls is adequate to avoid the likelihood of condensation.

### **3(b) Are external doors and windows adequately draught proofed (Primary)?**

External doors and windows must be sufficiently well fitting so that they do not cause severe draughts without reducing background ventilation. Additional draught stripping may be considered adequate.

### **3(c) Is the living room separated from the main entrance door (Secondary)?**

The main entrance door should not open directly into the living room. The provision of a lobby area in a living room entered directly by the front door will cut down on unnecessary heat loss.

### **3(d) Is the hot water tank effectively insulated (Primary)?**

The hot water tank must be effectively insulated. A factory foam jacket would be considered adequate. Existing unlagged hot water tanks should have a jacket fitted. This should cut heat loss by around 75%. If there is already a jacket fitted to the hot water tank, it should be at least 75mm (3") thick. If not, it should be replaced with a new heat saving one.

### **3(e) Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom? (Secondary)?**

There should be adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom to minimise condensation.

#### **For good practice reference: energy performance and insulation**

Emerging best practice information on heating thermal insulation and ventilation is available at: [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)



## 7.4

**PART 4****Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms****The Standard**

All dwellings must have reasonably modern facilities, services and amenities.

There must be adequate facilities for preparing, cooking and storing food.

The kitchen must be 15 years old or less, unless in good condition and meet the safety, space and layout criteria, designed in accordance with Minimum Requirements.

All dwellings must have bathroom and WC facilities which are 25 years old or less, unless in good condition and include fittings as stated in Minimum Requirements.

**Minimum Requirement****Kitchens**

4(a) The dwelling must have a kitchen 15 years old or less unless it is in good condition (Primary).

**Washing and drying clothes**

4(b) The dwelling should have adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes (Secondary).

**Bathroom and WC facilities**

4(c) The bathroom and WC facilities must be 25 years old or less, unless it is in good condition (Primary).

4(d) The dwelling must have a bathroom with a bath and shower which may be an over bath shower (Primary).

**Interpretation****4(a) Is the kitchen 15 years old or less, unless in good condition (Primary)?**

All dwellings must have a reasonably modern kitchen which is free from deficiencies. Ideally the kitchen should be 15 years old or less. However, it is accepted that a kitchen may not need replacing if it is older than 15 years and it is in good condition.

The areas for consideration in assessing whether or not a kitchen is free from deficiencies are also referred to as under HHSRS as potential Hazard 16. Guidance is given here to highlight key points for consideration and to illustrate the relationship between size, layout, design and cleanability. Landlords should read the HHSRS guidance in full. Landlords need to consider whether the kitchen meets the following criteria.

**Storage**

- Properly designed food storage facilities in a good state of repair and of adequate size for the household.
- Space for fridge and freezer.
- Sufficient power sockets.

**Preparation**

- A kitchen sink, with a separate supply of cold drinking and hot water for each household and a drainer to the sink.
- A sufficient amount of impervious worktops with adjacent power sockets.
- The sinks, drainers and worktops in a good state of repair.

## 7.4

**Cooking**

- Provision for cooking including an oven and hob (where appropriate).
- Where appropriate, adequately sized oven and/or hob having regard to the number and size of the (potential) household(s) and no disrepair to the oven and/or hob if provided.
- Sufficient space for cooking facilities - an oven and/or hob.

**Design, layout and state of repair**

- Kitchen facilities should be in a properly designed room or area, laid out so as to make safe and hygienic preparation and cooking of food easy, so reducing the risk of food poisoning and promoting safe practice.
- Kitchens should be laid out so that they are easy to use, provide space for the equipment and provide storage.
- In the interest of safety they should be designed in a 'u'-shape with no through route between doors. This will not always be possible in existing dwellings but to be safe and easy to work in, the aim should be to provide an unbroken sequence of worktop - cooker - worktop - sink - worktop.
- Kitchen floors should be even and easily cleanable and worktops should have cleanable impervious surfaces. There should be seals between a sink, a drainer, or a worktop and the adjacent wall surface.
- Kitchen lighting should be adequate and ventilation should be appropriate.
- HHSRS recognizes that deficiencies with space and crowding can increase the risks associated with a number of other hazards. Small kitchens also increase the risk of accidents.

HHSRS Operating Guidance ref: pages (108-112)

**Good practice reference: kitchen layout and design**

The layouts in Appendix 1 show some typical solutions for a 3 person flat and a 5 person house. The following publication is recommended as a source of good practice: BRE Housing Design Handbook - Building Research Establishment (See [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)).

In addition to the minimum standards detailed for existing kitchens, where it is necessary to create a new kitchen or to replace an existing one, it should wherever possible at reasonable cost, be designed to meet the standards of new dwellings ensuring in particular that:

- there is a work surface each side of the sink bowl, one of which may be the sink drainer
- there is a work surface each side of the cooker
- the cooker is at least 100mm from a corner base unit
- all work surfaces are at least 400mm long
- at least one double power socket provided close to the main food preparation area
- a food preparation area is provided between the sink bowl or drainer and the cooker must be at least 800mm long measured along its front edge, preferably in a straight line, and, if it has to be arranged around a corner, one front edge must be at least 1000mm long

In addition, a modern kitchen should be designed so that:

- spaces at least 600mm wide are provided for a cooker and refrigerator. In most cases 600mm wide spaces will be required for a washing machine and for a tumble dryer
- the cooker space is not in front of a window and cooker control units are offset to one side so that they can be used without reaching over the hob space

## 7.4

- wall cupboards are positioned at least 150mm away from the cooker space and such that they can be used without reaching over the hob
- people passing through do not have to enter “the work triangle”, an imaginary triangle formed by lines drawn between the cooker, sink and fridge positions
- there are adequate and convenient storage cupboards for food, crockery and pots and pans. This should be 1.1m<sup>3</sup> in a two person dwelling, increasing by 0.2m<sup>3</sup> for each additional person as determined by Nominal Occupancy referred to in Part 7
- there are enough convenient power sockets to avoid using multi-way adaptors and trailing flexes (not less than three double sockets above worktop level in addition to those at fixed appliance positions)

#### 4(b) Are there adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes (Secondary)?

There should be adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes, which include:

- space, power and plumbing for a washing machine
- provision for an external drying line
- an airing cupboard

These may be provided in communal laundry facilities e.g. in some sheltered housing schemes and multi-storey flats.

In the absence of provision for an external drying line, and no communal drying facilities, there should be provision for space, power and external venting for a 600mm wide tumble dryer. It should be positioned so that it can be vented directly to the outside air. These spaces will normally be in the kitchen, but may be in a utility area.

In dwellings where a hot water tank is present, there should be a heated airing cupboard with at least 1m<sup>2</sup> of internal slatted shelving provided.

#### 4(c) Are the bathroom and WC facilities 25 years old or less, unless in good condition (Primary)?

The dwelling must have a bathroom and WC which are free from deficiencies. Ideally these should be reasonably modern i.e. 25 years old or less. However, it is accepted that a bathroom may not need replacing if it is older than 25 years and free from deficiencies.

The minimum requirements set out for existing bathrooms are the same for replacement and new bathrooms and should be designed in accordance with the guidance set out below.

This element is dealt with by HHSRS hazard 17. Guidance here is given to highlight key points for consideration and to illustrate the relationship between size, layout, design and cleanability. Landlords should read the HHSRS guidance in full. In terms of layout, the following factors should be considered when assess the condition of existing bathrooms.

#### Space and layout

- There should be a sufficient number of baths or showers and wash hand basins for the residents or potential residents.
- Houses for six or more people should have a second WC with a wash hand basin.
- Houses for eight or more people should have a second bathroom or shower room.
- Bathrooms should not be more than one storey away from the bedrooms.
- In dwellings with more than one bedroom it should be possible to reach the bathroom without passing through a bedroom.
- To provide for adequate privacy for the user, each bath or shower should be sited in a bathroom and each WC should be sited in a bathroom or separate compartment provided with a lockable door.

# 7.4

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- The WC should be provided in a naturally or artificially ventilated and lit bathroom or separate WC compartment and should not be open directly and immediately onto a space intended for the storage or preparation of food.
- The washbasin should normally be located in or near the room containing the WC. The WC, wash-basin and bath should be readily accessible at all times without unduly compromising the privacy of the occupants.

## **Cleanability**

Where there are deficiencies with the facilities themselves, this clearly can increase the risk from this hazard. In terms of cleanability:

- water closet basins should have a smooth and impervious surface (such as vitreous china) and be self-cleansing
- the internal surfaces of the sink should be smooth, impervious, and capable of being readily cleansed and maintained in a hygienic condition. Cracks, chips or other damage to the internal surface may prevent thorough cleansing
- wall, ceiling and floor surfaces must be cleanable

## **4(d) Is there a shower as well as a bath (Primary)?**

The dwelling must have a bath and shower, which may be an over bath shower.

## 7.5

**PART 5****Well managed  
(for rented housing)****The Standard**

Housing should be fairly, efficiently and well managed to address the needs of tenants as individuals and as part of a community.

**Minimum Requirement**

This element of the Standard is not relevant to the assessment process and future financial planning at this stage.

**Interpretation****5(a) Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed?**

This element of the Standard is not relevant to the assessment process and future financial planning at this stage.

All social landlords are subject to assessment of this element through existing policy and performance management frameworks:

- RSL regulatory code of guidance
- Local Authority National and Core performance indicators
- RSL National Core performance indicators
- Local Authority Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI)
- other statutory statistical returns and performance indicators

## 7.6

**PART 6****Located in attractive and safe environments****The Standard**

All dwellings should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live.

**Minimum Requirement**

All opportunities should be taken to make improvements to the immediate environment (within the property boundary) of individual dwellings and to the general environment.

Consultation with residents, results of tenant satisfaction surveys and external audits can be used to inform the process.

- 6(a) All roads and footpaths should be accessible and provide safety (Secondary).
- 6(b) There should be soft and hard landscaping (Secondary).
- 6(c) Street lighting should be adequate (Secondary).
- 6(d) There should be safe play areas for young children (Secondary).
- 6(e) Communal areas should be practical and maintainable (Secondary).
- 6(f) The dwelling should have a clearly defined boundary (Secondary).
- 6(g) Utilities should be clearly identified (Secondary).
- 6(h) Car parking should also be practically located and should be clearly visible to residents (Secondary).

**Interpretation**

The interpretation of this section is, as far as possible, consistent with the principles detailed in 'Guidance on the Interpretation of the WHQS Environmental Standard' published in June 2008.

The 'Guidance on the Interpretation of the WHQS Environmental Standard' has been produced by TPAS Cymru and Groundwork Wales and is part of a suite of documents including:

- Report on the Scope and Implementation of the Environmental Standard of WHQS
- Case Studies of approaches to business planning and implementation of the environmental standard
- Abstract from the Literature Review - Guidance on Environmental Improvements

These documents are available from:

[www.tpascymru.org.uk](http://www.tpascymru.org.uk) or [www.groundworkwales.org.uk](http://www.groundworkwales.org.uk)

Or contact:

TPAS Cymru, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Rd., Cardiff CF11 9SD

Tel: 02920 237303

Groundwork Wales, Unit G5, The Willowford, Treforest Industrial Estate, Pontypridd, CF37 5YL

Tel: 01443 844866



## 7.6

**6(a) Are roads and footpaths accessible, providing safety for residents, pedestrians and children (Secondary)?**

All landlord owned roads and footpaths should be accessible and provide safety for residents, pedestrians and children. This includes ensuring that:

- main roads through residential areas are clear and well used
- where it is desirable to limit access / use to residents and their legitimate visitors, features such as rumble strips, change of road surface (by colour or texture), pillars or narrowing of the carriageway may be appropriate
- footpaths are wide enough to allow the passage of emergency vehicles
- footpaths which give access to the rear of dwellings should have gates placed as near to the building line as possible, to the same height as the adjacent boundary fencing and be opened via a key operated robust lock but should not be easy to climb or remove from hinges
- only grass or low ground cover is used as landscaping around footpaths
- planting should be used within two metres either side of the footpath

**6(b) Is there soft and hard landscaping with planting in protected areas (Secondary)?**

All landlord owned areas should have hard and soft landscaping in protected areas.

Landscaping should not impede the opportunity for natural surveillance and must avoid the creation of potential hiding places.

**6(c) Is there adequate street lighting (Secondary)?**

All landlord owned street lighting should be adequate and comply with BS 5489 unless prohibited by statute e.g. in conservation areas, in which case individual requirements should be discussed with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer and Local Authority lighting engineer.

**6(d) Is there adequate and safe play space for young children (Secondary)?**

All landlord owned play spaces for young children should be adequate and safe. "Toddler" areas should be designed so that it can be secured and to allow supervision from nearby dwellings with a safe route for users to come and go.

**6(e) Are there adequate, practical and maintainable communal areas (Secondary)?**

All landlord owned communal areas should be adequate, practical and maintainable.

Boundaries between public and private space should be clearly defined and open spaces should have features that prevent unauthorised vehicular access.

Consideration should be given to the provision of informal association areas for members of the community, particularly youths.

**6(f) Are dwellings clearly identifiable with definable boundaries (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should be clearly identifiable and with definable boundaries and there should be clear naming and numbering of dwellings to assist residents and the attendance of Emergency Services.

Where it is possible, defensible space should be created to front gardens by clearly defining the boundaries between private and public space.

The front boundary should be clearly defined, by hedge, wall or fence of no more than 1000mm in height unless planning regulations specify a lower level.

Adequate rear boundaries such as hedge, wall or fencing should also be provided between adjacent rear gardens.

Where risk is increased by boundaries being adjacent to open land, footpaths or areas such as railway property or canal tow paths additional features such as a trellis top or thorny shrubs should also be considered.

## 7.6

Boundary walls, bin and fuel stores, low flat roofs or balconies should be designed so as not to provide climbing aids to gain access into the property.

The estate layout should provide each block (of flats or maisonettes etc) with a clearly defined defensible space and fencing where appropriate.

**6(g) Are utility services practically located and well identified (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should have utility services, which are practically located and well identified.

To reduce opportunities for theft by bogus officials, utility meters should, where possible, be brought to the outside and front of the dwelling where they can be overlooked.

Where possible utility meters in multi occupancy developments should be located on the ground floor between access controlled doors so that access can be restricted to the meters.

**6(h) Is there adequate and practically located car parking clearly visible to residents (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should have adequate and practically located car parking clearly visible to residents.

In-curtilage car parking should be provided where possible. However, where communal car parking areas are necessary, they should be in small groups, close and adjacent to the residents' dwellings, preferably within the residents' view and well lit.

Where garages are provided the entrances should be orientated towards the front of dwellings where they can be easily observed.

Where parking is designed to be adjacent to or between dwellings, a gable end window should be considered to allow residents an unrestricted view of their vehicles.

**For good practice reference: useful resources on external design and layout**

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

People, Streets and Movement - Communities & Local Government [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

Essex Design Guide - Essex County Council [www.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.essexcc.gov.uk)

Time for Design - English Partnerships [www.englishpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk)

Making Places - English Partnerships [www.englishpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk)

Good Practice Advice Site Layout (WAG) [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

TAN (Wales) 12 Design (WAG) [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

Better Places to Live - (Communities & Local Government) [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

## 7.7

**PART 7**

As far as possible, suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)

**The Standard**

The accommodation provided within the dwelling should, as far as possible, suit the needs of the household.

The dwelling should provide sufficient space needed for everyday living and be appropriate for household numbers (Appendix 2)

Dwellings should have rooms that can accommodate sufficient furniture and circulation space to meet the needs of the residents. Circulation space should not be reduced to the point where rooms are cramped and inconvenient.

A lack of storage can impede upon the actual space dwellings provide for everyday living.

Where existing dwellings are intended for residents with specific needs, they should, wherever possible, be improved so that the layout of the dwelling reflects current good practice.

All necessary aids and adaptations to meet the specific requirements of any residents, including those with disabilities, should be provided.

The quality of housing provided by landlords is not only affected by the dwelling itself, the area outside a dwelling is equally important.

**Minimum Requirement**

- 7(a) The dwelling should provide sufficient space for everyday living (Secondary).
- 7(b) The dwelling should have enough storage both internally and externally (Secondary).
- 7(c) The dwelling layout should meet the specific cultural needs of the tenants (Secondary).

7(d) All necessary physical aids required by the residents should be provided (Secondary).

7(e) Dwellings with a garden should have a directly accessible, reasonably sized level area (Secondary).

7(f) The dwelling should have paved access to any garden gate and drying line (Secondary).

**Interpretation****7(a) Is there sufficient space within the dwelling for every day living (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should provide sufficient space for Nominal Occupancy and every day living. Nominal Occupancy is determined by bedroom and living space floor area. Space for every day living is determined by the furniture requirements to suit this Nominal Occupancy.

Appendix 1 provides landlords with an indication of how much nominal floor space is required for households in terms of bedrooms and living spaces. As shown, larger households require more living space.

Whether a dwelling has sufficient space for its Nominal Occupancy is driven by its bedroom sizes e.g. a dwelling with three bedrooms, two doubles (over 10m<sup>2</sup> floor area) and one single (between 6m<sup>2</sup> and 10m<sup>2</sup>), would be classified as a five person dwelling and would be expected to have a dining room of at least 7m<sup>2</sup> and a lounge of at least 16m<sup>2</sup> (see table on Nominal Occupancy).

Where a dwelling has additional rooms (e.g. rooms in a converted loft) that are not being used as bedrooms, then the lounge and dining room sizes need only be sufficient for the actual occupancy of the dwelling.

Landlords are advised to use the guidance relating to furniture layout for bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms in conjunction with the table below to assess the appropriate occupancy level for each dwelling.

It is recognised that sometimes individual rooms in an otherwise acceptable dwelling may fall just short of the standard required, and that to enlarge the room in question is not possible or cost-effective.

# 7.7

In such cases some tolerance on the minimum circulation space requirements shown in Appendix 1 is acceptable (up to 100mm would normally be regarded as reasonable). Worked examples using this table can be found in Appendix 2.

Landlords should also take into consideration the gender composition and relationship of residents when considering the sufficiency of space within a dwelling as laid out in the Bedroom Standard. The Bedroom Standard states that a separate bedroom is required for:

- a married or cohabiting couple
- an adult aged 21 years or more
- a pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex
- a pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex

Any unpaired person aged 10-20 years is paired, if possible, with a child under 10 years of the same sex or, if that is not possible, they require a separate bedroom. The same applies to any unpaired child aged under 10 years.

This is then compared with the number of bedrooms available for the sole use of the household. Bedrooms converted to other uses are not included; bedrooms not in use are included unless they are unusable as a bedroom.

Furniture sizes and circulation space requirements for living and dining rooms are shown in Appendix 1. These, together with the detail given below, can be used to test the suitability of existing rooms.

Minimum furniture requirements are as follows.

## Living rooms

- Adequate number of chairs/settees to seat the maximum nominal number of occupants.
- Three small or two large storage units, one of which may be in the dining area (in single person dwellings, requirements reduces to two small or one large unit).
- A television.

## Dining areas

- A dining table and chairs to seat the maximum nominal number of occupants.

It is emphasised, however, that these circulation space requirements are already modest, as is the amount of furniture allowed for. Circulation space should not be reduced to the point where rooms are cramped and inconvenient.

## Bedrooms

One-person bedrooms (bedroom size more than 6m<sup>2</sup> and less than 10m<sup>2</sup>):

- a single bed and bedside table
- a medium chest of drawers (this may be in an adjacent box room or on the landing if it does not impede circulation space)
- a single wardrobe (free-standing or built in)

Two-person bedrooms (Bedroom size more than 10m<sup>2</sup>):

- a double bed or two single beds or a double bed and a bedside table
- a large chest of drawers (this may be in an adjacent box room or on the landing if it does not impede circulation space)
- a dressing table
- one double or two single wardrobes (free-standing or built in)

## **7(b) Is internal and external general storage space adequate (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should provide adequate internal and external general storage space. All dwellings should have adequate and convenient internal and external storage which should include:

- a tall cupboard suitable for storage of brooms etc.
- high level shelving for storage of cleaning materials out of reach of small children
- an airing cupboard (where applicable)
- a robust and lockable external store, where appropriate

## 7.7

**7(c) Does the dwelling layout meets the special cultural needs of the residents (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should meet the special cultural needs of the residents, where practicable.

**For good practice reference: meeting specific needs**

Landlords should consider that in many Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities the notion of extended families is based on children remaining with their parents for the rest of their lives. This will require housing providers to develop dwellings that enable families to remain together. It should be noted, however, that in some communities, the extended family concept is declining. Consultation with BME communities is essential to ensure that proper consideration is given to trends such as these.

House design is related to household numbers and amenities such as bathrooms and kitchen facilities complement the number of residents.

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

Accommodating Diversity N H F/ Home Housing Trust  
[www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

Tai Pawb (Housing For Everyone) - Various Newsletters.

Chartered Institute of Housing (Cymru) - BME Housing Good Practice Guide [www.cih.org/cymru](http://www.cih.org/cymru)

**For good practice reference: flexibility and future proofing**

Where it is practical and cost effective to do so, consideration should be given to incorporating some, or all, the Lifetime Homes Standards (LHS) into dwellings.

The LHS specification is comprised of 16 major standards for incorporation into a home in order to increase flexibility, offer tenants choice and improve accessibility. For further detailed guidance see: Designing Lifetime Homes Joseph Rowntree Foundation; and Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes Joseph Rowntree Foundation at [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

New dwellings are designed to be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of residents. This is a more difficult goal to achieve in existing dwellings due to constraints imposed by the structure.

Landlords should however, wherever it is practical and cost effective to do so, take every opportunity to incorporate features into projects that will result in dwellings that are flexible and capable of adaptation. Further sources of information can be found at:

- Building Sight RNIB [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)
- Wheelchair Design Guide - National Wheelchair Housing Group NATWHAG
- Good Loo Design Guide (for purchase) - Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) April 2004.

**7(d) Does the dwelling have the necessary physical aids to suit the requirements of the residents (Secondary)?**

The dwelling should have the necessary physical adaptations to suit the professionally assessed requirements of the residents. Landlords should, therefore, consider the particular requirements of individuals and/or groups and where the existing dwelling falls short of their needs, look at possible remedies. Similarly, accessibility issues should be addressed when considering dwellings to be occupied by those with a mobility impairment.

**7(e) Does the garden have a level area no smaller than 10m<sup>2</sup> directly accessible from the dwelling (Secondary)?**

All dwellings with either a front or rear garden should have a level area of no less than 10m<sup>2</sup> that is directly accessible.

An area is to be considered directly accessible if access to it can be gained without leaving the dwelling's plot boundaries. Paths and steps may be considered an acceptable method of access.

# 7.7

## **7(f) Is there a paved access to the drying line and any garden gate (Secondary)?**

Where a dwelling has a garden that requires access from the front or rear boundary to an entrance door the access to them should be fully paved. Where a dwelling has a garden with an area with provision for a drying line, the access to this should be fully paved.

### **For good practice reference: additional sources of information on design**

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

BRE Housing Design Handbook Building Research Establishment [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

Scheme Development Standards Housing Corporation [www.housingcorp.gov.uk](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk)

Standards in Quality & Development National Housing Federation [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

Development Quality Requirements Welsh Assembly Government [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)



# Assessment

A dwelling will fail the Standard if any individual element is classified as a Fail.

Each element of the Standard has been categorised as either a Primary or Secondary element.

- A Primary element is one that impacts on the safety of the residents.
- A Secondary element is more focussed around the comfort of the residents.

Separation of elements into Primary and Secondary has been made to assist landlords to prioritise improvements and help in the assessment process i.e. demonstrating the degree of progress towards meeting the Standard.

Appendix 3 provides landlords with an assessment checklist as a quick reference point to assist in ensuring that all elements of the Standard have been considered.

In all possible cases, landlords will assess elements as Pass, Fail or Not Applicable. In cases where this is not possible, it may be appropriate to employ the Acceptable Fail category.

## Use of Not Applicable relating to individual elements within the Standard

It is important to remember that it will not be appropriate for every dwelling to be assessed on all elements within the Standard. For example:

- a ground floor flat will not be assessed on the thickness of any loft insulation present
- the presence of 'a robust and lockable external store' is not needed for dwellings without gardens
- an external fire escape is not needed in a single storey dwelling
- adequate fire alarms and equipment need only apply to common parts of dwellings

The above examples highlight differences in the nature and purpose of the dwellings. Particular distinctions may be relevant between single household dwellings and dwellings of multiple-occupation such as sheltered housing schemes, as well as flats and houses. Thus, where appropriate, it may be necessary for some elements to be reported as Not Applicable.

## Use of Acceptable Fail relating to individual elements within the Standard

An Acceptable Fail is only possible on individual elements and not the dwelling as a whole. An Acceptable Fail may only be used in one or a combination of the following situations:

- cost of remedy
- timing of remedy
- residents' choice
- physical constraint

In the main this classification should only apply to the assessment of Secondary elements.

The technical steering group highlighted some practical examples (not exhaustive) of how these Acceptable Fails of an element might occur.

For example:

### Cost and timing of remedy

Element being assessed Part 7 (a) - Is there sufficient space within the dwelling for every day living?

A landlord may deem it necessary to consider the cost effectiveness of some works such as undertaking structural changes to the property in order to enlarge living spaces/kitchen. It may be appropriate for the landlord 'postponing' the achievement of this Secondary element work and reporting it as an Acceptable Fail until major investment is required for that property (i.e. where a Primary element would fail).

### Residents' choice

Element being assessed - Part 4 (d) - Is there a shower as well as a bath?

A shower without a bath is acceptable where agreed with the resident e.g. sheltered and disabled accommodation.

Any outstanding work required to convert an Acceptable Fail to a Pass must be undertaken prior to relet of the property. All cases of Acceptable Fail should be recorded by the landlord so that future works can be appropriately planned and budgeted.

# Stock condition surveys

This guidance provides advice on the process of undertaking stock condition surveys for social landlord managed housing stock. It is aimed at assisting social landlords to improve the long-term management of their housing stock.

All social landlords should follow the themes and recommendations in this guidance. They can be summarised as below:

## Strategy

A plan for undertaking a stock condition survey should form part of a comprehensive strategy for future planned maintenance. This should also be linked to any reinvestment, improvements and energy efficiency policies.

## Objectives

Surveys should aim to provide an overall assessment of the condition of the stock. This can be achieved by using a representative sample of dwellings, including all associated external works. It is not necessary to survey 100% of the stock in order to achieve an overall assessment.

## Sampling

A small pilot survey should be carried out on a representative sample of stock, as a means of validating the survey format, content, consistency between surveyors, and methodology. Void dwellings can be used for the pilot surveys as these provide an excellent opportunity for training and benchmarking different surveyors' views on condition. The sample for the pilot survey should not need to be greater than 5% of the stock to be included in the main survey.

The method of analysing the survey data should be checked at the pilot survey stage to ensure reports contain the required information.

## Rolling programme

To maintain up to date information on stock condition, regular cycles of surveys should be undertaken. As a minimum, a statistically representative sample of all stock should be surveyed every five years. Alternatively, a five year rolling programme of surveys could be implemented, based on surveying a representative sample of 20% of the stock each year.

## Survey format

The survey format should be designed to gather the minimum amount of information consistent with achieving the objectives. Although there are clear advantages in gathering the minimum necessary information, there may still be advantages in using the survey to gather additional information.

## Data capture

Social Landlords will need to decide on the means of recording survey data. Generally data can be captured electronically on hand-held machines or manually on paper proformas. Where electronic data capture is used it must be compatible with the data analysis software.

Where external consultants use electronic data capture, their brief should include training of in-house staff in its use.

## Resourcing

The assessment of the resources needed has two aspects:

- i) the cost of carrying out the survey and processing survey data
- ii) the cost of carrying out urgent repairs discovered during the course of the survey

---

## Programme and monitoring

A programme based on realistic timescales should be determined for each stage of the survey process. It is important that there is a regular flow of data analysis information to allow for checking of reports/results at early stages to avoid the risk of discovering that the information/reports provided at the end of the exercise are inappropriate or unsuitable.

## Data analysis

Stock condition information should ideally be considered as part of an overall information management strategy, to provide key information that is consistent and useful across all departments.

The use of computer software is essential in the analysis of condition survey data. The system chosen must be able to present information in report formats that allow their use as a planning tool in long-term forecasting.

The data analysis software should provide a full set of reporting and querying facilities in order that specific information can be identified easily and costs broken down and reported in tabular form. The information should be able to be easily exported for use in financial and business plans. All reports should be capable of providing 30 year projections.

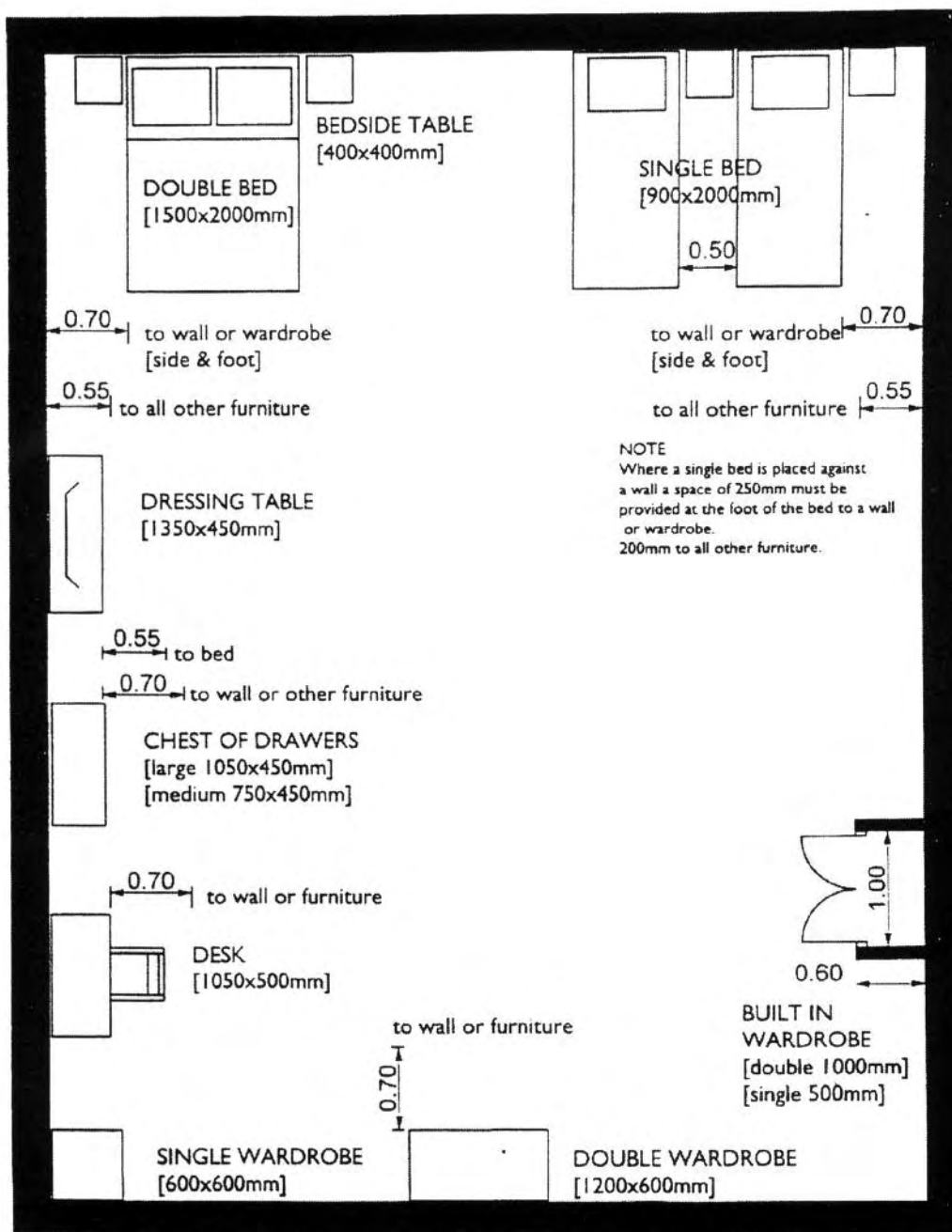
Opportunities should be taken to gather data for other associated housing objectives such as the Management of Asbestos Regulations, Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), and Energy Performance in Buildings Directive (EPBD). Some landlords may wish to adapt their stock condition survey to do this. Others may wish to undertake separate exercises if it is more appropriate and / or cost effective to do so. Also, some may wish to use the opportunity at re-letting/void inspections to gather this information.

Assessment against the Standard is likely to necessitate some internal inspection of dwellings. But good knowledge of the stock, sound past asset management practice and record keeping, plus a careful approach to sampling for statistical relevance, should mean that an internal inspection of every property is not needed. Sufficient data should be available to give a reasonably accurate picture of condition and the overall situation relative to the Standard.

# Appendix 1

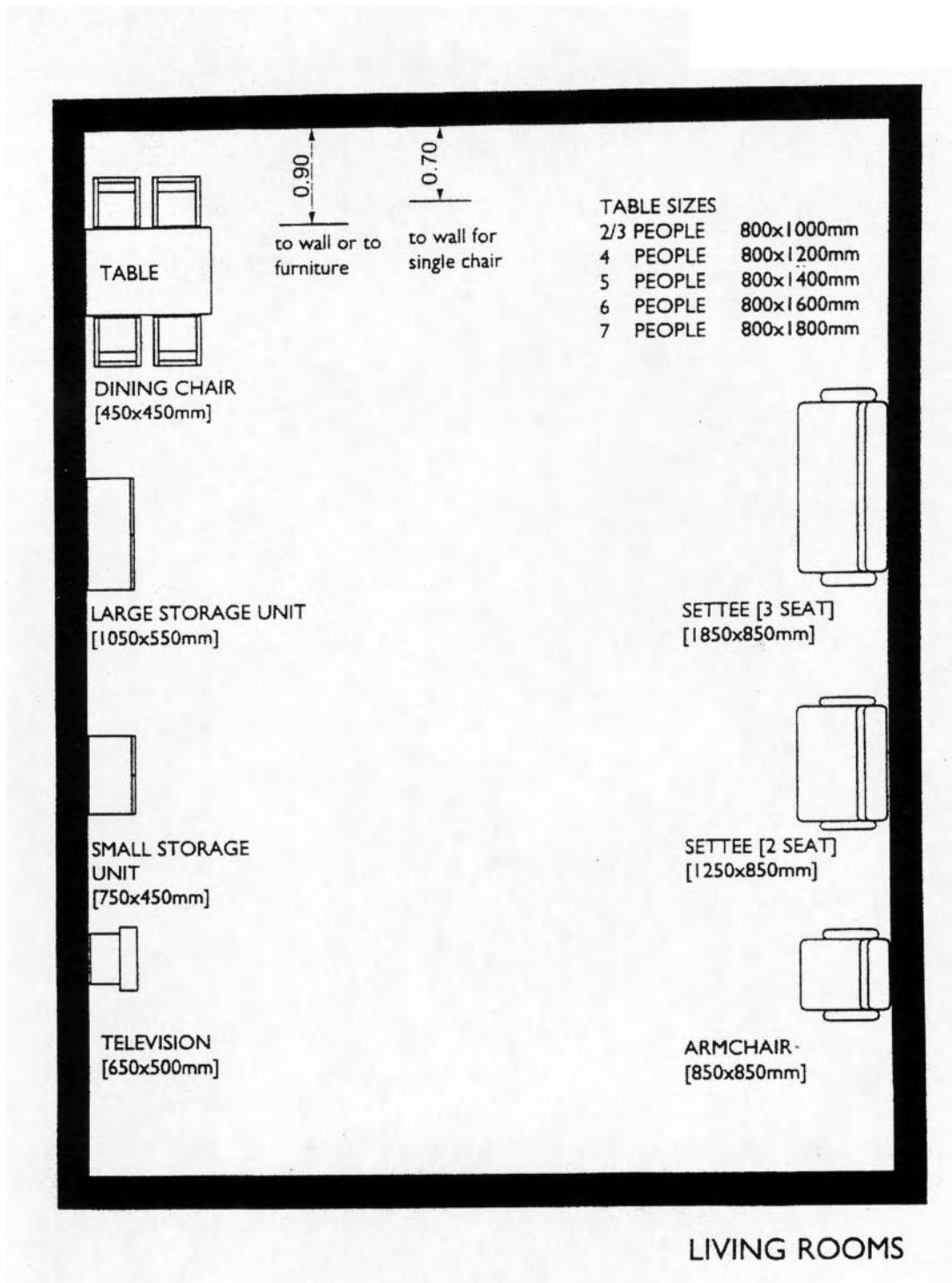
# Space Standard Layout Drawings

# A1

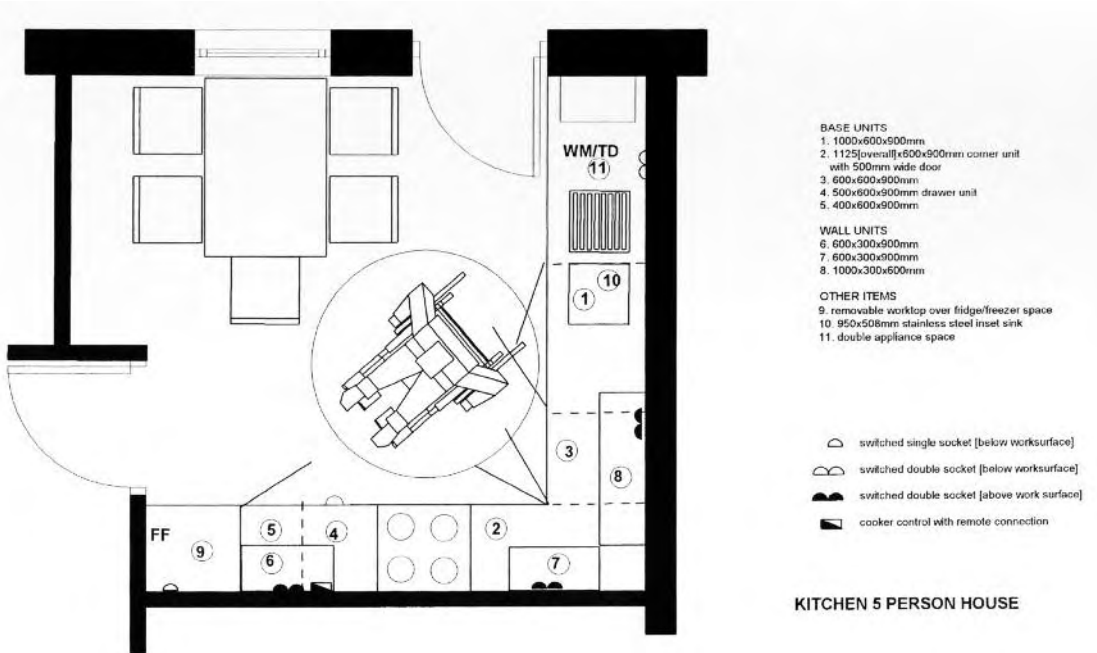
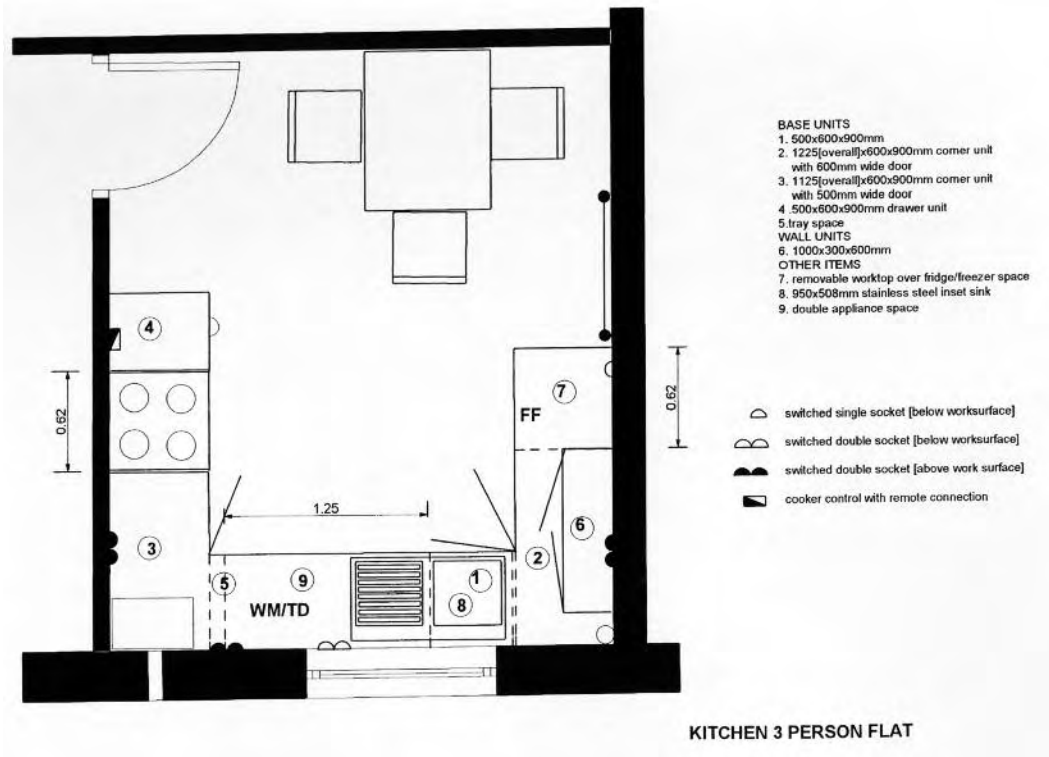


BEDROOMS

# A1



# A1





## Appendix 2

# Worked example of determining Nominal Occupancy

# A2

Minimum sizes (m <sup>2</sup> )		Number of bedrooms		Nominal Occupancy
Dining*	Lounge	Double (Min 10m <sup>2</sup> )	Single (Min 6m <sup>2</sup> , less than 10m <sup>2</sup> )	
6	10	0	2	2
		1	0	
6	10	1	3	3
		1	1	
7	12	0	4	4
		1	2	
		2	0	
7	16	0	5	5
		1	3	
		2	1	
8	16	0	6	6
		1	4	
		2	2	
		3	0	
9	16	0	7	7
		1	5	
		2	3	
		3	1	

Notional Room size (m<sup>2</sup>) \* may be combined with the kitchen lounge and dining may be combined

### Examples from the table above if a dwelling has:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Dining room = 7.5m <sup>2</sup><br>Lounge = 11.5m <sup>2</sup><br>Single bedrooms = 0<br>Double bedroom = 1<br><b>Nominal Occupancy = 2</b> | 2. Dining room = 8m <sup>2</sup><br>Lounge = 16m <sup>2</sup><br>Single bedrooms = 1<br>Double bedroom = 2<br><b>Nominal Occupancy = 5</b> | 3. Lounge dinner = 21m <sup>2</sup><br>Single bedrooms = 2<br>Double bedrooms = 1<br><b>Nominal Occupancy = 4</b> |
|--|--|---|

## Appendix 3

# The Standard Assessment Checklist

# A3

Element	Primary/Secondary
<b>Part 1. In a good state of repair</b>	
1 (a). Is the dwelling structurally stable and free from disrepair?	P
1 (b). Is the dwelling free from damp?	P
<b>Part 2. Safe and secure</b>	
2 (a). Is the staircase and balustrade safe?	P
2 (b). Is there adequate space for kitchen appliances?	S
2 (c). Is the work surface sufficient for safe food preparation?	S
2 (d). Is the cupboard storage convenient and adequate?	S
2 (e). Is the number of convenient power sockets in the kitchen sufficient?	S
2 (f). Is the flooring in the kitchen and bathroom safe and suitable for use?	S
2 (g). Is there an external fire escape?	S
2 (h). Are there adequate fire alarms and equipment?	P
2 (i). Do rooms used for sleeping have escape routes not passing through another room?	S
2 (j). Are mains powered smoke detectors on each floor?	P
2 (k). Are window locks without automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping?	S
2 (l). Is the gas, solid fuel or oil service and safety certificate up to date, and have all heating installations and appliances been certified safe by an appropriately qualified person as required by law?	P
2 (m). Have electrical lighting and power installations been checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person?	P
2 (n). Do external doors and windows give a reasonable level of physical security?	P
2 (o). Is the rear garden easy to maintain, reasonably private, safe and suitable for young children to play in?	P

## A3

Element	Primary/Secondary
<b>Part 3. Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated</b>	
3 (a)	Is the heating system reasonably economical and capable of heating the dwelling to a reasonable level? P
3 (b)	Are external doors and windows adequately draught proofed? P
3 (c)	Is the living room separated from the main entrance door? S
3 (d)	Is the hot water tank effectively insulated? P
3 (e)	Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom? S
<b>Part 4. Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms</b>	
4 (a)	Is the kitchen 15 years old or less, unless in good condition? P
4 (b)	Are there adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes? S
4 (c)	Are the bathroom and WC facilities 25 years old or less, unless in good condition? P
4 (d)	Is there a shower as well as a bath? P
<b>Part 5. Well managed (for rented housing)</b>	
5 (a)	Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed? Not Assessed
<b>Part 6. Located in attractive and safe environments</b>	
6 (a)	Are roads and footpaths accessible, providing safety for residents, pedestrians and children? S
6 (b)	Is there soft and hard landscaping with planting in protected areas? S
6 (c)	Is there adequate street lighting? S
6 (d)	Is there adequate and safe play space for young children? S
6 (e)	Are there adequate, practical and maintainable communal areas? S
6 (f)	Are dwellings clearly identifiable with definable boundaries? S
6 (g)	Are utility services practically located and well identified? S
6 (h)	Is there adequate and practically located car parking clearly visible to residents? S

## A3

Element	Primary/Secondary
<b>Part 7. As far as possible, suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)</b>	
7 (a)	Is there sufficient space within the dwelling for every day living? S
7 (b)	Is internal and external general storage space adequate? S
7 (c)	Does the dwelling layout meet the special cultural needs of the residents? S
7 (d)	Does the dwelling have the necessary physical aids to suit the requirements of the residents? S
7 (e)	Is there a level area no smaller than 10m <sup>2</sup> directly accessible from the dwelling? S
7 (f)	Is there a paved access to the drying line and any garden gate? S





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## COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday, 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018
<b>Report Subject</b>	Forward Work Programme
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	N / A
<b>Report Author</b>	Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

## REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME</b>
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?</li><li>2. Is it an area of major change or risk?</li><li>3. Are there issues of concern in performance?</li><li>4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?</li><li>5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?</li></ol>
<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	None as a result of this report.
<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	Publication of this report constitutes consultation.
<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	None as a result of this report.
<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Current Forward Work Programme
<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Ceri Shotton Overview &amp; Scrutiny Facilitator</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702305</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk">ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<b>Improvement Plan:</b> the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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<b>Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019 10.00 am</b>	<b>Quarter 3 Council Plan 2018/19 Monitoring Report</b>  <b>Welfare Reform Update – Universal Credit Roll Out</b>	To enable Members to fulfil their role in relation to performance monitoring  To provide an update on the impact of Welfare Reform on Flintshire residents	Assurance Monitoring  Assurance/Monitoring	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator  Benefits Manager	
<b>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019 10.00 am</b>  Page 1	<b>Update Report – Disabled Facilities Grant Internal Audit Report 2017</b>	To provide a six month update on progress in relation to the service control action plan			
<b>Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 10.00 am</b>	<b>Quarter 4/Year-end Council Plan 2018/19 Monitoring Report</b>	To enable Members to fulfil their role in relation to performance monitoring	Assurance Monitoring	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator	

### Items to be scheduled to a date

- Work to address economic inactivity and support entrepreneurship
- Update on private sector housing renewal strategy
- Update report on stairwell at Castle Heights Flint – as suggested during the 20<sup>th</sup> September meeting
- Smart Metres – as suggested during the 16<sup>th</sup> October meeting.
- Rent Arrears Internal Audit Report and Action Plan



**REGULAR ITEMS**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Responsible / Contact Officer</b>
<b>Quarterly / Annual</b>	<b>Performance Reporting</b>	To consider performance outturns for improvement targets against directorate indicators.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
<b>Six monthly</b>	<b>Welfare Reform Update – including Universal Credit</b>	To update Members on the impact of Welfare Reform and the cost to the Council.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
<b>Six monthly</b>	<b>Update on North East Wales Homes &amp; Property Management</b>	To update Members on the work of the North East Wales Homes & Property Management	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)

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