



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

July 2008

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Overview of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

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

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

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

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

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>

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

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 1.1m³ in a two person dwelling, increasing by 0.2m³ 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.

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

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).

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 1.1m³ in a two person dwelling, increasing by 0.2m³ 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 1m² 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

- 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

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.

7.7

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 10m² floor area) and one single (between 6m² and 10m²), would be classified as a five person dwelling and would be expected to have a dining room of at least 7m² and a lounge of at least 16m² (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

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

Tai Pawb (Housing For Everyone) - Various Newsletters.

Chartered Institute of Housing (Cymru) - BME Housing Good Practice Guide 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

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
- 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 10m² directly accessible from the dwelling (Secondary)?

All dwellings with either a front or rear garden should have a level area of no less than 10m² 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.

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.

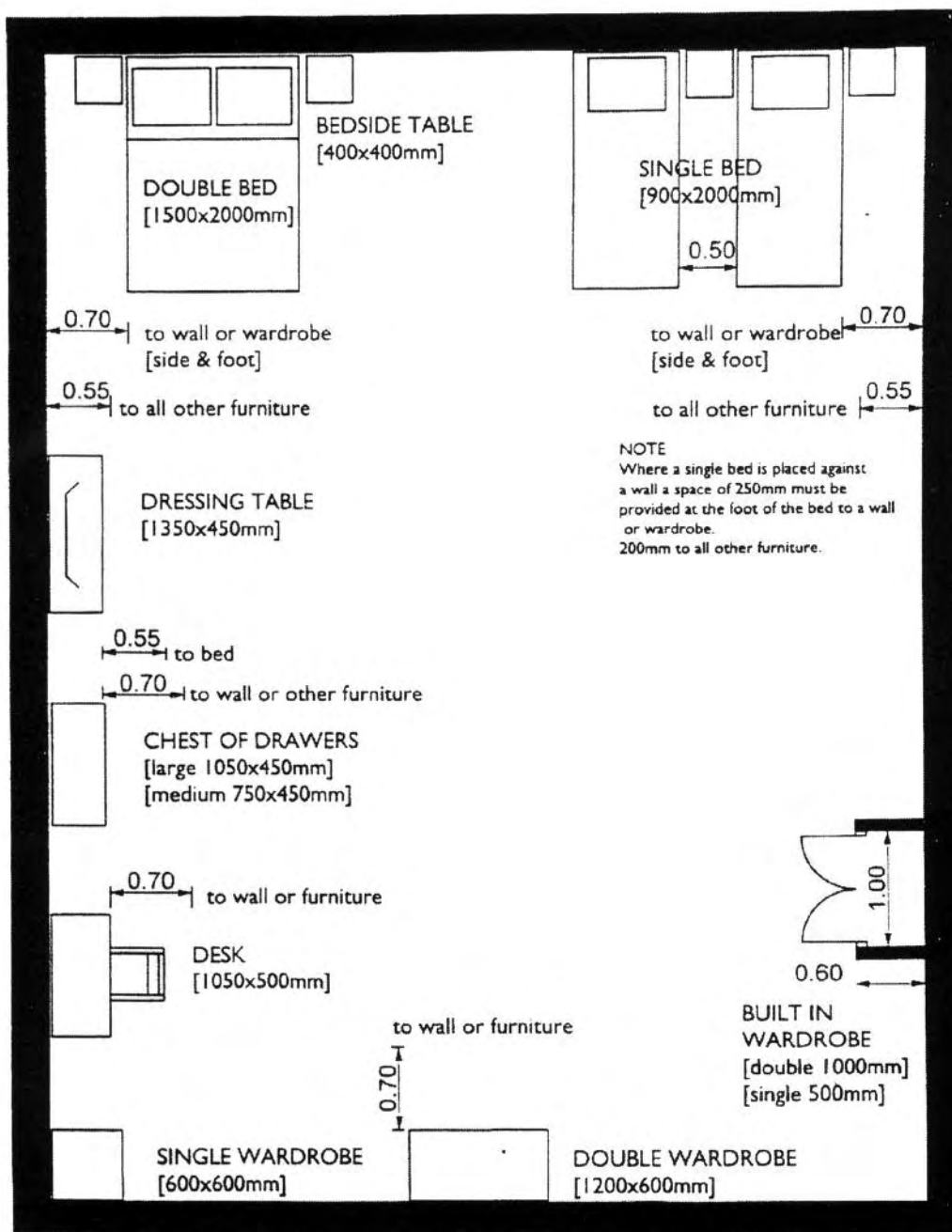
Opportunities should be taken to gather data for other associated housing objectives such as the Management of Asbestos Regulations, Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), and Energy Performance in Buildings Directive (EPBD). Some landlords may wish to adapt their stock condition survey to do this. Others 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

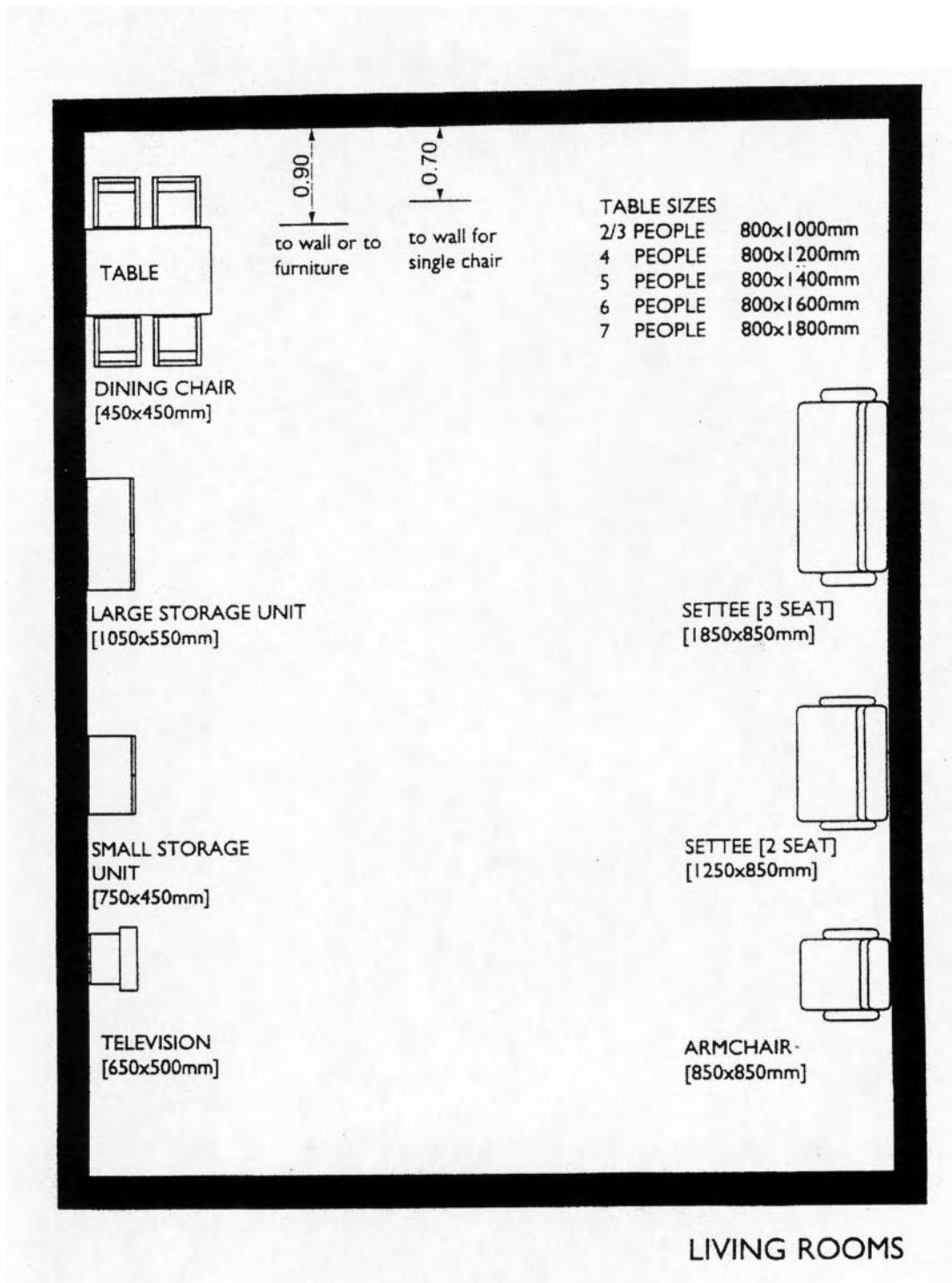
Space Standard Layout Drawings

A1

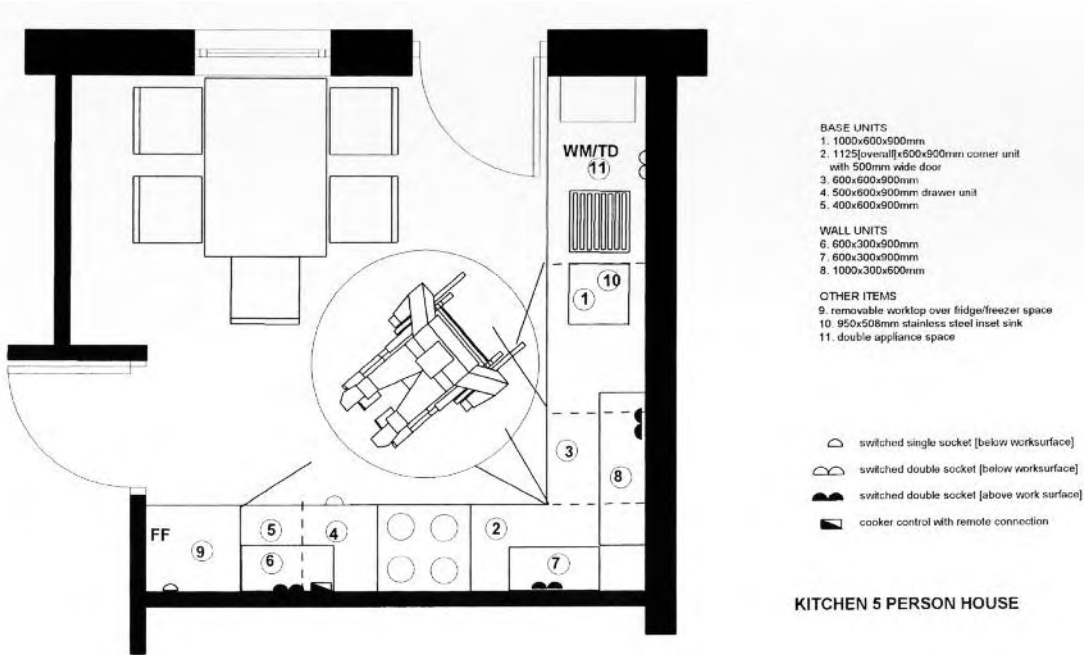
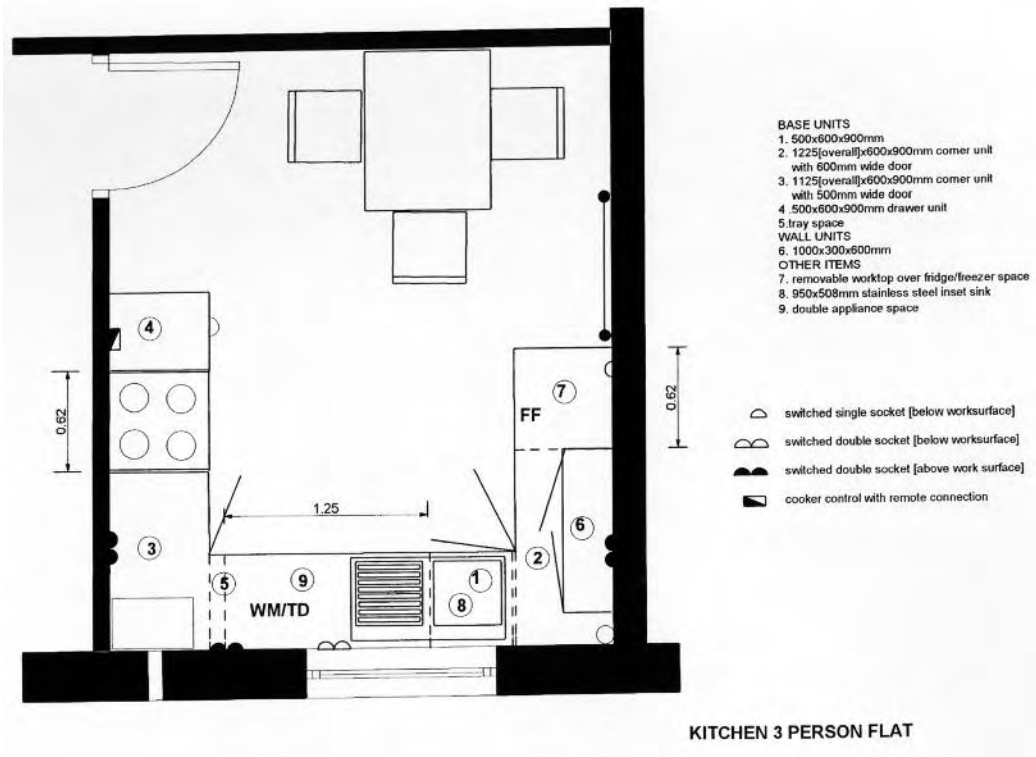


BEDROOMS

A1



A1



Appendix 2

Worked example of determining Nominal Occupancy

A2

Minimum sizes (m ²)		Number of bedrooms		Nominal Occupancy
Dining*	Lounge	Double (Min 10m ²)	Single (Min 6m ² , less than 10m ²)	
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 (m²) * 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 ²
Lounge = 11.5m ²
Single bedrooms = 0
Double bedroom = 1
Nominal Occupancy = 2 | 2. Dining room = 8m ²
Lounge = 16m ²
Single bedrooms = 1
Double bedroom = 2
Nominal Occupancy = 5 | 3. Lounge dinner = 21m ²
Single bedrooms = 2
Double bedrooms = 1
Nominal Occupancy = 4 |
|--|--|---|

Appendix 3

The Standard Assessment Checklist

A3

Element	Primary/Secondary
Part 1. In a good state of repair	
1 (a). Is the dwelling structurally stable and free from disrepair?	P
1 (b). Is the dwelling free from damp?	P
Part 2. Safe and secure	
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
Part 3. Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated	
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
Part 4. Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms	
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
Part 5. Well managed (for rented housing)	
5 (a)	Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed? Not Assessed
Part 6. Located in attractive and safe environments	
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
Part 7. As far as possible, suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)	
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 ² directly accessible from the dwelling? S
7 (f)	Is there a paved access to the drying line and any garden gate? S

Notes





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