

## Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), as at 31 December 2020

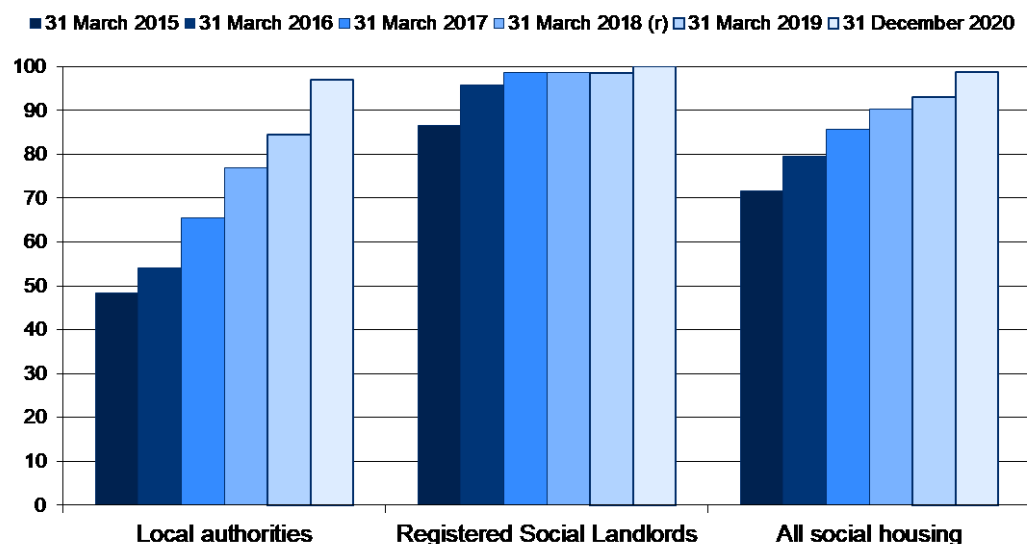
30 September 2021  
SDR 275/2021

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the 31 March 2020 collection and publication was cancelled and has been replaced with a collection that covers compliance with Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as at 31 December 2020. An updated version of WHQS is currently being developed.

### Key Results

- The number of social housing dwellings that are compliant with WHQS (including acceptable fails) continues to increase. At 31 December 2020, 99% of social housing dwellings (228,510 dwellings) were compliant with the WHQS (including acceptable fails) compared to 93% as at 31 March 2019.
- At 31 December 2020, across all social housing, the most common reason given for an acceptable fail was 'Timing of Remedy'; occurring in just over half of all compliant dwellings that contained at least one acceptable fail.

**Chart 1: Percentage of dwellings compliant with WHQS (including acceptable fails), 2015-2020**



Source: Annual WHQS returns

### About this release

This annual Release presents information from the annual data collection measuring the self-reported progress made by social landlords in achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) for their stock. The release covers compliance with the standard as at 31 December 2020 and information on compliance with the WHQS by individual component type.

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## 1. Background - WHQS

The [Welsh Housing Quality Standard \(WHQS\)](#) is the Welsh Government standard of social housing quality. The WHQS was first introduced in 2002 and aims to ensure that all dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents. The Welsh Government set a target for all social landlords to improve their housing stock to meet the WHQS as soon as possible, but in any event by the end of December 2020. The WHQS measures 41 individual elements within seven categories (see [Annex 1](#)):

- In a good state of repair
- Safe and secure
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated
- Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms
- Well managed (for rented housing)
- Located in attractive and safe environments
- As far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities).

Full compliance refers to dwellings where the WHQS standard is achieved for all individual elements. However, there can be situations where achieving the standard for an individual element is not possible. Such situations may include the cost or timing of the work, residents choosing not to have the work done or where there are physical constraints to the work. In these instances the landlords may record one or more element as acceptable fails. Where a dwelling contains one or more acceptable fails but all other elements are compliant, the dwelling is deemed to be compliant subject to acceptable fails.

Further details can be found in the [Quality Report](#) published alongside this release. Definitions are shown in the [Glossary](#) towards the end of this release.

Some elements of the WHQS were measured by the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2017-18.

**Users wanting to look at trends in meeting the quality standard for social housing over time should use these Official Statistics**, those wanting to compare across tenures should use the [Welsh Housing Conditions Survey WHQS report](#) (noting that only a subset of elements have been measured). **The two data sources are not directly comparable.**

## 2. WHQS compliance – Results

For the purposes of this data collection, social housing dwellings assessed include all self-contained general needs, sheltered, other supported, and extra care properties, including bedsits. As at 31 December 2020 there were a total of 231,207<sup>1</sup> such dwellings in Wales.

As at 31 December 2020 99% of social housing dwellings (228,510 dwellings) were compliant with the WHQS (including acceptable fails). This compares with 93% as at 31 March 2019 ([Table 1](#)).

**Table 1 – Progress made by social landlords towards compliance with WHQS as at 31 December, 2013 to 2020 (a) (b)**

Compliance	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Per cent 2020 (c)
WHQS compliant (including acceptable fails) (b)								
Local authority dwellings	39	44	48	54	66	77	84	97
Registered social landlord dwellings	75	83	87	96	99	99	99	100 (d)
All social housing	60	67	72	79	86	90 (r)	93	99
Fully compliant								
Local authority dwellings	32	37	40	43	45	50	58	72
Registered social landlord dwellings	53	58	65	72	70	71	75	77
All social housing	45	50	55	61	61	63	69	75
Not compliant								
Local authority dwellings	61	56	52	46	34	23	16	3
Registered social landlord dwellings	25	17	13	4	1	1	1	0 (e)
All social housing	40	33	28	21	14	10 (r)	7	1

Source: Annual WHQS returns

(a) The information shown for local authorities is based on the 11 local authorities who had stock as at 31 December 2020. Information shown for registered social landlords (RSLs) is based on responses received from 58 RSLs in 2013, 59 in 2014, 58 in 2015, 60 in 2016, 59 in 2017 and 2018, 60 in 2019 and 53 in 2020. In 2020 data was not estimated for any RSLs as all 53 with stock provided a response.

(b) An Acceptable Fail is only possible on individual elements and not the dwelling as a whole. Further detail on acceptable fails are available in the accompanying Quality Report

(c) Data for 2020 is at 31 December 2020 and data for previous years is at 31 March of the corresponding year

(d) Rounded to 100%, a very small number were not compliant

(e) Rounded to 0%, a very small number were not compliant

(r) Revised June 2019.

The percentage of registered social landlord (RSL) dwellings that were WHQS compliant (including acceptable fails) has been higher than that of local authority dwellings every year since the first year of publication in 2013 ([Table 1](#)). The gap between the levels of compliance for RSLs and that for local authorities has continued to decrease. This is due to a considerable increase in the proportion of compliant (including acceptable fails) local authority dwellings, an increase from 84% in 2019 to 97% in 2020. However, 3% (2,669) of local authority dwellings were still not compliant at the end of December 2020, compared with less than 0.02% (28) of RSL dwellings.

<sup>1</sup> Stock numbers reported by providers as part of the WHQS data collection

Of the 11 local authorities who had housing stock, 8 stated that all their stock was compliant with the WHQS (including acceptable fails) at 31 December 2020, no change from the previous year. Of the 53 RSLs, 49 reported that all their stock had achieved WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails) at 31 December 2020. This compares to 51 out of 60 RSLs as at 31 March 2019.

### **3. Acceptable fails**

Of all dwellings which were compliant (both fully compliant and compliant subject to an acceptable fail) at 31 December 2020, 24% had at least one acceptable fail. Between March 2019 and December 2020, the number of dwellings which were in the category of 'compliant (subject to an acceptable fail)' decreased by 1.3% to 54,833 dwellings. This was offset by a big increase in fully compliant and decrease in non-compliant dwellings.

### **4. Reasons for acceptable fails**

Since 2012-13, information has been collected on the reason for the 'acceptable fails' as reported by local authorities and RSLs. These include 'Resident Choice', 'Physical Constraint', 'Timing of Remedy' and 'Cost of Remedy'.

The most common reasons for acceptable fails remain unchanged from last year. At 31 December 2020, across all social housing, the most common reason given for an acceptable fail was 'Timing of Remedy' occurring in 51% of compliant dwellings that contained at least one acceptable fail, followed by 'Resident's Choice' which occurred in 31% of these dwellings. 'Physical constraint' and 'Cost of Remedy' were the least common reasons for acceptable fails occurring in 13% and 5% of dwellings respectively ([Table 2](#), [Chart 1](#)).

**Table 2 - Number of dwellings WHQS compliant subject to acceptable fails, by reasons for acceptable fails as at 31 December 2020 (a)(b)**

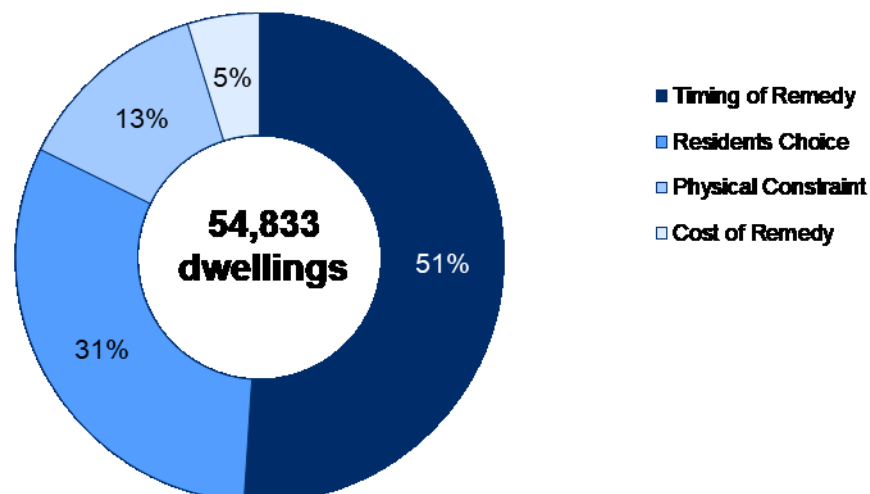
WHQS compliant subject to acceptable fails	Number / Per cent		
	Local authority dwellings	Registered social landlord dwellings	All social housing
Dwellings compliant subject to acceptable fails by reasons for acceptable fails:			
Residents Choice	11,565	5,573	17,138
Physical Constraint	2,322	4,785	7,107
Timing of Remedy	6,621	21,354	27,975
Cost of Remedy	1,326	1,287	2,613
<b>Total dwellings compliant subject to acceptable fails</b>	<b>21,834</b>	<b>32,999</b>	<b>54,833</b>
Percentage of dwellings compliant subject to acceptable fails by reasons for acceptable fails:			
Residents Choice	53	17	31
Physical Constraint	11	15	13
Timing of Remedy	30	65	51
Cost of Remedy	6	4	5

Source: Annual WHQS returns

(a) The information shown for local authorities is based on the 11 local authorities who had stock as at 31 December 2020. Information shown for registered social landlords (RSLs) is based on responses received from all 53 RSLs with stock in 2020

(b) An Acceptable Fail is only possible on individual elements and not the dwelling as a whole. Further detail on acceptable fails are available in the 'Key Quality Information' section.

**Chart 2 - Percentage of all dwellings compliant subject to acceptable fails by reason for acceptable fails, 31 December 2020**



Source: Annual WHQS returns

## 5. Compliance against components

Social landlords were also asked to provide an assessment of compliance with the WHQS in relation to ten components, listed in [Table 3](#) below. To be compliant with a component, a property must meet the standard for each element that applies to that component (see [Annex 1](#)).

Whilst it is generally expected that compliance will improve over time, compliance levels can also appear to fall due to a change in the quality of the source data. Some landlords have informed us that due to more recent stock condition surveys and improved estimation processes and data management systems, the accuracy of the data they provide is improving. Further information is available in the [Quality Report](#).

**Table 3 - Compliance of all social landlords with WHQS (including acceptable fails) by component as percentage of dwellings as at 31 December 2020 (a) (b) (c)**

Component	Per cent							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (c)
Roofs and associated components	90.2	90.7	89.6	92.1	92.7	95.6	97.3	99.6
Windows	96.4	96.7	96.9	97.5	97.7	97.9	98.1	99.6
External Doors	92.2	95.5	95.2	96.3	96.4	97.2	98.1	99.6
Kitchens	76.8	82.2	87.2	93.4	96.4	98.6	99.3	99.9
Bathrooms	76.7	81.6	87.8	93.1	95.5	97.9	99.3	99.9
Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)	77.8	85.6	84.9	93.0	95.7	97.1	98.3	99.4
Central heating systems	88.1	91.6	96.0	98.1	98.5	98.5	99.0	99.9
Electrical systems	86.1	88.8	90.7	93.2	96.4	97.6 (r)	98.0	99.9
Mains powered smoke detectors	95.4	96.5	97.7	99.0	99.4	99.3	100.0	100.0
Gardens and external storage up to and including the boundary of the property	82.5	86.6	85.6	87.0	89.9	93.2	95.7	99.0

Source: Annual WHQS returns

(a) For a component to be considered as compliant it should meet the requirements stated in the “Revised Guidance for Social Landlords on Interpretation and Achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard July 2008”.

(b) The compliance numbers shown in Table 3 will generally be higher than in Table 1, as properties may comply with a subset of the elements, without necessarily complying with them all.

(c) Data for 2020 is at 31 December 2020 and data for previous years is at 31 March of the corresponding year

(r) Revised June 2019.

The components that showed the highest percentage of compliance (including acceptable fails) at 31 December 2020 were ‘Mains powered smoke detectors’ at 100%, and ‘Kitchens’, ‘Bathrooms’, ‘Central heating systems’ and ‘Electrical systems’, all at 99.9%.

At 31 December 2020, the two components with the lowest levels of compliance (including acceptable fails) were ‘Gardens and external storage’ and ‘Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)’, at 99.0% and 99.4% respectively, though both have improved in each of the last five years. These lower levels of compliance may be due to higher failure rates for ‘Gardens and external storage’ following external surveys ([Table 3](#)).

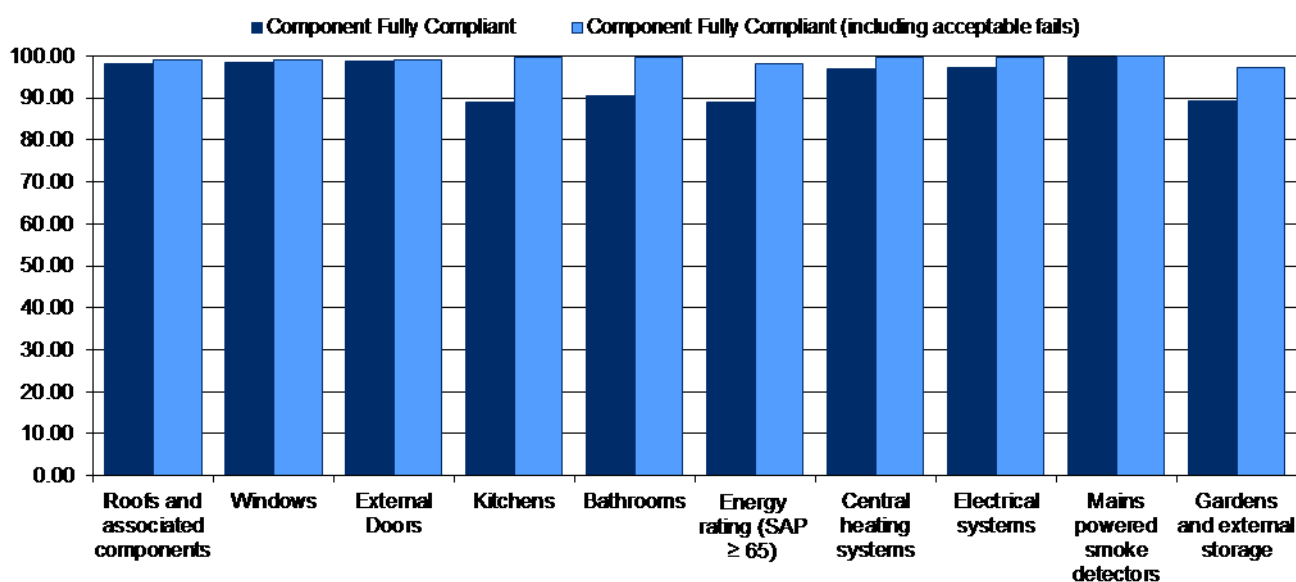
## 6. Compliance against components by social landlord

### 6.1 Local authorities

At 31 December 2020, for local authority dwellings, 'Mains powered smoke detectors' was the component showing the highest percentage of dwellings that were **fully** compliant at 99.6 % followed by 'External Doors' and 'Windows' at 98.7% and 98.6% respectively. The component showing the highest percentage of compliance (**including acceptable fails**) was also 'Mains powered smoke detectors' with 100% followed by 'Bathrooms', 'Kitchens' and 'Central Heating Systems' at 99.8%. ([Chart 2](#)).

'Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)' was the component showing the lowest level of **full** compliance (89.0%) and 'Gardens and external storage' had the lowest level of compliance (**including acceptable fails**) (97.4%) for local authority dwellings at 31 December 2020, though again both improved since 2019 ([Chart 2](#)).

**Chart 3: Percentage of local authority dwellings compliant with WHQS by component, as at 31 December 2020 (a) (b) (c) (d)**



Source: Annual WHQS returns

(a) For a component to be considered as compliant it should meet the requirements stated in the ["Revised Guidance for Social Landlords on Interpretation and Achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard July 2008"](#).

(b) Includes only those properties meeting the standard, including acceptable fails, for each individual element apart from those under Category 6 'Located in attractive and safe environments' which cannot be easily measured on a consistent basis.

(c) Compliant properties should also include any properties where a particular element of the standard is not applicable and hence not assessed.

(d) The compliance numbers shown will generally be higher than those in [Table 1](#), as properties may comply with a subset of the elements, without necessarily complying with them all.

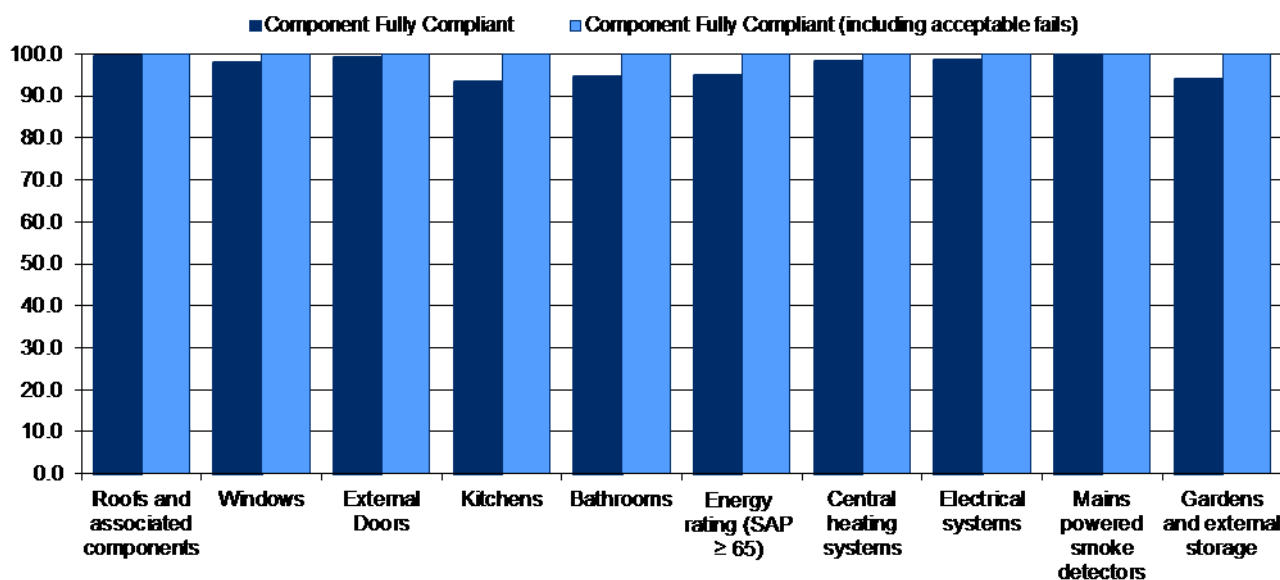
For local authority dwellings, the largest difference between **full** component compliance and compliance (**including acceptable fails**) was for the 'Kitchens' at 11 percentage points. This was followed by 'Bathrooms' and 'Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)', both with **full** component compliance 9 percentage points lower than compliance (**including acceptable fails**) and 'Gardens and external storage' with **full** component compliance 8 percentage points lower ([Chart 2](#)).

## 6.2 Registered social landlords

For RSLs, all of the 10 components were 100% (rounded to 2 decimal places) component compliant (**including acceptable fails**) at 31 December 2020. 'Mains powered smoke detectors' was 99.9% **fully** compliant and for the remaining 9 components **full** component compliance ranged from 99.6% for 'Roofs and associated components', to 93.5% for 'Kitchens' ([Chart 3](#)).

For RSL dwellings, the component showing the largest difference between **full** compliance and compliance (**including acceptable fails**) was 'Kitchens' and 'Gardens and external storage', with **full** component compliance 6 percentage points lower than compliance (**including acceptable fails**) (94% compared to 100%) ([Chart 3](#)).

**Chart 4 - Percentage of RSL dwellings compliant with WHQS by component, as at 31 December (a) (b) (c) (d)**



Source: Annual WHQS returns

(a) For a component to be considered as compliant it should meet the requirements stated in the ["Revised Guidance for Social Landlords on Interpretation and Achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard July 2008"](#).

(b) Includes only those properties meeting the standard, including acceptable fails, for each individual element apart from those under Category 6 'Located in attractive and safe environments' which cannot be easily measured on a consistent basis.

(c) Compliant properties should also include any properties where a particular element of the standard is not applicable and hence not assessed.

(d) The compliance numbers shown will generally be higher than those in Table 1, as properties may comply with a subset of the elements, without necessarily complying with them all.

RSLs had higher rates of both **full** component compliance and component compliance (**including acceptable fails**) than local authorities for most components of WHQS. The largest differences in levels of **full** component compliance between RSLs and local authorities were for 'Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)' with RSL full compliance 6 percentage points higher than local authority full compliance, followed by 'Gardens and external storage', with RSL full compliance 5 percentage points higher than local authority full compliance. The two components showing the largest differences in levels of compliance (**including acceptable fails**) between RSLs and local



authorities were again 'Gardens and External Storage' with RSL compliance 3 percentage points higher than local authority compliance, followed by 'Energy rating (SAP  $\geq$  65) with RSL compliance 2 percentage points higher than local authority compliance.

The information shown in this release does not include any assessments made for the elements covered under Part 6 which is the environment standard of the WHQS and states that 'All dwellings should be located in attractive and safe environments to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live'. This is because these elements are considered to be difficult to measure on a consistent basis.

## 7. Further information

The document is available at

<https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-statistics>

More detailed data are available on the [StatsWales website](#).

## Next update

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the 31 March 2020 collection and publication was cancelled and has been replaced with a collection that covers compliance with WHQS as at 31 December 2020. This will be the final publication before the new Welsh Housing Quality Standard is developed following a consultation in Autumn 2021.

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

[stats.housingconditions@gov.wales](mailto:stats.housingconditions@gov.wales)

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## **Glossary**

### **Acceptable fails**

An acceptable fail is only possible on individual elements and not the dwelling as a whole. There may be several reasons why the property containing those elements might then be regarded as an acceptable fail for the purposes of the WHQS data collection. In these cases, the social landlord data providers were asked to record the main reason for that 'acceptable fail' according to the hierarchical order below;

1. Resident Choice
2. Physical Constraint
3. Timing of Remedy
4. Cost of Remedy

### **Bathrooms**

Bathrooms in a property should include a shower as well as a bath and be safe, convenient, adequately ventilated and include the appropriate fittings and flooring.

### **Central heating systems**

The heating system to a dwelling must be appropriately sized and be reasonably economic to run and programmable, so that a resident can control the temperature and timing.

### **Electrical systems**

The electrical installation must be safe with the appropriate number of conveniently located fittings.

### **Energy rating (SAP $\geq$ 65)**

SAP is the Government's 'Standard Assessment Procedure' for energy rating of dwellings. SAP provides a simple means of reliably estimating the energy efficiency performance of dwellings. SAP ratings are expressed on a scale of 1 to 100, the higher the number the better the rating. The annual energy consumption for the space and water heating for a dwelling must be estimated using the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings 2005 (SAP2005) method<sup>2</sup>. A minimum rating of 65 out of 100 must be achieved.

### **External doors**

The external doors to a dwelling should be safe, secure, with adequate thermal performance and adequately draught proofed. In a block of flats all the separate flats should be considered compliant/non-compliant according to the assessment of the communal doors of the block as a whole, alongside the assessment required of individual doors to each property within the block.

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<sup>2</sup> WHQS guidance is based on SAP 2005 but some landlords use more recent versions.

## **Gardens and external storage up to and including the boundary of the property**

The external and communal areas around a dwelling should be an attractive and safe environment. Achievement of this standard should exclude any assessment of elements under Part 6 of the standard as outlined in [the WHQS 2008 guidance](#).

## **Kitchens**

Kitchens should be safe, convenient, adequately ventilated and include the appropriate space, fittings, storage, electrical sockets and flooring.

## **Mains powered smoke detectors**

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

## **Reasons for acceptable fails**

Below are examples of the different reasons that may be given for acceptable fails.

### **Residents' choice:**

A property may contain more than one element that acceptably fails WHQS e.g. where a resident has refused a new bathroom, but also the resident has accepted a new kitchen and the kitchen is too small to fully meet WHQS. In this case, using the hierarchy above, the main reason for the property containing an 'acceptable fail' should be recorded as 'resident choice'.

### **Timing of remedy:**

The roof of a property may need structural repairs planned within 2 years time and also needs the loft insulation upgrading to comply with the energy efficiency target of SAP 65. Although the loft insulation could be provided in advance of repairing the roof, and then renewed again following the structural works, it would not be cost-effective to provide the insulation twice. In this case the reason for recording the roof insulation as an acceptable fail would be both 'cost of remedy' and 'timing of remedy', but using the hierarchy above, the main reason should be recorded as 'timing of remedy'

### **Physical constraint:**

A steeply sloping rear garden may make it difficult, at reasonable cost, to provide a level area of 10 m<sup>2</sup> due to the physical constraint. Again using the hierarchy the main reason should be recorded as 'physical constraint' not 'cost of remedy'

### **Cost of remedy:**

This could be where a solid walled dwelling would benefit from external wall insulation in order to bring the energy rating above SAP 65 and where this is practical, but not cost effective due to the high cost and where other grant support is not available.

## **Roofs and associated components**

The roof structure, coverings, fascias, soffits, bargeboards and chimney to a dwelling should be free from disrepair and in good condition. In respect of the roof for a block of flats, all the separate flats should be considered compliant/non-compliant according to the assessment of the communal roof of the block as a whole.

## **Windows**

The windows to a dwelling should be safe, secure, with adequate thermal performance and adequately draught proofed.

In a block of flats all the separate flats should be considered compliant/non-compliant according to the assessment of the communal windows of the block as a whole, alongside the assessment required of individual windows of each property within the block.

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## Annex 1 - List of WHQS elements

WHQS Element	Individual component (see key below)
<b>Part 1. In a good state of repair</b>	
1 (a). Is the dwelling structurally stable and free from disrepair?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10
1 (b) Is the dwelling free from damp?	All components total only
<b>Part 2. Safe and secure</b>	All components total
2 (a). Is the staircase and balustrade safe?	
2 (b) Is there adequate space for kitchen appliances?	4
2 (c) Is the work surface sufficient for safe food preparation?	4
2 (d) Is the cupboard storage convenient and adequate?	4
2 (e) Is the number of convenient power sockets in the kitchen sufficient?	4
2 (f) Is the flooring in the kitchen and bathroom safe and suitable for use?	5
	All components total only
2 (g) Is there an external fire escape?	All components total only
2 (h) Are there adequate fire alarms and equipment?	All components total only
	All components total only
2 (i) Do rooms used for sleeping have escape routes not passing through another room?	only
2 (j) Are mains powered smoke detectors on each floor?	9
2 (k) Are window locks without automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping?	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 certified safe by an appropriately qualified person as required by law?	7
2 (m) Have electrical lighting and power installations been checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person?	8
2 (n) Do external doors and windows give a reasonable level of physical security?	2, 3
2 (o) Is the rear garden easy to maintain, reasonably private, safe and suitable for young children to play?	10
<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?	6, 7
3 (b) Are external doors and windows adequately draught proofed?	2, 3
	All components total only
3 (c) Is the living room separated from the main entrance door?	only
3 (d) Is the hot water tank effectively insulated?	7
3 (e) Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom?	4, 5
<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?	4
4 (b) Are there adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes?	4, 10
4 (c) Are the bathroom and WC facilities 25 years old or less, unless in good condition?	5
4 (d) Is there a shower as well as a bath?	5
<b>Part 5. Well managed (for rented housing)</b>	
5 (a) Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed?	All components total
<b>Part 6. Located in attractive and safe environments</b>	
6 (a) Are roads and footpaths accessible, providing safety for residents, pedestrians and children?	Not measured
6 (b) Is there soft and hard landscaping with planting in protected areas?	
6 (c) Is there adequate street lighting?	
6 (d) Is there adequate and safe play space for young children?	
6 (e) Are there adequate, practical and maintainable communal areas?	
6 (f) Are dwellings clearly identifiable with definable boundaries?	
6 (g) Are utility services practically located and well identified?	
6 (h) Is there adequate and practically located car parking clearly visible to residents?	
<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?	4
7 (b) Is internal and external general storage space adequate?	4, 10
7 (c) Does the dwelling layout meet the special cultural needs of the residents?	4, 5
7 (d) Does the dwelling have the necessary physical aids to suit the requirements of the residents?	4, 5, 10
7 (e) Is there a level area no smaller than 10m <sup>2</sup> directly accessible from the dwelling?	10
7 (f) Is there a paved access to the drying line and any garden gate?	10

**Key**

1. Roofs and associated components
2. Windows
3. External doors
4. Kitchens
5. Bathrooms
6. Energy rating (SAP $\geq$ 65)
7. Central heating systems
8. Electrical systems
9. Mains powered smoke detectors
10. Gardens and external storage up and including the boundary of the property

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