

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), as at 31 March 2023

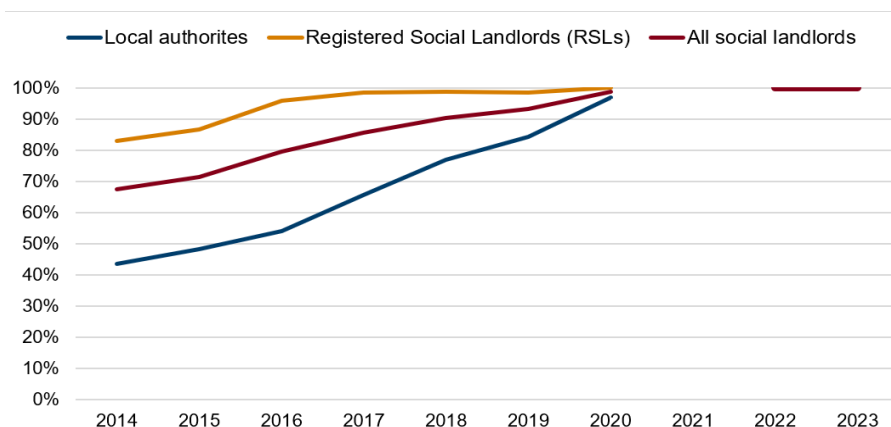
19 Oct 2023
SFR 84/2023

The deadline for achieving the current WHQS was December 2020 (due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a small number of social landlords were granted an extension to December 2021). A new Standard, WHQS 2023, will be launched in Autumn 2023, and therefore this is the final publication under the current standard. We anticipate that data measuring progress towards WHQS 2023 will begin to be published from 2025.

Main points:

- At 31 March 2023, all social housing stock (234,665 dwellings) achieved WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails), consistent with the previous year.
- Three quarters (78%) of social housing stock achieved full compliance.
- The most common reason for an acceptable fail was 'Timing of remedy', recorded for half of all dwellings with an acceptable fail.

Figure 1: Percentage of social housing stock achieving WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails) by social landlord, 31 March 2014 to 31 March 2023 [Note 1]



Source: Annual WHQS returns

[Note 1] Data for 2020 was collected at 31 December. There was no data collection in 2021.

Description of Figure 1: A line chart showing that since 31 March 2014, the percentage of social housing stock achieving WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails) has increased, with all dwellings achieving compliance (including acceptable fails) at 31 March 2022 and 2023.

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 March 2023 and information on compliance with the WHQS by individual component type.

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1. Background - WHQS

The **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 deadline for achieving the current WHQS was December 2020 (due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a small number of social landlords were granted an extension to December 2021). Social landlords must maintain the WHQS on an ongoing basis. 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. An acceptable fail is only possible on individual elements and not the dwelling as a whole.

The information presented for RSLs is based on responses received from 58 RSLs in 2013, 59 RSLs in 2014, 58 RSLs in 2015, 60 RSLs in 2016, 59 RSLs in 2017 and 2018, 60 RSLs in 2019, 48 RSLs in 2020, 49 RSLs in 2022 and 47 RSLs in 2023. 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 \(energy efficiency of dwellings\) 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.**

The Welsh Government will introduce a new and improved Standard, WHQS 2023, in Autumn 2023. A public [consultation on proposals for an update to WHQS](#) ran until August 2022. A [summary of responses to the consultation](#) is available to view online.

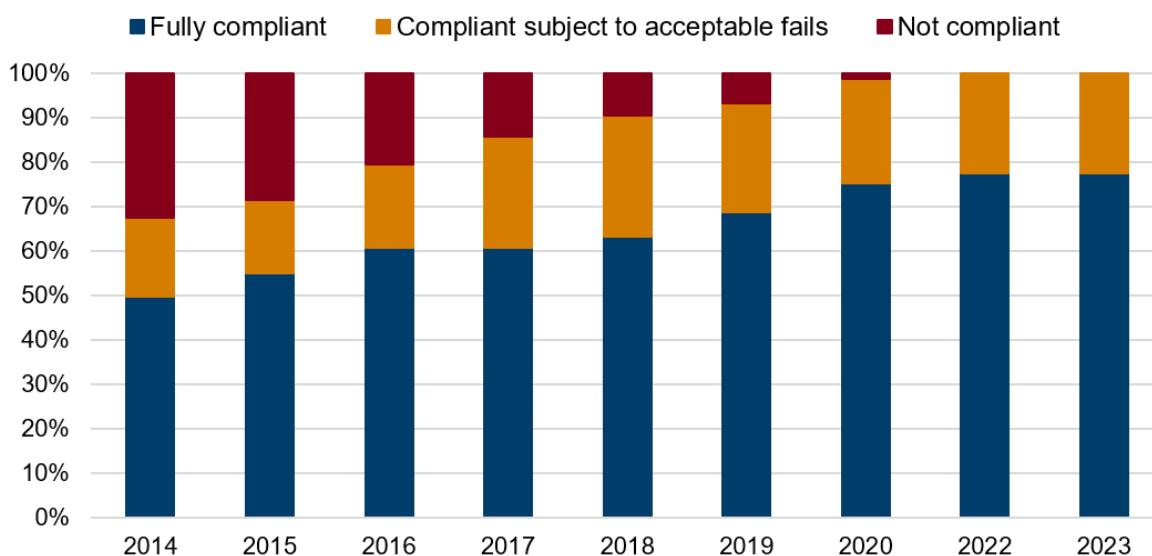
2. Compliance results

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 March 2023 there were a total of 234,665¹ these dwellings in Wales.

The information presented for local authorities is based on the 11 local authorities with stock.

At 31 March 2023, all social housing stock (234,665 dwellings) achieved WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails), consistent with the previous year.

Figure 2: Distribution of all social housing stock by WHQS compliance, 31 March 2014 to 31 March 2023 [Note 1]



Source: Annual WHQS returns

[Note 1] Data for 2020 was collected at 31 December. There was no data collection in 2021.

Description of Figure 2: Trend described in text below.

The percentage of social housing dwellings achieving full compliance has increased from 50% in March 2014 to 78% in March 2022. Over the same period, the percentage of dwellings achieving compliance subject to acceptable fails has increased from 18% to 22%. In 2022, all social housing stock achieved WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails). There has been no change in the distribution of social housing stock by compliance between March 2022 and March 2023.

¹ Stock numbers reported by providers as part of the WHQS data collection.

3. Reasons for acceptable fails

As in recent years, in March 2023, the most common reason for an acceptable fail in all social housing was 'Timing of remedy', recorded in 49% of compliant dwellings that contained at least one acceptable fail. This was followed by 'Residents choice' and 'Physical constraint', recorded respectively in 31% and 12% of all compliant homes that contained at least one acceptable fail.

Table 1: Distribution of dwellings recorded as WHQS compliant subject to acceptable fails, by reason for acceptable fail, 31 March 2023

	Local authority dwellings	RSL dwellings	All social housing
Residents Choice	51%	19%	31%
Physical Constraint	11%	13%	12%
Timing of Remedy	34%	58%	49%
Cost of Remedy	4%	11%	8%

Source: Annual WHQS returns

Description of Table 1: Distribution described in text below.

In local authority dwellings, 'Resident's choice' was the most common reason for an acceptable fail, recorded in 51% of dwellings compliant subject to acceptable fail. In contrast, for RSL dwellings, the most common reason for an acceptable fail was 'Timing of remedy', recorded in 58% of dwellings compliant subject to acceptable fails.

4. 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 2: Percentage of all social housing achieving WHQS compliance (including acceptable fails) by component, 31 March 2014 to 31 March 2023 [Note 1] [Note 2]

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	2023
Roofs and associated components	91%	90%	92%	93%	96%	97%	100%	100%	100%
Windows	97%	97%	97%	98%	98%	98%	100%	100%	100%
External Doors	96%	95%	96%	96%	97%	98%	100%	100%	100%
Kitchens	82%	87%	93%	96%	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%
Bathrooms	82%	88%	93%	96%	98%	99%	100%	100%	100%
Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)	86%	85%	93%	96%	97%	98%	99%	100%	100%
Central heating systems	92%	96%	98%	98%	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%
Electrical systems	89%	91%	93%	96%	98%	98%	100%	100%	100%
Mains powered smoke detectors	97%	98%	99%	99%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Gardens and external storage up to and including property boundary	87%	86%	87%	90%	93%	96%	99%	100%	100%

Source: Annual WHQS returns

[Note 1] Data for 2020 was collected at 31 December. There was no data collection in 2021.

[Note 2] The compliance figures shown in this table will generally be higher than those shown in Figures 1 and 2, as properties may comply with a subset of the elements, without necessarily complying with all of them.

Description of Table 1: Trend described in text below.

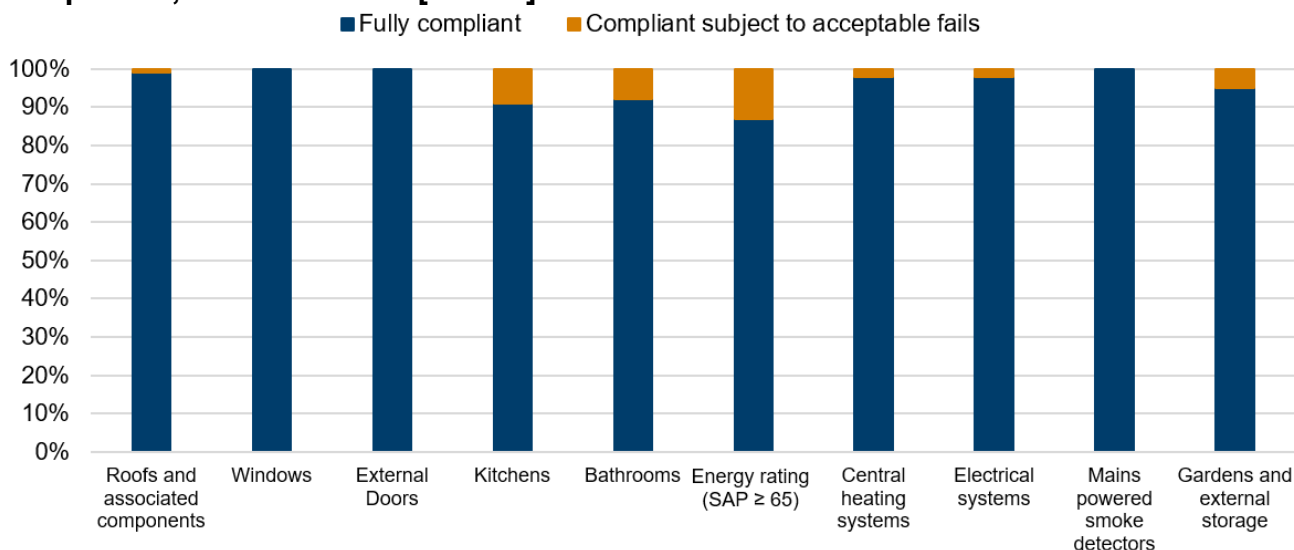
Between 2014 and 2022, the percentage of social housing stock recorded as compliant (including acceptable fails) against each of the ten WHQS components increased, with 100% compliance (including acceptable fails) achieved for all components in March 2022 and 2023.

5. Compliance against components by type of social landlord

5.1 Local authorities

At 31 March 2023, all local authority housing stock achieved 100% compliance (including acceptable fails) against each of the ten WHQS components.

Figure 3: Distribution of local authority dwellings by WHQS compliance and component, 31 March 2023 [Note 1]



Source: Annual WHQS returns

[Note 1] The compliance figures shown in this figure will generally be higher than those shown in Figures 1 and 2, as properties may comply with a subset of the elements, without necessarily complying with all of them.

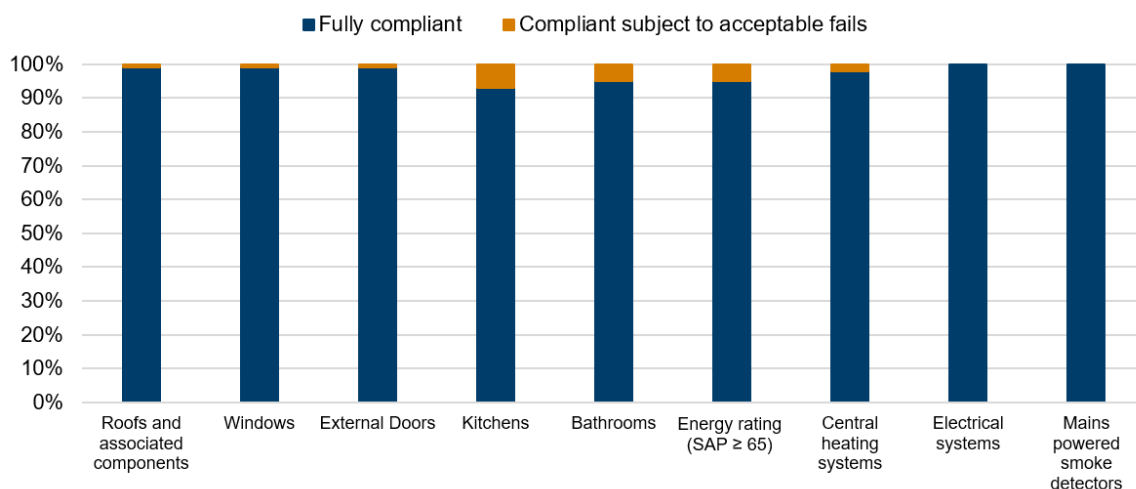
Description of Figure 3: Distribution described in text below.

All local authority dwellings achieved full compliance against three WHQS components: 'Main powered smoke detectors', 'Windows' and 'External doors'. A smaller proportion of dwellings achieved full compliance against 'Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)' (87%), 'Kitchens' (91%) and 'Bathrooms' (92%).

5.2 Registered social landlords (RSLs)

At 31 March 2023, all RSL dwellings achieved 100% compliance (including acceptable fails) against each of the ten WHQS components.

Figure 4: Distribution of RSL dwellings by WHQS compliance and component, 31 March 2023 [Note 1]



Source: Annual WHQS returns

[Note 1] The compliance figures shown in this figure will generally be higher than those shown in Figures 1 and 2, as properties may comply with a subset of the elements, without necessarily complying with all of them.

Description of Figure 4: Distribution described in text below.

All RSL dwellings achieved full compliance against two components: 'Mains powered smoke detectors' and 'Electrical systems'. A smaller proportion of RSL dwellings achieved full compliance against 'kitchens' (93%).

There was little difference in the percentages of local authority and RSL stock achieving full compliance against nine of the ten WHQS components. The exception to this was 'Energy rating (SAP ≥ 65)', with 87% of local authority stock achieving full compliance compared to 95% of RSL stock.

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

This is the last output in this series. Data collected for the new WHQS 2023 is due to be published from 2025.

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

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) method². 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.

² 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 m² 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)
Part 1. In a good state of repair	
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
Part 2. Safe and secure	All components total
2 (a). Is the staircase and balustrade safe?	4
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?	5
2 (f) Is the flooring in the kitchen and bathroom safe and suitable for use?	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
2 (i) Do rooms used for sleeping have escape routes not passing through another room?	All components total 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
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?	6, 7
3 (b) Are external doors and windows adequately draught proofed?	2, 3
3 (c) Is the living room separated from the main entrance door?	All components total 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
Part 4. Contain up to date kitchens and bathrooms	
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
Part 5. Well managed (for rented housing)	
5 (a) Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed?	All components total
Part 6. Located in attractive and safe environments	
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?	
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?	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 ² 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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