

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Housing Services

Quality of Accommodation Service Standard

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Powys County Council – Housing Services

Quality of Accommodation Service Standard

Guide for Housing Services officers.

We will make sure that the homes that Powys County Council lets are of a good standard and are places where people want to live.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard

- ✓ Every home should meet the Government agreed fitness standards (please see Appendix A) and the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).
- ✓ Each WHQS Primary Element's estimated replacement dates will be noted on the Property Inspection Sheet. This means that we can keep tenants better informed about when improvements are planned for their homes.
- ✓ Each Primary Element will need to be maintained in good condition during its life cycle. This is work that will be overseen by Housing Services. Where necessary, any such work can be included within void works if the work is absolutely necessary to make sure the property is habitable.

Specifying Works to Void Properties






Housing Quality Officers will specify works to a void property that will achieve the following outcomes:

Every home is hygienic and in good decorative order.






Cleaning

- 🏠 Kitchen surfaces, cupboard doors, draw fronts and sink units are to be thoroughly cleaned.
- 🏠 All baths, shower trays, toilets and wash-hand basins are to be thoroughly cleaned.
- 🏠 All storage cupboards are to be cleared and cleaned.
- 🏠 Window sills and doors are to be wiped down so that they are clean.
- 🏠 All fixtures, fittings, ledges, radiators, pipes, door frames, door handles, picture rails, skirting boards and fire surrounds are to be free of loose dust.
- 🏠 Cobwebs are to be cleared from walls, ceilings and cupboards.
- 🏠 Graffiti and any Blu-tack, Sellotape, drawing pins, nails, screws, chewing gum and labels are to be removed.
- 🏠 Curtains and blinds are to be removed.
- 🏠 Carpets to remain if a good standard and agreed by new tenant.
- 🏠 Remaining carpets to be thoroughly cleaned and checked that securely fitted.
- 🏠 Laminate floors to be removed.
- 🏠 All hard floors are to be swept and mopped, to remove loose dust and debris.
- 🏠 The loft is to be cleared.
- 🏠 Cleaning should be one of the last jobs undertaken, to make sure that the property is as clean as possible for viewing and letting.





Ceilings and Walls

-  Ceilings and walls are to be in a sound condition.
-  All plasterwork is to be sound. Hairline cracks, minor blemishes and holes and small gaps between wall and ceiling are acceptable.
-  If the ceiling has an Artex coating and it is in a good condition (i.e. not flaking or damaged), it is to be left in place.
-  Polystyrene ceiling tiles, including coving, will be removed from all ceilings with any damage to the plaster made good
-  All walls are to be free from damp and mould.


Garden Areas and External Buildings

-  Front and back gardens, bin stores, and any sheds are to be emptied and swept out.
-  All paved areas around the property, including the drive and path are to be swept. Any moss is to be scraped away. Any trip hazards should be removed.
-  Gardens with lawns and hedges are to be cut and trimmed and, if necessary, cut and trimmed during the period of void works. The garden is not to become at any time wild and overgrown.
-  Boundary fences are to be safe and secure and any substantial damage, for example holes big enough for pets or children to get through, repaired or where necessary, the relevant sections of fencing replaced.
-  Fall protection to be considered for retaining walls if there is an evidenced risk that failure to provide fall protection may result in injury to an incoming household.

Decoration









-  If the property does not meet our acceptable standard¹ for decoration, we will give tenants a decoration allowance. Any such allowance will be in the form of vouchers or decoration packs, the value of which is to be decided by the officer specifying the works to be undertaken prior to letting, based on condition and the allocating officer advised accordingly.
-  In exceptional circumstances where a family is unable to decorate², the property can be decorated. Any such decoration should be on a wall-by-wall basis where decoration is essential to make the property clean and habitable.
-  Decoration will be completed as part of the void works with due allowance made when setting the target return date.
-  All interior decoration will be white or magnolia.

Make sure that every home is safe

-  The staircase is securely fixed and safe and incorporates a handrail for the length of the staircase.

¹ Definition of Acceptable Decoration Standard: Free from nicotine staining, no multiple layers of dark or irregular colours of paint and/or wallpaper, existing painted finishes able to be re-coated without stripping back to bare wood or plaster.

² Unable to Decorate: this will be determined by the allocating HMOO, with reference to evidence that the new tenant for reasons beyond their reasonable control, does not have physical and mental capacity and capability to decorate themselves or arrange decoration of the property by a third party.

-  All doors and windows are secure and open and close properly.
-  Sufficient keys are provided for window locks.
-  There are new locks to the front and back doors.
-  All floors are even, in a good state of repair and have no protruding nails.
-  All roofs, walls, gutters and downpipes are safe and securely fitted.
-  A hard-wired, functioning smoke detector is located in the property.
-  If the property has a solid fuel heating system, all functioning chimneys are to be swept.
-  Any asbestos containing materials (ACM's) in the property are in a good condition, safe, sound and to maintain safety, only require regular managing and monitoring.

A safe supply of electricity, gas and water, a safe sewerage and water disposal system and a heating system that works safely and efficiently.

Electricity

- ✎ The electrical supply will have been checked prior to letting, in line with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contractors (NICEIC) inspection procedure. The incoming tenant will be given a copy of the Electrical Condition Report Certificate.
- ✎ All sockets, switches and fittings are to be free from dirt, paint, undamaged in any way, securely fixed to the walls or ceilings and be safe to use
- ✎ Each room (except the bathroom and toilet) has at least one plug socket



Water

- ✎ All water supply pipes are intact and that the drainage system is operating effectively
- ✎ The water stopcock is in an accessible location, the surveyor advising the allocating officer where the stopcock is so that the new tenant can be shown by the allocating officer where and how to use stopcock.
- ✎ If the property has a cold-water tank, consider whether or not it is practicable and affordable to remove the tank and have the cold-water supply direct from the main.









Heating and hot water

- ✎ Each property will have a safety compliant heating system
- ✎ Any gas supply and gas appliances have been tested in line with current gas safety regulations to make sure they are in safe, working order. The allocating officer will issue a copy of the landlord's gas safety certificate at the sign-up.
- ✎ The emergency control valve to turn off the gas/oil supply is in an accessible and safe location. The allocating officer will show the tenant where this is and how to use the valve.
- ✎ All other forms of heating will have relevant certification demonstrating that at the time of letting the heating systems fully comply with all relevant and applicable installation, servicing and commissioning requirements.








Kitchens

-  Every property will have a fully functioning kitchen.
-  All kitchen cupboards, drawers, sink, taps, plugs, worktops, wall tiles, grouting and sealant are cleaned.

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-  If the worktop is damaged (for example knife gouges, chips or other damage that may harbour food or other waste) it should be replaced.
-  The kitchen sink is to be clean with hot and cold taps which are in good condition and don't leak or drip and has a plug and chain. All new taps are to be lever taps
-  There is a supply of hot and cold water to the kitchen sink and at least three rows of tiles above the sink, where possible.
-  All kitchen units are secure, the edging is complete and doors and drawers work properly. (The number of storage cupboards in the kitchen will vary depending on the size of kitchen).
-  There is space for a cooker with either an electricity or gas supply and one electric cooker switch.
-  Dependent on the size of the kitchen there should be space for a fridge, freezer and washing machine. If the kitchen is small there must be space for a fridge.
-  There should be space for a tumble dryer, if not we need to provide a line for drying clothes. This can be either a rotary or a line fixed to a post(s) in the garden.
-  The kitchen contains a working extractor fan.

Bathrooms and toilets

-  Each property should have a fully functional bathroom, which contains a washbasin, toilet and either a bath or shower.
-  There is to be an over-bath shower and bath, or in cases of properties allocated to an elderly or disabled tenant, a level access shower base.
-  The bath and all wash hand basins each must have a plug and chain.
-  All fittings and taps are in good condition and don't leak or drip. All new taps will be lever taps.
-  There are three rows of tiles above each wash hand basin and bath (if there is a bath).
-  If the property has a shower the shower area will be fully tiled and a new shower curtain and shower head installed.
-  The toilet is fully working, has no cracks, is securely fixed, has a new secure seat and flush handle or chain.

Letting a home

When a tenant moves into their new home, the allocating officer will give them a copy of the Tenant Handbook. The Tenant Handbook will include for the property:

-  The tenancy agreement.
-  The gas safety certificate (if applicable).
-  The electrical safety certificate.
-  The energy performance certificate.
-  A user guide to the heating system.
-  A summary of the proposed WHQS work for the property over the following five years (noting that the programme is subject to change at any time).
-  How to report repairs and maintenance requests (including clear details of what the tenant and the council are each responsible for).

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- ✿ Any fire safety requirements (for example use of communal areas, shared halls, landings and stairways), including testing of smoke alarms and giving the tenant a Scarlet Pointernet.
- ✿ Date of next heating service.
- ✿ Any relevant garbage disposal requirements (for example use of bin areas, storage of wheelie bins, if applicable).
- ✿ Guide to the correct use of drying areas (if applicable).
- ✿ Garden Maintenance Guide (if applicable).
- ✿ All health, safety and other relevant certificates will be provided to the allocating Housing Officer by the Housing Quality Officer with responsibility for void works.

Eight weeks after signing the tenancy, the area Housing Officer will visit to:











- ✿ Gather information from the tenant about their experience of our services during the first eight weeks of their tenancy.
- ✿ Gather information from the tenant about the neighbourhood in which they live
- ✿ Make sure that any repairs agreed at the time of letting are complete.
- ✿ That decorating is complete (if vouchers or decorating packs were issued at the time of letting).
- ✿ Accept any repair requests and arrange for these to be passed to the Council's repairs and maintenance team or, if necessary, a Housing Quality Officer to visit and assess the reported situation.
- ✿ Address any potential breaches of tenancy conditions or expectations.

One year after signing the tenancy, the area Housing Officer will visit to:

- ✿ Gather information from the tenant about their experiences of our services during the first year of their tenancy.
- ✿ Gather information from the tenant about the neighbourhood in which they live.
- ✿ Accept any repair requests and arrange these to be passed to the Council's repairs and maintenance team or, if necessary, a Housing Quality Officer to visit and assess the reported situation.
- ✿ Address any potential breaches of tenancy conditions or expectations.







Appendix A: Fitness Standard

There is a minimum fitness standard for all our properties. To meet the fitness standard, the property must:

-  be structurally stable
-  be free from serious disrepair and be habitable.
-  be free from dampness that could damage the occupant's health
-  have adequate provision for lighting, heating and ventilation
-  have adequate piped water
-  have satisfactory facilities for food preparation, cooking including the supply of hot and cold water, space for a cooker and a fridge and clean surfaces upon which to prepare food
-  have appropriate sanitary, washing and bathing facilities (bath, shower or wet-room, toilet and wash had basin).
-  have an effective system for the draining of foul, waste and surface water
-  be reasonably secure and adequately protected from the weather (with lockable and weathertight doors and windows, no leaks in the roof).
-  be clean and reasonably decorated (or the provision of a decoration voucher or decoration allowance will be offered to the tenant).

Structural stability

The house should not have any progressive structural movement that could cause any part of the building to fail or collapse. Before letting a house to tenants, the Housing Quality Officer with responsibility for specifying works prior to letting will check the condition of the property and will look for issues, such as:


-  leaning chimney stacks and pots
-  sagging roofs
-  bulging brickwork to the main external walls
-  settlement cracks above windows and doorways
-  distorted window and door openings
-  sloping floors.

Minor structural defects will be corrected by the Council's Housing Quality team. Major defects, as long as they do not pose a risk to the safety of the occupants, passers-by and immediately neighbouring properties, should be considered for incorporation into the Council's Capital Investment programme, recommendations for which could be completed following commencement of the tenancy.

Tenants will be advised when their tenancy starts of any relevant works to their home that are being considered for the Capital Investment Programme.

Damp

The house needs be free from rising and penetrative dampness, which could damage health. The Housing Quality Officer will need to check for:

-  Rising dampness to ground floor walls - this is normally indicated by a damp tide mark usually about 18 inches above the floor level

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- ☞ Rising dampness to ground floors - old quarry tile floors and poorly constructed solid concrete floors with no damp-proof membrane are particularly susceptible
- ☞ Penetrating dampness to walls and ceilings due to leaking roofs and gutters, perished external brickwork and mortar joints, leaking hot or cold water pipes
- ☞ Condensation can lead to mould growth on walls and ceilings in kitchens and bathrooms. Condensation also gathers on bedroom walls behind cupboards and wardrobes and beneath windows.

Heating

All heating systems should be efficient, safely designed and cost effective to run.

With the reduction of carbon emissions by 2030 a requirement from both the Welsh and British Government, we will be exploring ways to reduce the incidence of fossil fuelled systems and how we can reduce the energy needs of our homes.

This means that we will be paving the way for alternative fuels (for example hydrogen), greater use of electricity that is generated in an environmentally friendly way, renewable energy (for example solar voltaic) and higher levels of insulation.

However, we will be taking a long-term approach making sure that our chosen options can be easily and economically maintained, are user friendly, have long lives and do not cause other problems elsewhere within our homes.

Insulation

It is important to have good thermal insulation. Housing Quality Officers must:

- ☞ Make sure roof spaces are insulated
- ☞ Adequate draught proofing is fitted to external doors and windows
- ☞ Make sure that all water pipes likely to be exposed to frost, such as those in the roof space or those servicing external taps, are properly insulated against frost damage
- ☞ If the house is fitted with a hot water tank, make sure it is fitted with a good quality insulation jacket.

Lighting

All rooms need adequate natural lighting to allow people to do domestic activities safely. A clear glazed window equal in size to one tenth of the room floor area will normally be adequate. However, this may not always be possible to retrofit to a property where this facility for allowing natural light into the property is not there.

- ☞ All staircases, landings, kitchens, bathrooms and toilets should have a window wherever practicable.
- ☞ There should be adequate electric lighting to all accessible parts of the house.
- ☞ Light switches must suitably positioned so that they can be switched on quickly when entering any room, hallway or landing.
- ☞ Two-way switches that switch on and off should be fitted at the top and bottom of stairs.

Ventilation

- ☞ All habitable rooms should be able to be ventilated directly to the open air by opening a window.
- ☞ Kitchens and bathrooms must have adequate mechanical ventilation. In kitchens and bathrooms with windows, it is good practice for the extractor fan to have smart technology via an automatic humidistat to remove moist air before it condenses on walls and ceilings.
- ☞ All rooms containing an open flue heating appliance should be provided with enough suitable permanent ventilation by air brick or similar.

Tenant Agreement

New tenants will be given the opportunity to consider the compliance of the property with the Minimum Fitness Standard before signing the tenancy of their new home.