

The Decent Homes Standard



A Landlords Guide

The Decent

Introduction

It is estimated that a third of all social housing (local authority and housing association properties) in the UK fall below the Decency Standard. The Government has pledged to ensure all social housing meets the Decency Standard by 2010. While originally introduced solely to raise standards in social housing, the Decency Standard has been extended to vulnerable people living in private sector accommodation.

There are four criteria that make up the Decent Homes standard. These criteria form a minimum standard to attain 'decency'. A property must meet all of the four criteria set out below to be classed as 'decent'.

Criterion A: Property meets the current housing statutory minimum standard

The Fitness Standard was replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) on 6 April 2006. To meet this criterion, the property must be free from any category one hazards as scored by the HHSRS scoring procedure (see HHSRS guidance leaflets available from the DASH website at www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk).

Criterion B: Property is in a reasonable state of repair

A dwelling will satisfy this criterion unless either or both of the following apply:

- One or more key building components are old and in poor condition

A key building component is a component that if in poor condition could have an immediate impact on the integrity of the building such as walls, roof and windows (see table 1).

- Two or more other building components are old and in poor condition (e.g. kitchens, bathroom and heating distribution systems, see table 1)

Old and in Poor Condition

A component is 'old' if it is older than its standard lifetime (see table 1).

Components are in 'poor condition' if they require replacement or major repair (see table 2).

Components must be both old and in poor condition to fail the standard.

If a component is in poor condition before it reaches the end of its expected lifetime, it does not render the dwelling non-decent, unless the defect results in a category 1 HHSRS hazard. However, the condition of the component should still be addressed by the landlord.

Table 1: Component lifetimes used in the disrepair criterion

Building components (key components marked*)	Houses & bungalows	All flats in blocks of below 6 storeys	All flats in blocks of 6 or more storeys
Wall structure*	80	80	80
Lintels*	60	60	60
Brickwork (spalling)*	30	30	30
Wall finish*	60	60	30
Roof structure*	50	30	30
Roof finish*	50	30	30
Chimney*	50	50	N/A
Windows*	40	30	30
External doors*	40	30	30
Kitchen	30	30	30
Bathrooms	40	40	40
Heating – central heating gas boiler*	15	15	15
Heating – central heating distribution system	40	40	40
Heating – other*	30	30	30
Electrical systems	30	30	30

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Criterion C: The property has reasonably modern services and facilities

A dwelling will satisfy this criterion unless it has three or more of the following deficiencies:

- A kitchen which is more than 20 years old
- A kitchen with inadequate space and layout
- A bathroom which is more than 30 years old
- An inappropriately located bathroom and WC
- Inadequate external noise insulation
- Inadequate size and layout of common entrance areas (blocks of flats only)

Bathroom & WC

An inappropriately located bathroom and WC could be if the main bathroom or WC is accessed through a bedroom that is in use (this would not apply if the dwelling was occupied by a single person). The dwelling would also fail if the main WC was external or located on a different floor to the nearest wash hand basin, or if the WC was located off the food preparation area and a wash hand basin was not provided.

Kitchen

For a kitchen to fail the adequate space and layout test, it would be too small to contain all the expected items a kitchen should include (such as sink, cupboards, cooker space, worktops) appropriate to the size of the dwelling (see Amenities and Space guidance leaflet available from the DASH website at www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk).

Noise Insulation

Inadequate insulation from external noise could be where there are high levels of transport or factory noise. Landlords should ensure their property is installed with acoustic glazing in line with current building regulations.

The property must have both efficient heating and effective insulation. Efficient heating includes programmable gas or oil central heating systems, warm air systems, underfloor systems etc. The primary heating system must be capable of providing heat to two or more rooms of the home, but it should be remembered that under HHSRS, the landlord has a responsibility to ensure that the whole home is warm enough for the occupant.

For dwellings with gas/oil central heating, cavity wall insulation and minimum 50mm loft insulation would be an effective package. For dwellings heated by LPG/solid fuel, at least 200mm of loft insulation as well as cavity wall insulation is required.

Table 2: Definition of 'poor condition' used in disrepair criterion

Wall structure	Replace 10% or more or repair 30% or more
Wall finish	Replace / repoint / renew 50% or more
Chimneys	1 chimney needed partial rebuilding or more
Roof structure	Replace 10% or more or strengthen 30% or more
Roof covering	Replace or isolated repairs to 50% or more
Windows	Replace at least one window or repair / replace sash or member to least two (excluding easing sashes, reglazing painting)
External doors	Replace at least one
Kitchen	Major repair or replace 3 or more items out of the 6 (cold water drinking supply, hot water, sink, cooking provision, cupboards, worktop)
Bathroom	Major repairs or replace 2 or more items (bath, wash hand basin, WC)
Electrical system	Replace or major repair to system
Central heating boiler	Replace or major repair
Central heating distribution	Replace or major repair
Storage heaters	Replace or major repair

Landlords:

The decent Homes Standard is a standard that triggers action, not one to which work is necessarily carried out. It should be noted that in all instances the Decent Homes Standard is a minimum and Landlords should always strive to achieve a higher standard than this. For example, the condition of a kitchen may become unacceptable before the end of its expected 30 year lifetime, therefore would still need repairing or replacing.

Landlord responsibilities which are not included in the Decent Homes Standard:

- Maintain exterior of dwelling and all structural elements
- Provide all equipment necessary to supply the utilities safely and correctly
- Maintain all drains, waste pipes, rainwater goods, inlet gullies and inspection chambers
- Maintain air bricks, trickle vents, opening lights to windows and mechanical and non-mechanical ventilation equipment



Decent And Safe Homes (DASH) East Midlands is a project funded by the Government Office of the East Midlands. We work with landlords, tenants and Local Authorities to raise standards in housing.

Further information on DASH, its associates, projects and successes can be found by visiting our website at www.eastmidlandsdash.org.uk or by calling 01332 256301.

Issued November 2011

Also Available:

- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - Local Authority Enforcement Options. A Landlords Guide
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - Amenities and Space. A Landlords Guide
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - The 29 Hazards. A Landlords Guide
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance - Houses in Multiple Occupation - Licensing in the East Midlands
- Housing Act 2004 Guidance – Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes. A Guide for Landlords and Tenants
- The Ideal Property. A Landlords Guide to HHSRS and the 19 Hazards
- Buying to Let. A Landlords Guide

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