

## **THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD**

### Making your property decent

#### **What is a decent home?**

A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. To achieve this minimum standard a decent home will have to meet the following four criteria:

- A. Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing**
- B. Be in a reasonable state of repair**
- C. Have reasonably modern facilities and services**
- D. Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

#### **A. Statutory minimum standard for housing:**

To meet this criteria the property must be free from significant hazards to health and safety as assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System [HHSRS])

#### **B. Reasonable state of repair:**

This aspect considers the condition of the building components.

Building components are the structural parts of a dwelling (e.g. wall structure, roof structure) as well as other external elements (e.g. roof covering, chimneys) and internal services and amenities (e.g. kitchens, heating systems).

For the purposes of the decent homes standard building components are split into two categories – ‘key’ and ‘other’.

**Key building components** are components which, if in poor condition, could have an immediate impact on the integrity of the building and cause further deterioration of other components. They are the parts of a property that have potential safety implications. They include: external walls; roof structure and covering; windows/doors; chimneys; central heating boilers; gas fires; storage heaters; plumbing and electrics;

If any of these key components are old and in poor condition (i.e. need replacing or require immediate major repair) then the dwelling is not in a reasonable state of repair and is considered non-decent. Remedial action will be required.

**Other building components** are ones that are not considered to be key components (i.e. they have a less immediate impact on the integrity of the dwelling). The combined effect of these components is considered in order to determine if a dwelling is in a reasonable state of repair. They include: floor construction; kitchen units; bathroom/wc; ceilings; internal walls; internal joinery; staircase and damp proof course.

If two or more of these components are old and in poor condition then the dwelling is not in a reasonable state of repair and is considered non-decent. Remedial action will be required.

### **C. Reasonably modern facilities and services:**

A dwelling is considered to fail this criterion if it lacks three or more of the following facilities:

- a kitchen which is 20 years old or less
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- a bathroom which is 30 years old or less;
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
- adequate external noise insulation; and
- adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats.

### **D. Reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

A dwelling will need to have both efficient heating and effective insulation.

#### **Heating**

Efficient heating is defined as any gas or oil programmable central heating; or

- electric storage heaters; or
- warm air systems; or
- underfloor systems; or
- programmable LPG/solid fuel central heating; or
- similarly efficient heating systems which are developed in the future.

Heating sources which provide a less energy efficient option will fail the Decent Homes standard.

## **Insulation**

Because of the differences in efficiency between gas/oil heating systems and the other heating systems listed, the level of insulation that is appropriate also differs:

<b>Heating system</b>	<b>Insulation requirement</b>
gas/oil programmable heating	cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively) OR, at least 50mm loft insulation (if there is loft space)
electric storage heaters/ LPG/ programmable solid fuel central heating.	at least 200mm of loft insulation (if there is a loft) AND, cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively).

Where insulation is being fitted, landlords should take the opportunity to improve the energy efficiency and install insulation to a much greater depth (270mm recommended).

Where new heating systems are being installed or existing system replaced, landlords should take the opportunity to increase the energy efficiency of the dwelling by installing energy efficient boilers and cavity walls if possible.

If new heating or insulation is being installed, it is also important that steps are taken to ensure the dwelling is adequately ventilated.

It should be noted that whilst dwellings that meet criteria B, C and D are likely to also meet criterion A, some significant hazards may still remain to be addressed e.g. a dwelling meeting criterion D on energy efficiency and heating may still contain a significant hazard for 'Excess Cold'.

## Implementing the Standard

The Decent Homes Standard is not a regulation and therefore is not enforceable. However, it is a government standard that local authorities must implement through financial assistance and enforcement.

### For information and advice

For further information please contact a member of the Housing Standards Team on: 01225 396418.

### Assistance

- **Bath and North East Somerset Housing Improvement Team** offer financial assistance in the form of low cost or zero interest loans for home owners on a low income or if they are over 60 years of age. Tel: 01225 396216
- **South West Energy Saving Trust** offer free impartial advice on energy saving, grants and discounts. Free phone: 0800 512 012.

### Enforcement

Bath and North East Somerset Housing Standards Team have a legal duty under the Housing Act 2004 to take enforcement action where significant hazards to health and safety are identified.

For information on the HHSRS go to: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) or to view our enforcement policy:

<http://cis/BathNES/Housing/housingadvice/housinginformationadvice/HsgServicesEnforcementPolicy.htm>