



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# **THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD**

**Guidance for Local Authorities on the Assessment Process and Achievement  
of the Standard**

**APRIL 2002**

# THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD

| <b>INDEX</b>  | <b>Page<br/>No.</b> |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>The Welsh Assembly Government's Objectives</b>   | 2                   |
| <b>Guidance for Local Authorities on the Assessment Process<br/>and Achievement of the Standard</b> |                     |
| Introduction  | 3                   |
| What Local Authorities need to do to meet the Milestones  | 4                   |
| <b>The Welsh Housing Quality Standard</b>   |                     |
| Overview  | 10                  |
| <b>The Standard</b>   | 11                  |
| <b>Minimum Requirements</b>   | 14                  |
| <b>Good Practice Guide</b>  | 20                  |
| Appendix 1: Space Standards Layout Drawings   |                     |
| Appendix 2: Compliance with Welsh Housing Quality Standard<br>Checklist                             |                     |

# THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD

## The Welsh Assembly Government's Objectives

In July 2001 the National Assembly approved the National Housing Strategy for Wales "Better Homes for People in Wales".

"Better Homes for People in Wales" set out the Welsh Assembly Government's long term vision for housing in Wales. Central to that vision is the expectation that all households in Wales shall have the opportunity to live in good quality homes. To achieve this, the physical standard and condition of existing housing must be maintained and improved to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (The Standard).

The Standard has been developed to provide a common target standard for the physical condition of **all** housing in Wales, but this guidance is intended specifically to help local authorities to assess their housing stock against the Standard. Separate guidance will be issued to deal with Registered Social Landlords' stock and privately owned housing.

The Assembly Government recognises that the Standard represents a major challenge for the social housing sector in Wales, but believes that aiming for anything less than the standard would mean that we are content with second best for the people in Wales. The Assembly Government therefore expects all social landlords in Wales to adopt the Standard and to devise realistic programmes for bringing all their properties up to it by the end of 2012.

Local Authorities are required to assess the implications of bringing stock up to the Standard by 2012 and are expected to provide to the Assembly by 1 September 2002, their initial overall assessment on the condition of their stock, the investment needed to achieve the Standard and the capital and revenue financial implications.

The initial assessment should be carried out using the best available information and based on an assumption of resources continuing to be available at current levels. The assessment and subsequent action plan should be incorporated into the local authority's Business Plan, which are to be introduced from 1 April 2003.

Some authorities already have comprehensive information on the condition of their stock, but by the end of 2006 **all** local authorities are expected to be in this position. This will enable them to continue to develop the necessary programmes for tackling the backlog of repairs and planning of future improvements.

# **Guidance for Local Authorities on the Assessment Process and Achievement of the Standard**

## **Introduction**

This guidance explains what local authorities will need to do in order to meet the Standard. A number of useful publications, as sources of good practice, are listed in each section of the Good Practice Guidance.

The guidance is intended to help local authorities interpret and implement the Assembly Government's requirements in relation to the physical standards of their existing properties and their improvement.

A Check-List is appended (Appendix 2) to this guidance to help to assess where dwellings fall short of the Standard.

Local authorities will be expected to include in their annual Business Plans an achievable programme for repairs and improvements (when these are introduced in 2003/2004).

In order to achieve this, local authorities are expected to carry out an assessment of the stock in relation to the Standard, analyse the information, and plan the management of their property assets as part of their normal business and financial planning. This will ensure that landlords are aware of the work required to meet the Standard, their future liabilities, when properties and their components are forecast to be replaced and when funds need to be in place to meet these liabilities.

In developing programmes, local authorities should take account of the views and aspirations of tenants. However, in so doing, local authorities should not raise their tenants' concerns unnecessarily about the future of their homes. The programme should be the product of dialogue and mutual understanding through the development of initiatives such as the Wales Programme for Improvement and Tenant Participation Compacts.

All social landlords should plan to integrate their various policies and strategies for responsive and planned maintenance, estate improvements, improving energy efficiency, void management and re-let works. The outcome of this will determine the corporate targets and objectives within the overall framework of the Standard and be a key factor in the business planning process. This will lead to the development of an improvement programme that takes into account the views of their tenants, but should, in the main, set priorities on the basis of tackling the worst properties first.

The following are suggested elements or “*milestones*” of the local authority’s programme to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by the end of 2012:

**By 1 September 2002:**

- Establish the current state of the local authority’s housing stock relative to the Standard based on best available information.
- Estimate the investment needs to achieve the Standard.
- Assess the work programmes necessary to meet the Standard.

**Between September 2002 and the end of 2006 (at the latest):**

- Gather comprehensive information on the whole of the Council’s housing stock.
- Complete Tenant Consultation on the draft programme.
- Finalise and implement a programme for the repair and improvement of the stock.
- Update the Business Plan to include the tenant consultation results and the repair and improvement programme.

**By the end of 2012:**

- Review and monitor the programme as a part of the business planning process.
- Confirm that all Council housing stock meets the Standard.

**WHAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES NEED TO DO TO MEET THE MILESTONES**

**By 1 September 2002:**

**Establish the current state of the local authority’s housing stock relative to the Standard.**

The initial assessment must be carried out by the local authority using the best information currently available on the condition and standard of the stock.

A desk-top exercise can be undertaken using any data currently available and the local knowledge of key technical staff.

## **Estimate the investment needs to achieve the Standard.**

A general overview will be sufficient at this stage, applying realistic, approximate current costs of repairs and improvements where it is known that dwellings and estates fall short of the Standard. Costs should allow for VAT and overheads, but there should not be any allowance for assumed future increased costs or inflation.

The current available resources is defined as:

- Either:** The amount of capital borrowing applied to properties for the HRA - averaged over the financial years 1999/2000; 2000/2001; 2001/2002, plus any Revenue contributions to Capital - averaged over the same period.
- Or:** An estimate of the annual additional borrowing that can be serviced from within the HRA, ie the likely prudential borrowing limit for the HRA.

### **Outcomes of this exercise will be:**

- (a)** that the Standard can be achieved within the likely level of resources available.
- (b)** the Standard cannot be achieved without a modest increase in resources.
- (c)** the Standard cannot be achieved without a very significant increase in resources.

If the outcome of the assessment is of **(a)** above, the local authority should work towards the production of a programme of improvement and repairs.

If the outcome is **(b)** above, the local authority should identify the shortfall and what options are available to deal with this (taking into account that the programme for repairs and improvements should be based on the principle of tackling the worst properties first).

If the outcome is **(c)** above, the local authority should provide initial statements setting out proposals to achieve the Standard by the end of 2012.

The initial assessment and draft programme should be submitted to the Housing Directorate of the Welsh Assembly Government by 1 September 2002.

## **Assess the work programmes necessary to achieve the Standard**

A draft programme of repairs and improvements, based on an assumption of current available resources, should be devised to illustrate the local authority's priorities and the feasibility of the programme.

An example Check-List summarising the technical aspects of the Standard is attached at Appendix 2 to assist with the assessment process and future surveys.

## **Between September 2002 and the end of 2006**

### **Gather comprehensive knowledge of the whole of the housing stock.**

Gathering data on stock condition is a priority to inform and enable the assessment process.

In any case, local authorities are expected to have comprehensive information on **all** of their housing stock **by the end of 2006**.

Local authorities should undertake stock condition surveys so that a detailed knowledge of the stock and a comprehensive programme of repairs and improvements can be implemented with meaningful progress by 2006.

Many local authorities are already familiar with the process of surveying their properties to establish their condition. The Assembly issued "Stock Condition Surveys - Guidance for Local Authorities" in December 2000.

Several local authorities are already making good progress or may be at various stages in a cycle of surveys that are intended to provide data on the condition of the whole stock.

Opportunities should be taken to gather data for other associated housing objectives such as its obligations under HECA. Some authorities may wish to adapt their stock condition survey to do this. Others may wish to undertake a separate exercise if it is more appropriate and/or cost effective to do so. Also, some may wish to use the opportunity at re-letting/void inspections to gather this information.

Assessment against the Standard is likely to necessitate some internal inspection of properties. But good knowledge of the stock, sound past asset management practice and record keeping, plus a careful approach to sampling for statistical relevance, should mean that an internal inspection of every property would not be needed. Sufficient data should be available to give a reasonably accurate picture of condition and the overall situation relative to the Standard.

## **Complete tenant consultation on the draft programme**

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that to foster pride, belonging and 'ownership', tenants and residents should be encouraged to take the opportunity to be involved in making any decisions that affect their community and environment.

The precise process local authorities should go through to put together their programme for repairs and improvements is a matter for the authority, but it must include tenant consultation.

Local authorities should develop a draft programme after the analysis of data on current standards and condition, estimated costs, financing requirements and an established set of priorities. The Assembly Government will expect the local authority to consult with, and show its tenants how it has arrived at its draft programme, the choices made and how the views and priorities of their tenants have influenced the agreed final programme.

The Assembly Government would like to see consultation on a local level, but does not wish to prescribe the process a local authority should follow to achieve this. However, Tenant Participation Compacts could provide the appropriate mechanism.

## **Finalise and implement a programme for the repair and improvement of the stock**

Following the consultation exercise, the authority should prepare a draft implementation programme which sets objectives that take into account such matters as stock profile, location, tenants' views, physical constraints of the buildings, changing demographics, demand, financial constraints and its overall Council Housing Business Plan. It is also important that the programme reflects the Local Housing Strategy.

If there are properties where compliance with the Standard cannot reasonably be achieved, these should be identified with the reason highlighted. Undertaking improvements which fall short of the Standard, setting aside and securing of void properties (mothballing), disposal of properties or stock transfer, are amongst options that can be considered. From the analysis it should be possible to produce a list of work required to:

- Improve the standard and condition of individual properties
- Undertake major improvement works to groups of properties or estates

The authority should be able to estimate the cost associated with these works.

It will assist in the programme planning process if separate lifecycle renewal of components, stock, improvements and the different costs associated are kept separate. This will help to identify the different ways in which they will be funded.

It should be possible to establish a set of priorities for the items of work to be identified in the programme based on the following:

**April 2002**



- Health, safety and security
- Knowledge of tenants' views and aspirations
- Experience of housing need and lettability
- Energy efficiency
- The local authority's financial position and its ability to secure future resources

The programme for repairs and improvements and the process leading up to it should be published and show the stages the local authority has gone through, highlighting the choices that have been made along the way and the reasoning. The programme should set out the priorities for the various items of work with a forecast of finance required and sources of finance available.

The programme will also need to be clear how it will be implemented and at what stages it will be reviewed.

The programme is unlikely to remain static. Examples of factors influencing the development and implementation of the programme could include:

- Changes to statutory requirements, eg Building Regulations and other environmental standards.
- New technologies.
- People's changing needs and expectations of the standards of their homes.
- The authority's progress on implementing their strategy.
- Unforeseen major repairs.
- Changing government policy.
- Demographic changes.
- Changing housing needs and community sustainability.

The Assembly Government will expect to see that local authorities have provided information and consulted tenants on the detail of the programme of works to their homes. Authorities will also be expected to take account of the needs of disabled tenants and tenants from minority ethnic communities in relation to bespoke adaptations when preparing its programme of improvement works.

As with all activities and services, the repairs and improvements programme should reflect the principles of the Wales Programme for Improvement in its implementation and review.

**Update the Business Plan to include the Tenant Consultation results and the repair and improvement programme.**

Local authorities will be required to prepare a Housing Stock Business Plan by April 2003. Further guidance will be provided in the next few months but the first year will provide an opportunity to "test" the Plans.

## **Reviewing and monitoring the programme as part of the business planning process**

The local authority's programme for repairs and improvements must be dynamic and responsive to changes. The programme must be reviewed annually or at such times following an up-date of stock information and condition data, but must be based on the principle that **all social housing stock meets the Standard by the end of 2012.**

# THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD

## Overview

“Better Homes for People in Wales” states the National Assembly for Wales’s vision that “*all households in Wales ... shall have the opportunity to live in good quality homes that are:*

- **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 (eg specific disabilities)**

**The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to bringing all existing social housing up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.**

# THE STANDARD

## Introduction

The Standard has been developed to provide a common target standard for the physical condition of all existing social housing in Wales.

### 1. In a Good State of Repair

All dwellings must be in a good state of repair by being:

- Structurally stable.
- Free from dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupants.
- Free from disrepair.

### 2. Safe and Secure

All dwellings must be free from evident safety hazards, particularly in respect of the following:

#### (a) Stairs and Landings

Staircases are a frequent source of accidental injury, particularly to elderly people and young children and every opportunity should be taken to improve safety.

#### (b) Kitchens

There is a high risk of accidents in kitchens that can be reduced by careful consideration and improvement of the layout.

#### (c) Fire Escape

Fire can cause death or serious injury and every opportunity should be taken to improve existing installations to ensure easy escape routes are provided.

#### (d) Electrical Installations, Heating Installations and Appliances

Electrical installations in poor condition are a frequent cause of injury. Inadequate and poorly located outlets can be inconvenient and dangerous.

Inadequate heating installations can cause discomfort and be detrimental to good health.

All opportunities should be taken to modernise existing installations and ensure they are safe.

**(e) Security**

Inadequate levels of security increases the fear of crime and makes people feel insecure in their own homes.

All dwellings should provide tenants with a reasonable level of physical security and every opportunity to improve the physical security through the provision of locks and other hardware should be taken.

All opportunities should also be taken to improve safety in the external environment (eg lighting, landscaping, boundaries).

**(f) Outside the Home**

Poorly enclosed and laid out gardens may be unsafe and inconvenient for the occupants.

All opportunities should be taken to make gardens safe and suitable for young children to play in, convenient to use, easy to maintain and reasonably private.

**3. Adequately Heated, Fuel Efficient and Well Insulated**

All dwellings must be capable of being adequately heated at an affordable cost to the tenant. Homes with inadequate heating cause discomfort and can pose a health risk.

Whether the home can be adequately heated depends on the cost of providing the heat required and the ability of the household to afford it. The eradication of fuel poverty\*, the inability to afford to heat one's home is a strategic priority for the Welsh Assembly Government as set out in 'Better Homes for People in Wales'.

**4. Contain Up-to-Date Kitchens and Bathrooms**

All dwellings must have reasonably modern facilities and services

**(a) Kitchens**

There must be adequate facilities for preparing, cooking and storing food.

The kitchen should be no more than 15 years old, unless in good condition and meets the safety, space and layout criteria, designed in accordance with **Minimum Requirements** (see page 19)

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\*Fuel poverty is dependent on the energy efficiency of the home (eg the SAP rating) and the circumstances of the household (including household size, composition and income). A household is defined as "fuel poor" if they need to spend 10% or more of their income on achieving a reasonable heating regime, which is generally defined as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in other occupied rooms.

**(b) Washing and Drying Clothes**

There must be adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes.

**(c) Bathroom and WC Facilities**

All dwellings must have reasonably modern bathroom and WC facilities which are not more than 25 years old unless in good condition and include fittings as stated in **Minimum Requirements** (see page 19).

**5. Well Managed (for rented housing)**

Housing should be fairly, efficiently and well managed to address the needs of tenants as individuals and as part of a community.

**6. Located in Attractive and Safe Environments**

All homes should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live.

**7. As Far as Possible, Suit the Specific Requirements of the Household (eg Specific Disabilities)**

The accommodation provided within the dwelling should, as far as possible, suit the needs of the household.

The home should:

- Provide sufficient space needed for everyday living and be appropriate for household numbers (see **Minimum Requirements**, page 19).
- Provide suitable accommodation to meet the cultural needs of the household.
- Contain adequate internal and external storage facilities.
- Provide all necessary aids and adaptations to meet the specific requirements of any household members including those with disabilities.
- Reflect the changing needs of the household.

# MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The Standard will ensure that dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future tenants. It is recognised that it will not be economically or practically feasible to bring all existing properties up to the standard expected in a modern dwelling.

The following requirements which develop the Standard in greater detail are considered to be an acceptable minimum.

They are not however intended to be exhaustive and local authorities should always consider whether they are satisfied that the best possible solution has been achieved.

## 1. In a Good State of Repair

All key-building components which make up the dwelling and have an immediate impact on its integrity, must be in good condition. This includes walls, roof structure and covering, windows and doors and chimneys.

All other building components that have a less immediate impact on the integrity of the dwelling must be in reasonable condition and have reasonable component life remaining.

## 2. Safe and Secure

### Stair and Landings

Where an existing staircase is considered to be exceptionally hazardous, for example, where winders have been used or where the pitch is very steep, structural modification or replacement may be required.

Where safety can be materially improved at modest cost, for example, by adding an extra handrail, this should be done.

### Fire Escape

Dwellings must be easy to escape from by:

- Having an escape route from the bedrooms to an external door which does not pass through another room. If this is not possible an alternative means of escape must be agreed with the fire officer.
- Having a suitably located mains powered, linked smoke alarm (with sealed lithium battery back up) on each floor.
- Ensuring that window locks, where fitted to bedroom windows, do not have an automatic locking action which could pose an obstacle to escape.

- Ensuring replacement windows are designed so that means of escape is possible.

## **Security**

Dwellings should have a reasonable level of security.

Where it is necessary to replace doors, windows or fencing, the replacements should comply with the requirements of **Secured by Design**, the Police Force's Housing Design Security Scheme (see **Good Practice Guidance**).

Cost effective measures should also be taken to upgrade the security of components that are to be retained.

### **3. Adequately Heated, Fuel Efficient and Well Insulated**

#### **Electrical and heating installations**

Dwellings should have:

- Adequate and appropriately located power outlets. Any cost-effective opportunities to increase the number of power sockets should be taken (see **Good Practice Guidance** for details).
- Electrical lighting and power installations checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person.
- All heating installations and appliances checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person at least annually or as required by law.

#### **Energy Efficiency and Ventilation**

Meeting the cost of heating bills can be difficult for many tenants. Landlords should do whatever they reasonably can to minimise the cost of heating homes to a comfortable level.

Heating systems must be:

- Capable of heating the whole of the dwelling to a comfortable level in normal weather conditions.
- Reasonably economical to run.

Lack of adequate ventilation and poor thermal performance of external walls and windows, in addition to inadequate background heating levels, are significant contributors to condensation in older properties. Of particular concern are kitchens and bathrooms in which large amounts of moisture are generated.



All cost-effective opportunities to upgrade the thermal and ventilation performance of the dwelling must be taken.

These will include ensuring that:

- Heating systems are fuel efficient and reasonably economical to run.
- Doors and windows are sufficiently well fitting so that they do not cause severe draughts.
- The main entrance door does not open directly into the living room.
- The hot water tank is effectively insulated.
- There is at least **200 mm** of insulation in the loft.
- All pipes and tanks in the roof-space are lagged.
- All necessary steps taken to minimise the likelihood of condensation (see **Good Practice Guidance**).

The annual energy consumption for space and water heating must be estimated using the SAP method and following minimum ratings achieved:

| Floor area m <sup>2</sup> | SAP Rating* |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Up to 35                  | 58          |
| 36 to 40                  | 59          |
| 41 to 45                  | 60          |
| 46 to 50                  | 61          |
| 51 to 55                  | 62          |
| 56 to 60                  | 63          |
| 61 to 70                  | 64          |
| 71 to 80                  | 65          |
| 81 to 90                  | 66          |
| 91 to 100                 | 67          |
| 101 to 110                | 68          |
| 111 to 120                | 69          |
| Over 120                  | 70          |

\* Based on SAP 1998 (currently under review following publication of SAP 2001)

#### **4. Contain Up to Date Kitchens and Bathrooms**

##### **Kitchens**

All dwellings must have a reasonably modern kitchen. There should be a well organised working area with adequate work surfaces for resting pans and food preparation, sufficient storage to meet the needs of the family and adequate space for appliances (see **Good Practice Guidance**).

##### **Bathroom and WC Provision**

All dwellings must have a reasonably modern bathroom with a bath **and** shower, wash-hand basin and WC. The WC may be separate. In dwellings with more than one bedroom it must be possible to reach the bathroom without passing through a bedroom.

Houses for 6 or more people must have a second WC with a wash-hand basin.

Houses for 8 or more people must have a second bathroom or shower room.

Bathrooms should not be more than one storey away from the bedrooms.

#### **5. Well Managed (for rented housing)**

This element of the Standard is not relevant to the assessment process and future financial planning at this stage. Further guidance on this element will be issued in due course.

#### **6. Located in Attractive and Safe Environments**

All opportunities should be taken to make improvements to the immediate environment (within the property boundary) of individual dwellings and to the general environment.

Scope to make improvements to the former will probably be limited but any opportunities that present themselves should be taken.

Consultation with tenants, results of tenant satisfaction surveys and external audits can be used to inform the process.

#### **7. As Far as Possible Suit the Specific Requirements of the Household (eg specific disabilities)**

##### **Space for every day living**

Homes should have rooms that can accommodate sufficient furniture and circulation space to meet the needs of the family.

Circulation space must not be reduced to the point where rooms are cramped and inconvenient.

Minimum furniture requirements are as follows\*:

### **Living rooms**

- Adequate number of chairs/settees to seat the maximum number of occupants.
- Three small or two large storage units, one of which may be in the dining area (in single person dwellings, requirements reduces to two small or one large unit).
- A television.

### **Dining areas**

- A dining table and chairs to seat the maximum number of occupants.

### **One person bedrooms**

- A single bed and bedside table.
- A medium chest of drawers (this may be in an adjacent box room or on the landing if it does not impede circulation space).
- A single wardrobe (free-standing or built in).

### **Two person bedrooms**

- One bedroom must be able to contain a double bed and further large bedrooms, two single beds or a double bed.
- A bedside table.
- A large chest of drawers (this may be in an adjacent box room or on the landing if it does not impede circulation space).
- A dressing table.
- One double or two single wardrobes (free standing or built in).

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\* See **Appendix 1** for recommended furniture sizes.

## **Storage**

All dwellings must have adequate and convenient internal and external storage which should include:

- A tall cupboard suitable for storage of brooms etc.
- High level shelving for storage of cleaning materials out of reach of small children.
- An airing cupboard.
- Where suitable space is available, houses and bungalows should have a robust and lockable external store (see **Good Practice Guidance**).

## **Flexibility**

New houses are designed to be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of occupants. This is a more difficult goal to achieve in existing dwellings due to constraints imposed by the structure.

Landlords should however, wherever it is practical and cost effective to do so, take every opportunity to incorporate features into projects that will result in homes that are flexible and capable of adaptation.

The **Lifetime Homes Standards** (see **Good Practice Guidance**) should be used as a reference source for exploring the opportunities available on individual projects.

## **Specific needs**

Where existing homes are intended for people with specific needs, they must, wherever possible, be improved so that the layout of the dwelling reflects current good practice.

For example, housing provided for minority ethnic groups must take account of cultural requirements.

Landlords should, therefore, consider the particular requirements of individuals and/or groups and where the existing dwelling falls short of their needs, look at possible remedies.

Similarly, accessibility issues should be addressed when considering homes to be occupied by those with a mobility impairment.

# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Good Practice Guidance supports the requirements in the Standard and points to additional sources of best practice.

Local authorities are responsible for developing and maintaining their housing stock to a good standard.

Standards and Good Practice Guidance can only provide the basic building blocks and local authorities should exercise their responsibility as clients and as accountable bodies to take a critical interest in the housing they manage to ensure it remains of good quality.

## 1. In a Good State of Repair

Basic conditions that are expected in dwellings are contained in the housing fitness standard (section 604 of the 1985 Housing Act as amended by paragraph 83 of Schedule 9 to the 1989 Act).

The legislation sets out the standard of fitness for human habitations. A dwelling would **not** be fit for habitation if, in the opinion of the local authority, it failed to meet one or more of the requirements set out in the legislation and, by reason of that failure, is not reasonably suitable for occupation.

The judgement on whether a house is fit for human habitation rests with the local authority and guidance on making a judgement can be found in Welsh Office Circular 59/96 Annex A.

The current standard has been in place for some time, but following widespread consultation in 1998, Government is proposing to introduce a new Housing Health and Safety Rating System. The new system currently being developed will more closely link house conditions with the health and safety of the occupants.

It will provide a means of identifying faults in dwellings and the potential impact of those faults on the health and safety of the occupants. It will provide a means of grading the sensitivity of dangers that may be present in dwellings and differentiating the sensitivity of those dangers and the extent of any risk to the occupant.

The new system, which will require primary legislation and introduction when there is a suitable parliamentary opportunity, will provide an appropriate standard for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## 2. Safe and Secure

### Safety

There are in excess of two million injuries from accidents in the home each year, many due to trips and falls. Homes should be designed and maintained to reduce the risk of accidents and all opportunities should be taken by local authorities to improve building related safety.

The Building Research Establishment Centre for Safety, Health and Environment publish a Digest (458) 'Safe as Houses' that provides a useful checklist: [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

### Security

It is important to reduce the fear of crime in the community and create a safe environment for people to live in.

Good design can play an important part in achieving these objectives. It is recognised that it will be more difficult to introduce new design features in existing estates where public rights of way and street patterns are fixed. Nevertheless, all practical, cost effective measures should be considered.

**Secured by Design (SBD)** is the police initiative to encourage the adoption of crime prevention methods in new and existing housing and aims to achieve a good standard of security for both the home and the surrounding environment.

Each police force in Wales has a dedicated Advisor (Architectural Liaison Officer) who can be used to obtain advice on all security matters.

The following publication is recommended as a source of good practice:

Secured by Design

[www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)

## 3. Adequately Heated, Fuel Efficient and Well Insulated

### Electrical installations

Under-provision of power sockets will lead to dangerous overloading of circuits with adapters and excessive use of trailing flexes and extension leads.

The following is the minimum provision of power sockets in a new home:

| Room Type                | Minimum No. of Sockets   |
|--------------------------|--|
| Living rooms             | 4 double in houses and in flats                                  |
| Dining rooms             | 2 double or 1 double in the dining area of a kitchen/dining room |
| Double and twin bedrooms | 3 double   |
| Single bedrooms          | 2 double   |
| Halls and landings       | Further single sockets are required                              |

TV aerial sockets and a telephone point should be provided in suitable locations in the living room.

### Condensation

The following measures can help to reduce the effects of condensation:

- Upgrading the thermal performance of external walls or internal walls.
- Improving control over ventilation rates by provision of trickle ventilation to windows or the introduction of positive pressure fans.
- Introducing rapid mechanical extract ventilation to moisture producing areas like kitchens and bathrooms.

The following publication is recommended as a source of good practice:

Housing Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme: BRECSU 2001

## 4. Contain up to date Kitchens and Bathrooms

To meet **basic** needs, all kitchens should provide:

- Space at least **600mm** wide for a cooker and a refrigerator. In most cases a **600mm** wide space will also be required for a washing machine (see also under '**Space for Appliances**'). The cooker space must be safely positioned in relation to doors, windows, wall units, electric sockets, etc.
- Enough clear space in front of the cooker and other units and appliances to operate safely (**1200mm** in front of the cooker, otherwise **1000mm** ).

- An adequate work surface for safe and convenient food preparation (**500mm** deep, **800mm along the front edge if straight, 1000mm** if 'L' shaped).
- Adequate and convenient storage cupboards for food, crockery and pots and pans.
- At least one convenient power socket close to the main food preparation worktop in addition to those at fixed appliance positions.

Where it is necessary to create a **new kitchen** or to **replace** an existing one, they should, wherever possible at reasonable cost, be designed to meet the standards of new dwellings ensuring in particular that:

- There is a work surface each side of the sink bowl, one of which may be the sink drainer.
- There is a work surface each side of the cooker.
- The cooker is at least **100mm** from a corner base unit.
- All work surfaces are at least **400mm** long.
- A food preparation area is provided between the sink bowl or drainer and the cooker. It must be at least **1000mm** long measured along its front edge, preferably in a straight line. If it has to be arranged around a corner, one front edge must be at least **800mm** long.
- There is at least one double power socket close to the main food preparation area.

Kitchens should be laid out so that they are easy to use, provide space for the equipment and provide storage.

In the interest of safety they should be designed in a 'u'-shape with no through route between doors. This will not always be possible in existing dwellings but to be safe and easy to work in, the aim should be to provide an unbroken sequence of worktop - cooker - worktop - sink - worktop.

**In addition**, a modern kitchen will be designed so that:

- Spaces at least **620mm** wide are provided for a cooker and refrigerator. In most cases **620mm** wide spaces will be required for a washing machine and for a tumble dryer (see also under **Space for Appliances**).



- The cooker space is not in front of a window and cooker control units are offset to one side so that they can be used without reaching over the hob space.
- Wall cupboards are positioned at least **150mm** away from the cooker space and such that they can be used without reaching over the hob.
- People passing through do not have to enter “the work triangle”, an imaginary triangle formed by lines drawn between the cooker, sink and fridge positions.
- There are adequate and convenient storage cupboards for food, crockery and pots and pans. **1.1m<sup>3</sup>** in a two person dwelling, increasing by **0.2m<sup>3</sup>** for each additional person.
- There are enough convenient power sockets to avoid using multi-way adapters and trailing flexes (not less than 3 double sockets above worktop level in addition to those at fixed appliance positions).

The layouts shown in **Appendix 1** show some typical solutions for a 3 person flat and a 5 person house.

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

BRE Housing Design Handbook  
Establishment

Building Research

### **Space for appliances**

All dwellings must have space, power and plumbing connections for a washing machine. If an external clothesline cannot be provided there must also be space and power connections for a **600mm** wide tumble dryer, positioned so that it can be vented directly to the outside air. These spaces will normally be in the kitchen but may be in a utility area.

## **5. Well Managed (for rented housing)**

This element of the Standard is not relevant to the assessment process and future financial planning at this stage. Further guidance on this element will be issued in due course.

## **6. Located in Attractive and Safe Environments**

### **Local Environment**

Where it is possible to do so, defensible space should be created to front gardens by clearly defining the boundaries between private and public space.

Adequate fencing (minimum **1200mm** high) should also be provided between adjacent rear gardens.

### **General Environment**

Where estates or groups of houses are being brought up to standard, more opportunities are available to take steps which will encourage residents to develop a sense of ownership for their own homes and their local neighbourhood.

For example it may be possible to provide landmarks (new trees or street furniture) or add a symbolic entrance to a small group of houses. Where works to the outside of a dwelling are being carried out it may be possible to introduce some variation to the elevation or to use coloured render.

It may be possible to introduce traffic calming measures to slow traffic down in residential areas to make pedestrian movement and children's play safer. Improvements to street lighting and opportunities to rationalise pedestrian routes can also be considered.

A good environment would include:

- Accessible roads and footpaths providing safety for residents, pedestrians and children.
- Practical maintainable, soft and hard landscaping with planting in protected locations.
- Adequate and effective street lighting.
- Adequate and safe play space for young children.
- Adequate, practical and maintainable communal areas.
- Clear dwelling identification and boundaries.
- Practically located and well identified utility services.
- Adequate car parking, practically located and clearly visible to residents.

## Gardens

Where possible, all family homes should have convenient access to a garden.

Gardens should:

- Contain a nominally level area no smaller than **10m<sup>2</sup>** which can be directly reached from the house.
- Have a paved access to the drying line and any garden gate.
- Have fencing and boundary walls which provide a reasonable level of physical security.

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

|                                      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| People, Streets and Movement         | DTLR                 |
| Essex Design Guide                   | Essex County Council |
| Time for Design English Partnerships | English Partnerships |
| Making Places                        | English Partnerships |
| Good Practice Advice Site Layout     | NAfW (Tai Cymru)     |
| TAN (Wales) 12 Design                | NAfW                 |
| Better Places to Live                | DTLR                 |

## 7. As Far as Possible Suit the Specific Requirements of the Household (eg specific disabilities).

### Space for everyday living

The requirements state that homes should have rooms that can accommodate sufficient furniture and circulation space to meet the needs of the family. It is recognised, however, that sometimes individual rooms in an otherwise acceptable dwelling may fall just short to the standard required, and that to enlarge the room in question is not possible or cost-effective.

In such cases some tolerance on the minimum circulation space requirements shown in **Appendix 1** is acceptable (up to **100mm** would normally be regarded as reasonable).

Furniture sizes and circulation space requirements are shown in **Appendix 1**. These together with the expectation of provision stated in the **Minimum Requirements** can be used to test the suitability of existing rooms.

It is emphasised, however, that these circulation space requirements are already modest, as is the amount of furniture allowed for.

## Specific needs

Every opportunity must be taken to improve homes for people with specific needs to ensure that their cultural and physical needs are met.

For example, landlords should consider:

- In many BME communities the notion of extended families is based on children remaining with their parents for the rest of their lives. This will require housing providers to develop homes that enable families to remain together. It should be noted, however, that in some communities, the extended family concept is declining. Consultation with BME communities is essential to ensure that proper consideration is given to trends such as these.
- House design is related to household numbers and amenities such as bathrooms and kitchen facilities compliment the number of residents

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Building Sight          | RNIB                                      |
| Wheelchair Design Guide | NATWHAG                                   |
| Good Loo Design Guide   | Centre on Environment for the Handicapped |
| Accommodating Diversity | N H F/ Home Housing Trust (1998)          |

## Reflects Changing Needs of the Household

It is important to consider the flexibility of dwelling interiors so that they meet the changing needs of occupants and are suitable for all visitors.

Where it is practical and cost effective to do so, consideration should be given to incorporating some, or all, the **Lifetime Homes Standards (LHS)** into dwellings.

The LHS specification comprises of 16 major standards for incorporation into home in order to increase flexibility, offer tenants choice and improve accessibility (See The Joseph Rowntree Foundation website [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk) ).

Lifetime Homes are not aimed specifically at people with disabilities who would require a wheelchair. They are homes that are built to current standards and can be lived in and visited by a wide range of people. They would, therefore, also be suitable for people with a very wide range of disabilities, older people or people having to adapt to different circumstances.

It is recognised that there will be limited opportunities to include LHS features in existing dwellings and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

publishes guidance on making the most of these opportunities where they are practical and cost effective to do so.

The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Designing Lifetime Homes                    | Joseph Rowntree Foundation |
| Meeting Part M and Designing Lifetime Homes | Joseph Rowntree Foundation |

### **Airing cupboards**

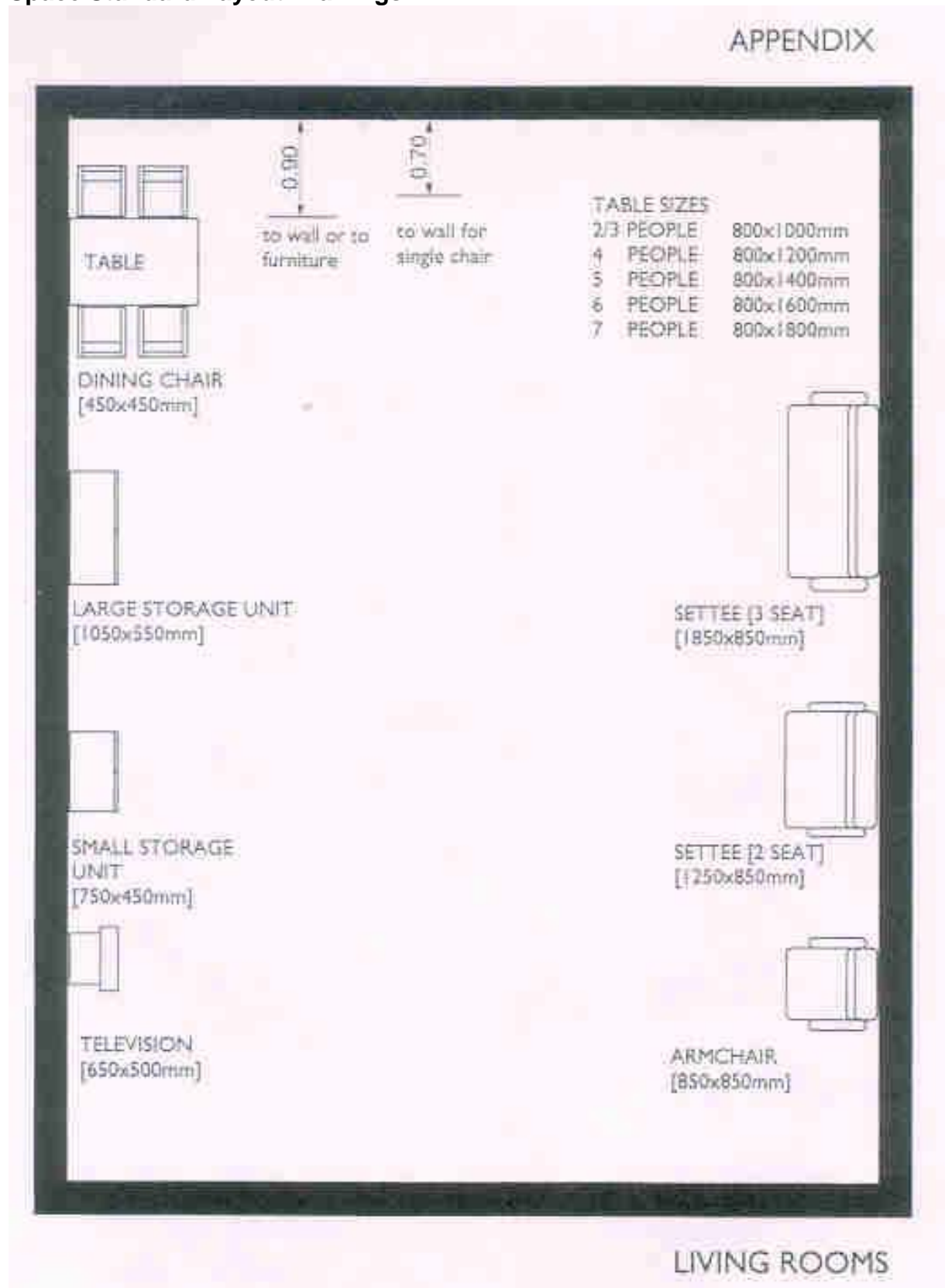
Hot water cylinder cupboards must be fitted with a reasonable amount of shelving (**1m<sup>2</sup>**). Dwellings without hot water storage must have a heated airing cupboard.

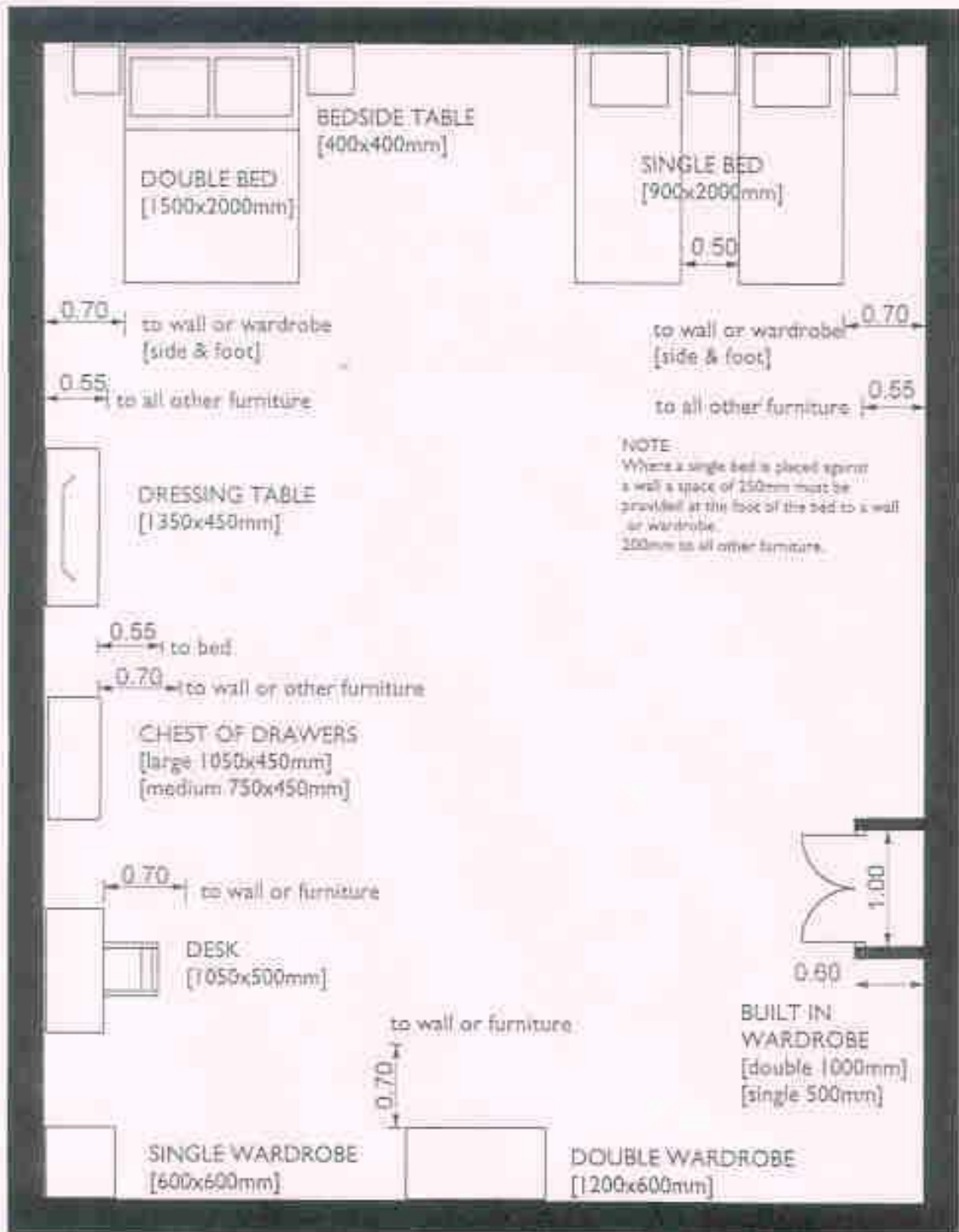
The following publications are recommended as sources of good practice:

|                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| BRE Housing Design Handbook        | Building Research Establishment |
| Scheme Development Standards       | Housing Corporation             |
| Standards in Quality & Development | National Housing Federation     |
| Development Quality Requirements   | National Assembly for Wales     |

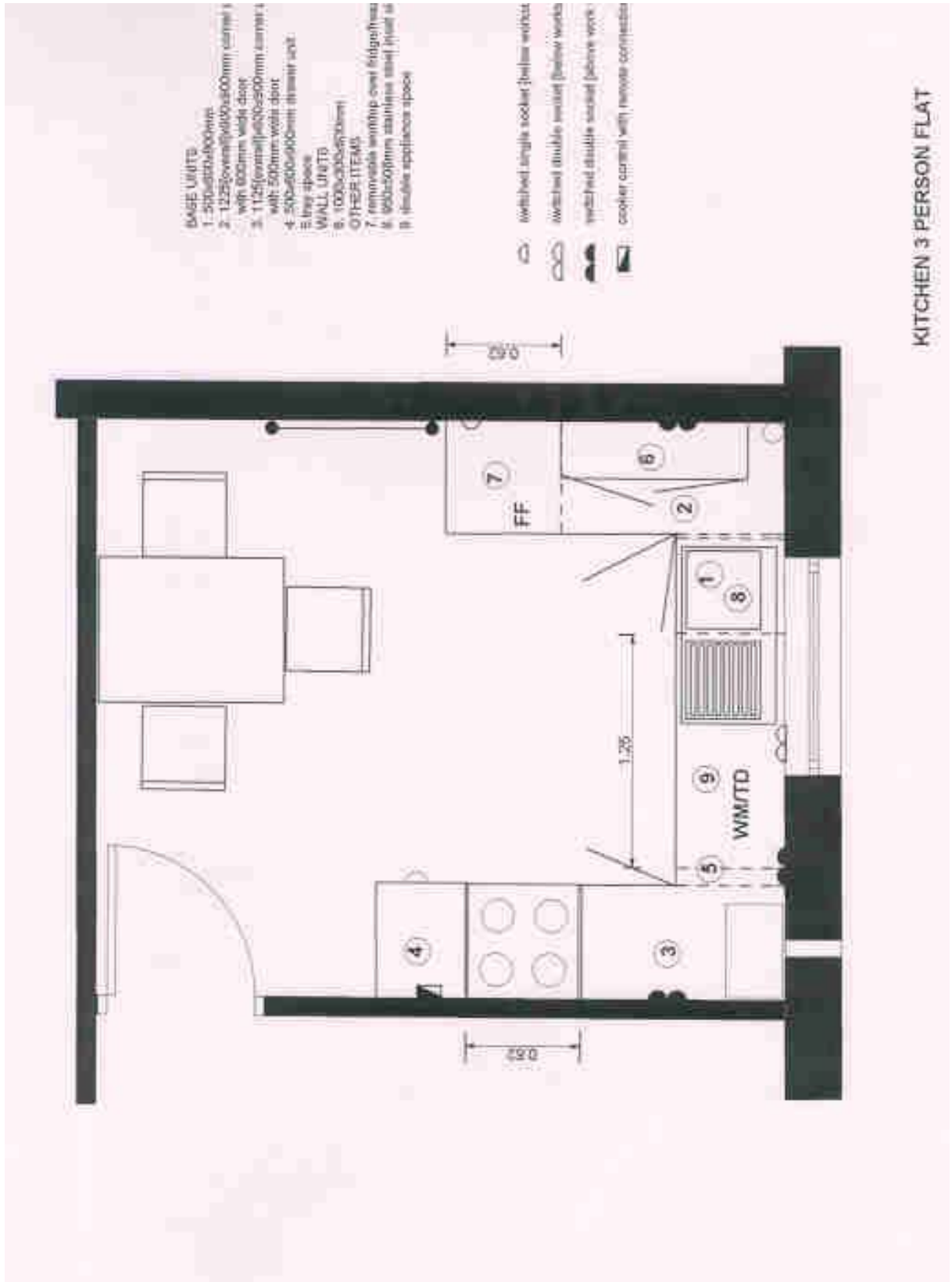
# Appendix 1

## Space Standard Layout Drawings



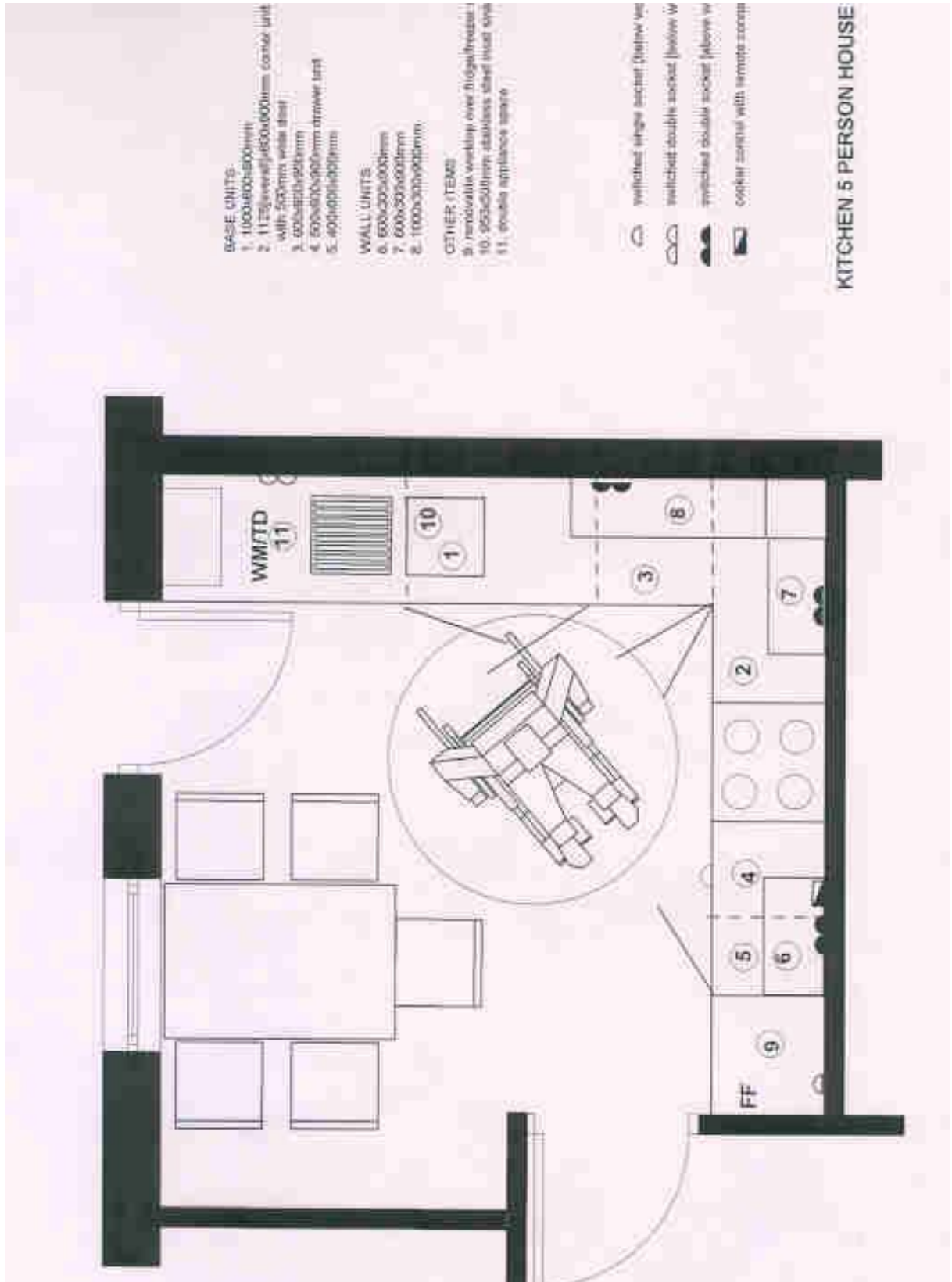


BEDROOMS



KITCHEN 3 PERSON FLAT





## Appendix 2

### COMPLIANCE WITH WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD CHECK-LIST

The following questions for each dwelling to be answered YES or NO or NOT APPLICABLE, each followed by details of the improvement required, if applicable and estimated cost, together with the total cost for the dwelling.

#### 1. STATE OF REPAIR

1.a Is the dwelling:

- Structurally stable?
- Free from damp?
- Free from disrepair?

1.b Are all key building components in good condition?:

- Walls?
- Roof structure and covering?
- Windows and Doors?
- Chimneys?
- Central heating boiler/gas fires?
- Electrics?

#### 2. SAFETY AND SECURITY

##### Stairs and landings

2.a Is the staircase and balustrading safe?

##### Kitchens

2.b Are there safe **600mm** wide spaces with enough clear space in front for the cooker, refrigerator and washing machine?

2.c Is the work surface sufficient for safe food preparation?

2.d Is the cupboard storage adequate and convenient?

2.e Are the numbers of convenient power sockets sufficient?

2.f Is the flooring to the kitchen and bathroom non-slip?

##### Fire Escape

2.g Is there an external fire escape (where applicable)?

2.h Is there adequate fire alarm and equipment (where applicable)?

April 2002

- 2.i Do bedrooms have escape routes not passing through another room?
- 2.j Are mains powered smoke detectors on each floor?
- 2.k Are bedroom window locks without automatic locking action?

### **Electrical and Heating Installations**

- 2.l Is the gas service and safety inspection up to date?
- 2.m Is the electrical safety test and inspection up to date?

### **Security**

- 2.n Do doors and windows give a reasonable level of physical security?
- 2.o Does the dwelling comply with the Police Force's "Secured by Design" ?
- 2.p Is the rear garden easy to maintain, reasonably private, convenient to use, safe and suitable for young children to play in?

## **3. HEATING, FUEL EFFICIENCY AND INSULATION**

- 3.a Can the heating system heat the dwelling to a reasonable level?
- 3.b Is the heating system reasonably economical?
- 3.c Are windows and doors adequately draught proof?
- 3.d Is the living room separated from the main entrance door?
- 3.e Is the hot water tank effectively insulated?
- 3.f Is there at least **200mm** of insulation in the loft?
- 3.g Are all the pipes and tanks in the roof space lagged?
- 3.h Is the thermal performance of the external walls adequate to avoid the likelihood of condensation?
- 3.i Do windows have trickle ventilation?
- 3.j Is there adequate mechanical extract ventilation to the kitchen and bathroom?

#### **4. UP TO DATE KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS**

##### **Kitchen**

- 4.a Is it more than 15 years old?
- 4.b Is it in good condition?
- 4.c Is it designed in accordance with the WHQS Minimum Requirements?  
(Page 13).

##### **Washing and Drying Clothes**

- 4.d Are there adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes?
- 4.e Is there space, plumbing and power for a washing machine?
- 4.f In the absence of an external clothes line, is there space, power and external venting for a tumble dryer?
- 4.g Is there a heated airing cupboard with sufficient shelving?

##### **Bathroom and W.C. Facilities**

- 4.h Are the bathroom and w.c. facilities more than 25 years old?
- 4.i Are they in good condition?
- 4.j Is there a shower as well as a bath?
- 4.k Are the facilities sufficient and conveniently located?

#### **5. MANAGEMENT**

- 5.a Is the dwelling fairly, efficiently and well managed?

#### **6. LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENT**

- 6.a Are roads and footpaths accessible, providing safety for residents, pedestrians and children?
- 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 and 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?

## **7. SUITABILITY OF THE HOUSEHOLD**

- 7.a Does the dwelling provide sufficient space for everyday living?

### **Living Rooms and Dining Areas**

- 7.b Are the rooms large enough for nominal occupancy?

### **Bedrooms**

- 7.c Are the rooms large enough for nominal occupancy?

### **Storage**

- 7.d Is internal and external general storage space adequate?

### **Specific Requirements**

- 7.e Does the dwelling layout meet the special cultural needs of the residents?
- 7.f Does the dwelling have the necessary physical aids to suit the requirements of the residents?

### **Lifetime Homes Standards**

- 7.g Does the dwelling meet Lifetime Homes Standards?

### **Outside**

- 7.h Is there a level area no smaller than 10m<sup>2</sup> directly accessible from the house?
- 7.i Is there a paved access to the drying line and any garden gate?