

# Frequently asked questions about WHQS

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### What does WHQS stand for?

WHQS is an abbreviation of the **Welsh Housing Standards Quality Standards**. Take a look at the Welsh Government website for information: <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-overview>

### What does WHQS mean for Beacon residents?

Beacon has a responsibility to ensure that the homes we provide are energy efficient, safe and secure. To ensure every home meets a similar standard, all social landlords work towards a Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). It was first introduced in 2002 but updated in 2023 to reflect changes in the way people live, work and feel about their homes. The revised standard aims to continue to improve the quality of people's homes and sets new ambitious targets to address decarbonisation, support efforts to reach net zero and improve water efficiency.

At its heart, WHQS is a resident focused standard, designed to upgrade social homes in a way that contributes to positive health, education and wellbeing outcomes. The investment required also provides a significant opportunity to generate and retain prosperity for local communities, through the creation of jobs, training and apprenticeships in the supply chain.

The standard comprises of eight elements that state a quality home must:

- 1 Be in good condition
- 2 Be safe and secure
- 3 Not cost too much to heat and not be bad for the environment
- 4 Have an up-to-date kitchen
- 5 Have an up-to-date bathroom
- 6 Be comfortable and suit the person living there.
- 7 Have a garden (if possible)
- 8 Have a nice outside space (if possible)

If a home has all these things, it has passed the standard.

**Please note that not all elements are applicable to all homes, and some will not be able to achieve elements for various reasons.**

### **What are the timescales for WHQS?**

Welsh Government has set timescales for landlords to meet:

| <b>DEADLINE</b>   | <b>LANDLORD OBJECTIVES</b>   |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>MARCH 2025</b> | We must have finalised our WHQS compliance policy; assessed the condition of the housing stock and identified the work necessary to meet the standards; completed resident engagement on the programme; estimated the investment needed; and reported the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) scores to WG.  |
| <b>MARCH 2027</b> | We must have completed our whole stock assessment and produced all Target Energy Pathways (these identify measures that can lead to the decarbonisation of a dwelling which is reaching net zero and heating the property with a low carbon heating system at an affordable cost to the resident).   |
| <b>MARCH 2030</b> | We must have achieved a minimum of EPC – C and SAP 75 on all housing stock. EPC is an Energy Performance Certificate, a measure of how much energy a home might use based on how well it is insulated and how efficient the heating system is, and SAP is a Standard Assessment Procedure which measures the energy rating of a home, gives a score and informs the EPC. |
| <b>MARCH 2034</b> | We should confirm that all Beacon housing stock meets the standard.  |

### **How will this work be paid for?**

Maintenance and improvement works are paid through resident's rents. We also have to make sure that rents remain affordable while planning to do the work required for WHQS. Where possible we will look to claim any grant available to help us undertake this work.



### What does WHQS means for residents' homes?

With the new WHQS23 standard your home should:

- Be structurally stable
- Be safe and have secure windows and doors
- Be free from disrepair
- Be free from damp
- Have space to live comfortably
- Have good quality flooring
- Have soundproofing
- Have high-speed internet
- Minimised exposure to noise
- Suit the specific needs of your household
- Have clearly identifiable, defined boundaries

Your **kitchen** should be in good condition. You should have enough space for storage, appliances and recycling; sufficient power sockets; suitable flooring and adequate facilities for washing and drying clothes.

Your **bathroom** should be in good condition and have suitable flooring.

There should be proper **ventilation** in your kitchen and bathroom and water-saving measures should be in place.

Your **heating system** should be affordable and be able to heat the entire home.

Every home is different and will need to be individually assessed in the future to see what measures may be required. Here are some of the upgrades you might need:

- Solar panels
- Loft insulation
- Windows
- External doors
- Wall insulation
- New heating system
- Smart meters

### **How will WHQS keep residents safe?**

The WHQS standards aim to keep you safe in your home by ensuring you have:

- Secure front and rear doors to help prevent crime
- Easily accessible windows will have lockable hardware or opening restrictors for child safety
- Safe staircases and balustrades to reduce the risk of accidents
- Fire safety, alarms and means of escape
- Gas safety inspections every year (minimum)
- A fire risk assessment if you live in a flat
- An appropriate means of escape in case of fire to a place of safety outside the building
- Regular heating checks
- Electrical safety checks every five years (minimum)
- Suitable slip resistant flooring in kitchen, utility areas and bathrooms to reduce the risk of slips and falls





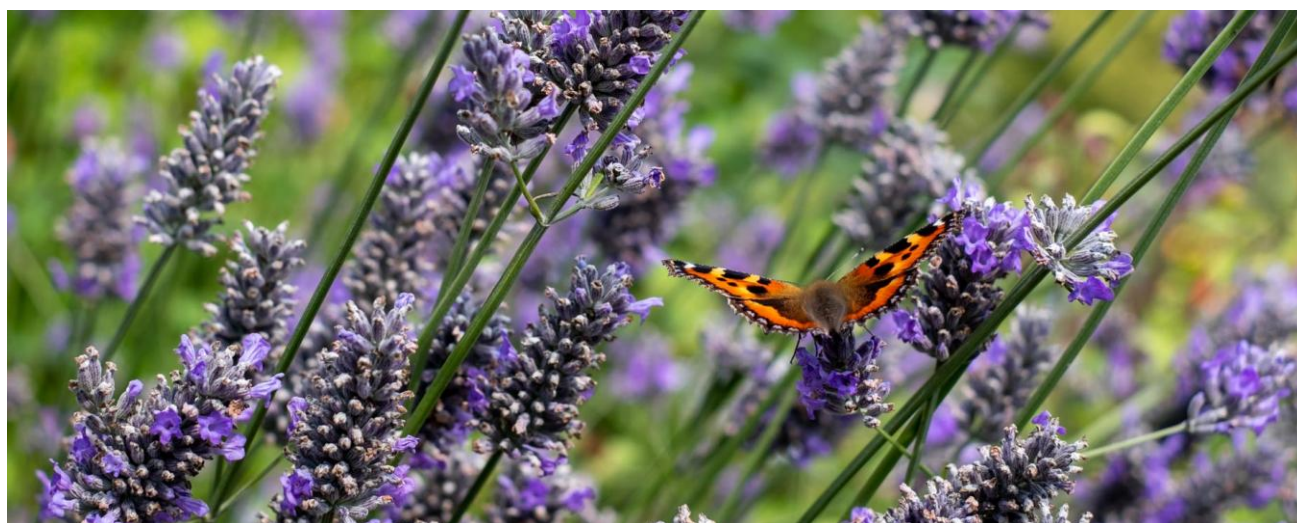
## What will WHQS mean for residents outside spaces?

With the new WHQS standard, **where possible**, homes should have a suitable garden or safe outside space which is pleasant and easy-to-maintain and should include:

- A level space 10m<sup>2</sup> in size to reduce trip hazards
- Paved access to a gate, drying line and shed
- External store for cycles and equipment

### There should also be:

- Safe community spaces for members of the community, particularly children and young people, including areas for outdoor exercise, benches to enjoy fresh air, communal growing spaces where practicable etc
- Biodiversity opportunities, for example:
  - Managing areas that already provide good habitats for pollinators, for example flowering hedgerows and meadows; patches of wildflowers; areas of bramble or ivy
  - Planting pollinator friendly plants and hedgerows
  - Encouraging wildflowers and pollinator friendly plants by reducing mowing and collecting grass clippings
  - Locally sourced trees, plants and flowers from native stock
  - Taking action to remove or manage invasive/non-native species
  - Reducing dependence on chemical pesticides
  - Ensuring exterior lighting is not detrimental to biodiversity
  - Creating hedgehog highways
  - Using peat free compost
  - Installing bat and bird boxes



## **What is a compliance statement?**

Beacon is accountable to residents, Board & Welsh Government when it comes to complying with the standard. This means providing residents with information about their home or a compliance statement to confirm where it is in relation to the standard. We will report annually to residents, Board & Welsh Government on how we are performing

## **What happens next and how do residents find out more?**

Each home is unique and will require individual tailored changes to meet the WHQS standard. You will be contacted directly when we need to survey your home and once work has been identified and agreed, we will discuss timescales and choices with you. There is a considerable amount of work to be done to survey homes, identify what is required and programme when work will take place across all properties.

Welsh Government recognises that to foster pride, belonging and ownership, residents should be encouraged to take opportunities to be involved in making any decisions that affect their community and environment.

Beacon will work closely with you and keep you informed throughout the whole process.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for residents with disabilities or special requirements.

Training on any new equipment installed will be provided and we will check that you are satisfied with the work carried out on your home.



**For more Welsh Government WHQS information please visit:**

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-05/welsh-housing-quality-standard-easy-read.pdf>