

beacon



Frequently asked questions about WHQS

www.beacon.cymru





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 residents?

Landlords have a responsibility to ensure that the homes they 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 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 8 elements that state that 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 some elements for various reasons.

What are the timescales for WHQS?

Welsh Government has set timescales for landlords to meet:

DEADLINE	LANDLORD OBJECTIVES
MARCH 2025	We should have finalised our WHQS compliance policy; assessed the condition of our stock and identified the work necessary to meet the standards; completed tenant engagement on our programme; estimated the investment needed; and reported our Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) scores to WG.
APRIL 2026	There will be an external audit on WHQS.
MARCH 2027	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 tenant).
MARCH 2030	We must have achieved a minimum of EPC – C and SAP 75 on all our 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 measure the energy rating of a home, gives a score and informs the EPC.
MARCH 2034	We must confirm that all our housing stock meets the standard.

What are the benefits of WHQS?

The changes we make to your home will be in your best interest and you will benefit from having:

- More comfort
- Improved standards
- Affordable warmth
- Reduced bills*
- Better quality of life
- Increased safety and security



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 less than 16 years old unless 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 have a bath and shower and be less than 26 years old unless 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, but 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 WHQS23 keep residents safe?

The WHS23 standards aim to keep you safe in your home by ensuring you have:

- Secure doors compliant with the official police security initiative ‘Secured by Design’ which helps prevent crime
- Easily accessible windows will have lockable hardware or opening restrictor for child safety)
- Safe staircases and balustrades to reduce the risk of accidents
- Fire safety, alarms and means of escape
- Gas safety inspections
- 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 5 years
- 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 WHQS23 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 10m² 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. Tenants should be consulted in the design and maintenance of such areas.
- 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 sourcing 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?

Social landlords are accountable to tenants, their Board & Welsh Government when it comes to complying with the standard. This means providing tenants with a certificate or compliance statement to confirm it meets the standard. The certificate or statement will tell you what we are going to do and when we will fix any gaps in compliance. We will report annually to tenants, Board & WG on how we are doing.

What happens next and how do residents find out more?

Each home is unique and will require individual tailored changes to meet the WHQS23 standard. Your landlord will contact you directly to let you know what works will be undertaken, when and by who and will discuss timescales and choices with you too.

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

Staff 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 your landlord will check that you are satisfied with the work carried out on your home.

