



Newport City Homes

WHQS Compliance Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy sets out our interpretation of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and how our compliance with the Standard is monitored and verified.
- 1.2 Welsh Government requires this policy to be approved by Board. The ongoing review and revision of the policy will be undertaken in accordance with our policy review approach.
- 1.3 This policy is supported by Newport City Homes' WHQS Compliance Statement. This provides detail on the processes associated with assessing and reporting WHQS compliance.

2 Interpretation of WHQS

- 2.1 NCH interprets the WHQS in accordance with the guidance published by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2008 (Housemark Cymru, 2008). This guidance is supplemented by Newport City Homes (NCH) stock condition survey form guidance notes.
- 2.2 In accordance with Welsh Government guidance failure of an element to meet the WHQS may be accepted in the following situations:
 - a. *Cost of remedy* - Where the cost of making an improvement to comply fully with the Standard is disproportionate to the benefit it would achieve, an element may be deemed an acceptable fail on the basis of cost of remedy. The assessment is a matter of judgement and must be made on a case by case basis. The reason for the assessment must be recorded against the element in the asset management system. This acceptable fail does not apply to works required to assure health and safety.
 - b. *Timing of remedy* - Where a property is programmed for major reinvestment within five years that incorporates WHQS compliance works, this element may be deemed an acceptable fail on the basis of the timing of remedy. Where works to make an element compliant with WHQS are in a contract that is due within a year, this element may be deemed an acceptable fail on the basis of the timing of remedy. The reason for recording an acceptable fail on the basis of timing of remedy must be clearly recorded against the element in the asset database system.
 - c. *Residents' choice* - Where a resident refuses work to make an element WHQS compliant or where they have requested and agreed a design that

does not comply with WHQS this element may be deemed an acceptable fail on the basis of resident's choice. Details of the resident's choice are:

- (1) Recorded against the element in the asset database system. This acceptable fail does not apply to statutory testing (e.g. of electrical and gas installations). Statutory testing must be carried out and NCH will take legal proceedings to enforce this as necessary. NCH will undertake all outstanding WHQS works at the end of the tenancy.
- d. *Physical Constraint* - Where the layout, topography or construction of a property means it is not feasible to make an element comply fully with WHQS this element may be deemed an acceptable fail on the basis of physical constraint. The reason for the assessment must be recorded against the element in the asset management system. This acceptable fail does not apply to works required to assure health and safety.

3 WHQS Progress Monitoring and Reporting

- 3.1 NCH will report to the Welsh Government on WHQS compliance annually. The report will include the numbers and percentages of properties complying with WHQS by element. The report to Welsh Government will also include the number of acceptable fails sorted by criteria. The report will be in the format prescribed by the Welsh Government.
- 3.2 The WHQS compliance results will be reported annually to engaged residents' through the Quality Improvement Panel (QIP).
- 3.3 WHQS compliance results will be published annually on the NCH website.
- 3.4 NCH will report to the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) on WHQS compliance annually. The report will include the numbers and percentages of properties complying with WHQS by element and the number of acceptable fails sorted by criteria.
- 3.5 The report will include a summary of investment works undertaken during the year and projections for WHQS compliance for future years.
- 3.6 NCH will provide a WHQS Compliance Certificate to all new residents on the commencement of their tenancy.

4. Verification of WHQS Compliance

- 4.1 NCH will maintain an up-to-date asset database containing reliable stock condition data on all of our stock. The database will be maintained through an annual rolling programme of stock condition surveys.
- 4.2 Independent validation will be ensured through a stock condition survey undertaken on a rolling programme basis which will include internal and external resources to ensure independence.

5. Risk implications

- 5.1 That independent assessors are unable to verify the reported WHQS Compliance figures. In order to mitigate this risk the Assets team will engage with the assessor at an early stage to ensure there is a common understanding of the interpretation of WHQS and agree the evidence required to substantiate compliance.

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1 Newport City Homes is committed to giving an equal service to all. Any action taken under this policy will comply with current equalities legislation.
- 6.2 Newport City Homes' staff will operate within the Equality and Diversity Policy and meet any specific needs which may arise in respect of ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, the elderly or vulnerable residents.
- 6.3 Newport City Homes will in all reasonable circumstances make information available in a variety of information formats, including:
 - a. large print
 - b. audio tape
 - c. community languages

7. Welsh Language Implications

- 7.1 Newport City Homes recognises the right of people to conduct their business through the medium of Welsh.
- 7.2 Newport City Homes will meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and Welsh Language Standards and offer a choice of using English or Welsh when communicating with Newport City Homes.

8. Resident Participation Implications

- 8.1 The WHQS compliance results will be reported annually to the residents' QIP following submission to the Welsh Government. This will include a summary of the learning points from the previous year. Once the consultation with QIP is complete, the WHQS compliance results will be reported to NCH's Community Voice and #talkabout resident panels

9. Policy monitoring

9.1 This policy will be monitored through the process of WHQS Compliance verification.

10. Links to other relevant policies/documents

10.1 This policy links closely with the following policies and documents:

- a. Contractor and Consultant Procurement Policy
- b. Planned and Cyclical Maintenance Policy
- c. Adaptations Policy

11. Review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with our Policy Review Approach and updated as appropriate.

12. Approvals

Date approved by the Board:	8 th March 2016
Responsible post:	Head of Property Maintenance