

WHQS Compliance Policy.

Policy number: P23

Version number: 1.0

Owner: Head of Asset Strategy & Investment

Approver: Board

Approval date: 26/03/2025

Review period: Annually

Next review date: 31/03/2026

Any printed or downloaded copies of this document are not controlled.

This document can be made available in Welsh, other languages, and formats on request.

1.0 Introduction

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 (WHQS23) ensures that social housing in Wales meets modern standards for quality, safety, and sustainability.

This policy confirms Newport City Homes' interpretation and approach to the revised standard, and how it is met, monitored and verified.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all activities undertaken by Newport City Homes in relation to its domestic rented properties.

This policy applies to all colleagues involved in activities relating to meeting and maintaining the Standard.

3.0 Key definitions

Term	Definition
Target Energy Pathway (TEP)	Measures that can lead to the decarbonisation of an individual dwelling
Whole Stock Assessment (WSA)	Review of stock condition and energy efficiency data, software and data analytical skills to gain and develop a sufficient understanding of housing stock.
Welsh Design Quality Requirements (WDQR21)	The minimum functional quality standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes.
Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	A risk-based tool to assess 29 housing hazards and the effect each may have on the health and safety of customers.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Newport City Homes Board	Overall accountability for ensuring that Newport City Homes meets its legal obligations and is compliant with WHQS23.
Executive Director of Operations	Overall responsibility for ensuring the policy is effectively implemented at a strategic level across Newport City Homes.

Role	Responsibility
Director of Property & Place	Accountability for ensuring that the policy is effectively implemented, remains relevant, up to date and made available to its intended stakeholders.
Head of Asset Strategy & Investment	Overall responsibility for ensuring the policy is effectively implemented and remains relevant, up to date and made available to its intended stakeholders. This includes monitoring, review and ensuring delivery of stated training is provided.

5.0 Approach and interpretation

Newport City Homes has taken a proportionate and pragmatic approach to its decision making in order to meet all elements of WHQS23 within its financial capacity, reflecting local circumstances and resources.

The association will continue to monitor decisions and guidance issued by Welsh Government that will impact on our interpretation and implementation of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, acting upon changes as are reasonable and practicable to do so within the resources of the approved business plan

5.1 Homes must be in a good state of repair

Newport City Homes properties will be structurally stable and free from disrepair, ensuring that repairs are completed in a timely manner and meets customers needs.

Embracing a holistic approach, colleagues across all teams will report back any repairs noted whilst in our properties, inspect all reports of damp, and keep customers informed.

This alongside our rolling stock condition survey programme ensures the integrity of our homes.

5.2 Homes must be safe and secure

Newport City Homes will comply with legal, statutory and regulatory standards for homes to be safe and secure.

All new windows and doors will meet Secure by Design standards, and staircases and balustrades will meet HHSRS standards, so homes are safe in the event of a fire with adequate escape routes.

Gas, oil-fired or solid fuel burning combustion appliances and installations will be annually certified as safe by an appropriately qualified person.

5.3 Homes must be affordable to heat and have minimal environmental impact

Newport City Homes ensures through a robust planned programme that all properties have up to date energy efficient and programmable heating systems to ensure homes must be affordable to heat and have minimal environmental impact.

TEPs will be created as part of WSAs and programmes configured to meet Welsh Government objectives and align with the Business Plan. We will endeavour to achieve minimal carbon emissions to our homes (minimum of EIR 92) as an average across our stock, risk assessing those which by exception will not meet the standard, by following the TEPs.

For our homes that don't meet minimal carbon targets, the majority are very old, hard to treat. Our intention is to investigate further the potential to improve these properties, however a cost benefit analysis will be conducted.

Water butts are installed where appropriate and at customer request if suitable. All plumbing fittings will comply with The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 with specific reference to Regulation 4 and smart meters will be fitted on change of tenancy.

Homes will have adequate ventilation and if identified as missing, new systems will be installed.

5.4 Homes must have an up to date kitchen and utility area

Newport City Homes ensures kitchens are in good condition and have adequate space for appliances. They're well organised and contain sufficient work surfaces and general storage. Adequate space for local recycling requirements is considered at installation with sufficiently located power sockets also installed. Suitable flooring is provided on new tenancy or kitchen install with adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes provided. Washing lines are provided at change of tenancy where practical, or energy efficient tumble dryers gifted to customers.

5.5 Homes must have an up to date bathroom

Bathrooms will be in good condition with suitable flooring provided on new tenancy or new bathroom install. Bathrooms will be suitable for customers' needs and contain a shower and bath unless there physical constrained.

5.6 Homes must be comfortable and promote wellbeing

Newport City Homes' properties have sufficient space for everyday living. At change of tenancy, all habitable rooms are fitted with suitable floor coverings as part of our Void Standard. Exposure to noise is minimised, but should an issue be identified or reported, we will address it.

5.7 Homes must have a suitable garden

The stock condition survey includes a survey of the garden any issues identified during the survey or other site visits are reported are addressed. Should a garden require major works or is identified as being unsafe, the area is secured to ensure safety until the necessary works are completed.

5.8 Homes must have an attractive and practical outside space

Newport City Homes has a process for the identification and installation of external cycle storage where it is viable and meets the needs and requirements of the local community. We will provide external sheds to customers if one was not provided at the start of the tenancy or provided by us during the tenancy on request. We will maintain external storage areas where they form part of the originally constructed building

6.0 Independent verification

Newport City Homes maintains a database containing reliable stock condition data on all of our properties. The database will be updated through an annual rolling programme of stock condition surveys, with each survey validated by a senior surveyor to ensure consistency and quality.

Monthly reporting and verification is undertaken to check quality assurance with additional sampled quality checks conducted and checks against other related systems to ensure attributes are consistent across Newport City Homes.

7.0 Compliance statement for new residents

Newport City Homes provides a 'WHQS Compliance Certificate' to all new customers and at the point of re-letting. The certificate includes the purpose of the Standard, when or if the property complies, as well as any areas yet to meet the Standard. An example can be found in '**Appendix A**'.

8.0 Elements not measured

A number of elements in WHQS23 are not formally measured. However, Newport City Homes will ensure these areas are considered and progressed.

8.1 Whole Stock Assessments and Target Energy Pathways

Whole Stock Assessment are produced through a rolling programme of surveys to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is held on our properties. Subsequently, TEPs will be generated over time for each home.

8.2 Homes should suit specific requirements of the household

The individual needs of customers are assessed and met as far as practicable. When we are made aware of changing needs during a tenancy, we will work with customers to adapt their properties where practical, or explore alternative accommodation if necessary and available.

8.3 Disabled and older people's housing requirements

Newport City Homes has a variety of housing options to meet the needs of older and disabled residents, including 55+ schemes, adapted bungalows and minor and major adaptations provided to our customers who need them the most.

8.4 Attractive outside spaces and biodiversity

Newport City Homes has an Environmental Sustainability Strategic Commitment which is our strategic response to the climate emergency. We own and maintain community spaces that are adequate, practical and safe in accordance with our 'Estates Management Plan', which includes improving biodiversity.

8.5 Broadband and digital connectivity

Newport City Homes will work to gain an understanding of the level of fixed broadband connectivity across a representative sample of its existing homes and new build properties.

9.0 Cost prohibitive activity

Cost prohibitive is where the costs associated with an activity are high and would not deliver value for money for Newport City Homes and its customers. The association will determine cost prohibitive activity as TEPs are produced and through improved data on external areas where costs of levelling gardens are often prohibitive.

10.0 Target Energy Pathways

A Target Energy Pathway (TEP) identifies measures that can lead to the decarbonisation of an individual property so that it can be heated by a low carbon heating system at an affordable cost.

Newport City Homes will produce initial TEPs, informed by Whole Stock Assessments (WSA), to identify decarbonisation measures and the sequence in which they will be undertaken based on our data, programmes and current understanding of our properties.

Our approach is an iterative process and will continue to be modified and refined as new technologies, sources of finance and resources make pathways possible that may have been previously considered unfeasible.

Newport City Homes will utilise a dedicated asset management and intelligent energy software to support the development of WSA and TEPs. Assessing and improving data quality is an iterative process and where Newport City Homes identifies improvements. Improvements will be included in our existing Data Quality Improvement Plan. We will continually cleanse and update property data to use the most accurate information available.

Newport City Homes' approach to significant archetype of property for individual TEPs is outlined below:

- **Flats/Bedsits:** Whole building approach looking at renewable and sustainable heating and examining building fabrics.
- **House/Bungalow:** Fabric first approach, this is followed by looking at renewable technologies. Heating systems will be replaced at end of life, by alternative heating systems.
- **Terrace House:** Fabric first approach, however, this could be a bespoke combination of EWI/IWI, depending on curb side status. This is followed by looking at renewable technologies. Heating systems will be replaced at end of life, by alternative heating systems.

As part of planned programmes and decarbonisation projects, properties are being improved to reach SAP 75 and where possible with current technologies SAP 92. A number of properties may not reach these standards until new technology become available.

11.0 Redevelopment, demolition and carbon

Newport City Homes will consider carbon consequences and will evaluate options prior to any decisions being taken as to dispose, demolish or fully refurbish homes.

Any properties built to WDQR21 go through a technical scrutiny process whereby best practice for decarbonisation is adopted.

12.0 Community benefits

Newport City Homes ensures that formal Community Benefit clauses are included in contracts. The type and level of community benefit investment required will vary depending on the type, duration and value.

13.0 Monitoring and review

The owner of this policy is responsible for ensuring the policy remains relevant, up to date and accessible to its intended audience. This policy is approved by Board and will be reviewed **annually**.

14.0 Engagement statement

Newport City Homes is committed to ensuring customers take an active role in decision making and shaping services. This policy has been developed with consideration of customer feedback and insight.

Our Scrutiny Partnership enhanced their focus on WHQS23 as a priority area for 2024/25. The Partnership supports with views, feedback and their level of assurance that the customer voice is embedded.

The draft policy was presented to our Scrutiny Partnership with feedback incorporated into the final draft of the policy. Newport City Homes will continue to consider and take into account the views of residents through various mechanisms such as formal groups, surveys as well as complaints, compliments and business intelligence.

15.0 Equity, diversity & inclusion and data protection

This policy is subject to an ongoing assessment of impact on service delivery to enable us to continue to evolve to meet the needs of all residents and colleagues.

This policy is written in accordance with Newport City Homes Data Protection Policy and complies with data protection legislation.

Appendix A: Compliance Statement Example

We're pleased to let you know that your home at [Address] meets the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) 2023**.

What This Means for You

Your home meets Welsh Government standards of safety, comfort, energy-efficiency, and is well-maintained.

Your home has been checked to make sure it meets the eight **key WHQS standards**:

☒ **Good Condition** – Your home is well-maintained and in great shape. Your home is safe, warm and affordable and we will deliver a reliable repairs service at an affordable rent.

☒ **Safe & Secure** – All necessary safety measures are in place. Your home meets all health and safety requirements.

☒ **Energy Efficient** – Your home is warm, cost-effective to heat, and eco-friendly. We will improve the energy efficiency of our homes and work with you to reduce your energy costs.

☒ **Modern Kitchen** – Designed to meet your everyday needs. Nothing in the promise specific to this but how about 'A kitchen that is designed and equipped to meet your everyday needs'

☒ **Modern Bathroom** – Up-to-date and comfortable. Again nothing specific from the promise but I suggest – 'A bathroom designed and equipped to meet your everyday needs'

☒ **Comfortable Living** – A home that suits you and your lifestyle. We will make the best use of the homes we manage, ensuring our properties meet individual household need

☒ **Outdoor Space** – Wherever possible, nice outside space is provided, e.g. a garden if possible.

☒ **Well-Maintained Surroundings** – Pleasant and practical outdoor areas. Our neighbourhoods and estates will be well-maintained and attractive places to live.

We're committed to providing high-quality homes so you can live comfortably and securely.

Further information on WHQS23 can be found on the Welsh Government Website <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-overview>.

In some cases, there may be reasons where aspects of your home can't fully meet the standards. For example, you may live in a flat which doesn't have any drying facilities. In this instance we would look at providing a tumble dryer or washer dryer to resolve the issue.

We will always look for alternative solutions to make sure the home is as safe comfortable and well maintained as possible.

Welsh Government categorises such examples in two ways:

- **Conditional Passes** – These apply when work **cannot be completed** due to heritage considerations or physical limitations. The home meets the **WHQS standard**, but we continually review these cases to find solutions. Conditional passes for this property include:

[Specific elements & reasons listed]

- **Temporary Fails** – These occur when **external factors** prevent the home from meeting WHQS, such as:

[Specific elements & reasons listed]

What is next?

We aim to find a solution for all **conditional passes and temporary fails**, with a plan and timeline put in place for all homes impacted **and we** will keep you informed of our progress.

Where elements are partially compliant, works will be planned as part of asset investment planning cycle, with the aim that the property is fully compliant for all elements applicable to the property by the 31 March 2035.

If you have any questions – here is how you can contact us

 **Email:** [Insert contact email]

 **Call us:** [Insert phone number]

 **Visit:** [Insert website]