

Decent homes

Introduction

The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) is a measure of general housing conditions introduced by the government in 2000. Although private landlords are not directly required to take any action to bring their properties up to this standard, it has had a major impact on our approach to the private rented sector and, therefore, will have a significant indirect effect on landlords. The private rented sector currently has the lowest percentage of decent homes of all sectors.

Standards

A decent home is one that meets all of the following four criteria.

1. It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing. The property must be free of all Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
2. It is in a reasonable state of repair.

It would fail this if:

- one or more key building components were old and because of their condition needed replacing or major repair
- two or more other building components were old and because of their condition needed replacing or major repair.

3. It has reasonably modern facilities and services.

It would fail here if it lacked three or more of the following facilities:

- a kitchen which is 20 years old or less
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout
- a bathroom which is 30 years old or less
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC
- adequate external noise insulation
- adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats
- a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

4. The property must have both efficient heating and effective insulation.

Rented property

Social landlords

Social landlords, for example Housing Associations, have a duty to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2012. If the property does not meet the standard your landlord will be able to tell you when works are programmed for your home.

Private landlords

Private landlords do not have a duty to meet the Decent Homes Standard. However, they do have a duty to ensure that homes they let are in reasonable repair. We are able to give assistance to help landlords meet Decent Homes Standard, see below. If there are hazards in the property, please refer to our 'Housing health and safety rating system' leaflet, and if your landlord will not carry out the necessary works, we can work with you and your landlords on the standards which must be met and how to meet them. Where necessary, we can take enforcement action against the landlord.

Assistance to meet the standard

To meet the Decent Homes Standard, resources will continue to be targeted at vulnerable households, or to landlords who provide accommodation for them. Financial assistance is often only being made available to these groups, or they will receive enhanced levels of assistance.

A number of programmes have been established to encourage the private sector to meet the standard:

the **Housing Renewal Assistance Policy** (HRAP) provides grants and loans for those in the private sector, is targeted at the vulnerable through repair assistance and landlords' repair assistance.

the **Carbon Emissions Reduction Target** (CERTS), whereby electricity and gas suppliers provide financial assistance to domestic consumers to install energy efficiency measures, provides a significant proportion of its assistance to vulnerable consumers. Information about this can be found through the Energy Saving Trust www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

the **Warm Front Scheme** (WFS) provides grants for insulation and heating improvements, including central heating systems for vulnerable households in the private rented and owner occupied sectors.

Contact details

Contact Wiltshire Council Customer Services on **0300 456 0100** and ask for Private Sector Housing.