

Empty Homes Initiative



FUNDING ASSISTANCE DESIGN STANDARDS

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The Council is committed to continuing to help empty homes owners bring their properties in need of repair back into use, where they will be let out or reoccupied. It is therefore essential that these properties be in a good state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities, provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, and be free from Hazards which are likely to affect the people living in or visiting the property.

These 'Hazards' are set out under Part One – Health and Safety Rating System under the Housing Act 2004, and the guidelines outlined in the Government's "Decent Home Standard".

This document therefore is a list of **minimum** standards where applicable, which need to be met to ensure your property meets the standards mentioned above, when applying for empty homes grants and loans. In addition to the standards all building components must meet a minimum 5-year working life.

GENERAL

- The property on completion must be in sound condition, and good/clean decorative order
- Gas, electricity and water supplies must be connected
- Heating systems must be in working order at the time of inspection
- The property must be free from severe cracking, bowing, settlement or subsidence.
- All snagging works must have taken place before a final inspection is arranged

1. EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

- 1.1 Roofs to be watertight, safe, sound and in good repair.
- 1.2 Chimneystacks and walling above roof level should be safe and secure and in a condition to prevent damp penetration.
- 1.3 Rainwater goods should be watertight, secure, and effective and discharging freely, gutters should be cleared where necessary.
- 1.4 Drain gullies and pipes must be free of blockages and operating as intended.
- 1.5 Brickwork pointings, renderings and stonework must be stable, safe and sound, and in a condition to prevent damp penetration.
- 1.6 Airbricks must be clear and in good repair to prevent ingress by vermin.
- 1.7 Where the damp proof course is bridged, remedial measures should be taken if necessary to prevent damp penetration.
- 1.8 External joinery and stonework must be painted unless the existing finish is satisfactory.
- 1.9 Loose cables/aerials must either be securely fixed or removed.
- 1.10 The overall visual appearance of the property should blend-in with adjoining

2. INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT

- 2.1 Kitchens must be entered off the hall, and not from another room unless the kitchen is combined with a living/dining room.
- 2.2 There must be a door between kitchens and hallways.
- 2.3 Rooms without natural light/ventilation are not acceptable as habitable rooms.

3. KITCHENS

Depending on the size of the new or refurbished kitchen, Kitchens should have a minimum of

- 1 no. 3 drawer base unit
 - 3 no. drawer line base units
 - 1 no. sink base unit
 - 3 no. wall units
- 3.1 2600mm impervious work surface where including for inset sink top, otherwise to provide on completion a minimum 2000mm work surface.
 - 3.2 Good quality inset sink top and drainer or suitable alternative complete with good quality monobloc lever tap
 - 3.3 There must be worktop at least one and preferably both sides of the cooker space
 - 3.4 Space and dedicated power point for a fridge /freezer

- 3.5.1 A 610mm wide space with worktop over or other suitably located space, for washing machine connection, along with a suitable cold water feed and adequate drainage.
- 3.6
- 3.6 Glazed tiling minimum 2 courses high must be provided above all worktops and sink and extend onto adjacent window cills and reveals. Tiles to be properly grouted.
- .3.7 A neat white silicone mastic seal must be provided between all worktop tile and window abutments.
- .3.8 Base unit plinths must be securely fixed.
- .3.9 There must be a 605mm space with purpose gas and electrical fittings for cooker connection or an inset hob.
- 3.10 Gas cooker point must terminate with a back elbow type bayonet fitting rigidly fixed and pointing down.
- 3.11 Electric cooker point must terminate in a cooker outlet plate controlled by a cooker control panel sited above an adjacent worktop and having a socket outlet (if new).
- 3.12 Kitchens must have a minimum 3no double socket outlets, cooker outlet plate or cooker control panel with socket outlet, connection units supplying boiler if applicable, socket for fridge freezer, switch operated socket for washing machine connection
- 3.13 Light switch operated extractor fans must be installed in both kitchens and bathrooms.

5. WATER

Cold water supply used for drinking and food preparation should come directly from the rising mains or private supply that is wholesome.

- 5.1 The property must have an independent water main - in any case the stopcock must be easily accessible. Newly installed supplies must be 25mm diameter.
- 5.2 Cold water storage tank, if present must be clean internally and covered with a lid
- 5.3 Loft pipe work and tank top and sides must be insulated.

6. GAS

The installation should be, as a minimum, tested annually to ensure there are no leaks or other defects; a competent person must do this (i.e. a registered engineer on the Gas Safe Register).

- 6.1 Property must have an independent gas supply
- 6.2 Gas valve on/off handle must be fitted
- 6.3 If meter is in an external box then the key must be available for the new occupant
- 6.4 Gas installation must be deemed safe by a Gas Safety Register registered contractor and a CP12 Landlords safety record issued annually

7. ELECTRICAL

- 7.1 Property must have an independent electricity supply.

- 7.2 Installation must be inspected and tested and deemed to be safe and satisfactory by a competent electrical installer. The following organisations register businesses that may be competent to carry out this work:

British Standards Institution BSi
ELECSA Ltd
Electrical Contractors Association
NICEIC Group Ltd
NAPIT Registration Ltd
SELECT

Before selecting a contractor you should check that the business you are using is approved and registered for undertaking periodic inspection and reporting work. Please refer to The Electrical Safety Council's guide <http://www.esc.org.uk/> for finding a competent electrical installer for further details.

- 7.3 Doorbell and /or door entry systems must be provided, as applicable.
- 7.4 Light bulbs must be fitted and working throughout
- 7.5 If the property is being rewired the following minimum amount of fittings need to be provided:
- Ceiling rose and pendant in all rooms controlled by light switch,
 - 2 ceiling rose and pendants will be required in through and large rooms in excess of 20m²
 - 2no switched double socket outlets in all bedrooms 3no in living and dining rooms.
- 7.6 Hall lighting - light switching must be 2way.

8. SPACE AND HOT WATER HEATING

- 8.1 Both hot water and space heating should be provided, where practicable, via gas central heating. Where installations are new a condensing boiler must be fitted. Heating system must be controllable by the occupants, safely and properly installed and maintained.

The property should be provided with efficient heating capable of maintaining a temperature of 21 °C in the living room and 18 °C in the hallway, bathroom, bedrooms, and kitchen when the external temperature is minus 1 °C.

- 8.2 Boiler fitted with integral programmer and heating controlled via wall mounted thermostat, and/or preferably thermostatic radiator valves.
- 8.3 Access to the filling loop for the heating system must be accessible within a cupboard or readily accessible loft space.
- 8.4 Boilers must not be sited in a bathroom.
- 8.5 Boilers should be sited in the kitchen where possible, if sited elsewhere they must be fully enclosed in a well built ventilated lockable cupboard
- 8.6 Existing boiler, hot water and space heating system must be serviced by a [Gas Safety Register engineer](#) annually and service record provided
- 8.7 Existing radiators and pipe work must be securely fitted
- 8.8 Gas fires and heaters are not acceptable and must be removed and the underlying area made good

9. WASTE WATER AND SOIL PIPEWORK

Must be watertight, sound and securely fixed in place, Perforations made in the course of fitting must be neatly made good,

10. DRY ROT

If dry rot is present then all necessary work must be undertaken to kill it, repair all affected areas and prevent a recurrence. All work to be carried out by a competent contractor and an insurance backed guarantee provided.

11. DAMP

If found work must be undertaken to, renew detrimentally affected materials and prevent the damp recurring.

12. BEETLE INFESTATION

If affected the woodwork must be renewed, and treatment undertaken if necessary to kill the infestation and prevent its recurrence. All work to be carried out by a competent contractor and an insurance backed guarantee provided

13. CONDENSATION

All black mould must be removed using a proprietary product and areas treated with appropriate mould inhibitors and redecorated as necessary to reduce the likelihood of its recurrence. The cause of the condensation mould to be determined and any other works necessary to prevent recurrence undertaken.

14. LOFTS

14.1 Loft insulation to be provided to a minimum depth of 270mm

15. BATHROOMS

New installations

- 15.1 Suites preferably all white, with pressed steel baths, close coupled dual flush WC cistern, WC pan, and a pedestal type wash hand basin.
- 15.2 White hardboard or plastic bath panel attached to framing either with equally spaced CP dome-headed screws, corners formed with preformed plastic angle strip, each angle attached with 3no screws or if plastic clipped into position.
- 15.3 WC to be fitted with a White heavy-duty plastic WC seat with flap
- 15.4 WC to have integral internal overflows
- 15.5 Toilet roll holder, and towel rail.
- 15.6 A bevel edged mirror above the wash hand basin attached with purpose fixings
- 15.7 Bath taps to be CP shower/mixer type or independent bath taps, bracket fixed at low level, basin taps to match bath taps

- 15.8 White glazed tiling minimum 2 courses high to wash hand basin abutment walls, and full height to bath abutment walls, tiles must be bedded on waterproof adhesive and pointed in waterproof grout.
- 15.9 A neat white concave silicone mastic seal must be provided between all tile abutments, - (bath filled before mastic seal applied)
- 15.10 Light switch operated extractor fans must be installed in bathrooms
- 15.11 Bathroom door to be fitted with suitable bathroom locks (locks with keys are not acceptable)
- 15.12 All windows to be fitted with obscure glazing

Existing Installations

- 15.10 Existing sanitary ware must be clean sound, undamaged and sturdy, taps working properly, not dripping.
- 15.11 Plugs and chains fitted, toilet seats and clean and secure, bath panels rigidly fitted.
- 15.12 Sharp edges, screw heads and the like must be appropriately removed.
- 15.13 Brief items 15.5 – 15.9 as per new bathrooms to apply.

16. CEILINGS

- 16.1 Must all be sound and secure.
- 16.2 Cracked lath and plaster ceilings are notorious for collapse without warning and special attention must be paid to check the stability of lath and plaster ceilings.
- 16.3 All polystyrene ceiling tiles must be removed and ceilings repaired and skim plastered
- 16.4 Paper on ceilings, must be firmly stuck to the ceiling
- 16.5 Existing ceilings below existing flats that are above shops must be at least 1 hour fire resisting.

17. WALLS AND PARTITIONS

- 17.1 Must all be sound and secure and fit for their purpose.
- 17.2 Cracks, holes and other defects, filled and left ready for decoration
- 17.3 Paper on walls and partitions must be firmly stuck to the wall or partition.

18. WINDOWS

- 18.1 Must be sound, and complete with all the ironmongery originally fitted
- 18.2 Must operate properly
- 18.3 Must have defect free glazing, missing fore and back putties replaced

- 18.4 Above ground level must be fitted with purpose "Disarmable" restrictors to prevent sash openings beyond 100mm
- 18.5 Every habitable room must have at least 1 opening window, the opening large enough to allow an adult to pass through in case of fire.
- 18.6 Bathroom glazing must be obscure
- 18.7 All window glazing 800mm or less above floor level must be glazed with Safety Glass
- 18.8 Ground floor windows should be lockable,
- 18.9 Windows must be fitted with window boards/tiled cills internally, (MDF not acceptable) Exposed edges must be rounded.
- 18.10 Balconies landings parapets and basements to be properly guarded. Any openings in guarding to be no greater than 100mm and guarding to be not easily climbed by children and in good repair

19.1 DOORS, INTERNAL

- 19.1 Matching doors must be provided to all rooms. Kitchen cabinets and units should be fitted with matching doors and fronts
- 19.2 Must operate freely on their hinges, and shut easily and securely.
- 19.3 All ironmongery must have all screw fixings.
- 19.4 Lever latch furniture to be fitted throughout. Matching "Privacy" type lever latch to Bathrooms and Cloakrooms.
- 19.5 New kitchen doors must be fire resisting.
- 19.6 Individual replacement doors should match
- 19.7 Damaged frames and linings must be soundly repaired
- 19.8 Door glazing 1500mm or less above floor level must be safety glazing
- 19.9 Any glazing or part of that glazing, which is within 300mm of either side of a door edge and which is between the finished floor level and a height of 1500mm above the floor level must be safety glazing.

20. DOORS, EXTERNAL

- 20.1 Must operate freely on their hinges, and shut easily and securely and must be of an external specification.
- 20.2 All ironmongery must have all screw fixings.
- 20.3 Doors must be fitted with the following:
 - Door numerals
 - Letter plate
 - Cylinder rim night latch with latch pull

- Mortice deadlock with escutcheons, preferably large plate type

20.4 Damaged frames and linings must be soundly repaired

20.5 Door glazing 800mm or less above floor level must be safety glazing

21. SKIRTING BOARDS AND ARCHITRAVING

Must be secure, matching, and fitted throughout

22. FIREPLACES

22.1 Fireplaces must be clean if left in place, or their openings neatly panelled/boxed over and vented

22.2 Stone hearths made good and flush with the floor.

22.3 Alternatively fireplaces can be removed and their openings filled and vented to match room design and detail. Stone hearths made good and flush with the floor.

22.4 Damaged fireplaces must be replaced or removed and their openings filled and vented to match room design

22.5 Stone hearths made good and flush with the floor.

23. STAIRCASES

23.1 Steps to be even and in good repair. Must be sturdy, secure and sound and adequately lit

23.2 Must be strengthened or repaired as necessary to prevent unreasonable creaking or movement.

23.3 Must be properly fitted with at least 1 handrail per flight

23.4 Balustrading should be solid, but if ornate, it must be adapted so that there is no gap large enough to allow a 100mm sphere to pass through

23.5 Open-plan staircases are not acceptable due to the risks posed to child safety

23.6 Coverings especially on staircases and landings where carpeted are to be securely fitted, free from trip hazards, protruding nails, and screws.

23.7 Adequate lighting and suitably located light switches are to be positioned on landings at the top and bottom of all staircases.

23.8 Riser and tread heights and widths should not present a hazard nor vary up the staircase.

24. FLOORS, TIMBER

24.1 Must be sound, and firm, without any projecting nail and screw heads and without excessive gaps or holes

24.2 Broken boards must be replaced

24.3 All board ends must be supported and fixed

25. FLOORS, SOLID

- 25.1 Must not be damp
- 25.2 Must be reasonably level
- 25.3 Holes, depressions, and the like must be repaired and left flush
- 25.4 Surfaces must be smooth enough to take a vinyl floor covering, without affecting the vinyl's top surface appearance

26. FIRE SAFETY

- 26.1 Dwelling design, construction and condition should limit the chances of fire spread.
- 26.2 At least 1 British Standard Approved Smoke Detector must be provided and suitably located on the ceiling of **each** landing (this means one per storey). Detectors to comply with the requirements of BS5446 Part 1 and have a kitemark.
- 26.3 All detectors to be mains wired with battery back-up and comply with the above **standard.**
- 26.4 All appliances or installations within the property, which could be the cause of a fire, should be checked to ensure they are in good repair and working order.
- 26.5 There should be adequate means of escape in the event that a fire occurs.
- 26.6 A carbon monoxide detector to be fitted near to the gas boiler

27. CURTAIN BATTENS

Must be fitted above windows, and to project beyond windows by 100mm

28. DECORATIONS

- 28.1 Generally all surfaces must be prepared to receive paint or paper as applicable, in accordance with the paint or paper manufacturer's preparation instructions.
- 28.2 Where mould problems have arisen kitchen and Bathroom wall and ceiling surfaces must be painted with a purpose fungicidal paint such as "Steracryl" or similar complying with the manufacturer's instructions for application, health and safety.
- 28.3 All areas apart from kitchens and bathrooms can be painted direct if the surfaces are sound and smooth enough.
- 28.4 If walls or ceilings need lining, a Fungicidal paste must be used to stick the lining paper.
- 28.5 Previously varnished surfaces should be prepared and re-varnished
- 28.6 All woodwork if previously painted must be painted to a gloss finish with oil-based paints

29. FLOOR COVERINGS

- 29.1 Kitchens and Bathrooms Utility Rooms and Cloakrooms, must have professionally fitted quality vinyl, tiled or laminate flooring, colour and design to match the scheme in the particular room and to be appropriate for use in that particular room. All edges sealed with neat silicone mastic joint. Timber floors must first be overlaid with hardboard, gapping kept to a minimum gaps filled flush, nail heads hammered below hardboard surface.
- 29.2 All floor and staircase surfaces must be professionally fitted with a heavy domestic quality carpet and suitable underlay or laminate flooring properly fixed and finished and suitable for purpose..
- 29.3 Entrance halls must be provided with mats
- 29.4 All doors must be checked after fitting of carpets and if necessary eased to allow smooth operation

30. KEYS

Sets of keys to all doors and windows must be provided to the prospective occupants

31. COMMUNAL AREA

- 31.1 Must be carpeted and staircases fitted with nosings
- 31.2 Must be provided with post facilities
- 31.3 Must have a doormat.
- 31.4 All meters and stopcocks must be marked
- 31.5 Door entry phone system if provided must have a marked panel

32. CONVERSIONS/CHANGE OF USE

Notwithstanding the above brief, all work must comply with the Building Regulations, Where there is conflict with this "Design Brief" then the Building Regulations will prevail.

Fire Safety in conversions

Dwelling design, construction and condition should limit the chances of fire spread. All flats and other types of conversions above commercial premises should comply with fire safety standards contained within the relevant Building Regulations for new or converted accommodation, (for conversions after 1985) and the Councils' adopted standards enforced by the Building Control Department of the Council. Conversions should have a minimum 60 minutes (1hour) fire separation between the residential and the commercial parts of the building.

33. GARDENS

- 33.1 Must be cleared of all rubbish debris and waste
- 33.2 Vegetation must be maintained and safe to an extent that the tenant can manage it

- 33.3 Paving must be safe for foot traffic and free of trips greater than 10mm and any identified hazards.
- 33.4 Walls and fences and gates should enclose all perimeters and be safe and sound with a life commensurate with the 5-year grant condition or the social housing providers lease length whichever is the greater.
- 33.5 Asbestos sheds, cupboards and the like must be removed by a licensed contractor unless they are in good condition and clearly marked as containing asbestos.
- 33.6 Sheds and garages must be cleared out and be in a safe and secure condition
- 33.7 Ponds must be drained and filled, or have a pond safety covering. For properties to be leased to Housing Associations ponds must be drained and filled.
- 33.8 Any change in levels which would pose a danger must be guarded or filled as appropriate
- 33.9 All outdoor paths and steps to be even, in good repair and properly drained.

34. DOMESTIC HYGIENE PESTS AND REFUSE

- 34.1 The layout, design and construction of the dwelling should be arranged so that it can be readily kept clean and hygienic.
- 34.2 There should be no access into the dwelling for pests or harbourage left in the garden or property.
- 34.3 There should be adequate and hygienic storage facilities for disposal of household waste. This means providing a readily cleansable impervious refuse bin with a lid. The bin must be of adequate size to store at least one week's refuse.

35. GENERAL

Properties to comply with the Decent Home Standard and be safe.

For more information on empty homes grant contact:

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