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Housing

What you need to know about the new Decent Homes Standard



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Introduction

The government has confirmed a revised [Decent Homes Standard](#), updating minimum standards for rented homes for the first time since 2006. The new standard will apply across both social and private rented housing from 2035, with a long lead-in period intended to allow landlords time to plan, prioritise, and invest.

The new standard includes significant changes as it moves away from age-based measures towards an outcome and condition-based understanding of what decency is in practice. Damp and mould are now made much more explicit through the addition of a standalone criterion that supports wider work on prevention in this area. The expectations around thermal comfort and energy efficiency are strengthened through the integration of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) into Criterion D. Furthermore, the role and interpretation of core facilities, especially kitchens and bathrooms, are clarified. Overall, the standard raises the bar for what is now considered a decent home.

[Government modelling](#) indicates that the updated standard would increase the proportion of homes assessed as non-decent, especially in the short- and medium-term. However, this means the updated standard can help provide a clearer, more transparent baseline for the condition of the country's housing stock, and therefore a more honest picture of the level of investment needed to ensure homes are safe, warm, and fit to live in.

CIH has [consistently](#) supported this shift towards a more preventative, resident-led approach to decency, stressing the importance of aligning the Decent Homes Standard with wider regulation, including Awaab's Law, MEES, consumer regulation, and building safety requirements. The final policy position largely reflects that approach, with the government clear that the Decent Homes Standard is intended to sit alongside existing frameworks rather than duplicate them.

Moving forward, clear, practical, and proportionate guidance will now be essential, especially in complex delivery areas. Guidance will also be important in helping landlords focus first on the most serious risks to residents' health and safety, and in planning improvements that work across decency, energy efficiency, and building safety requirements.

CIH will continue to support our members in understanding and implementing the new duties and will reflect member feedback on any practical challenges in our conversations with government officials.

The new Decent Homes Standard - at a glance

The government has confirmed a modernised Decent Homes Standard (DHS), updating minimum standards for rented homes for the first time in over 20 years. The new standard will apply to both social and private rented homes from 2035, with a long lead-in period designed to facilitate planning and investment.

What is changing?

The updated DHS introduces [five core](#) criteria:

- **Criterion A:** Homes must be free from the most serious health and safety risks, defined as Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- **Criterion B:** Homes must be in a reasonable state of repair, assessed on condition rather than age, with failure triggered where one key building component or two other components are in disrepair.
- **Criterion C:** Homes must provide core facilities and services, including adequate kitchens and bathrooms, with different thresholds for houses and flats, and mandatory child-resistant window restrictors where there is a fall risk.
- **Criterion D:** Homes must provide thermal comfort, including meeting new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).
- **Criterion E:** Homes must be free from damp and mould, with a clearer emphasis on early identification and action, supporting a more preventative approach in practice.

What is not being introduced?

Following consultation, the government has confirmed that the DHS will not include:

- Mandatory floor coverings
- Enhanced home security standards
- Repair obligations for the wider public realm and shared external spaces.

These issues may be addressed through other routes, but they are not part of the final DHS.

How and when will it apply?

- The new DHS will apply from 2035 across both social and private rented housing.
- In social housing, compliance will be overseen through the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) [Safety and Quality Standard](#).
- Plans to achieve the DHS should take account of the Regulator's RSH's expectations under the [Transparency, Influence and Accountability](#) standard by involving tenants in setting these.
- In the private rented sector, enforcement will sit with local authorities, supported by amendments to the Housing Act 2004.
- The government has been clear that landlords should not wait until 2035 to begin planning and prioritising works.

How does this fit against other regulations?

The DHS is intended to work alongside existing regulations, not replace them. In particular:

- Category 1 hazards under HHSRS remain unchanged.
- Awaab's Law introduces clear, enforceable timescales where damp and mould or other serious hazards cause harm. The Decent Homes Standard sits alongside this, with a stronger emphasis on identifying and addressing problems earlier, before they escalate.
- Minimum energy efficiency standards are set out in separate regulations, but they are now clearly linked to the Decent Homes Standard through Criterion D.

What happens next?

The next phase of this work will focus on guidance. This will be critical for explaining how the standard should be interpreted and applied in practice, particularly in more complex situations such as supported housing, temporary accommodation, mixed-tenure buildings, and hard-to-treat homes.

How the Decent Homes Standard fits with wider regulation

The Decent Homes Standard sits alongside existing and developing legal and regulatory requirements, including:

- **Housing Act 2004**, which sets the framework for enforcement where a Category 1 hazard exists in all tenures.
- **Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018**, amending the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, enabling tenants to take landlords to court where homes are unfit, potentially resulting in required repairs and compensation.
- Existing **health and safety requirements**, including gas safety, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, asbestos and legionella management, and in the private rented sector, electrical safety and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.
- **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (Awaab's Law)**, which requires landlords to act on hazards within set timeframes, starting with damp and mould in the social rented sector from October 2025 and extending to other hazards in 2026 and 2027. Awaab's Law will apply to the private rented sector following the introduction of the Renters' Rights Act 2025.



The new Decent Homes Standard

Homes must meet the new DHS by 2035, although there are different milestones for the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES), as detailed below.

Note: Even where the standard remains the same or largely the same as previously, the language has been changed to make the standard more accessible.

The proposals in detail, which homes must meet to be decent:

Criterion A: A home must be free of the most dangerous hazards

Properties fail this criterion if one or more Category 1 hazard is found, under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). It interprets this as a hazard which, if not addressed, is likely to require some medical intervention in a 12-month period, such as a visit to the GP or hospital.

The HHSRS has been reviewed with recommendations for changes to make it more intuitive to come, but this will not change the definition of a Category 1 hazard or the obligations of landlords to act to meet this criterion.

The HHSRS currently has 29 potential health and safety hazards that are classed according to the level of seriousness of risk and likelihood of occurrence in the next 12 months. Bands A to C are a Category 1 hazard; bands D to J are Category 2.

Criterion B: A home must be in a reasonable state of repair

A home will fail if:

- One or more **key** building components are not in a reasonable state of repair, or
- Two or more **other** building components are not in a reasonable state of repair.

Building components include structural features such as roof and wall structure; other external features such as chimneys; internal amenities and services such as kitchens and heating.

It will also extend to other features that support a good quality of life for residents, that, **if present**, must be kept in a reasonable state of repair, such as lifts.

Key components are those that could have an immediate impact on the integrity of the home and negative impacts for residents (roof, walls, windows, doors, kitchens, bathrooms), whereas **other** components have a less immediate impact. These are set out, with definitions of disrepair and brief examples, in [Annex A](#). Further examples will be developed in the guidance to come later.

This aims to drive proactive work by landlords to maintain homes in a good state of repair beyond immediate risks to health and safety. Age will no longer be taken into account, only the condition of components, which may mean that components that are old but in good repair are not as quickly replaced.

Criterion C: A home must provide core facilities and services

To be considered decent, a **flat** must provide **at least three** of the following facilities:

- A kitchen with adequate space and layout
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC
- Adequate external noise insulation
- Adequate size and layout of common entrance areas in blocks of flats.

A house must provide **at least two** of the following:

- A kitchen with adequate space and layout
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC
- Adequate external noise insulation.

Removing the age element from kitchens and bathrooms and making these 'key' components means a strengthened focus on having adequate space and appropriate layout. The English Housing Survey definitions of inadequate space, layout or inappropriate location are used, and clarity that external noise insulation relates to the external environment in which the dwelling is situated, not insulation within flatted accommodation ([paragraph 24, a to d](#)).

Child-resistant window restrictors

Child-resistant window restrictors, which can be overridden by an adult, are now required to meet this criterion to address the risk of falls from windows by children and vulnerable adults.

Windows which present a fall risk to children and therefore are unsafe are where:

- The change in floor level between the inside and outside is more than 600mm
- The window can be opened over 100mm
- The guard height is less than 1100mm above internal floor level
- It does not have a functioning window restrictor in place.

This meets building regulations and guidance and keeps homes free of a Category 1 hazard under the HHSRS.

Not included:

The government has decided not to include mandatory floor coverings or enhanced security measures as proposed in the consultation.

External windows and doors are a key component and, if the condition makes the home vulnerable to access by intruders, this could be classed a Category 1 hazard, and therefore failure under Criterion A.

On mandating floor coverings, following mixed responses, and concerns about costs, particularly for the social housing sector, the government will not require this under the DHS to balance the needs of tenants with the impacts for landlords and other requirements/expectations. However, it will explore options to encourage landlords to look at how to support tenants through either:

- Best practice guidance
- Pilots with landlords to assess the costs more effectively.

Criterion D: A home must provide thermal comfort

The government response to the consultation confirms that the initial proposals are being taken forward. This means that Criterion D is being retained, with two main additions.

The first addition is that the primary heating system in the home must have a distribution system sufficient to provide heat to the whole

home. The government consultation response notes that updated guidance will provide clear definitions of key terms such as 'whole home' and set out practical examples to support implementation. Guidance will also promote good practice in insulation, ventilation, overheating mitigation, preserving essential safety features, and crossovers with building and fire safety regulations.

The second addition is that Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) is being introduced for the social rented sector and updated for the private rented sector, and incorporated into Criterion D.

In the [private rented sector](#), homes will have to meet a minimum standard on a new Fabric Performance metric, plus a minimum standard on one of two additional metrics, Smart Readiness or Heating System, on the [reformed EPC regime](#) by 1 October 2030. A transition regime and exemptions apply, and CIH has produced a [separate summary](#) of MEES in the private rented sector with more detail.

In the social rented sector, a partial outline of the policy decision has been [published](#), with a full government consultation response to follow. By 1 April 2030, social housing providers will be required to ensure all homes reach a minimum standard on one of the Fabric Performance, Smart Readiness, or Heating System metrics (on the [reformed EPC regime](#)), or have a valid exemption registered. Providers will have the flexibility to choose which of the three metrics they will meet, and there will be a £10,000 cost cap. They will then have to meet a second metric by 2039. However, the finalised transition plan means that homes meeting EPC Band C or better (i.e. an Energy Efficiency Rating or EER of C, sometimes called SAP C) on the current EPC regime by 1 April 2030 will be considered compliant until their individual EPCs expire.

CIH will be producing a detailed member briefing when the finalised social rented sector MEES government consultation response has been published.



Criterion E: A home should be free of damp and mould

The introduction of Awaab's Law will ensure that tenants can get repairs done within timescales, where damp and mould or other hazards threaten health and safety.

This criterion aims to ensure an earlier and proactive approach, responding when residents report issues, and following [government guidance](#) on actions to remedy damp and mould. It will fail if the assessment falls anywhere in bands A to H under the HHSRS.

(An HHSRS assessment of damp and mould results in one of 10 bands from A (most severe) to J (safest level). Bands A, B and C are classed as Category 1, and all others are Category 2.)

Application of DHS to temporary accommodation and supported housing

The new DHS will be applied to temporary accommodation and supported housing; however, the government will provide detailed guidance about the appropriate application of the DHS in a proportionate way in these sub-sectors. This will include how local authorities may apply discretion for the small minority of temporary accommodation, such as bed and breakfast accommodation, where the kitchen and bathroom requirements (Criterion C) would further reduce supply. For example, councils will be able to suspend enforcement action for a period of time, or apply awareness notices that do not require remedial works.

For supported housing, with the introduction of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, licensing authorities will be able to take reasonable steps with providers to maintain their licenses, unless there are significant concerns about individual schemes.

Leasehold and commonhold

The government will also address how to apply the DHS to leasehold and commonhold in guidance, covering the rights and responsibilities of both leaseholders and

freeholders. This will take into account stakeholders' views of how to do so in a proportionate, fair and effective way for all parties.

The guidance will provide clarity on how the standard will be applied and enforced, the respective responsibilities of freeholders and leaseholders, and how proportionate enforcement will work. In terms of enforcement for PRS, local authorities will have power to escalate issues to the superior landlord where relevant (for example in the case of a leasehold flat and communal spaces).

Best practice guidance

There will also be best practice guidance to encourage landlords to go further in terms of improving homes, covering:

- Electric vehicle charging
- Additional security measures
- Water efficiency
- Home accessibility and adaptability
- Climate change adaptations
- Signposting to information on furniture provision.

Further issues raised by tenants will also be considered.

Implementation

The new DHS will be required by 2035. The timescale is intended to enable landlords to develop long-term strategic plans to achieve the DHS by the required time, and to drive ongoing improvements across both rented sectors. The introduction of MEES will follow different milestones. The government is clear that landlords should not leave implementation too close to the required date.

The DHS complements Awaab's Law, which sets timeframes for action to be taken in respect of damp, mould, and other health hazards. This was introduced to the social sector from October 2025 and will be extended to the private rented sector following the Renters' Rights Act 2025.

In the social sector:

The government will issue a direction to the Regulator of Social Housing to set a standard requiring landlords to meet the new Decent Homes Standard by 2035. The current Decent Homes Standard will continue to apply until the new standard is achieved, and guidance will be issued to support the transition.

Alongside this, landlords will be required to meet Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) milestones, with the first metric due by 1 April 2030 and the second by 2039, as set out under Criterion D.

At the same time, landlords must continue to prioritise tenant health and safety and meet the requirements of Awaab's Law.

Plans to achieve the DHS should take account of the RSH's expectations under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard by involving tenants in setting these.

In the private rented sector:

Local authorities will enforce the new DHS. Landlords are already required to ensure homes are free from Category 1 hazards (Housing Act 2004, Part 1). The Renters Rights Act 2025 places a duty on landlords to meet further property requirements set out in regulations. These, together with regulations to meet MEES, will apply the DHS to private rented homes.

Local authorities have a duty, if appropriate, to inspect properties to determine if there is a failure under the DHS, and they can apply their enforcement powers for such failures, which can include requiring landlords to remedy the problem. Failure to comply with local authority enforcement notices is a criminal offence, leading to fines or prosecution.

Secondary legislation will be used to increase the maximum fine for non-compliance with enforcement action from £30,000 to £40,000. A new power for immediate civil penalties up to £7,000, in the case of failure to take steps to address serious hazards, will be introduced (both in advance of the full DHS).

The DHS requirements in the private rented sector fall into two types. Local authorities will have a duty to enforce action against the highest hazard (Criterion A), whilst for all other DHS requirements, [councils will have the power](#) to do so.

Monitoring the standard

The government will monitor the DHS before full implementation, through a combination of the English Housing Survey and, for the social housing sector, landlord data returns.

Meeting the standard

The government recognises that some homes will not meet the DHS, and will set out how it will identify when the failure is due to landlords not complying, or when they cannot or should not do so. It will set out in guidance (across both tenures and with examples), circumstances when landlords cannot, or should not, and what should be done when:

- Tenants refuse access
- Planning or physical factors prevent compliance
- There are plans to sell, demolish, or renew properties/ estates for social landlords)
- MEES will have separate exemptions, including the £10,000 cap.

To come:

- Detailed guidance for the new DHS and MEES
- Secondary legislation and regulatory changes to give effect to the new Decent Homes Standard by 2035 across both social and private rented sectors
- The government response to the social sector MEES and the associated impact assessment.

CIH support

CIH will continue to work with government and members to support the implementation of the new Decent Homes Standard. If you would like to provide us with feedback on the consultation outcome or share good practice on aspects of the new standard you are already taking forward, please contact us at the email below.



For further information, email policyandpractice@cih.org.

