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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Consultation Document

Mandatory Quality Standards for new, rehabilitated and existing homes

Implementation of mandatory quality standards for
new, rehabilitated and existing homes under Part 4
of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 & Sections 33A,
33B and 33C of the Housing Act 1996

Date of issue: 18 January 2016

Action required: Responses by 12 April 2016

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview This consultation is to gather views on both of these standards and their accompanying guidance. The Welsh Ministers are consulting on the implementation of mandatory quality standards for new and existing housing under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Housing Act 1996. If introduced the standards will apply to the existing 222,000+ social housing homes in Wales and new build and rehabilitated social homes built using Welsh Government subsidy.

This consultation document is in two parts and covers two separate but related areas:

Part A: We are proposing a mandatory standard for the improvement of existing homes. The proposed standard is the existing Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). It incorporates draft guidance which reflects minor changes to the existing version.

Part B: we are proposing a mandatory standard for the design and construction of new and rehabilitated homes built using Welsh Government subsidy. The proposed standard is the existing Development Quality Requirements (DQR) amended to reflect recommendations made to Welsh Ministers in 2014 by their DQR Review Group. Revised draft guidance is also attached.

How to respond Please respond by completing the questionnaire at the back of this document and sending it to
Email: housingqualitystandards@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Or

Housing Quality Standards Team
Homes and Places
Welsh Government
Rhydycar Business Park
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1UZ

Further information ; related documents **Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.**

More details about the Act can be found on the Welsh Government website:
www.wales.gov.uk/legislation/programme/assemblybills/housing/?lang=en
www.wales.gov.uk/legislation/programme/assemblybills/housing/?lang=cy
also additional information about the Act including amendments laid by the Government and other Assembly members throughout the scrutiny process, can be found on the National Assembly website:
www.sendedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=8220

Contact details

For further information:

Housing Quality Standards Team
Homes and Places
Welsh Government
Rhydycar Business Park
Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ

email: housingqualitystandards@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

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Summary

- Welsh Ministers are proposing to set the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as the mandatory standard for all existing social housing and a revised Development Quality Requirements (DQR) as the mandatory standard for new and rehabilitated housing where Welsh Government subsidy is provided.
- The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on these proposed mandatory standards and their accompanying guidance.
- The consultation is in two parts:
 - Part A: proposes implementation of the existing Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as the mandatory standard for existing social housing. It includes draft guidance.
 - Part B: proposes implementation of a revised Development Quality Requirements (DQR) as the mandatory standard for new build and rehabilitated social housing using Welsh Government subsidy. It includes draft guidance.
- Responses are welcome on either or both Parts of the consultation and must reach us no later than close of business on 12 April 2016.

Introduction

- Standards in subsidised housing are important as they aim to ensure homes are capable of meeting the needs of current and future residents. Homes also need to be flexible, adaptable and well designed to meet the requirements of people and a changing society throughout its lifespan of +60 years.
- The Welsh Government currently requires housing standards to be met where it provides public subsidy and enforcement is achieved for example through funding requirements, grant conditions and regulation. The standards are in addition to requirements for example in Building Regulations and Planning legislation but are not mandatory.
- All existing social homes must meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2020 and all landlords are currently on track to meet it. Where subsidy is given for new and rehabilitated homes, social landlords must meet the Development Quality Requirements (DQR).

Legislative background

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was passed by the National Assembly for Wales in July 2014 and received Royal Assent on 17 September 2014.
- Part 4 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 & sections 33A, 33B and 33C of the Housing Act 1996 permits Welsh Ministers to set mandatory standards for the quality of housing for both new and rehabilitated housing where there is public subsidy and also for existing social homes.

Proposals for change - next steps

- This two part consultation is proposing Housing Associations and Local Authorities should comply with a mandatory WHQS and DQR where Welsh Government subsidy is provided.
- As now, new homes built by Housing Associations and Local Authorities without subsidy will not be required to meet DQR although they can chose to do this. This consultation (Part B) asks for views on whether DQR should be a requirement when building new social housing *whether funded or not*, because of the wider and long term public benefits offered.
- Standards have served well to ensure people live in good quality homes and environments, and changing needs can be more easily met, however they continue to represent a direction of travel rather than an end point. The challenges of for example growing housing need, increasing fuel bills and fuel poverty, climate change, changing demographics, pressure on the NHS and social care and so on, means they may need a more robust overhaul in the medium term.

Consultation Responses

Your views are welcomed and a response form is provided at the back of this document. The consultation deadline is 12 April 2016.

Consultation
Response Form

Your name:

Organisation (if applicable):

email / telephone number:

Your address:

Part A

The proposed introduction of the WHQS as the mandatory standard for existing social housing in Wales

Question A1: What are your views on the proposed standards and guidance set out in Part A of the consultation document?

Please enter here:

Question A2: What do you think are the benefits and/or dis-benefits of using this standard and guidance?

Please enter here:

Question A3: What changes (if any) do you think are needed? Please explain and provide evidence to support your views.

Please enter here:

Question A4: We would welcome your views on the potential impact of the proposals for people with the following protected characteristics:-

- Disability
- Race
- Gender and gender reassignment
- Age
- Religion and belief and non-belief
- Sexual orientation
- Human Rights
- Children and young people

Please enter here

Question A5: We would welcome any comments you may have on the potential impact of the proposals on the Welsh Language.

Please enter here:

Question A6: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Please enter here:

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:

Part B

The proposed introduction of DQR as the mandatory guidance for the design and construction of new and rehabilitated housing in Wales where Welsh Government subsidy is provided

Question B1: What are your views on the proposed standards and guidance set out in Part B of consultation document?

Please enter here:

Question B2: What do you think are the benefits and/or dis-benefits of using this standard and guidance?

Please enter here:

Question B3: What changes (if any) do you think are needed? Please explain and provide evidence to support your views.

Please enter here:

Question B4: Do you think this standard should be used when building new social housing whether funded or not because of the wider public benefits? Please explain and provide evidence to support your views.

Please enter here:

Question B5: We would welcome your views on the potential impact of the proposals for people with the following protected characteristics:-

- Disability
- Race
- Gender and gender reassignment
- Age
- Religion and belief and non-belief
- Sexual orientation
- Human Rights
- Children and young people

Please enter here

Question B6: We would welcome your views on the potential impact of the proposals on the Welsh Language.

Please enter here:

Question B7: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Please enter here: