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Our ref:

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Dear Colleague

SCOTTISH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD (SHQS)

The Minister for Communities has made an announcement today about the Scottish Housing Quality Standard in a statement to the Scottish Parliament. This gives details of the content of the Standard and sets a target date for bringing houses in the social rented sector up to this Standard.

The Scottish Executive's consultation paper "Modernising Scotland's Social Housing", issued in March 2003, set out proposals for a national standard based on a minimum set of quality measures for all houses in the social rented sector (at the time this was referred to as the Scottish Social Housing Standard). In the meantime, Scottish Ministers announced that, following recommendations of the Housing Improvement Task Force, they would bring in a cross-tenure Scottish Housing Quality Standard in line with the Partnership Agreement to introduce a decent homes standard. Decisions on the final version of the Standard have taken account of the responses to the consultation and a summary of the responses is available from the Executive and on the Executive's website – www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/housing/mssh04-00.asp. Account has also been taken of the results of the Scottish House Condition Survey which was published in November 2003.

The intention has been to define a standard which is relevant to the 21st Century and is consistent with views on what constitutes acceptable, good quality housing. It differs from the statutory Tolerable Standard (a very basic standard of acceptability) and the Building Standards as they apply to new housing.

As initially proposed in "Modernising Scotland's Social Housing" the Standard is based on a number of broad quality criteria. To meet the Standard the house must be:

- compliant with the tolerable standard;
- free from serious disrepair;
- energy efficient
- provided with modern facilities and services;
- healthy, safe and secure.



The precise way in which these broad criteria are to be defined is set out in the attached note which sets out a detailed specification of the Standard. A number of changes have been made to the detailed specification in the light of the responses to the consultation and you may wish to note, in particular:

- there is now an explicit requirement for the required full central heating system to be energy efficient;
- the standard for loft insulation is 100mm;
- although there is not a standard requirement for double glazing, this may be necessary in certain houses if there are problems with external noise or to ensure that the house meets the thermal efficiency standard;
- there is a requirement for adequate noise insulation where there are problems with external noise (the possibility of having a noise insulation standard for noise generated within the building was considered but rejected on grounds of practicality);
- mechanical ventilation should be provided in either the kitchen or bathroom, or both, if there are persistent problems of condensation dampness;
- the suggested requirement for a second WC in houses with 3 or more bedrooms has been dropped because of the practical difficulties of adapting existing houses to add an additional WC;
- there is a requirement to ensure that common areas and facilities linked to the house but external to the dwelling are in good and safe order with adequate lighting.

Careful consideration was given to whether the Standard should include accessibility requirements. There is an existing 'visitability' standard for new build properties that aims to make it much easier for disabled persons to visit the house in question. A higher standard is promoted by Communities Scotland for new build social housing in accordance with the 'Housing for Varying Needs' design guidance based on the 'barrier free' concept. As well as containing many similar features to the 'visitability' standard, it provides for additional specifications to help disabled occupants.

Many respondents commented that these standards could not be realistically applied to all existing properties. There were concerns that it could give rise to significant rebuilding at disproportionate cost. It was also recognised that different occupants have different needs and that many houses which could never be adapted to provide suitable housing for persons with disabilities, nevertheless provide quite satisfactory housing for most households. Whilst the Executive has, therefore, decided not to include any accessibility requirements in the Standard itself, it fully recognises the need to ensure that there is suitable housing for persons with disabilities. The Executive expects each local authority, through the process of preparing Local Housing Strategies, to identify, over time, the scale and nature of these needs and to draw up proposals for meeting any shortfall.

The intention is that the Scottish Housing Quality Standard is relevant to the housing stock as a whole. Its application will, however, vary according to tenure.

In the social rented sector, the Minister has made it clear that she expects local authorities and registered social landlords to ensure that their stock meets the standard by 2015. However they will be able to set their own milestones for progressing towards the 2015 target date, taking account of their local circumstances. They will also be expected to prepare Standard Delivery Plans for submission to Scottish Ministers by April 2005 at the latest; these will be assessed by Communities

Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. In the case of local authorities, these will take the form of an update to, or revision of, the Local Housing Strategy. Further guidance on the content of Delivery Plans and the criteria for assessing them will be issued in due course.

Social landlords may, following consultation with their tenants, wish to augment the Standard with additional local specifications. The Executive has no difficulty with this providing there are clear plans for achieving the national Standard and the additional resources are available.

In the private sector, aside from instances where owners may be required to, for example, bring properties up to the Tolerable Standard or rectify serious disrepair that has been subject of a statutory notice, it is ultimately a matter for individual owners to decide whether to make improvements if their properties do not meet the Standard. However, local authorities will wish to take account of the Standard in monitoring the condition of the private sector housing stock in their areas; they will need to consider what measures might be adopted to encourage private owners to undertake relevant works and to report on this in future Local Housing Strategies.

If you have any queries on the Standard, please contact Mary MacDonald (tel: 0131 244 5569) (e-mail mary.macdonald@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or Helen Jones (tel: 0131 244 5570) (e-mail helen.e.jones@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



MIKE NEILSON

SCOTTISH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD

Housing Quality Criteria	Criteria definition	Criteria elements	Failure assessed by:
COMPLIANT WITH THE TOLERABLE STANDARD	The Tolerable Standard	Below Tolerable Standard	Single Primary Failure
FREE FROM SERIOUS DISREPAIR	Primary Building Elements	Wall structures Internal floor structures Foundations Roof structure	Single Primary Element Failure. An element fails where it requires repair or replacement of more than 20%
	Secondary Building Elements	Roof covering Chimney stacks Flashings Rainwater goods External wall finishes Access decks/ balustrades Common access stairs / landings, pathways within the curtilage of the dwelling Individual dwelling balconies / verandas Individual dwelling, attached garages, internal stairs Damp Proof Course Windows/ doors Common windows/ roof lights Underground drainage	Failure by <u>two</u> or more elements. An element fails where it requires repair or replacement of more than 20%.
ENERGY EFFICIENT	Effective Insulation	Cavity insulation where technically feasible and appropriate ¹ 100mm loft insulation where appropriate ² Insulation of hot water tanks and pipes (and cold water tanks as an ancillary measure)	Single Element Failure

¹ In some types of housing, it is not possible to install cavity wall insulation; in other cases installation may be prohibited by building regulations because cavity wall insulation would lead to other problems such as water penetration and dampness.

² 100mm is the minimum existing insulation which will meet the standard, but where insulation is being installed it must meet the standard required by the building regulations.

	Efficient Heating	A full house central heating system that has an acceptable efficiency rating ³ , or similarly efficient heating system that is developed in the future	Single Element Failure
	Additional energy efficiency measures	Additional energy efficiency measures, where technically feasible ⁴ , necessary to achieving a minimum NHER rating of 5 or SAP rating of 50	Single Element Failure where a necessary, practical measure has not been implemented
MODERN FACILITIES AND SERVICES	Bathroom Condition	Bathroom amenities should include a WC, bath or shower and wash hand basin in good and usable condition	Single Element Failure An element fails where it requires repair or replacement of more than 25%
	Kitchen Condition	Kitchen fittings in good and usable condition	Single Element Failure An item fails where it requires repair or replacement of more than 25%
	Kitchen Facilities	Adequate kitchen storage to current building standards where practical (1m ³ within or adjacent to the kitchen; space for a cooker and related activity space in front of it to allow safe use) Safe kitchen working arrangements, including worktop space on at least one side of, and at least the same width as, the cooker Sufficient power outlets (6 or more sockets)	Single Element Failure

³ An inefficient central heating system is defined here as being:

- a solid fuel boiler with an annual seasonal efficiency of 55% or less
- a natural gas boiler with an annual seasonal efficiency of 55% or less
- an oil-fired boiler with an annual seasonal efficiency of 65% or less
- a gravity or semi-gravity heating system more than 20 years old.

An inefficient electric storage heating system is defined here as being:

- free-standing large volume storage heaters more than 20 years old
- free standing compact storage heaters more than 20 years old
- electric fan-assisted storage warm air heating more than 20 years old
- electric wired underfloor heating, set in solid floors, more than 20 years old
- electric ceiling heating more than 20 years old.

⁴ Such measures might include coated double or even triple glazing. It is recognised that it will not always be technically feasible, without disproportionate cost, to bring certain houses up to the minimum thermal efficiency standard. Building Standards may be relaxed if it is not reasonably practical to meet the minimum standards.

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE	Healthy	Internal pipe work lead-free Mechanical ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom where this is required to tackle persistent problems of condensation dampness and mould growth Adequate noise insulation ⁵ where there are problems with external noise from e.g. traffic or factories	Single Element Failure Persistent problem categorised by condensation or mould on more than 5% of the wall and ceiling area of bathroom or kitchen
	Safe	A smoke detector present in the home ⁶ Safe electrical systems Safe gas and oil systems and appliances Common stairwells, lifts, lobbies, courts, laundry and drying areas, refuse chutes and bin stores, where provided, in good and safe order Adequate lighting in common internal and external areas within the curtilage of the house	Single Element Failure
	Secure	Secure front and rear access doors Front door entry systems and secure rear access to enclosed common areas	Single Element Failure

⁵ In most cases, the insulation will be provided through double or triple glazing.

⁶ Existing smoke detectors may be hard wired or battery powered; new installations must be hard wired.

