

# **A Decent Home - the definition and guidance for implementation**

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## **Publication details**

### **A Decent Home - The definition and guidance for implementation**

(Updates following the PSA Plus Review and extension of the standard to the private sector)

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## Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 In July 2000, following its Spending Review, the Government announced a significant increase in resources for housing, especially social housing. As part of its desire to link increased spending to better outcomes, the Government established a target to:

*'ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010, by reducing the number of households living in social housing that does not meet these standards by a third between 2001 and 2004, with most of the improvement taking place in the most deprived local authority areas'*<sup>1</sup>

1.2 The 2002 Spending Review renewed the commitment to making all social housing decent by 2010. The target was also expanded to cover vulnerable households in the private sector. The amended target is now:

*'by 2010, to bring all social housing into decent condition, with most of the improvement taking place in deprived areas, and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups'*

1.3 *Sustainable communities: building for the future*<sup>2</sup> reaffirmed the commitment to provide all social housing tenants with decent homes by 2010. It explained that reforms would be put in place to improve the way the target was delivered and that these reforms were based on the recommendations of the 'PSA Plus Review' conducted into the delivery of the target. The Review made no changes to the decent homes standard but recommended that aspects of the definition were clarified and that it was set in a wider context.

1.4 The target relates to both social housing i.e. that owned by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs - generally known as Housing Associations) and private housing occupied by vulnerable groups.

1.5 In measuring progress against the target local authorities and housing associations are advised to use homes as this is easier. We will check the progress in terms of households in national monitoring.

1.6 To ensure all social tenants have access to decent homes, the Government is dependent on social landlords. To deliver and meet this standard by 2010, social landlords need to quantify the level of non-decent housing in their stock, develop an investment strategy to tackle this and measure progress towards its elimination. The criteria included in the decent home standard reflect the types of work social landlords undertake to their housing stock. Local housing authorities and Housing Associations develop Business Plans regarding investment in and management of their housing stock. It is important to ensure these plans deliver outcomes on the ground in terms of quality social housing. Delivery of decent homes is a key part of this.

1.7 For the private sector the approach will necessarily be different, reflecting the different ownership responsibilities and the legislative framework. Further information on how the standard is to be applied in the private sector can be found in Section 4.

1.8 The first version of the guidance was issued in July 2001 and was updated in April 2002. This third version covers the same ground but implements recommendations from the PSA Plus Review

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<sup>1</sup> The most deprived local authority areas are those LAs that have been identified as such by the Indices of Deprivation 2000. This aspect of the target does not require social landlords to focus investment on the most deprived neighbourhoods or individual cases of vulnerability, although this may be appropriate as part of an effective investment strategy.

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Communities: building for the future is available on the ODPM web site: [www.odpm.gov.uk/communities](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/communities) (under the Communities Plan) or from the ODPM Publications Centre, see imprint details.

namely: greater clarity on some aspects of the definition and its implementation; linking decent homes to the wider regeneration agenda; clarifying roles and responsibilities between the Housing Inspectorate, Government Offices and the Community Housing Task Force. It also includes new sections on the private sector and covers the transition to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

1.9 This revised guidance is supported by, *Decent Homes: Capturing the Standard at the Local Level*, which is the annex to *Collecting, Managing and Using Stock Condition Information*<sup>3</sup>. This provides guidance on using stock condition surveys and other information in estimating, predicting and monitoring the level of non-decent homes. The Housing Corporation have, through the University of the West of England provided an online stock survey methodology<sup>4</sup> for capturing information on decent homes. It is geared to those organisations that have relatively small housing stocks.

1.10 Section 2 provides a summary of the decent home definition, plus some general principles about its usage. This section may be of interest to tenants and members who do not need to know about the detail of the definition and its interpretation, which are covered in Sections 3 to 5.

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<sup>3</sup> Collecting, managing and using housing stock information: A Good Practice Guide, ODPM, (2000).

<sup>4</sup> The methodology can be found on the UWE HCOND web site at: <http://environment.uwe.ac.uk/hcond>

## Section 2 - What is a Decent Home? - a summary of the definition

2.1 A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. It reflects what social landlords spend their money on. To set a national target a common definition of decent is needed so all social landlords can work towards the same goal.

2.2 A decent home meets the following four criteria:

### **a - It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing**

Dwellings below this standard are those defined as unfit under section 604 of the *Housing Act 1985* (as amended by the *1989 Local Government and Housing Act*).

### **b - It is in a reasonable state of repair**

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either:

- one or more of the key building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- two or more of the other building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.

### **c - It has reasonably modern facilities and services**

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those which lack three or more of the following:

- a reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less);
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- a reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less);
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
- adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem);
- adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.

A home lacking two or less of the above is still classed as decent therefore it is not necessary to modernise kitchens and bathrooms if a home passes the remaining criteria.

### **d - It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

This criterion requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating.

## General principles of application

2.3 In applying the decent home standard, social landlords should bear in mind the following (covered in more detail in section 4):

- decent homes must be sustainable in the long term. Decisions on which homes to invest in must be made in the context of the long term demand for the stock;
- it is a **minimum** standard that all social housing should meet by 2010 and which can be measured consistently across all social housing stock;
- it is a standard that **triggers action**, not one to which work is necessarily carried out;

- landlords are not expected to make a home decent if this is against a tenant's wishes as work can be undertaken when the dwelling is next empty. For reporting purposes, these properties should be counted as non-decent. Landlords should make clear what proportion of their non-decent stock falls into this category when reporting on progress against the target; and
- landlords are not expected to carry out only that work which contributes to making homes decent. Other factors may be considered:
  - building components may fail early, typically these should be dealt with on a responsive basis;
  - environmental and security works, which are not included in the decent home standard, may be considered high priority in some areas; and
  - landlords may also wish to consider which relevant Lifetime Home Standards<sup>5</sup> are appropriate when carrying out work to properties, and whether the work to be undertaken can be modified to help meet the needs of people with disabilities.

### **What types of property are included in the target?**

2.4 This target applied to sheltered housing including non-self contained or supported housing. However the target does not apply to homeless hostels even though they are local authority owned.

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<sup>5</sup> Lifetime Home Standards, produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, available at: [www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes](http://www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes)

## Section 3 - What is a Decent Home? - the detailed definition

3.1 This section gives detailed definitions of each of the four criteria that make up the decent home standard. Social landlords and local housing authorities may deliver housing above this standard but to ensure at least a minimum standard across all housing a common classification is needed to set and monitor the national target.

3.2 The definitions used are not new concepts. The detailed technical descriptions used within the standard have been included in the English Housing Condition Survey (EHCS) for many years and, in the case of the Fitness Standard (see below), the necessary information is reported annually by local authorities as part of the Housing Investment Programme. The disrepair criterion builds on those component lifetimes regarded appropriate for planning newly arising renewal works. The component expected lifetimes were developed for the calculation and allocation of the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA). This is given to local authorities to finance newly arising programme renewals to their stock over the long term.

3.3 If social landlords follow the guidance set out in the Department's *Collecting, Managing and Using Housing Stock Information*, they should have the information required to assess individual dwellings against the standard. Further guidance on local measurement against each criterion, primarily through a stock condition survey, is available in *Decent Homes: Capturing the Standard at the Local Level*<sup>6</sup>.

### Criterion a: It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing

3.4 The current minimum standard for housing is the Fitness Standard (s604 of the *Housing Act 1985* amended by Schedule 9 of *1989 Local Government and Housing Act*). Dwellings unfit under this legislation fail this criterion. Under the Fitness Standard, a dwelling is fit for human habitation unless, in the opinion of the local housing authority, it fails to meet one or more of various requirements. These are listed in Annex A.

3.5 The Government intends to replace the Fitness Standard with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which will assess health and safety hazards in the home and designate them Category 1 or 2 according to their severity. This system requires primary legislation and is unlikely to come into force before 2005. A Category 1 hazard will trigger a duty on an authority to take appropriate enforcement action and will also trigger action in the context of decent homes. How the transition should be managed is set out in Annex A. Draft technical guidance on HHSRS (Version 2) was made available on the ODPM web site on 22 December 2003, and at the same time draft enforcement guidance for local authorities on the use of the powers and duties in the Bill was launched for consultation. The deadline for responses to the enforcement guidance consultation is 26 March 2004. *Collecting, managing and using housing stock information* sets out a number of options by which social landlords could collect information that will help them assess how their stock measures against the HHSRS. Further information is at Annex A.

### Criterion b: It is in a reasonable state of repair

3.6 A dwelling satisfies this criterion unless:

- one or more key building components are old **and**, because of their condition need replacing or major repair; or
- two or more other building components are old **and**, because of their condition need replacing or major repair.

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<sup>6</sup> Decent Homes: Capturing the standard at a local level, DTLR (ODPM) (March 2002) published as an annex to *Collecting, Managing and Using Housing Stock information*.

A building component can only fail to satisfy this criterion by being old and requiring replacing or repair. **A component cannot fail this criterion based on age alone.**

### ***Building components***

3.7 Building components are the structural parts of a dwelling (e.g. wall structure, roof structure), other external elements (e.g. roof covering, chimneys) and internal services and amenities (e.g. kitchens, heating systems). Key building components are those which, if in poor condition, could have an immediate impact on the integrity of the building and cause further deterioration in other components. They are the external components plus internal components that have potential safety implications and include:

- external walls;
- roof structure and covering;
- windows/doors;
- chimneys;
- central heating boilers;
- gas fires;
- storage heaters; and
- electrics.

3.8 Lifts are not considered to be a key component unless the lift or the lift shafts have a direct effect upon the integrity of the building.

3.9 If any of these components are old and need replacing, or require immediate major repair, then the dwelling is not in a reasonable state of repair and remedial action is required.

3.10 Other building components are those that have a less immediate impact on the integrity of the dwelling. Their combined effect is therefore considered, with a dwelling not in a reasonable state of repair if two or more are old and need replacing or require immediate major repair.

### ***Old and in poor condition***

3.11 A component is defined as 'old' if it is older than its expected or standard lifetime. The component lifetimes used are those used to calculate the MRA and are listed in Annex B.

3.12 Components are in poor condition if they need major work, either full replacement or major repair. The definitions used for different components are at Annex B.

3.13 One or more key components, or two or more other components, must be both old and in poor condition to render the dwelling non-decent on grounds of disrepair. Components that are old but in good condition or in poor condition but not old would not, in themselves, cause the dwelling to fail the standard.

3.14 A building component which requires replacing before it reaches its expected lifetime has failed early. Under the terms of the definition, this early failure does not render the dwelling non-decent but should be dealt with by the landlord, typically on a responsive basis.

3.15 The disrepair criterion is set in such a way that it helps plan future investment needs. Landlords are more likely to be able to predict component failure after the component has reached a certain age than predicting early failures. Annex B provides further guidance regarding the expected lifetimes.

3.16 Where the disrepair is of a component affecting a block of flats the flats that are classed as non-decent are those directly affected by the disrepair.

### **Criterion c: It has reasonably modern facilities and services**

3.17 A dwelling is considered not to meet this criterion if it lacks 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 noise insulation; and
- adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats.

3.18 The ages used to define the 'modern' kitchen and bathroom are less than those for the disrepair criterion. This is to take account of the modernity of kitchens and bathrooms, as well as their functionality and condition. This principle was agreed with local authority representatives during the consultation on the formulation of the MRA allocations. This allows for dwellings to be improved to a more modern standard than would simply be achieved by applying the disrepair criterion.

3.19 These standards are used to calculate the national standard and have been measured in the English House Condition Survey (EHCS) for many years. For example, in the EHCS:

- a kitchen failing on adequate space and layout would be one that was too small to contain all the required items (sink, cupboards cooker space, worktops etc) appropriate to the size of the dwelling;
- an inappropriately located bathroom and WC is one where the main bathroom or WC is located in a bedroom or accessed through a bedroom (unless the bedroom is not used or the dwelling is for a single person). A dwelling would also fail if the main WC is external or located on a different floor to the nearest wash hand basin, or if a WC without a wash hand basin opens on to a kitchen in an inappropriate area, for example next to the food preparation area;
- inadequate insulation from external airborne noise would be where there are problems with, for example, traffic (rail, road and aeroplanes) or factory noise. Landlords should ensure reasonable insulation from these problems through installation of appropriate acoustic glazing in line with the current Building Regulations; and
- inadequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats would be one with insufficient room to manoeuvre easily for example where there are narrow access ways with awkward corners and turnings, steep staircases, inadequate landings, absence of handrails, low headroom etc.

3.20 Landlords may work to different detailed standards than those set out above. In some instances there may be factors which may make the improvements required to meet the decent homes standards challenging, or impossible, factors such as physical or planning restrictions. Where such limiting factors occur the property should be assessed to determine the most satisfactory course of action in consultation with the relevant body or agency so as to determine the best solution. The outcome may determine that some improvements may be possible even if all are not. **A dwelling would not fail this criterion, where it is impossible to make the required improvements to components for planning reasons.**

### **Criteria d: It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

3.21 The revised definition requires a dwelling to have both:

- efficient heating; and

- effective insulation.

3.22 **Efficient heating is defined as any gas or oil programmable central heating or electric storage heaters or programmable LPG/solid fuel central heating or similarly efficient heating systems** which are developed in the future.<sup>7</sup> Heating sources which provide less energy efficient options fail the decent home standard. Programmable heating is where the timing and the temperature of the heating can be controlled by the occupants.

3.23 Because of the differences in efficiency between gas/oil heating systems and the other heating systems listed, the level of insulation that is appropriate also differs:

- **For dwellings with gas/oil programmable heating**, cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively) or at least 50mm loft insulation (if there is loft space) is an effective package of insulation; and
- **For dwellings heated by electric storage heaters/LPG/programmable solid fuel central heating** a higher specification of insulation is required: at least 200mm of loft insulation (if there is a loft) and cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively).

3.24 Loft insulation thickness of 50mm is a minimum designed to trigger action on the worst housing. Where insulation is being fitted, landlords should take the opportunity to improve the energy efficiency and install insulation to a much greater depth.

3.25 The Government is considering the most effective means of improving the energy efficiency of 'hard to heat' homes where the construction may preclude the installation of traditional cost-effective insulation measures. This is being considered in the wider context of progress against the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy. The Carbon Trust announced at the Better Building Summit that they are looking to fund proposals to research, develop and demonstrate innovative ways of reducing heat loss from solid wall dwellings.

3.26 The *UK Fuel Poverty Strategy*,<sup>8</sup> published in November 2001, announced a pilot project using micro Combined Heat and Power to test suitability of the technology for fuel poor households.

3.27 An announcement supporting field trials to evaluate the benefits of micro-CHP was made in March. These trials are going ahead, with the Carbon Trust, in consultation with the Energy Saving Trust, building on development work through the Low Carbon Innovation Programme. The trial will provide independently monitored data on up to 200 micro-CHP units running in a range of applications over a full year. It aims to obtain robust, independent performance data from a range of impartially procured equipment in real operating environments, including fuel poor housing. This project will help determine what future trials or measures, if any, are necessary to tap the micro-CHP potential of a wider domestic environment.

3.28 The Government will monitor the results of the Carbon Trust and Energy Saving Trust trials before taking any decision on further trials for fuel poverty.

3.29 Where new heating systems are being installed or existing system replaced, landlords should take the opportunity to increase the energy efficiency of the dwelling if possible. This would be achieved through installing energy efficient boilers where possible. Energy efficient boilers are those with a SEDBUK A-C rating. Where this is not possible, cavity walls should be insulated where feasible.

3.30 If new heating or insulation is being installed, it is important that steps are taken to ensure the dwelling is adequately ventilated.

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<sup>7</sup> For example efficient heating based on renewable sources.

<sup>8</sup> DTI UK Fuel Poverty Strategy [www.dti.gov.uk/energy/consumers/fuel\\_poverty/strategy.shtml](http://www.dti.gov.uk/energy/consumers/fuel_poverty/strategy.shtml)

3.31 Specific programmes are now in place which provide additional resources to carry out energy efficiency programmes.<sup>9</sup> These are:

- **The Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC):** This requires electricity and gas suppliers to meet targets for the promotion of improvements in domestic energy efficiency. They do this by encouraging and assisting domestic consumers (in both private and public sectors) to take up energy efficiency measures. Further information can be found on the DEFRA web site<sup>10</sup>.
- **Warm Front:** This scheme tackles fuel poverty among vulnerable households in the private rented and owner occupied sectors. The scheme provides grants for packages of insulation and heating improvements, including central heating systems, for eligible households. Further information can be found on the DEFRA web site<sup>11</sup>.
- **Transco's Affordable Warmth Programme:** This programme has introduced Affordable Warmth leases targeted at RSLs and LAs. These leases make the installation of high-efficiency gas central heating and energy efficiency measures more financially attractive for both landlords and tenants.

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<sup>9</sup> More information is available via the DEFRA web site: [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/index.htm)

<sup>10</sup> [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/eec/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/eec/index.htm)

<sup>11</sup> [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/hees/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/energy/hees/index.htm)

## **Section 4 - Implementing the Decent Home Standard**

4.1 This section explains how the decent home standard should be implemented in the context of planning investment in the housing stock. Investment needs to be considered in the context of the future demand for the housing stock. In some areas of low demand, it may not be appropriate to invest in dwellings because there is unlikely to be sufficient demand for these in the longer term. Landlords should consider whether clearance of the dwellings and regeneration is the most effective long-term strategy.

### **Standard of work to be carried out**

4.2 The decent home standard is a minimum standard that triggers action and that no social housing should fall below by 2010, but it does not represent the standard to which all work should be carried out. The work that is done to bring homes above this level will vary with the policies of social landlords.

4.3 A dwelling is non-decent if it has less than 50mm of loft insulation (if there is a loft and there is no cavity wall insulation) but when insulating a dwelling, a greater depth of insulation should be installed.

4.4 When considering refurbishment packages, landlords should consult with current Building Regulations and other relevant technical publications.

4.5 Landlords may also want to consider other factors when carrying out work to make homes decent. For example ensuring that works undertaken do not make the home more difficult to use for a person with disabilities, considering lifetime homes and carrying out works in a sustainable way. On the last of these, Sustainable Homes, in conjunction with the Housing Corporation, has developed Green Street<sup>12</sup>, a web-based tool for sustainable refurbishment. Green Street is based around a virtual street containing houses, flats and bungalows from pre-1900's to 1970's. For each house type solutions for sustainable refurbishment are available, covering issues such as insulation, boiler replacement, water efficient appliances and material use.

### **Work outside the decent home standard**

4.6 Delivery of decent homes is a key priority, but this should not stop landlords from carrying out other work that falls outside the decent homes standard such as environmental work to the estates, security improvements or provision of disabled persons' adaptations.

### **Working in accordance with tenants' wishes**

4.7 The decent homes standard ensures that all social tenants have access to a minimum standard of housing. However tenants may have other priorities and these need to be taken into account.

4.8 Landlords have reported that some tenants do not want their kitchens and or bathrooms modernised. This work need not be done as the standard is sufficiently flexible for homes to be without two of the components in the modernisation list and still be classed as decent.

4.9 Where an individual tenant does not want work carried out on their home to bring it up to the decent homes standard, then the home can remain below the standard until the property is vacated, at which point the necessary work can be undertaken. The exception to this is where works are required to maintain the structural integrity of the dwelling or prevent other components within the dwelling from deteriorating.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.greenstreet.org.uk](http://www.greenstreet.org.uk)

4.10 Delivery of the Decent Home target will be important in bringing health benefits to tenants and reducing health inequalities. Authorities will be expected to set out in their business plans the investment strategy they consider the most effective, how they are taking tenants wishes into account and how their effort is to be targeted. Although the Guidance does not require landlords to focus investment on the most deprived neighbourhoods or on vulnerable tenants, it may make strategic sense to do so in some circumstances, for example by prioritising measures such as heating and insulation for elderly tenants.

4.11 Social landlords may also retain some repair responsibilities for leasehold stock or stock held under shared ownership. Such stock is not classified as social housing and therefore the target is not applicable.

### **Timing of work**

4.12 Effective planning of renovation programmes is vital for the delivery of the decent homes for all social sector tenants by 2010. Landlords need to identify and evaluate the options for improving the condition of their housing over the period. Programmes of work should be planned to enable an effective use of resources in tackling non-decent housing and preventing decent housing from deteriorating into non-decency, as well as taking into account the views of tenants and future demand for the homes.

4.13 Timing of the work will need to take account of the following:

- Premature failure of building components. Where there are signs of early failure, this will need to be accommodated in the investment strategy.
- Components lasting longer than expected. Under the disrepair criterion components should not be replaced just because they have reached the end of their life. They should show signs of failure before a replacement programme is put in place.

4.14 Landlords should determine the most effective balance between making homes decent and preventing homes falling below the standard.

### **Packages of work**

4.15 If a dwelling fails to meet one criterion, landlords should consider whether it is appropriate to only carry out the work to make the homes decent or whether it is more effective to carry out additional works at the same time. For example:

4.16 Dwellings are non-decent because they have windows that need replacing. Their replacement would make the dwelling decent, but it may be more cost effective to replace both windows and doors, the latter being likely to require replacements in the next few years.

4.17 Providing additional loft insulation at the same time as carrying out re-roofing work in circumstances where provision of further insulation is not required to meet the decent homes standard.

4.18 When undertaking any work to improve the thermal efficiency of a dwelling, consideration should be given to improving other energy efficiency aspects such as additional insulation and ventilation, even if the dwelling already meets the minimum insulation requirements.

### **Implementing the Decent Home Standard - Private sector**

4.19 The Spending Review 2002 extended the decent homes target to the private sector with the focus on reducing the proportion of vulnerable households living in non-decent homes. This section of the guidance should be read in conjunction with ODPM circular 05/2003<sup>13</sup>. This circular sets out how a

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<sup>13</sup> Housing Renewal: ODPM Circular 05/2003  
[www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm\\_housing/documents/page/odpm\\_house\\_609809.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_609809.pdf)

local authority should develop a private sector renewal strategy as part of its overall housing strategy and how it should publish a policy setting out its use of powers under the *Regulatory Reform Order 2002* (the RRO) to support private sector renewal. Meeting the private sector element of the decent homes target should be an important element of this process. Set out below is further guidance on how this integration should be achieved.

4.20 The approach to making private sector homes decent will be different from that adopted for homes in the social sector reflecting the different ownership responsibilities and the legislative framework guiding enforcement powers. Achieving the decent homes standard will only be achieved by adopting a combination of policies which will involve a range of assistance, advice and encouragement to homeowners and using enforcement powers only as a last resort. It will also involve developing a close relationship with other partnerships and policies and this is covered in detail in circular 05/2003.

4.21 In particular Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) are seen by the Government as having a particularly important role to play in taking forward the decent homes agenda. HIAs provide a valuable service to help elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to remain living independently in their own home for as long as they wish. There are currently around 230 HIAs covering 285 local authority areas. They assess the clients needs for improvements and adaptations, arrange the best funding option and provide support during the stress and disruption that work in the home can cause. This enables the client to remain in a safe, warm and secure environment. Funding for HIAs has, since 1 April 2003 been part of the Supporting People programme. ODPM is investing another £2m in HIAs from 1 April 2004 to encourage restructuring of the existing sector and expanding into areas where there is currently little or no coverage. Foundations operate as the National Co-ordinating Body for Home Improvement Agencies under contract to ODPM to promote and develop the HIA sector. They can be contacted on **01457 891909** and can advise on all aspects of HIAs work and whether an agency operates in a particular area.

4.22 The Warm Front grant programme, administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will also be important in meeting the thermal comfort criterion of the decent home standard. Local authorities will need to work closely with the scheme managers to maximise take up of resources by homeowners and tenants and where necessary supplement the programme to ensure that the decency standard is achieved.

#### **a. Private sector renewal policies to support delivery of the target**

4.23 The new powers given to authorities under the RRO are designed to give authorities maximum flexibility to develop new policies for private sector renewal consistent with local priorities and which reflect the availability of resources. Therefore, while local authorities should aim to achieve **or in some respects exceed** the decent homes standard in every applicable case where they provide advice or assistance, they will want to offer a tailored package of financial incentives depending on the precise circumstances of each case. Some authorities will only wish to offer grants to those owners who are seen either as most vulnerable or in cases where no significant equity is available in the property. In other cases loans, equity release or other forms of assistance and advice may be more appropriate. In area regeneration schemes the form of assistance will be determined in the context of the wider regeneration objectives. For example, group repair schemes often only provide grants to deal with structural and other external problems. It is unlikely that many authorities would want to provide grant assistance for the modernisation of internal facilities.

4.24 Financial assistance may in certain circumstances be made available to landlords in the private rented sector in line with the authorities overall policy for that sector reflecting local priorities. But local authorities should bear in mind the importance of the decency standard and in all cases provide advice and support to owners to encourage them to achieve it.

## **b. Enforcement powers**

4.25 Local authorities have statutory duties to take enforcement action to deal with unfit properties and discretionary powers to deal with those in serious disrepair. When the Housing Health and Safety Rating System comes into force they will have a duty to take enforcement action against category one hazards and discretionary powers to enforce against category two hazards. Enforcement action will therefore remain a key part of the strategy to deal with non-decent homes, particularly dealing with those in the private rented sector. In relation to a local authority policy on the use of discretionary enforcement powers, authorities are expected to have regard to the PSA target and its focus on vulnerable households.

## **c. Limitations in securing the target**

4.26 However there will be some practical limitations in using the HHSRS to deliver decent homes. Firstly, the HHSRS enforcement legislation will enable local authorities to decide that, despite the presence of a Category 1 hazard, immediate enforcement action is unnecessary or not practicable. This may arise where, for example, the occupant is not vulnerable to the hazard in question, or the hazard is an integral feature of a listed building which cannot be dealt with and of which the occupants are fully aware. Secondly, although local authorities will have duties and powers to take enforcement action to deal with hazards in the interests of the health and safety of an owner or tenants, including powers of entry, they will have no power to go beyond that, against the wishes of the owner, in order to make a private sector home decent in other respects. This is likely to be a particular issue in relation to the criterion for reasonably modern facilities and services. The definition of this criterion already has a degree of flexibility built in as a dwelling can fail on two of the six items and still pass the standard. For example, a home can have both an 'old' kitchen and bathroom and still be decent if it meets the other criteria.

4.27 In summary, meeting the prevailing minimum statutory standard through enforcement will not always achieve the decent homes standard and relying on enforcement action alone is unlikely to result in a thriving and high quality private rented sector. Other elements of the policy toolkit will often be needed and local authorities working with partner agencies and services should seek to make all applicable private sector homes meet or exceed the decent homes standard wherever possible. However, if an owner elects not to modernise his home in this way, and not to accept assistance or advice from the local authority there is little more that can be done until there is a change of owner.

## **d. Definition of vulnerable**

4.28 Vulnerable households have been defined as those in receipt of at least one of the principal means tested or disability related benefits. For the purpose of establishing the national 2001 baseline from the English House Condition Survey the benefits taken into account were: income support, housing benefit, council tax benefit, disabled persons tax credit, income based job seekers allowance, working families tax credit, attendance allowance, disability living allowance, industrial injuries disablement benefit, war disablement pension.

4.29 The detailed definition of qualifying benefits used to define vulnerable will be subject to change and since 2001 a new range of tax credits has indeed been introduced with different qualifying thresholds. These are child tax credit, working tax credit and pension credit. The definition of vulnerable households used to monitor progress towards the target has therefore been amended as follows. In addition to the benefits described in the previous paragraph, pension credit will be included as a qualifying benefit. Also households in receipt of either working tax credit which includes a disability element or child tax credit will qualify as a vulnerable household providing the person entitled to the tax credit has a relevant income of less than £14,200, as defined for the purpose of determining eligibility for the tax credit. Working Families Tax Credit and Disabled Persons Tax credit have been abolished.

4.30 This is the definition of vulnerable which all local authorities should use to establish a baseline and monitor progress towards the decent homes target (see below). As explained above it will not

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necessarily have any direct connection with the eligibility criteria for financial assistance which the authority makes available and which will in practice be tailored to a more detailed appraisal of individual household circumstances.

## Section 5 - Measuring the baseline position and monitoring progress

### National monitoring

5.1 The national baseline was set at 1 April 2001 using data from the 2001 English House Condition Survey. There were 1.6 million non-decent homes in the social sector at that time. The national baseline figures quoted are for the number of dwellings currently failing on that date, and do not take account of projecting forward deterioration.

5.2 Progress towards the 2010 target will be monitored nationally through the same survey, which, from 2002, has been put on a continuous basis.

### Social landlords' assessment of the local baseline position

5.3 The Department has not cascaded specific targets for individual social landlords other than that all social housing should be decent by 2010. However, all social landlords should be setting targets for tackling their non-decent housing and monitoring their progress. This has been a Best Value Performance Indicator<sup>14</sup> from 2002/03.

5.4 Government Offices are working with local authorities and the Housing Corporation is working with RSLs to establish their plans and mechanisms for monitoring progress towards making their stock decent. Local authorities will be required to set targets and report on their progress as part of their Statistical Appendices to their HRA Business Plan. The Housing Corporation will monitor progress made by RSLs, which will be reported through the Regulatory Statistical Return.

5.5 Local monitoring requires the establishment of local baselines and setting realistic plans for delivery against targets, as well as establishing suitable mechanisms for on-going monitoring and reporting progress. Many landlords have already done this but may wish to refine initial estimates. Each criterion should be measurable through the data captured through a standard stock condition survey. In both the local authority and RSL sectors it is essential that all landlords are working to the same definition of a decent home so that we meet the 2010 target. At present many Local Authorities seem to be identifying too many homes as failing on criteria b and c, which require a dwelling to be failing on a combination of several measures, and too few failing on criteria d.

### Predicting Future Progress

5.6 The following paragraphs explain how to predict the future changes in levels of non-decent housing. *Decent Homes: Capturing the standard at the local level*<sup>15</sup> provides further details on how to collect the necessary information.

5.7 To address the problem of non-decent housing locally, social landlords need to understand the effect of different investment strategies on the level of non-decent homes. This requires an understanding of flows of stock into and out from non-decency and is part of investment appraisal. Key factors are:

- whether dwellings that are currently decent will deteriorate sufficiently to become non-decent in the planning period if no investment is made; and
- whether the type and extent of investment planned will make non-decent dwellings decent and prevent decent dwellings from becoming non-decent in the planning period.

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<sup>14</sup> Best Value Performance Indicators 2002/03 product code 99LG0110, available from the ODPM Publications Centre, see the imprint page of this document.

<sup>15</sup> Decent Homes: Capturing the standard at a local level, DTLR (ODPM) (March 2002) published as an Annex to Collecting, Managing and Using Housing Stock information.

5.8 The change in the number of non-decent homes from one year to the next is the net effect of these two flows. The year on year position would be simple to measure if a stock condition survey was repeated each year but this would not help in predicting how different investment plans would change the number of non-decent homes over the short and medium term. Nor is an annual stock condition survey necessary to estimate year on year change, provided there is good information about the dwellings on which investment is taking place together with a good property data base that includes data about the age of building components and their life expectancy.

5.9 Where non-decent properties are demolished, this can be counted as reducing the number of non-decent homes when reporting progress. These should be counted at the point at which demolition is scheduled rather than waiting for demolition to take place. The sale of properties through the Right to Buy or sold for any other reason also contributes to the reduction of non-decent homes in the social sector.

### **Estimating deterioration**

5.10 It is usually possible to predict which dwellings are likely to deteriorate and become non-decent. To do this, it may be helpful to classify dwellings into one of three categories:

- **Non-decent** a dwelling that fails now on one or more of the criteria;
- **Potentially non-decent** a dwelling that currently meets the standard but is likely to deteriorate and become non-decent if no work is done in the short term; and
- **Decent** a dwelling which does not require capital investment even in the short term to prevent it becoming non-decent.

5.11 One task in devising an investment programme is to determine what will happen to dwellings which are initially decent in the absence of any investment during the period in question. The following are factors that will influence whether or not there is deterioration:

- **age** - dwellings will fall below the defined standard over time (e.g. in modernity of facilities) simply because components are now a number of years older;
- **lack of preventative work** - many building elements will deteriorate in condition; they will show signs of increasing disrepair, and dampness or structural instability may appear; and
- **design** - e.g. layout of the kitchen, presence of insulation and heating system. These should not change over the period; no additional information is required to describe these features.

### **Predicting impact of investment**

5.12 The impact of different investment strategies on the future condition of the stock also needs to be estimated. The following considerations will need to be made:

- It may help to classify dwellings receiving investment as non-decent, potentially non-decent or decent before that investment is made.
- Where work is carried out, does it result in changes to the age of major building components and/or increases their remaining life? e.g. Replacing a building component sets its age to zero and maximises its remaining life.
- Where a dwelling is non-decent because it has some inherent design defect has it been remedied? In the case of thermal comfort, has the efficiency of the heating system been increased or insulation been improved?

5.13 Exogenous factors that will affect the level of non-decent housing need to be considered, e.g. the level of stock losses and gains, such as demolition, RTB sales, transfers and acquisitions.

5.14 The relative impacts of investing in non-decent, potentially non-decent and decent stock should be considered as part of the optional appraisal. One thing to consider will be the extent to which the number of non-decent dwellings is reduced. This will influence decisions on the level of investment on the decent, potentially non-decent and currently non-decent stock.

5.15 It will be necessary to carry out a stock condition survey periodically to re-quantify the number of non-decent homes.

### **Measuring the baseline position and monitoring progress - Private Sector**

5.16 The estimate of the national baseline - that nearly 1.2 million vulnerable households in the private sector were living in non-decent homes-is based on data from the 2001 English House Condition Survey. As explained in *The Decent Homes Target Implementation Plan*<sup>16</sup> this will be monitored annually at a national level.

5.17 The Decent Home Target Implementation Plan also sets out a trajectory for delivery that includes targets for specific years up to 2020 expressed as the proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in decent homes. The relevant target percentages are 65% by 2006, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2020. There is also a target that this proportion will increase year by year.

5.18 Precise targets have not been set at either a regional or local authority level. However, the new EHCS is of a sufficient sample size to produce reasonably reliable estimates of non-decent private sector homes at the regional level. The new EHCS will produce a reasonably reliable estimate of vulnerable households in non-decent homes at the regional level from 2005. This will be updated annually from then using a combination of new data and modelling. Regional housing strategies, which are being developed by the new Regional Housing Boards, will include a policy to address this issue which is consistent with the overall national PSA7 target.

5.19 At local authority level Circular 05/2003 emphasises the need for private sector housing renewal strategies to be evidence based and that identifying local issues, needs and expectations within localities is a vital step in establishing robust policies.

5.20 In reviewing their strategies, local authorities are expected to identify the level of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households in their authority and within the level of resources available to produce a robust and consistent policy response to the problem. This response needs to be sufficient to ensure that, at the national level, targets for private sector decent homes are being achieved. Consistency with the national target is difficult to define precisely in central guidance and is a matter for discussion with Government Offices in relation to policy priorities set out in the Regional Housing Strategies and the individual local authority Housing Strategies. The policy should, however, be robust enough to secure, at local authority level, a year on year increase in the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes and as a minimum to reach the same target figure of 70% by 2010 as set nationally.

5.21 In establishing a baseline position local authorities will need to undertake a stock condition survey. ODPM guidance *Collecting, Managing and using Housing Stock Information: Good Practice guidance*<sup>17</sup> is relevant for this exercise.

5.22 However, local authorities will need to go beyond a basic stock condition survey. As paragraph 2.33 of circular 05/2003 points out housing stock condition information in isolation will be insufficient as a basis for developing policy. An understanding of the local housing market and the financial circumstances of homeowners will be essential ingredients.

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<sup>16</sup> The Decent Homes Target Implementation Plan, ODPM, 2002  
[www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm\\_housing/documents/page/odpm\\_house\\_022985.pdf](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellant/groups/odpm_housing/documents/page/odpm_house_022985.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Collecting, managing and using housing stock information: A Good Practice Guide, ODPM, (2000).

5.23 Local authorities will therefore need to establish a baseline position that will include the following key information:

- the number of non-decent private sector dwellings in the owner-occupied and private rented sectors;
- the reasons for these dwellings failing the decency standard in relation to the four criteria and the approximate cost of rectifying the problem;
- the number of vulnerable households living in the private sector and the proportion of them living in non-decent homes; and
- an analysis of the local housing market with an emphasis on the present and future levels of un-mortgaged equity in the target non-decent properties occupied by vulnerable households and the socio-economic circumstances of the occupiers. This analysis will help to determine the appropriate policy response in terms of the potential for loans and equity release policies in addition to grants.

5.24 As part of the strategy process local authorities will also need to be in a position to monitor and report on progress towards increasing the percentage of vulnerable households in decent homes in their area. It is recommended that this should be done by **a systematic recording of policy outputs**. This should include the number of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households which:

- are made decent through assistance/enforcement;
- received assistance/enforcement action but where the full decency standard not achieved; and
- are not made decent because assistance was rejected by the owner.

5.25 Every effort should also be made by authorities to collect information from partners on the number of target homes which have been made decent by other programmes such as Warm Front or as part of a low demand pathfinder programme or other regeneration project.

5.26 Authorities already provide a limited amount of information on the number of households they have assisted annually to ODPM through the P4 return and all authorities are strongly encouraged to provide this data. The P4 form is being kept under review in order to capture as much as possible of this additional information on action to tackle non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households.

5.27 The output measures described above will only be able to demonstrate on an annual basis the rate at which the baseline problem is being tackled by the local authority. This analysis will not take into account the level of stock deterioration, private renewal activity or changes in the numbers of vulnerable households. A repeat of the stock condition survey together with the related survey of socio-economic data will therefore be necessary at periodic intervals as recommended in ODPM's guidance on stock surveys.

5.28 We have produced a set of look up tables that will assist local authorities in estimating levels of vulnerable households living in non-decent homes in their area which will help prior to an LA establishing that information for themselves. The Ready Reckoner is based on the association between vulnerable households living in non decent homes in any given district and the level of deprivation and age of the private sector dwelling stock in that area. It models local measures of the problem from district-level input of:

- the 'deprivation group' to which each district has been assigned; and
- the age profile of the private sector stock for the district.

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The Ready Reckoner for PSA7 private sector vulnerable households in non-decent homes is available on the ODPM web site<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> [www.odpm.gov.uk/decenthomes](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/decenthomes)

## **Section 6 - Delivering Decent Homes: Part of a Wider Strategy for Regeneration**

6.1 Delivering decent homes is a commitment in the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal and has a key role to play in narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. Delivery needs to be part of a holistic approach to regeneration which is about more than just 'bricks and mortar' and which makes the right linkages to wider regeneration objectives such as improving health and education outcomes, renewing failing housing markets and tackling poverty.

6.2 The following issues should be considered in delivering decent homes:

- investment in decent homes should take place in neighbourhoods with sustainable demand in the long term;
- expenditure on decent homes needs to be informed by a good understanding of the housing market - particularly in areas suffering from low housing demand, such as the market renewal pathfinder areas. Where demand for housing is not sustainable in the long term, demolition of the existing stock may represent a better option than refurbishment; and
- where wider regeneration is an issue, the delivery of decent homes should form part of a wider strategy for neighbourhood renewal.

6.3 Investment in decent homes can help to maximise the impact of regeneration spending funded from other sources - and regeneration spending can help to satisfy tenant priorities and ensure that decent homes are located within sustainable neighbourhoods.

6.4 The delivery of decent homes should work towards regeneration priorities identified in community strategies and local neighbourhood renewal strategies and should be co-ordinated with other regeneration initiatives such as low demand pathfinders, New Deal for Communities schemes. Housing providers should engage in efforts to deliver local regeneration priorities, provided that lenders are satisfied that this does not create inappropriate risks to the social housing assets.

6.5 Delivery of decent homes should be seen as part of a wider goal to improve public service delivery and the standard of living for vulnerable people and disadvantaged groups. It makes a major contribution to wider objectives by tackling fuel poverty, reducing health inequalities and addressing child poverty. Decent homes implementation should be linked to delivery of these wider objectives. Local Strategic Partnerships have a key role to play in bringing together local stakeholders to facilitate joined-up delivery.

## Annex A - The Fitness Standard

1. The current fitness standard was introduced by the *Local Government and Housing Act 1989*<sup>19</sup>, which inserted a new s.604 in the *Housing Act 1985*. A dwelling is unfit if, in the opinion of the authority, it fails to meet one of the requirements set out in paragraphs (a) to (i) of s.604 (1) and, by reason of that failure, is not reasonably suitable for occupation. The requirements constitute the minimum deemed necessary for a dwelling house (including a house in multiple occupation) to be fit for human habitation. They are that a dwelling house should:

- be free from serious disrepair;
- be structurally stable;
- be free from dampness prejudicial to the health of the occupants;
- have adequate provision for lighting, heating and ventilation;
- have an adequate piped supply of wholesome water;
- have an effective system for the drainage of foul, waste and surface water;
- have a suitably located WC for exclusive use of the occupants;
- have a bath or shower and wash-hand basin, with hot and cold water; and
- have satisfactory facilities for the preparation and cooking of food including a sink with hot and cold water.

2. The fitness standard applies to both houses and flats. Flats (including flats in multiple occupation) are assessed under the requirements set out in paragraph 1 above, but the legislation also explicitly states that flats can be considered as unfit if the building or part of the building outside the flat fails to meet any of the following requirements and by reason of that failure the flat is not suitable for occupation:

- the building or part is structurally stable;
- it is free from serious disrepair;
- it is free from dampness;
- it has adequate provision for ventilation; and
- it has an effective system for the drainage of foul, surface and waste water.

3. The 1989 Act introduced changes to the standard: the addition of new requirements for heating and basic amenities; the extension of lighting to cover artificial lighting; the omission of the previous requirement concerning internal arrangement; and a change to the means by which fitness is judged.

4. Under the current standard a dwelling house is unfit if, in an authority's view, it fails to meet any one of the requirements and because of that failure is not reasonably suitable for occupation. Previously authorities were required to look at the range of requirements and decide whether a property was unfit in respect of any one, or a combination, of the requirements. The rationale for the 1989 Act changes was that of improving the objectivity of the standard and, by covering provision for heating and amenities such as personal washing facilities, known to be important to health, to better reflect modern expectations.

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<sup>19</sup> Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (c.42) [www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/ukpga\\_1980042\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/ukpga_1980042_en_1.htm)

5. Advisory guidance is provided on interpreting each of the fitness standard requirements. This has been reproduced with minor updating references in Annex A of DOE circular 17/96 which consolidates extant guidance to local authorities on private sector renewal and covers the provisions in Part 1 of the *Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996*<sup>20</sup>. Annex B of circular 17/96 provides a revised code of statutory guidance for dealing with unfit premises to which local authorities are required to have regard in reaching decisions on fitness enforcement action.

### **Introduction of Housing Health and Safety Rating System**

6. As mentioned in Section 3, the Government intends to replace the Fitness Standard with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). We intend that, with the introduction of HHSRS, the decent home standard should instead include a requirement that a decent home should be free of Category 1 hazards - that is, hazards serious enough to trigger a duty on local authorities to take enforcement action.

7. We are switching from the fitness standard to an approach which focuses upon the health and safety risks of housing conditions on occupants' health and well being.

8. As outlined in the *Collecting, managing and using housing stock information*<sup>21</sup> it is recommended that the new system should be incorporated into any new surveys that landlords are carrying out.

9. Before carrying out a refurbishment programme to make houses decent landlords ought to assess whether there are any Category 1 hazards present and remedy these hazards at the same time as refurbishment is taking place. Additional guidance for landlords on the HHSRS will be published mid 2004.

10. There will be no expectation on landlords to carry out a new stock condition survey as soon as the legislation that will bring HHSRS into force is enacted. Landlords should build HHSRS into their next scheduled survey - doing this in advance if a survey is planned pre enactment. However, a HHSRS assessment undertaken as part of a sample survey will only provide indicative information and is unlikely to be sufficiently detailed for use in enforcement.

### **What will the impact be?**

11. In 2001, there were just under 7 million non-decent homes under the current definition. Replacing unfitness with Category 1 hazards will increase that figure by around 450,000. Of these, only around 20,000 will be in the social sector. By far the greatest number will be in the private sector. This shows that there is still much to do in the private sector and that we are right to move the emphasis towards the health and safety impact of poor housing.

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<sup>20</sup> Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 [www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1996/1996053.htm](http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1996/1996053.htm)

<sup>21</sup> *Collecting, managing and using housing stock information* published August 2002, DETR. In March 2002, DTLR published a new Annex to this guidance entitled *Decent Homes: Capturing the standard at a local level*.

## Annex B - Component lifetimes and definition of 'in poor condition' used in the national measurement of the disrepair criterion

1. Table 1 shows the component lifetimes within the disrepair criterion to assess whether the building components are 'old'. These are used to construct the national estimates of the number of dwellings that are decent and those that fail. These lifetimes are those considered appropriate for use in planning for newly arising renewal works for social landlords. They are the same as those used to calculate the MRA which were agreed following consultation in November 1999. Landlords will wish to consider whether these lifetimes are appropriate within their own stock for predicting the age at which the component ceases to function effectively.

<b>Building components (key components marked*)</b>	<b>Houses and bungalows</b>	<b>All flats in blocks of below 6 storeys</b>	<b>All flats in blocks of 6 or more storeys</b>
Wall structure*	80	80	80
Lintels*	60	60	60
Brickwork (spalling)*	30	30	30
Wall finish*	60	60	30
Roof structure*	50	30	30
Roof finish*	50	30	30
Chimney*	50	50	N/A
Windows*	40	30	30
External doors*	40	30	30
Kitchen <sup>22</sup>	30	30	30
Bathrooms	40	40	40
Heating central heating gas boiler*	15	15	15
Heating central heating distribution system	40	40	40
Heating other*	30	30	30
Electrical systems*	30	30	30

<sup>22</sup> Kitchens are assumed to require replacing on grounds of repair every 30 years, bathrooms every 40 years. Therefore the age aspects in the disrepair criterion are set at 30 and 40 years respectively. These lifetimes were agreed following consultation on the MRA. However, it is clear that social landlords and tenants prefer these amenities to be replaced more frequently, to enable them to be maintained at a reasonably modern standard. Thus different ages are required for kitchens and bathrooms under the reasonably modern facilities and services criterion.

## In poor condition

2. Table 2 sets out the definitions used within the disrepair criterion to identify whether building components are 'in poor condition'. These are consistent with EHCS definitions and will be the standard used to monitor progress nationally through the EHCS. Social landlords should consider appropriate minimum standards to use for their own local assessment and measurement of progress. For example, some will decide it appropriate to replace the whole roof covering if more than one third needs to be replaced (compared with one half used for national estimates).

3. During a stock condition survey, the surveyors should assess the extent to which individual building components require immediate work. Their judgement should be used to assess whether the components should be classified as in poor condition at the time of inspection or not. The general line used in the EHCS is that, where a component requires some work, repair should be prescribed rather than replacement unless:

- the component is sufficiently damaged that it is impossible to repair;
- the component is unsuitable, and would be even it were repaired, either because the material has deteriorated or because the component was never suitable;
- (for external components) even if the component were repaired now, it would still need to be replaced within 5 years.

<b>Table 2: Definition of 'poor condition' used in disrepair criterion</b>	
<b>Definition of 'poor condition' used in EHCS</b>	
<b>Wall structure</b>	Replace 10% or more or repair 30% or more
<b>Wall finish</b>	Replace/repoint/renew 50% or more
<b>Chimneys</b>	1 chimney need partial rebuilding or more
<b>Roof structure</b>	Replace 10% or more or strengthen 30% or more
<b>Roof covering</b>	Replace or isolated repairs to 50% or more
<b>Windows</b>	Replace at least one window or repair/replace sash or member to least two (excluding easing sashes, reglazing painting)
<b>External doors</b>	Replace at least one
<b>Kitchen</b>	Major repair or replace 3 or more items out of the 6 (cold water drinking supply, hot water, sink, cooking provision, cupboards, worktop)
<b>Bathroom</b>	Major repairs or replace 2 or more items (bath, wash hand basin, WC)
<b>Electrical system</b>	Replace or major repair to system
<b>Central heating boiler</b>	Replace or major repair
<b>Central heating distribution</b>	Replace or major repair
<b>Storage heaters</b>	Replace or major repair

## **Annex C - Clarifying the Roles of Key Delivery Supporters**

### **Background**

1. The PSA Plus Review recommended that there needs to be better integration of the roles and responsibilities of the key supporters of delivery.
2. Local authorities need to be clear about the roles of those working with them and likewise ODPM need to ensure that the information and intelligence being collected is accurate and up to date.
3. The following aims to clarify the roles of the Government Offices, the Community Housing Task Force and the Housing Inspectorate in:
  - Securing the delivery of robust and signed off Option Appraisals, by no later than July 2005, that are fit for purpose, tenant focused and lead to a delivery plan for decent homes.
  - Ensuring there is a shared understanding amongst GOR, CHTF, HI and ODPM of local authorities' progress in their chosen option.
  - Providing clarity on the risk each local authority poses to the achievement of the 2010 target so a staircase of intervention and support can be predicted at an early enough stage to ensure delivery by all authorities.

### **Government office**

- Ensuring delivery of decent homes by local authorities in its region.
- Supporting the development of regional housing strategies, establishment of regional housing boards and their focus on decisions about resource allocation.
- Input to Audit Commission in determining local authority improvement plans post CPA and supporting LAs in implementation of improvement plans.
- Providing ODPM with quarterly reports on those at risk of delivery.
- Facilitating use by LAs of appropriate support services, for example setting up mentoring opportunities between authorities.
- Signing off options appraisals.

### **CHTF**

- Supporting Local Authorities in Option Appraisals and promoting good practice.
- Ensuring tenants are effectively engaged in the process.
- Developing capacity of LA's to engage in exploring alternative investment options.
- Helping LAs develop the right skills to enable them to deliver.
- Providing specialist input to support authorities and tenants through the chosen stock option - ALMO, PFI, Transfer.
- Providing support to colleagues on ALMO, PFI and transfer programmes, updating on progress of authorities and input to assessments.
- Ensuring that the chosen option delivers decent homes, creates a better organisation, empowers tenants and the community, improves the strategic role of the local authority and stimulates neighbourhood renewal and, where appropriate, sustainable regeneration.

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- Helping LAs understand the complexities of the financial arrangements that flow from the different investment options.
- Facilitating and encouraging the development and dissemination of good practice and shared learning.
- Providing practical input to policy colleagues in the production of guidance and policy.

### **Housing Inspectorate**

- Assessing the capacity and capability of district councils that own their housing stock to meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010 under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework.
- Building on the outcomes of single tier CPA to assess the risks of local authorities not meeting the Decent Homes standard and agreeing with these authorities how to go about delivering the standard within Government time scales.
- Inspecting arm's length management organisations (ALMOs) to ensure they deliver high quality housing services and also have the capacity to bring their housing stock up to the Decent Homes standard.
- Helping the ODPM to monitor the performance of ALMOs by assessing how they have implemented improvement plans and responded to recommendations in inspection reports.
- Providing advice to ALMOs and prospective ALMOs about the inspection process.
- Providing written guidance to ALMOs on achieving excellence in housing management and the inspection of governance arrangements.
- Inspecting the repairs and maintenance services and asset management strategies of housing associations to assess their ability to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard by 2010.
- Publishing research and good practice advice on the delivery of Decent Homes (and related issues) by local authorities and housing associations from inspection, audit and other evidence.

Further copies of this guidance are available from:

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
ODPM Free Literature  
PO Box 236  
Wetherby  
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LS23 7NB

Tel: 0870 1226 236

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Or via the ODPM web site