

Resource 1:

WHQS information template



What Tenants Want!

NEW **UPDATED** VERSION



Acknowledgements

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Thanks also to Monica Keeble who produced the template with support from Tamsin Stirling, Simon Inkson, Liza Fleming, Elin Jones, Jo Baldwin, Cerys Jones and Keith Edwards.

We would particularly like to thank all the tenants who took part in the focus groups for sharing their views and experiences so generously.

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What Tenants Want resources are available on line in Welsh and English at www.whq.org.uk/i2i

Revised and updated September 2007

Introduction

This is an updated version of an information template produced by the Welsh Assembly Government **i2i - inform to involve** project. **i2i** has been established to help ensure that tenants have access to clear, accurate and appropriate information about how their landlord will achieve WHQS – the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

This template is based largely on discussions with 95 tenants taking part in 12 focus groups. Participants included tenant representatives who were knowledgeable and experienced about WHQS and the implications for their Council, as well as tenants who have never been involved in tenant participation activities and who knew little or nothing about WHQS. This template sets out the key areas of information that tenants *themselves* want to know about the process of bringing their homes and communities up to standard and maintaining it afterwards. It is part of a suite of *What Tenants Want!* resources that includes:

- > **resource 2: how to provide information**
- > **resource 3: good practice in information for tenants**

The focus groups resulted in a number of consistent messages for local authorities and tenant organisations:

- the range of issues that tenants want good quality information on is very wide;
- tenants want to be able to compare 'side-by-side' what the consequences are for any options they are being offered;
- there should be consistency and clarity in the terms used – as a consequence we have opted to use the term *RSL - registered social landlord* throughout to describe housing associations and community housing mutuals.

Because the process of providing information is on going we welcome feedback to help improve current and future resources developed by the **i2i** project.

how to use this template

The template can be used by local authorities and tenants organisations to engage tenants in the WHQS process. It has the following sections:

Section 1: providing tenants with **basic WHQS information**

Section 2: dealing with any **changes to tenants rights and conditions**

Section 3: achieving WHQS if the proposal is that **the council remains the landlord**

Section 4: achieving WHQS if the proposal is to **transfer to a new landlord**

Each section follows the format:

- the **information** tenants want and therefore should have the right to know;
- the most **frequently asked questions** (FAQs) by tenants;
- a space for **answers** to FAQs by the landlord.

It is important to recognise that tenants also have statutory rights to information that they might not have identified as a priority during this project. In addition, as the process of achieving WHQS develops in different parts of Wales there will inevitably be new and equally relevant questions. The template should therefore not be seen as the absolute final word on the information needs of tenants but rather as a resource to be adapted and developed locally.

Although aimed at tenants we hope the template and guide will help develop thinking on the information requirements of other key stakeholders such as staff and elected members.

Section 1: basic WHQS information

This section responds to tenants' desire for clear information on WHQS. It distinguishes between the two major types of social landlord – **local authorities** and **registered social landlords** (RSL). It also draws a distinction between the two major types of RSL – **housing associations** and **community housing mutuals**. It should be noted that in practice housing associations can also be set up with similar objectives and governance structures to mutual organisations.

This section includes the basic information tenants want to know about:

- what the Welsh Housing Quality Standard is;
- the different options available to the council to achieve WHQS;
- the different types of social landlord;
- the different types of RSL;
- who RSLs are accountable to and how they are managed;
- who will work for a new landlord;
- how RSLs get the money to invest;
- how stable and secure RSLs are.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW	MOST FAQs BY TENANTS	ANSWERS
<p>What the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is</p>	<p>What is WHQS?</p> <p>What are the improvements that will have to be done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in my home? • to the outside of my home? • within the local community? 	
<p>The different options available to the council to achieve WHQS</p>	<p>What are the council doing to see if they can afford to meet the WHQS?</p> <p>What are the options the council will consider if it cannot afford to reach the WHQS?</p> <p>Will the council remain my landlord?</p> <p>Are the council proposing to transfer the stock to a registered social landlord (RSL)?</p> <p>Will there be vote?</p> <p>Can the options of Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) or Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs), be considered by my council?</p> <p>Is there a 'fourth' option?</p>	

<p>What different types of social landlord there are</p>	<p>What are the main differences between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local authorities? • registered social landlords (RSLs)? 	
		<p>Housing Association</p>
<p>What a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) is</p>	<p>What are the main differences between:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing association RSLs? • community mutual RSLs? <p>Is an RSL a 'private' company'?</p> <p>Is an RSL a charity?</p>	<p>Community Mutual</p>
<p>How an RSL is managed</p>	<p>How is an RSL managed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will councillors be represented? • will tenants be represented? • who else might be involved in managing the organisation? 	

<p>Who RSLs are accountable to</p>	<p>Is an RSL accountable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to councillors? • to tenants? • to banks and lenders? • to anyone else? <p>Who will monitor what the RSL does and how it spends its money?</p> <p>If the proposal is to transfer to an existing RSL will their current tenants have a say?</p>		
<p>Who will be working for the RSL</p>	<p>Will the current officers at the council work for the RSL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senior managers? • housing officers? • repairs and maintenance staff (direct labour)? • sheltered housing wardens? • other staff? 		

<p>Who will do the WHQS improvement work for the RSL</p>	<p>Will the WHQS work be carried out by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSL staff / direct labour? • large contractors? • local small businesses? • combinations of the above? 		
<p>How the RSL gets the money to do the work to reach WHQS</p>	<p>Where does the RSL borrow money from to do the work to reach WHQS?</p> <p>Will the RSL be an ethical borrower?</p> <p>How does the RSL pay the money back?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from rents? • by other ways? 		
<p>How stable and secure an RSL is</p>	<p>What would happen to my home if an RSL went bust? Would my home have to be sold?</p> <p>What will happen if interest rates go up?</p> <p>What would happen if the RSL ran out of money before it had done all the work to reach the WHQS?</p>		

Section 2: changes to my rights and conditions as a tenant

This section is based on the firm views of tenants that they want them to compare the consequences for them if they remain council tenants or transfer to an RSL. **i2i** recommends that all such information is considered 'side by side' so that tenants can clearly see any differences between options. It includes information tenants want to know about:

- how the way they vote in a ballot will affect them;
- what will happen to rents;
- any changes to their rights;
- what will happen to the repairs service;
- what will happen to housing management services;
- any additional charges they may have to pay;
- the effects on any benefits they receive;
- how they will be consulted and have opportunities to participate;
- what will happen to community amenities and services.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW	MOST FAQs BY TENANTS	YES VOTE my home is transferred to an RSL	NO VOTE my home is retained by the Council
<p>How the way I vote in a ballot will affect me</p>	<p>What will be the main changes to my rent, rights and services?</p>		
<p>What will happen to my rent now and in the future</p>	<p>Will my rent go up?</p> <p>If so, how much will it go up by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • straight away? • in the future? <p>Will there be any limit to how much my rent can go up?</p> <p>What about the rents of new tenants?</p>		
<p>About any changes to my rights as a tenant</p>	<p>Will I still have the right to buy?</p> <p>Will there be any changes to my security of tenure?</p> <p>Will there be any alteration to my warden service? (sheltered housing)</p> <p>Will there be extra rules and regulations? (eg no ball games)</p> <p>Can I still exchange or transfer?</p>		

<p>About the repairs service</p>	<p>Will I get the same standard of repair service I get now?</p> <p>Who will be responsible for maintaining common areas?</p> <p>How will I make contact to get a repair done?</p> <p>Will I have to pay to have repairs done?</p> <p>Who will carry out my repairs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people employed directly by my landlord? • private contractors? <p>How will repairs be inspected to make sure they are done to a good standard?</p>		
<p>How anti social behaviour will be dealt with</p>	<p>How will anti social behaviour be dealt with?</p>		
<p>How rents will be collected</p>	<p>How and where will I pay my rent?</p>		
<p>How arrears will be dealt with</p>	<p>What will happen if I get into arrears?</p>		

<p>Who my landlord will let homes to</p>	<p>Will my landlord let homes to people outside the area?</p>		
<p>How my landlord will meet the needs of homeless people</p>	<p>How will my landlord meet the needs of homeless people?</p>		
<p>How my landlord will meet particular needs</p>	<p>Will my landlord let its homes to a lot of people with problems or support needs?</p> <p>How will my landlord meet the needs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older people? • people with disabilities? • people with support needs? <p>Will my landlord carry out adaptations for tenants who need them?</p>		
<p>Where the housing offices will be</p>	<p>Where will the housing offices be?</p>		

changes to my rights and conditions as a tenant

<p>If I will have to pay any other charges</p>	<p>Will I have to pay any new charges?</p> <p>If I pay service charge will they be put up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immediately? • in the long term? <p>Will my Council tax be put up?</p> <p>Will I have to pay for things I get free at the moment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repairs to roads or pavements? • rubbish collection? • grass cutting? • Other? 		
<p>How any benefits I receive will be affected</p>	<p>Will my entitlement to housing benefit change?</p> <p>Will I be entitled to income support?</p> <p>Will I be entitled to family credit?</p>		
<p>How I will be consulted and have opportunities to participate</p>	<p>What opportunities will there be for me to have a say in they way my home and community is managed?</p> <p>How will I receive information about my home and services?</p> <p>Will the information provided take into account different needs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people with sight problems? • those with hearing problems? • people whose first language isn't English? • other needs? 		

<p>What will happen to community amenities and services</p>	<p>What will happen to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playgrounds and kick-about areas? • gardens and common areas? • waste ground? • community buildings? • youth clubs? • shops? • any other amenities? <p>Will local services be maintained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • street lighting? • street cleansing? • refuse collection? • pavements? • grass cutting? • drain maintenance? • any other services? <p>Will our roads be adopted and maintained by the council?</p>		
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Section 3: achieving WHQS if I remain a council tenant

This section is based on the information tenants want if their landlord decides to retain its housing stock or there is a 'no' vote in a ballot to transfer to a new RSL. It includes sections on:

- how the council will achieve WHQS;
- how this will be monitored;
- the type of work to be carried out;
- the timetable for carrying out the work;
- who will carry out the work;
- disruption or disturbance to tenants;
- compensation payments;
- tenant choices;
- a code of conduct for contractors;
- arrangements for liaison with tenants during the work;
- final inspection of the work;
- a complaints procedure.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW	MOST FAQs BY TENANTS	ANSWERS
<p>How the Council will achieve WHQS</p>	<p>Where will the Council get the money from if it decides to remain my landlord?</p> <p>Has the Council got the money it needs to achieve and maintain the standard?</p> <p>Is the Council allowed to make its own standard that is different from WHQS?</p> <p>Could the Council afford to do day to day repairs if they were spending all their money on improvements?</p> <p>Will other services be cut to achieve WHQS?</p> <p>Will my rent go up to pay for the improvements to meet the standard?</p> <p>If so, how much will it go up?</p> <p>Will I get an opportunity to vote on whether I agree that the council should remain my landlord?</p>	

<p>What will be done to monitor the progress in achieving WHQS</p>	<p>Will there be independent monitoring of the Council's progress, to make sure it will achieve WHQS by 2012? If so, who will carry out the monitoring? What action will be taken by the Assembly if my council do not achieve WHQS by 2012?</p>	
<p>What will be done to make sure the council maintains WHQS after 2012</p>	<p>Will there be independent monitoring to make sure the Council maintains my home to WHQS after 2012? If so who will carry out the monitoring? What action will be taken by the Assembly if my council do not maintain my home to WHQS after 2012?</p>	

<p>The work that will be carried out to my home</p>	<p>Will I have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new kitchen? • a new bathroom? • showers fitted as standard? • insulated walls? • a downstairs toilet? • double glazing? • a double skinned front door? • re-rendering? • redecoration? • rewiring? • up to date central heating? • anything else? 	
<p>The work that will be carried out outside my home</p>	<p>Will work be done to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pathways? • fencing / walls? • gardens? • outside lighting? • outside seating? • CCTV? • anything else? 	

<p>The work that will be carried out in my local community</p>	<p>Will work be done to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roads, pavements and alleyways? • speed bumps? • community gardens? • other community facilities? • anything else? 	
<p>What will happen to non-traditional homes</p>	<p>How will steel frame houses be brought up to the standard if they have sub standard sized kitchens and poor storage facilities?</p> <p>Will non-traditional homes have to be demolished?</p> <p>If my home is demolished what compensation will I get?</p>	

<p>What the timescales for carrying out the work will be</p>	<p>Will each area be given a timescale explaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what work will be carried out? • when the work will be carried out? • how long the work will take to complete? <p>Will I be given proper notice of what is going to be done and when?</p> <p>Will the areas where homes are in worst condition get done first?</p>	
<p>How the work to be carried out will affect me and the people who live with me</p>	<p>How much disturbance will there be to my home while the work is being done?</p> <p>Will I need to move out while the work is being done?</p> <p>Will I be offered a temporary home in the same area?</p> <p>What will I be expected to do before moving out?</p> <p>What help will I get moving?</p> <p>How long will I have to move out for?</p> <p>What is the work going to involve and how will it affect me?</p> <p>Will I be able to use my kitchens / bathroom while the work is going on?</p> <p>How will tenants in sheltered housing manage?</p> <p>How will tenants with other needs / disabilities manage?</p>	

<p>About any compensation I may be entitled to</p>	<p>Will I receive any compensation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • home loss payments? • disturbance allowances? • other payments? <p>How much will any compensation be and how will it be calculated?</p> <p>When will it be paid?</p> <p>What will I be expected to pay for myself?</p> <p>What can I do if I am not happy with the payments I am offered?</p>	
<p>About any choices I have on the work to be done</p>	<p>Do I have the right to refuse to have improvements carried out to my home?</p> <p>If I have put in new kitchens and bathrooms will these have to be taken out?</p> <p>Will I have a choice of kitchen units and of bathroom fittings?</p> <p>Will I be able to choose colours?</p> <p>Will I have any other choices?</p>	

<p>The standard to which work will be carried out</p>	<p>Will the work be carried out to a good quality standard?</p> <p>Will the work be awarded to the best, not the cheapest contractors?</p>	
<p>Who will carry out the work and how they will behave</p>	<p>Will work be carried out by staff working directly for my landlord or by independent contractors?</p> <p>Will any contractors be local?</p> <p>Will there be opportunities for local people in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • jobs? • apprenticeships / training? <p>Will there be support for local people to set up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small businesses? • community / social enterprises? <p>Will contractors be allowed to sub-contract?</p> <p>Is there the capacity locally to carry out the work and still do day to day repairs?</p>	

<p>The Code of Conduct for anyone working in my home</p>	<p>Will a Code of Conduct be agreed with tenants for all people working in my home?</p> <p>What will be done to ensure that whoever does the work will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be clean & tidy? • be polite and courteous? • protect carpets? • have respect for tenants' possessions? • be punctual and keep to agreed times? • give proper warning before turning off water or electricity? • turn water or electricity on again before they leave for the day? • clean up after them at the end of each day? • have respect for privacy? • have respect for individuals culture and religious beliefs? <p>and will not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the toilet in my home? • smoke in the house? • walk in the house in dirty boots? • shout or sing loudly or play loud music in the house? • use bad language in the house? • discuss personal or lifestyle issues with others? 	
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<p>How to to get in touch if something goes wrong</p>	<p>How do I complain if I'm not happy?</p> <p>What will be done to put right any complaint I make?</p> <p>Who do I complain to if I remain unhappy?</p> <p>Who can tenants get in touch with if something goes wrong during the work?</p> <p>Will there be a clerk of works / site supervisor for each area?</p> <p>Will there be a local tenant liaison officer?</p>	
<p>How work be inspected to make sure it is of good quality?</p>	<p>Will there be inspectors to check the quality and progress of the work?</p> <p>Will these include tenant inspectors?</p>	

Section 4: achieving WHQS if my home is transferred to another landlord

This section is based on the information tenants want if their landlord proposes to transfer its housing stock to an RSL. It sets out what will happen if tenants either vote in favour or against the proposal. It includes:

- how WHQS will be achieved and maintained;
- how this will be monitored;
- the type of work to be carried out;
- the timetable for carrying out the work;
- who will carry out the work;
- disruption or disturbance to tenants;
- compensation payments;
- tenant choices;
- a code of conduct for contractors;
- arrangements for liaison with tenants during the work;
- final inspection of the work;
- a complaints procedure.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW	MOST FAQs BY TENANTS	If my home is transferred to an RSL	If my home is retained by the Council
<p>How WHQS will be achieved</p>	<p>Where will the money come from to achieve and maintain WHQS?</p> <p>Could the landlord afford to do day to day repairs if they were spending all their money on improvements?</p> <p>Will other services be cut to achieve WHQS?</p> <p>Will my rent go up to pay for the improvements to meet the standard?</p> <p>If so, how much will it go up?</p> <p>Will I get a vote to decide who my landlord will be?</p>		
<p>What will be done to monitor the progress in achieving WHQS</p>	<p>Will there be independent monitoring of the progress to make the landlord will achieve WHQS by 2012?</p> <p>If so, who will carry out the monitoring?</p> <p>What action will be taken by the Assembly if the landlord does not achieve WHQS?</p>		

<p>What will be done to make sure my landlord maintains WHQS after 2012</p>	<p>Will there be independent monitoring to make sure the landlord maintains my home to the WHQS after 2012?</p> <p>If so who will carry out the monitoring?</p> <p>What action will be taken by the Assembly if my landlord does not maintain my home to WHQS after 2012?</p>		
<p>The work that will be carried out to my home</p>	<p>Will I have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new kitchen and bathroom? • showers fitted as standard? • insulated walls? • downstairs w.c.? • double glazing? • double skinned front door? • re-rendering? • redecoration? • rewiring? • up to date central heating? • anything else? 		

<p>The work that will be carried out outside my home</p>	<p>Will work be done to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pathways? • fencing/walls? • gardens? • outside lighting? • outside seats? • CCTV? • anything else? 		
<p>The work that will be carried out in my local community</p>	<p>Will work be done to improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roads, pavements and alleyways? • speed bumps? • community gardens? • other community facilities? • anything else? 		
<p>What will happen to non-traditional homes</p>	<p>How will steel frame houses be brought up to the standard if they have sub standard sized kitchens and poor storage facilities?</p> <p>Will non-traditional homes have to be demolished?</p> <p>If my home is demolished what compensation will I get?</p>		

<p>What the timescales for carrying out the work will be</p>	<p>Will each area be given a timescale explaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what work will be carried out? • when the work will be carried out? • how long the work will take to complete? <p>Will I be given proper notice of what is going to be done and when?</p> <p>Will the areas where homes are in worst condition get done first?</p>		
<p>How the work to be carried out will affect me and the people who live with me</p>	<p>How much disturbance will there be to my home while the work is being done?</p> <p>Will I need to move out while the work is being done?</p> <p>What will I be expected to do before moving out?</p> <p>Will I be offered a temporary home in the same area?</p> <p>What help will I get moving? How long will I have to move out for?</p> <p>What is the work going to involve and how will it affect me?</p> <p>Will we be able to use our kitchens / bathrooms while the work is going on?</p> <p>How will tenants in sheltered housing manage?</p> <p>How will tenants with other needs / disabilities manage?</p>		

<p>About any compensation I may be entitled to</p>	<p>Will I receive any compensation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • home loss payments? • disturbance allowance? • other payments? <p>How much will any compensation be and how it will be calculated?</p> <p>When will it be paid?</p> <p>What will I be expected to pay for myself?</p> <p>What can I do if I am not happy with the payment/s that I am offered?</p>		
<p>What choices I have about the work to be done</p>	<p>Do I have the right to refuse to have improvements carried out to my home?</p> <p>If I have put in new kitchens and bathrooms will these have to be taken out?</p> <p>Will I have a choice of kitchen units and of bathroom fittings? Will I be able to choose colours?</p> <p>Will I have any other choices?</p>		
<p>What quality the work will be done to</p>	<p>Will the work be carried out to a good quality standard? Eg decent quality kitchen units, front doors etc.?</p> <p>Will the work be awarded to the best, not the cheapest contractors?</p>		

<p>Who will carry out the work and how they will behave</p>	<p>Will work be carried out by staff working directly for my landlord or by independent contractors?</p> <p>Will any contractors be local?</p> <p>Will there be opportunities for local people in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • jobs? • apprenticeships / training? <p>Will there be support for local people to set up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small businesses? • community / social enterprises? <p>Will contractors be allowed to sub-contract?</p> <p>Is there the capacity locally to carry out the work and still do day to day repairs?</p>		
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<p>A Code of Conduct for anyone working in my home?</p>	<p>Will a Code of Conduct be agreed with tenants for all people working in my home? What will be done to ensure that whoever does the work will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be clean and tidy? • be polite and courteous? • protect carpets? • have respect for tenants' possessions? • be punctual and keep to agreed times? • give proper warning before? • turning off water or electricity? • turn water or electricity on again before they leave for the day? • clean up after them at the end of each day? • have respect for privacy? • have respect for individuals culture and religious beliefs? <p>and will not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the toilet in my home? • smoke in the house? • walk in the house in dirty boots? • shout or sing loudly or play loud music in the house? • use bad language in the house? • discuss personal or lifestyle issues with others? 		
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<p>How to get in touch if something goes wrong</p>	<p>How do I complain if I'm not happy? What will be done to put right any complaint I make? Who do I complain to if I remain unhappy? Who can tenants get in touch with if something goes wrong during the work? Will there be a clerk of works / site supervisor for each area? Will there be a local tenant liaison officer?</p>		
<p>Will the work be inspected to make sure it is of good quality?</p>	<p>Will there be inspectors to check the quality and progress of the work? Will these include tenant inspectors?</p>		

