

## WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (WHQS) WORKS IN THE VALE

### What is the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and how does it affect council tenants?

One of the key aims of the Welsh Government is to ensure that all the people of Wales, including social housing tenants, have the opportunity to live in good quality homes, in safe and secure communities.

To ensure that all homes are brought up to an acceptable level, The Welsh Government has drawn up a document, the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). This is a standard for the quality and condition of properties which lists a number of targets which all homes will need to meet.

### The WHQS document requires all social housing to be:

- In a good state of repair;
- Safe and secure;
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated;
- Equipped with up to date kitchens and bathrooms;
- Located in safe and attractive environments;
- Well managed.



Local authorities in Wales have until **2020** to ensure that all their social housing ticks these boxes and achieves the standard. This means improvement works will need to be carried out on all homes which do not currently meet this standard.

### How is the Vale of Council Housing & Building Services going to achieve the WHQS?

To ensure that WHQS can be achieved, the Housing & Building Services are now carrying out a comprehensive improvement works programme on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's properties. The major works programme will be completed in time for the 2017 deadline.

### How is the work being funded?

- Each year, the Council sets out an annual budget for Housing improvement works
- Over £13m was invested in housing improvement work in 2015/16
- Approximately £31m will be invested in 2016/17. This is funded by a combination of Council house rent income, borrowed money (prudential borrowing) and income from the sale of Council owned land and properties

- The Vale of Glamorgan Council also receives a Major Repairs Allowance. This is a capital grant of £2,769,620m provided by Welsh Government to local authorities who have retained their council housing stock

## **How is the Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing & Building Services going to achieve the WHQS?**

The Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing & Building Services owns over 3,940 social housing properties. This stock includes properties of various different ages, shapes and sizes, and built from all sorts of different materials. All of these properties will need to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by **2020**.

To ensure that this can be achieved, the Housing & Building Services are now carrying out a comprehensive improvement works programme on the Vale of Glamorgan's social housing. The major works programme will be completed where required in time for the 2017 deadline.

## **What improvements will happen to my property?**

### **External Works**

- Re-roofing;
- Asbestos Removal;
- External Fabric replacement/repairs.

Works may include re-pointing to the dwelling walls, repairing or replacing conventional render, replacing cladding and removal or repointing and/or re-building of chimney stacks.

- **Non-Traditional House Repair**

Works may include where required to achieve appropriate SAP Ratings the installation of external wall insulation and any associated works. NB- where properties receive external wall insulation they may also be subject to receiving a replacement roof as part of the scheme.

- **Communal Works**

Works may include replacement door entry systems, communal doors, fire alarm systems, electrical replacement, repainting and replacement lighting.

- **Other External Issues**

Works includes strengthening or replacing masonry walls which are deemed defective, works to drainage systems and the repair of concrete elements that have become defective. Can also include repairs, replacements or improvements to (where required and relevant) footpaths, outhouses/sheds, clothes drying facilities, boundaries (fencing, walls etc.).



### **When will the work be carried out to my property?**

All Vale of Glamorgan properties requiring External Works will receive written notice, well in advance of any planned improvement works starting, to give you time to prepare. All major works in this programme will be completed by the end of 2017. However, other works will continue to be built into the Business Plan and undertaken on a planned programme of works.

### **Who is carrying out the major works?**

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is working in partnership with a number of contractors to ensure all aspects of the improvement works can be carried out to a high standard. You will be notified by the Tenant Liaison Officer who the contractors are working in your area.

### **Will the work involve disruption to my home and is there any help and advice available?**

Carrying out improvement works on this scale will inevitably involve some disruption for tenants and we realise the external works may cause some upheaval e.g. emptying attic spaces and clearing of garden pots. We do hope that seeing the finished product will make it worthwhile, and there is help available.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council has employed Tenant Liaison Officers' who's role is to stay in touch with you while a particular aspect of the work is being carried out, help answer any queries you may have, and act as a point of contact between you and the Housing & Building Services.

Some of our contractors also have their own Resident Liaison Officers who have a similar role so there will always be a friendly face that you can contact while the work is going on, should any issues arise.

### **HOW is the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Service monitoring the quality of the work being carried out?**

Each aspect of the major work has to be inspected by one of the Housing Improvement Supervisors (HIS) Officers (Clerk of Works), before it can be signed off as 'completed'. The HIS Officer must be satisfied that the work achieves the Welsh Housing Quality Standard before they can sign off.

The Vale of Glamorgan uses a Working Group and Quality and Design Forum, made up of elected tenants, who regularly visit properties, speak to tenants, and perform 'mystery shopper' type inspections on properties where improvement work is taking place. Their findings are reported

back to the Housing & Building Service to help us maintain a high standard of work and address any issues which may arise.

Key Tenant Satisfaction Performance Questionnaires are completed with tenants by the Tenant Liaison Officers, once the works have been completed. The results are then collected, compared and analysed. Contractors are challenged regarding performance to ensure a high standard of work is maintained across the board.



### **What if the money runs out before work is carried out on my property?**

Every social housing property in the Vale of Glamorgan Council must achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by **the 2020** deadline. Our commitment and promise to you, the tenant, is that all your homes will achieve the standard in the next four years. No homes will be left behind.

<http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/housing-quality/welsh-standard/?lang=en>

### **What are ‘Community Benefit’ Schemes?**

The Welsh Government and the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s Housing & Building Services are committed to ensuring that the local economy sees the maximum value from every penny spent on the work to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Clauses are now included in all major contracts, requiring contractors who work with the Vale of Glamorgan Housing & Building Services to commit to ‘give something extra’ back to the local economy through Community Benefit schemes.

Schemes can include sponsoring local projects such as community gardens and sports teams, or refurbishing village halls, community centres, etc.

Community Benefits can also include taking on local workers, setting up apprenticeship schemes and purchasing stock and supplies from local businesses.

Over the last 12 months Community Benefit Schemes have resulted in:

- For every £1 spend on a contract over £1.82 has been reinvested in the Welsh economy;
- Apprenticeships – 2;

- Apprenticeship weeks worked – over 182;
- Short term unemployment reduction (people hired during period covered by this work) over 10;
- NVQ's completed – 2;
- Work experience – 4.