



# **Falkirk Council**

*HOUSING & SOCIAL WORK SERVICES*

## **Scottish Housing Quality Standard ~ Consultation**





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The Scottish Executive has set a standard which all social housing in Scotland must meet - the **Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)**. This paper explains the new Standard, what the Council is expected to do to meet the Standard and asks for your opinion on action that the Council should be taking.

**The Standard**

To achieve the **SHQS**, Falkirk Council must ensure that each house within our stock: -

- **Meets the 'Tolerable Standard'** - This is the lowest acceptable standard of housing that anyone should be expected to occupy. Examples of this are structural stability, provision of adequate lighting and availability of a wholesome water supply. It is not anticipated that the Council has any properties that fail the tolerable standard.
- **Is free from 'Serious Disrepair'** - The definition of serious disrepair is in two parts, primary and secondary building elements. Examples of primary elements include the walls and roof structures, foundations and internal floor structures. Where more than 20% of one **primary** element

is in need of repair or replacement then the property will be considered to be in serious disrepair and will fail the Standard. A property will also fail the Standard if two or more **secondary** building elements require 20% repair or replacement. Secondary building elements include, amongst others, roof covering, underground drainage, chimneys and windows.

- Is *'Energy Efficient'* - By taking measures to improve energy efficiency, heating costs can be reduced and make homes warmer and more comfortable to live in. This also benefits the environment by reducing CO2 emissions. The Council will need to ensure that each property has efficient full house central heating, 100mm of loft insulation where appropriate, cavity wall insulation where feasible, insulated hot water tanks / pipes and any other measures necessary to bring houses up to the required minimum standard.
  
- Has *'Modern Facilities and Services'* - This part of the standard covers kitchens and bathrooms. Bathrooms need to include a WC, bath or shower and wash hand basin in good and useable condition. Kitchens need to have sufficient storage, safe and sufficient worktop space, as well as sufficient power outlets. Kitchen fittings also need to be in good and useable condition. An item will fail where it requires repair or replacement of more than 25%.
  
- Is *'Healthy, Safe and Secure'* - The Council is required to ensure water pipes are free from lead and there is adequate ventilation in the kitchen and bathroom to prevent condensation and mould growth. Heating and wiring need to be in a safe condition as well as other facilities such as bin stores and drying areas. To ensure properties are safe, smoke detectors and adequate lighting need to be provided. Lastly, properties should have secure front and rear access doors, with front door entry systems fitted where access is to an enclosed common area.

## Standard Delivery Plan

The Council is required to ensure all its houses meet the **SHQS** by the year 2015. To make sure we achieve this, the Scottish Executive has asked the Council to produce a **Standard Delivery Plan** setting out what actions need to be taken and we are keen to get tenants' views on our plans and proposals.

The main way the Council will improve the housing stock to meet the Standard is through different types of improvement work carried out as part of its **Housing Investment Programme**, which has an annual value of £15m.

## The Housing Investment Programme

Currently, the **Housing Investment Programme** is planned on a three year basis and updated each year when new projects are added. Preparing the Housing Investment Programme in this way allows the Council to plan more effectively by focussing on the longer term.

The main types of work the **Housing Investment Programme** can cover include:-

- **Central heating systems** - to ensure homes are warm and comfortable.
- **Re-roofing and roughcasting of walls** - to maintain and improve the fabric of houses to avoid structural problems such as water penetration.
- **Double glazing** - to help reduce fuel bills and help sound insulation.
- **Kitchens and bathrooms** - to provide modern facilities and services.
- **Insulation of houses** (both internally and externally) to raise energy efficiency.
- **Re-wiring and other electrical works** - to ensure safety for tenants.
- **Door entry systems** - to improve safety and security for people living in flats.

It is important that we identify areas where the Council's houses might fail the SHQS to ensure we have adequate improvement plans in place and **House Condition Surveys** are a valuable way of collecting information for this purpose. Currently the main areas of expenditure in the Housing Investment Programme are external fabric improvements (roofs and walls), kitchen and bathroom renewal and energy efficiency works.

## Your Opinion

We are keen to get tenants' views.

- Do you feel the work in the Housing Investment Programme covers the most important house condition issues within the Falkirk area?
- If not what other types of work are important to you?
- Unfortunately all works required to meet the SHQS cannot be done at once. If the Council were able to offer a choice what types of work would you like to see done first?
- Falkirk Council does not receive any funding from the Scottish Executive to ensure that the SHQS is met. It has to borrow money and repay this

using money from the rents. Would you be willing to pay a higher rent to help fund more housing improvements?

- Do you have an opinion on the quality of service the Council currently provides using money from the rents?
- Are there any additional comments you would like to make regarding the content of this document?

If you would like to let us know what you think about these issues we want to hear from you. Your comments can be sent to: Strategic Support Unit, Denny Town House, 23 Glasgow Road, Denny, FK6 5DL.

Alternatively, if you are interested in finding out further information on the Scottish Housing Quality Standard or Falkirk Council's Standard Delivery Plan/Housing Investment Programme please contact Alex Barr for further information on 01324 504000.

*Consultation on issues like this can sometimes be difficult to organise effectively to make sure everyone has a chance to have their say. If you have a particular view on how you would want to be consulted, e.g. by letter, circular, public meeting, e mail etc. we would like to hear from you.*