

A Tenant's Guide to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard

Properties that must meet SHQS by April 2015

Not all properties in Scotland are directly affected by the SHQS deadline. Broadly speaking, about one quarter of all properties in Scotland must meet it by April 2015 and these are the properties of social housing landlords. Other public sector landlords who rent out properties, such as universities, the armed forces etc., are not required to bring their properties up to SHQS but may have their own standards which they apply. The following diagram shows where meeting SHQS is required and where it is not required:

Properties owned by owner-occupiers	Properties owned by private sector landlords	Properties owned by non-social housing public sector landlords	Properties owned by local authorities	Properties owned by Registered Social Landlords
Not required	Not required	Not required	Required by April 2015	Required by April 2015

Getting further information on SHQS

Detailed technical guidance on the SHQS written mainly for landlords, together with other more general SHQS information, is available on the SHQS page of the Scottish Government website at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/shqs>

However, given that the technical guidance in particular has been written for social landlords, some people might find parts of the guidance difficult to follow. We therefore recommend that if social housing tenants wish to discuss any aspects of the SHQS they should first contact their landlord through the usual channels by telephone, email or in writing.

In addition, tenants may wish to approach their local Registered Tenants Organisation about SHQS as it is possible that they may have had discussions with landlords already on this subject, or may have discussions planned in the future. Landlords should be able to put tenants in touch with the relevant tenants' organisations.

Other public bodies and SHQS

If landlords cannot answer tenants' questions on SHQS, or do not answer questions satisfactorily, then tenants can lodge a formal complaint with their landlord through the normal channels. If this proves unsatisfactory, they have the right to ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to look at the complaint. Tenants may find it helpful to contact the Ombudsman's office first by phone - they can call free on 0800 377 7330 - or they can find them online at www.spsso.org.uk or send their complaints to SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. The Ombudsman will normally only look at complaints made within 12 months of the date of the tenant becoming aware of the matter.

The Scottish Housing Regulator also has a leaflet which outlines the procedures for taking a complaint against a landlord further. <http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk>

Who wrote this guidance?

The diagram of the house, showing all of the 55 elements and 9 sub-elements of SHQS that need to be addressed by April 2015, was prepared by the Social Housing Policy Division and Communities Analytical Services Division of the Housing, Regeneration and Commonwealth Games Directorate, Scottish Government. It was compiled using information from the Technical Guidance on SHQS which was prepared in consultation with the Scottish Housing Regulator and a Technical Working Group consisting of social landlords nominated by the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA).



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ISBN: 978-1-78045-026-1

This document is also available on the Scottish Government website: www.scotland.gov.uk

APS Group Scotland
DPPAS11297 (03/11)

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March 2011



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Who is this guide for and what is it about?

Scottish Government is responsible for setting policies on the physical quality of social housing i.e. housing owned by councils or Registered Social Landlords, for example, housing associations. The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is the main measure of housing quality that we use to establish if properties reach the required minimum. The SHQS is not new. It was introduced in February 2004 and social landlords have until April 2015 to bring their houses up to the Standard. This short guide is for anyone who has an interest in the quality of social housing in Scotland, but it is aimed at tenants in particular.

Why is updated guidance required?

The original 2004 SHQS guidance for landlords needs to be refreshed and expanded to provide more technical detail.

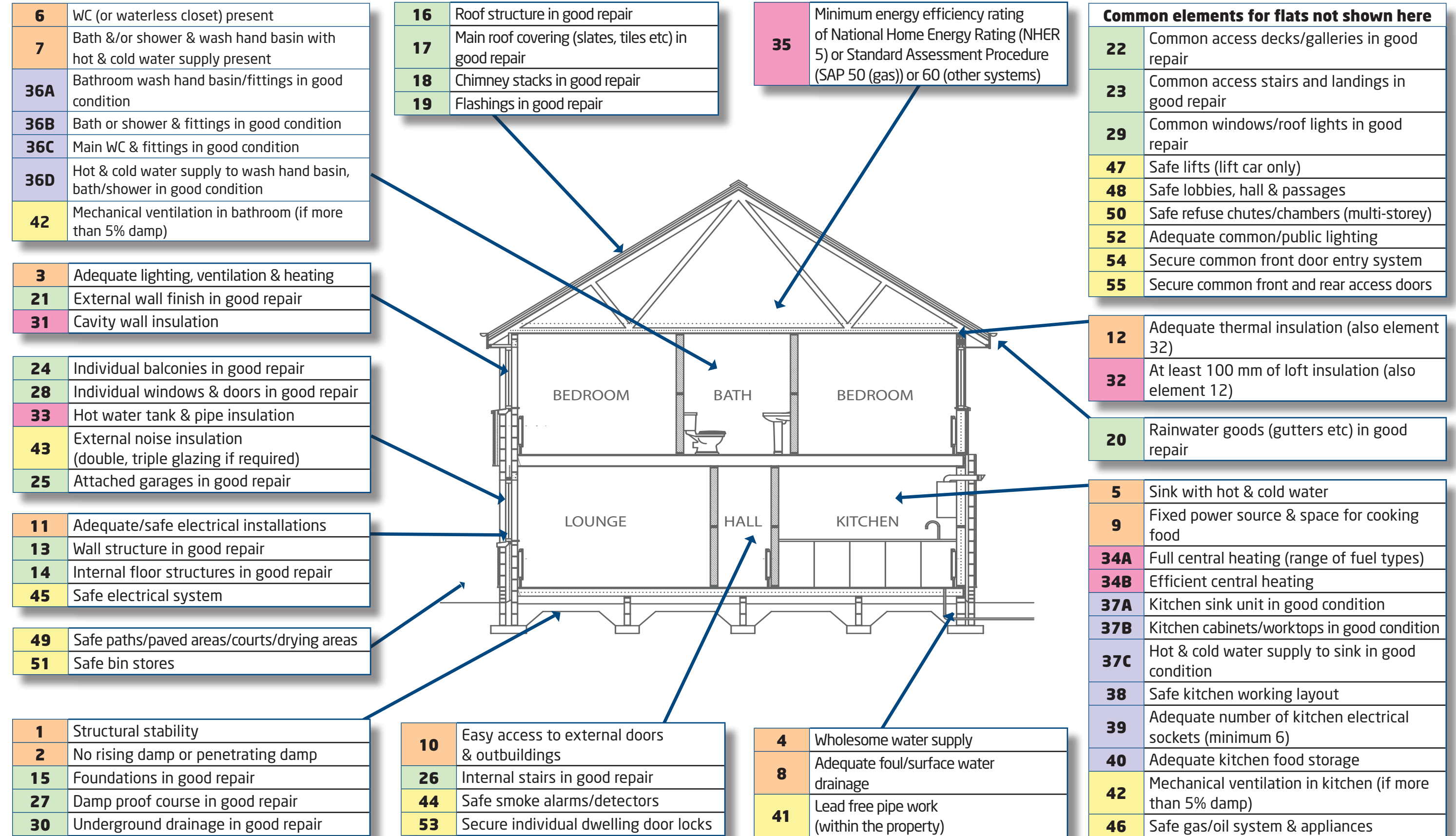
Recent research has also shown that tenants have very low awareness of the SHQS, despite it being in place for some time. We would therefore encourage tenants to make their fellow tenants aware of this guide.

So what is SHQS exactly?

There are 5 broad areas (called criteria) that social rented properties should satisfy by April 2015. The 5 broad areas are coded by letters (A-E) and colours (orange, green, pink, blue and yellow):

Broad area (or criteria)	Code	Element numbers	Colour code
Must meet the Tolerable Standard (i.e. the basic legal minimum standard)	A	1-12	Orange
Must be Free from Serious Disrepair	B	13-30	Green
Must be Energy Efficient	C	31-35	Pink
Must have Modern Facilities and Services	D	36-40	Blue
Must be Healthy, Safe and Secure	E	41-55	Yellow

Within these 5 broad areas, there are 55 separate elements (some of which are subdivided) which are shown in the diagram opposite. The reason for these colour and number codes is that sometimes the description of certain elements of SHQS is quite complicated and coding them, we believe, makes understanding SHQS more straightforward. Not all of the common elements (eg. common stairs, hallways etc.) can be shown in the diagram as they mainly relate to flats. These are, however, listed in the top right-hand corner of the diagram.



Colour key:

Orange Must meet Tolerable Standard (the basic legal minimum standard)

Green Must be Free from Serious Disrepair

Pink Must be Energy Efficient

Blue Must have Modern Facilities and Services

Yellow Must be Healthy, Safe and Secure