

Consultation on a reformed Decent Homes Standard for social and privately rented homes: government response

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England and Wales. For

1. Executive summary

On the 28 January 2026, the government published a response to the consultation on the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) for social and privately rented homes.

The government has introduced a new, modernised Decent Homes Standard applying to both the Social Rented Sector (SRS) and, for the first time, the Private Rented Sector (PRS). The government advises that the reform aims to ensure every tenant has access to a safe, warm, and decent home, aligning standards with contemporary expectations and responding to continued evidence of poor housing quality.

It is commented that although millions of homes have been improved since the DHS was introduced in 2001, the standard has not been updated since 2006, leaving it outdated. As of 2023, 21% of PRS homes and 10% of SRS homes still failed to meet core requirements.

The revised DHS forms part of a broader programme of housing reform, including:

- Awaab's Law
- Strengthened Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)
- The Renters' Rights Act 2025, including the end of Section 21 evictions.

The new DHS will become enforceable from 2035, giving landlords appropriate lead-in time while maintaining the expectation of proactive, early improvement.

This briefing provides an overview of the consultation response. The full response can be access via the below link: -

2. Consultation Process

A wide-ranging consultation ran from 2 July – 12 September 2025 seeking views from tenants, landlords, representative bodies, and local authorities.

As a result of the consultation:

- 820 responses submitted
- 49 consultation questions, including qualitative free-text sections.
- Stakeholder engagement through:
 - Expert panels
 - Working groups with NHF, LGA, CIH
 - Tenant roadshows in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham
- An interim Impact Assessment exploring delivery costs and benefits.
- Linked consultations on MEES in both SRS and PRS

Respondents were grouped into eleven categories, with representative organisations, private landlords and social landlords forming the largest contributor groups.

3. Structure of the New Decent Homes Standard

The new DHS establishes five criteria, each designed to address a core pillar of housing quality.

Criterion A – Free from Category 1 Hazards

- Homes must be free of the most serious risks as assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Criterion B – Reasonable State of Repair

A property fails this criterion if:

- One or more key building components are not in a reasonable state of repair;
or
- Two or more other building components fail
Updates include:
 - Condition now assessed on state only, not age.
 - Expansion of what constitutes key and other building components.

Criterion C – Core Facilities and Services

Requirements differ for flats and houses:

- Flats must have at least three core facilities
 - Houses must have at least two
- Changes include:
- Kitchen/bathroom age no longer triggers automatic failure.
 - Mandatory child-resistant window restrictors where there is a fall risk
- Future consideration in guidance may include:
- Secure doors and windows
 - Floor coverings at the start of tenancies

Criterion D – Thermal Comfort

Homes must:

- Meet new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards
 - Provide programmable heating
- This aligns decency with sustainability and affordability objectives.

Criterion E – Damp and Mould (new criterion)

For the first time, the DHS explicitly requires:

- Homes to be free of damp and mould.
- Landlords to remedy issues promptly

This builds on commitments following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak a two-year-old boy who died after being exposed to mould in his home.

4. Enforcement and Redress

The government response states that the implementation will be supported through strengthened regulatory and redress frameworks.

Social Rented Sector

- Regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)
- Tenants continue to access redress through the Housing Ombudsman

Private Rented Sector

- Local authority housing teams will enforce standards.
- Nearly all PRS landlords must join the new PRS Landlord Ombudsman Service, giving tenants a route to independent dispute resolution.

These mechanisms are designed to support consistent national application with appropriate local oversight.

5. Implementation Timeline and Supporting Guidance

The DHS becomes fully enforceable in 2035 across both sectors.

The government advise that they are mindful that the these are considerable changes and will take time to implement, therefore the timeline reflects the need for landlords, particularly in the SRS, to balance, stock improvement, the delivery of new affordable homes and compliance with concurrent reforms (Awaab's Law, MEES, Renters' Rights Act).

To support the implementation the government will issue guidance that will:

- Support landlords in planning early action.
- Clarify expectations for mixed-tenure blocks and situations where rented units sit within leaseholder-owned buildings.
- Provide tailored direction for supported housing and temporary accommodation.

In addition, the government is clear that landlords should not delay improvements until the end of the implementation period.

6. Summary of Consultation Findings

The consultation response states that there were 820 valid responses received. It is stated that the respondents strongly supported the modernisation of the DHS and extending it to the PRS.

In addition, the majority of respondents agreed that prioritising safety and repairs, introducing a damp and mould requirement and aligning thermal comfort with MEES were also supported.

Mixed views were expressed regarding mandating secure doors and windows and requiring floor coverings at tenancy start.

During the engagement process the government advise that it was revealed that there is a need for clarified guidance for supported accommodation, proportionate expectations where landlords are leaseholders and a consistent national enforcement approach.

APSE COMMENT

Every tenant has the right to expect that the home that they rent should be to a decent standard regardless of whether the property is owned and maintained by a social landlord or a private landlord.

The PRS now comprises of approximate 19% of all households in England. Making it the second largest tenure after home ownership and the PRS has increased by around 50% since 2008.

With the rise of this tenure in the sector local authorities have raised concern and frustration that social landlords are required to meet higher standards in their housing stock, than the PRS to the detriment of tenants.

Therefore, APSE welcomes the updated DHS which modernises minimum housing quality expectations across the rented housing sector and that the new standards create a clear, consistent framework for tenants, landlords, regulators, and local authorities.

It is clear that the government is committed to improving the quality and safety of tenants' homes with the introduction of sector-wide changes, including the Renters' Rights Act and MEES, that complement the DHS to create a long-term framework for improving housing quality and safety.

Housing policy for far too long has supported developers, which are driven by profits, the funding for local authorities to delivery new social housing has been severely inadequate for decades and the continuation of the Right to Buy policy, in England, have all contributed to eroding the social housing sector and this is evidence by the significant increase in the PRS.

Whilst APSE welcomes the government's commitment to building 1.5 million homes and the emphasis on providing good quality, sustainable homes in the social housing sector, it needs to be recognised that to support this commitment rebuilding the capacity and skills in the local authority workforce, and in the regulatory bodies, needs to be prioritised. This will ensure that the commitments can be delivered and that there are sufficient mechanisms to monitor and enforce the new standards across the sector.

Therefore the 2035 timeline seems pragmatic to achieve deliverability while ensuring pace of improvement. The government highlight in the consultation response that there is an expectancy that improvement will be made before the target date, which is essential as we should not lose sight of the fact that for some tenants, they have been living in substandard housing for far too long.

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