Appendix 2: Indicator definitions

The Decent Homes Standard

This section gives a detailed definition of the decent home standard and explains the four criteria that a decent home is required to meet. These are:

- it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing;
- it is in a reasonable state of repair;
- it has reasonably modern facilities and services;
- it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

The decent home definition provides a minimum standard. Landlords and owners doing work on their properties may well find it appropriate to take the dwellings above this minimum standard.

Criterion A: the dwelling meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing

The purpose of the HHSRS assessment is not to set a standard but to generate objective information in order to determine and inform enforcement decisions. The guidance on inspections and assessments is contained in the Operating Guidance. This is an extensive document and can be found at http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161785 .

HHSRS assesses twenty nine categories of housing hazard, including factors which were not covered or were covered inadequately by the housing fitness standard. It provides a rating for each hazard. It does not provide a single rating for the dwelling as a whole or, in the case of multiply occupied dwellings, for the building as a whole. A hazard rating is expressed though a numerical score, which falls within a band. There are 10 bands. Scores in Bands A to C are Category 1 hazards. Scores in Bands D to J are Category 2 hazards.

The hazards that can be assessed are those associated with or arising from:

Physiological Requirements	**Protection Against Infection**
Damp and mould growth	Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
Excess cold	Food safety
Excess heat	Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
Asbestos (and MMF)	Water supply for domestic purpose
Biocides	**Protection Against Accidents**
Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products	Falls associated with baths
Lead	Falling on level surfaces
Radiation	Falling on etc
Uncombusted fuel gas	Falling between levels
Volatile Organic Compounds	Electrical hazards
	Fire
Psychological Requirements	Flames, hot surfaces
Crowding and space	Collision and entrapment
Entry by intruders	Explosions
Lighting	Position and operability of amenities
Noise	Structural collapse and failing elements

The HHSRS assessment is based on the risk to the potential occupant who is most vulnerable to that hazard. For example, stairs constitute a greater risk to the elderly, so for assessing hazards relating to stairs they are considered the most vulnerable. The very young as well as the elderly are susceptible to low temperatures. A dwelling that is safe for those most vulnerable to a hazard is safe for all.

Action by authorities is based on a three-stage consideration: (a) the hazard rating determined under an HHSRS assessment; (b) whether the authority has a duty or power to act, determined by the presence of a hazard above or below a threshold prescribed by Regulations (Category 1 and Category 2 hazards); and (c) the authority's judgement as to the most appropriate course of action to deal with the hazard.

The threshold above which a hazard becomes a Category 1 hazard is currently a hazard rating score of 1,000.

Criterion B: the dwelling is in a reasonable state of repair

A dwelling satisfies this criterion unless:

- one or more key building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- two or more other building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacement or major repair.

BUILDING COMPONENTS

Building components are the structural parts of a dwelling (e.g. wall structure, roof structure), other external elements (e.g. roof covering, chimneys) and internal services and amenities (e.g. kitchens, heating systems).

Key building components are those which, if in poor condition, could have an *immediate* impact on the integrity of the building and cause further deterioration in other components. They are the external components plus internal components that have potential safety implications and include:

- External Walls
- Roof structure and covering
- Windows/doors
- Chimneys
- Central heating boilers
- Gas fires
- Storage Heaters
- Electrics

If any of these components are old and need replacing, or require immediate major repair, then the dwelling is not in a reasonable state of repair and remedial action is required.

Other building components are those that have a less immediate impact on the integrity of the dwelling. Their combined effect is therefore considered, with a dwelling not in a reasonable state of repair if 2 or more are old and need replacing or require immediate major repair.

'OLD' AND IN 'POOR CONDITION'

A component is defined as 'old' if it is older than its expected or standard lifetime. The component lifetimes used are consistent with those used for resource allocation to local authorities and are listed at the end of this appendix. Components are in 'poor condition' if they need major work, either full replacement or major repair. The definitions used for different components are as listed at the end of this appendix.

One or more key components, or two or more other components, must be both old and in poor condition to render the dwelling non-decent on grounds of disrepair. Components that are old but in good condition or in poor condition but not old would not, in themselves, cause the dwelling to

fail the standard. Thus for example a bathroom with facilities which are old but still in good condition would not trigger failure on this criterion.

Where the disrepair is of a component affecting a block of flats, the flats that are classed as non decent are those directly affected by the disrepair.

Criterion C: The dwelling has reasonably modern facilities and services

A dwelling is considered not to meet this criterion if it lacks three or more of the

following facilities:

- a kitchen which is 20 years old or less;
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- a bathroom which is 30 years old or less;
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
- adequate noise insulation;
- adequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats.

The ages used to define the 'modern' kitchen and bathroom are less than those for the disrepair criterion. This is to take account of the modernity of kitchens and bathrooms, as well as their functionality and condition.

There is some flexibility inherent in this criterion, in that a dwelling has to fail on three criteria before failure of the decent homes standard itself. Such a dwelling does not have to be fully modernised for this criterion to be passed: it would be sufficient in many cases to deal with only one or two of the facilities that are contributing to the failure.

These standards are used to calculate the national standard and have been measured in the English House Condition Survey (EHCS) for many years. For example, in the EHCS:

- a kitchen failing on adequate space and layout would be one that was too small to contain all the required items (sink, cupboards, cooker space, worktops etc) appropriate to the size of the dwelling;
- an inappropriately located bathroom or WC is one where the main bathroom or WC is located in a bedroom or accessed through a bedroom (unless the bedroom is not used or the dwelling is for a single person). A dwelling would also fail if the main WC is external or located on a different floor to the nearest wash hand basin, or if a WC without a wash hand basin opens on to a kitchen in an inappropriate area, for example next to the food preparation area;
- inadequate insulation from external airborne noise would occur where there are problems with, for example, traffic (rail, road or aeroplanes) or factory noise. Reasonable insulation from these problems should be ensured through installation of double glazing;
- inadequate size and layout of common entrance areas for blocks of flats would occur where there is insufficient room to manoeuvre easily, for example where there are narrow access

ways with awkward corners and turnings, steep staircases, inadequate landings, absence of handrails, low headroom etc.

Criterion D: the dwelling provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

The definition requires a dwelling to have both:

- efficient heating; and
- effective insulation.

Under this standard, efficient heating is defined as any gas or oil programmable central heating or electric storage heaters/programmable solid fuel or LPG central heating or similarly efficient heating systems1. Heating sources which provide less energy efficient options fail the decent home standard.

Because of the differences in efficiency between gas/oil heating systems and the other heating systems listed, the level of insulation that is appropriate also differs:

- For dwellings with gas/oil programmable heating, cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively) or at least 50mm loft insulation (if there is loft space) is an effective package of insulation under the minimum standard set by the Department of Health;
- For dwellings heated by electric storage heaters/programmable solid fuel or LPG central heating a higher specification of insulation is required to meet the same standard: at least 200mm of loft insulation (if there is a loft) and cavity wall insulation (if there are cavity walls that can be insulated effectively).

Component lifetimes and definition of 'in poor condition' used in the national measurement of the disrepair criterion

COMPONENT LIFETIMES

Table B.1 shows the component lifetimes within the disrepair criterion to assess whether the building components are 'old'. These are used to construct the national estimates of the number of dwellings that are decent and those that fail.

Table D.1: Component lifetimes used in the disrepair criterion

Building components (key components marked*)	Houses and bungalows	All flats in blocks of below 6 storeys	All flats in blocks of 6 or more storeys
Wall structure*	**80**	**80**	**80**
Lintels*	**60**	**60**	**60**
Brickwork (spalling)*	**30**	**30**	**30**

Wall finish*	**60**	**60**	**30**
Roof structure*	**50**	**30**	**30**
Chimney*	**50**	**50**	**N/A**
Windows*	**40**	**30**	**30**
External doors*	**40**	**30**	**30**
Kitchen	**30**	**30**	**30**
Bathrooms	**40**	**40**	**40**
Heating – central heating gas boiler*	**15**	**15**	**15**
Heating – central heating distribution system	**40**	**40**	**40**
Heating – other*	**30**	**30**	**30**
Electrical systems*	**30**	**30**	**30**

IN POOR CONDITION

Table B.2 sets out the definitions used within the disrepair criterion to identify whether building components are 'in poor condition'. These are consistent with EHCS definitions and will be the standard used to monitor progress nationally through the EHCS. The general line used in the EHCS is that, where a component requires some work, repair should be prescribed rather than replacement unless:

- the component is sufficiently damaged that it is impossible to repair;
- the component is unsuitable, and would be even it were repaired, either because the material has deteriorated or because the component was never suitable; (for external components) even if the component were repaired now, it would still need to be replaced within 5 years.

Table B.2: Component lifetimes used in the disrepair criterion

	Definition of 'in poor condition' used in EHCS
Wall structure	Replace 10% or more or repair 30% or more
Wall finish	Replace/repoint/renew 50% or more
Chimneys	1 chimney needs partial rebuilding or more
Roof structure	Replace 10% or more to strengthen 30% or more
Roof covering	Replace or isolated repairs to 50% or more

Windows	Replace at least one window or repair/replace sash or member to at least two (excluding easing sashes, reglazing painting)
External doors	Replace at least one
Kitchen	Major repair or replace 3 or more items out of the 6 (cold water drinking supply, hot water, sink, cooking provision, cupboards
Bathroom	Major repair or replace 2 or more items (bath, wash hand basin,
Electrical system	Replace or major repair to system

SAP Rating

SAP is the UK Government's standard methodology for home energy cost ratings. SAP ratings allow comparisons of energy efficiency to be made, and can show the likely improvements to a dwelling in terms of energy use. The Building Regulations require a SAP assessment to be carried out for all new dwellings and conversions. Local authorities, housing associations, and other landlords also use SAP ratings to estimate the energy efficiency of existing housing. The version on which the SAP<35 model is based is SAP 2005.

The SAP ratings give a measure of the annual unit energy cost of space and water heating for the dwelling under a standard regime, assuming specific heating patterns and room temperatures. The fuel prices used are averaged over the previous three years across all regions in the UK. The SAP takes into account a range of factors that contribute to energy efficiency, which include:

- thermal insulation of the building fabric;
- the shape and exposed surfaces of the dwelling;
- efficiency and control of the heating system;
- the fuel used for space and water heating;
- ventilation and solar gain characteristics of the dwelling.

SAP is not affected by the individual characteristics of the household occupying the dwelling or by the geographical location.

SAP scale

The SAP rating is expressed on a logarithmic scale, which normally runs from 1 (very inefficient) to 100 (very efficient).

Fuel Poverty

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth (usually defined as 21 degrees for the main living area, and 18 degrees for other occupied rooms). This broad definition of fuel costs also includes modelled spending on water heating, lights, appliances and cooking.

The Fuel Poverty Ratio is defined as:

$$\textit{fuel poverty ratio} = \frac{\textit{fuel costs (usage x price)}}{\textit{income}}$$

If this ratio is greater than 0.1 then the household is counted as being in Fuel Poverty.

Income

Two different classifications of incomes are used, and from these two different fuel poverty ratios are calculated. The official headline figure uses the full income definition whilst the basic income

definition is also produced. For both definitions, income is measured net of income tax and national insurance.

• The basic income is a measure of household income and is calculated by adding the personal incomes of every member of the household together plus any benefit payments that the household receives (from private source, state benefits and savings) but excludes income related directly to housing;

• The full income definition is the official headline figure. In addition to the basic income measure, it includes income related directly to housing (i.e. Housing benefit, Income Support for Mortgage Interest (ISMI), Mortgage Payment Protection Insurance (MPPI), Council Tax Benefit (CTB).

Fuel Costs

Fuel costs are modelled, rather than based on actual spending. They are calculated by combining the fuel requirements of the household with the corresponding fuel prices. The key goal in the modelling is to make sure that the household achieves the adequate level of warmth set out in the definition of fuel poverty whilst also meeting their other domestic fuel requirements.

Vulnerable households
The term vulnerable can take on a number of meanings. The indicator used for the 2006 model includes households who were in receipt of the following benefits:

- Income support
- Housing benefit
- Council tax benefit
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Disability living allowance : Care Component
- Disability living allowance : Mobility Component
- Pension Credit
- Attendance allowance
- Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit
- War disablement pension
- When income below £15,050
    - Working tax credit and in receipt of a disability premium
    - Child tax credit