



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

RESEARCH

Welsh Housing Quality Standard: tenants' survey (summary)

The research explores the attitudes of social tenants to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), and explores changes to how social tenants interacted with their homes during the first coronavirus lockdown.

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1. Research aims and methodology

The aims of the Tenants' Survey were to:

- contribute to the ongoing assessment of the current WHQS
- help inform the next iteration of the WHQS
- capture changes to the ways in which tenants interacted with their homes and local environments in the context of the coronavirus pandemic

There was a particular focus on:

- assessing awareness of the WHQS
- measuring the importance of the current WHQS criteria
- gaining understanding about acceptability of work to decarbonise tenants' homes
- exploring concerns of tenants with regard to the Coronavirus pandemic and first lockdown of 2020

The survey was developed using SmartSurvey online software. It was opened to responses from 16 September to 14 October 2020 and was disseminated and promoted to social tenants by TPAS Cymru and Welsh social landlords. There were 1,016 responses included in the analysis, 945 of which were from social

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tenants.

2. Key findings

44% of survey respondents reported that they had not heard of the WHQS. 17.5% reported a quite good or very good understanding of the standard.

All of the seven WHQS criteria against which social homes are measured (in a good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated; containing up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms; well managed; located in attractive and safe environments; and as far as possible suiting the specific requirements of the household) were rated by a large majority of respondents as being very important.

For most WHQS criteria, a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the criterion was being met in their home. The only exception was the criterion around homes being well managed by the landlord, where 48% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their homes were well managed.

A large majority of respondents reported that they would be happy or very happy for both minor and substantial works to be carried out in their home for the purpose of improving fuel efficiency.

The survey explored whether tenants' concerns about certain aspects of their homes (accessing local amenities, using local communal spaces, broadband and accessing the internet, household bills, safety and security in their neighbourhood and safety and security in their homes) had increased during the first coronavirus lockdown of 2020. For all aspects where comparison was possible, levels of concern increased, although the increase was small for safety and security in the neighbourhood, safety and security in the home, and access to the internet. The increase in levels of concern was largest for accessing local amenities and household bills.

3. Conclusions

This survey explored the views of social tenants, resident across Wales, regarding the WHQS and their experiences in their homes during the first coronavirus lockdown of 2020.

While 56% of respondents (n=510) reported at least having heard of the WHQS, the results showed that 44% of respondents had not heard of the Standard (n=404). It might therefore be of benefit for social landlords and the Welsh Government to consider ways to increase awareness of the WHQS so that social tenants can have a greater knowledge of what they can expect from their accommodation.

The survey measured how important respondents considered each of the criteria in the current WHQS, and found that a large majority rated all criteria as 'very important'. This suggests that the current WHQS is correctly focused on criteria that are valued by tenants and the next iteration of the WHQS would benefit from retaining the current criteria.

Most respondents agreed that their homes are meeting WHQS criteria, but a sizeable minority did not. The only criterion which less than half of respondents agreed was met in their home was 'management'. This also emerged as a theme in the open question responses, particularly with regards to poor landlord engagement and communication. This finding suggests that improving systems to communicate effectively and in good time may go some way towards addressing the perception that homes are poorly managed.

A majority of respondents reported that they would be happy for both minor and substantial work to be done in their homes to increase fuel efficiency. This may be influenced by environmental concerns amongst respondents and may also be influenced by issues respondents have in their homes with heating and insulation. Given that the next iteration of the WHQS is committed to a greater focus on decarbonisation this is a positive finding, suggesting that retrofit programmes and other domestic decarbonisation work may be acceptable to some social tenants.

The results of this survey suggest that a majority of respondents spent more time in their homes as a result of the first coronavirus lockdown, and that concerns around aspects of the home increased during the lockdown. This effect was very apparent for household bills, suggesting respondents, a high level of whom also reported having concerns about bills prior to lockdown, have been particularly hard-hit financially as a result of the lockdown.

High levels of concern about safety and security in the neighbourhood and in the home were also revealed, and these levels remained relatively stable prior to and during lockdown. A substantial number of respondents also reported increased levels of stress as a result of changes to space requirements during the lockdown. Some respondents thought that they would need to move in future as a result of changing space requirements in lockdown.

Although the response rate for the survey was reasonably high, the method of recruitment, which used a convenience-based approach, and the variation in response rate between different local authorities, means that the findings of this survey cannot necessarily be extrapolated to all social tenants in Wales, and should be treated as indicative only.

4. Contact details

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Full Research Report: Addison, Katy and Campbell, Lucy (2021); Welsh Housing Quality Standard: Tenants' Survey Summary Report. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 6/2021

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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