

WHAT IS THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD?

The government has set a target for all social housing to meet a minimum standard by 2010. This is called the Decent Homes Standard. Your home will need to meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing, be in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

A full copy of the Decent Homes Standard is available on the government website at www.odpm.gov.uk. The following is a general summary of the criteria:

Statutory minimum standard for housing

Your home is likely to meet this standard if:

- Your walls, floors and ceilings are free from damp and large cracks
- Your home has good natural light through such things as windows or roof lights
- Your home has good ventilation through such things as windows that you can open and/or extractor fans
- Your kitchen and bathroom are free from drainage problems and you have a good supply of hot and cold water
- Your kitchen has sufficient space for you to have the necessary equipment to prepare and cook food

A reasonable state of repair

Your home is likely to meet this standard if:

- The roof does not leak
- Window frames are secure and you can safely open and close your windows
- Electrics are safe, such as that there are no exposed wires and no broken sockets
- Your home is efficiently heated through gas central heating, electric heating or communal heating, including, if relevant, an efficient gas boiler.
- The external structure, including any chimneys, is safe
- Your kitchen and bathroom are in a reasonable condition with no major need for replacement of facilities

Reasonably modern facilities

Your home is likely to meet this standard if it has at least four of the following:

- A kitchen which is less than 20 years old
- The kitchen has sufficient space for you to have the necessary equipment to prepare and cook food
- The bathroom is less than 30 years old
- A bathroom which is not off a bedroom or outside
- You do not suffer excessively from external noise (i.e. not noise from adjoining properties)

- That entrances and lobbies in blocks of flats are of adequate size and layout

A reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Your home is likely to meet this standard if it is efficiently heated and insulated through gas central heating, electric heating or communal heating

Does housing in Islington reach the Decent Home Standard?

The short answer is no. At April 2004 it was estimated that around 58% of the tenanted stock managed by HFI failed one or more of the decent homes criteria. This is why the council set up Homes for Islington and has applied for £157m of additional money not only to achieve the Decent Homes Standard but to deliver improvements of over £500m to your homes and environment through our Homes for Islington Standard.

What about repairs to lifts, security improvements and environmental improvements that don't appear to be in the decent home standard?

Homes for Islington has estimated that £192m is needed to achieve the government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010, but we know that much more needs

to be done to put homes in a good condition and make homes and estates safe and secure for many years to come. This is the Homes for Islington standard.

What does this mean for improving kitchens and bathrooms?

Under the above criteria ('Reasonably modern facilities'), not many homes would have new kitchens or bathrooms installed because many homes would pass at least four of the six items listed.

However, it is clear from the resident consultation we have undertaken that new kitchens and bathrooms are a priority for people and that no major investment has been made in these areas for many years. As a result, Homes for Islington wants to deliver a higher standard than the Decent Homes Standard. As part of this, kitchens over 30 years old and bathrooms over 40 years old will be replaced, regardless of whether your home meets the other decent homes criteria, and any kitchen without adequate space and layout to accommodate sink, cupboards, cooker space, worktop and fridge, will be redesigned, regardless of age.

Further information is available on the Homes for Islington website. Look in the A-Z or click on the Repairs& Improvements tab at the top of the web page.



Tenants representatives visit Homes for Islington and Caxton Islington

The repairs process was put under scrutiny recently by representatives from tenant and resident associations (TRAs) from around the borough. Representatives responded to an invitation from Homes for Islington's Repairs Service Development Unit, to visit the offices of the repairs and maintenance contractor, Caxton and also to visit the contact centre, **Homes for Islington Direct**.

Tenant Reps were shown around the call centre to find out what happens when tenants ring the free phone number 0800 694 3344 and to learn how a repair is processed. Later on, they were able to see how Caxton handles the repair order at its offices. The tour of Caxton's facilities included a visit to their joinery shop. Tenant representatives also had the opportunity to question senior managers from Caxton and Homes for Islington about the repairs service and how things could be improved.

Future tours

If you would like to visit Caxton's facilities or the Homes for Islington call centre, **Homes for Islington Direct**, please contact the Repairs Service Development Unit on 020 7527 4337.

Each tour lasts for about one hour.



THE TOLLINGTON ESTATES

The Tollington Estates is the collective name for the housing estates of Andover, Six Acres, Clifton Court and Haden Court. These properties are in the Finsbury Park area of the borough.

The estates comprise a total of 1579 homes (1034 on Andover, 356 on Six Acres and 189 on Haden/Clifton). Andover Estate comprises of 1970's built mixed high and low-rise blocks. The housing is very dense with a poor layout and numerous security problems. Six Acres is a 1960's estate comprising of medium rise maisonettes and flats.

Haden/ Clifton is a 1960's estate comprising one high-rise block and low-rise blocks. Generally the estates represent high-density social housing in one of Islington's most deprived wards.

Residents have in the last three years gone through an extensive consultation on their preferred option to deliver an improvement programme for the estates. Central to the options considered was resident involvement. Residents requested Islington Council to pursue the option of transferring the estates to a registered social landlord (RSL). However, the ballot undertaken in November 2003 resulted in a negative result. Our exit survey showed that the improvement proposals were not the main reasons for voting against the transfer. Residents still wanted a solution to alleviate poor housing conditions and a poorly designed estate layout and environment.

The Way Forward

Following the negative ballot to transfer to a Registered Social Landlord, residents met with council and Homes for Islington representatives to agree a way forward. Final approval has now been given for a package of works to the estates over the period 2004-2009. Islington was successful in a bid to the government for resources to tackle design issues on the estates and £7.88m was awarded for 'Safer Routes'. Changes in government legislation on the

use of capital receipts released £24m for the improvements to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Finally, approval has been given by the Finsbury Park Partnership to allocate the remaining £1.66m Single Regeneration Budget to the Tollington Estates.

The Tollington Estates have now secured a total of £33.54m over the next five years for the improvement and regeneration of the estates. This funding has been split to deliver both Decent Homes and environmental improvements.



Work has commenced on Phase 1 of the project and works are due to commence on both Six Acres and Andover Estate in January 2005. The works will include the replacement of windows and external repair and decoration to several blocks. The remaining properties will be programmed over the remainder of the project. A master plan is being developed with residents on the estates and by April 2005 we will have a full programme of improvements and redesign for all estates and properties.

A project team has been established and they will be based from the **Durham Road Community Rooms**. **You can contact staff on 020 7527 4261**. The project programme and proposals will be on display. Residents may wish to drop by the office or make a specific appointment to speak to one of the project team officers. A quarterly newsletter will be sent to all homes on the estates with the latest information, it will also notify residents of the proposals for their home and the overall masterplan for their estate as it is being developed. The newsletter and any significant update information will be posted on the Homes for Islington website.

If you would like any further information on the Tollington project, please contact either David Ronan or Albert Neal on 020 7527 4261. See also the HFI website and click the blue **Repairs & Improvements** tab at the top of the web page.