



Your guide to the Somer Home Standard



All members of the Somer Housing Group are committed to providing tenants with homes that:

- meet and go beyond the Government's 'decent homes' standard;
- are safe and secure;
- are modern and efficient; and
- meet tenants' needs.

Crystal
Mark
19834

Clarity approved by
Plain English Campaign



Introduction

The Somer Home Standard makes sure that we provide you with good-quality housing in a safe and secure environment. The standard has been developed by staff and residents. It applies to all self-contained homes throughout the Somer Housing Group, and our members are committed to providing this standard for all residents. (A self-contained home is one which has its own kitchen, bathroom and toilet.)

Your home will benefit from modern facilities and will have an efficient heating and hot-water system which will provide affordable warmth to you and your family. We will regularly inspect your home to make sure that we know what condition it is in.

We will let you know about the work we are planning in the future, make sure you can get this information easily, and consult you before we carry out any work. We want to hear from you about the services we provide, how they have affected you and any improvements you would like to see.

If you are disabled, we will try to adapt your home to make it easier for you to manage and live more safely and comfortably. We can give you advice about adaptations or may be able to help you move to more suitable accommodation if you prefer. We will regularly service the appliances and equipment we own, to make sure that they are safe. We also regularly inspect the neighbourhoods around our properties, with residents, to make sure they are well maintained.

Facilities inside your home

Bathroom

If your bathroom is more than 30 years old, we will replace it with a new one. Also, if any of your bathroom fittings are in poor condition, we will repair or replace them, even if they are less than 30 years old.

We will give you a choice of floor and wall finishes if we are replacing these. If you want us to, and if there is enough water pressure, we will fit a shower over the bath. We will fit thermostatically controlled mixer valves, which protect from scalding, whenever we replace a bathroom.

Before we replace a bathroom we will ask if you have any special requirements because you are disabled or have difficulty moving around, and we will take account of these in the design of the bathroom. If your bathroom is not due to be replaced, please tell us if you are having difficulties using it because of special needs (see 'Adapting your home' on page 10).



Kitchen

If your kitchen is more than 20 years old, we will replace it with a new one. If it is less than 20 years old and in poor condition, we will repair or replace it.

When we replace a kitchen we will give you a choice of colours, styles, design, and wall and floor finishes. We will make sure that replacement parts will be available for 10 years.

Before we replace a kitchen we will ask if you have any special requirements, and we will take account of these in the design of the new kitchen.

Electrical wiring

If your home is more than 30 years old, we will repair or replace your wiring if it is in poor condition. Whenever we carry out any major work in your home, we will test and upgrade any wiring that is affected. We will also carry out electrical tests to shared areas each year, and will test the wiring and control panels in your home every five years to make sure that they are safe.

Ventilation

We will provide suitable levels of controlled ventilation, such as extractor fans, in your home as part of our kitchen, bathroom and other major refurbishment programmes.

Delivering these standards

We have a contract in place (called our 'internal refurbishment' contract) which delivers all the commitments set out in the section above. We renew the contract every five years, and we involve our residents in choosing the contractors and deciding what should be included in the contract.

Warmth and efficiency

Heating system

If your home has an inefficient gas, electric or warm-air heating system which is more than 30 years old, we will replace it with a modern, gas central-heating system, if this is possible. If we cannot install a gas central-heating system, for example if there is no gas supply available nearby, we will consult you about other heating systems we may be able to provide, such as night storage heaters, heat pumps, solar panels and wood-fuelled boilers.

If you do not have a heating system where you can control the temperature and time (for example you have a solid-fuel fire), we will provide a heating system which allows you to control these.

If you don't want to change from electric to gas heating, we will leave your electric system in place. However, we won't change a gas heating system back to electric if you change your mind after we have fitted a new system.

Heating boiler

If your gas central-heating boiler is more than 15 years old or is in poor condition and is not worth repairing, we will replace it. The new boiler will be energy efficient. We will give you advice about how to use your new boiler.

Other heating

If you have radiators which are more than 30 years old or are in poor condition and are not worth repairing, we will replace them. We will usually replace the boiler at the same time. If you have night storage heaters which are more than 25 years

old or are in poor condition and are not worth repairing, we will replace them.

If you have any other form of heating (for example, solar), we will repair or replace this in line with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Efficient heating

When we replace the heating system in your home we will design the new system using products which the Energy Saving Trust recommends for efficiency and safety. This includes room thermostats, thermostats on radiators and programmers.



Insulation

If you have a suitable loft, and the insulation is less than 250mm (10 inches), we will upgrade the insulation to at least 300mm (12 inches). This is better than current standards and will help you to reduce your energy bills.

If your home can have cavity-wall insulation (if the outside walls are not solid), we will insulate the cavity, wherever this is practical. This will help reduce your energy bills.

If it is not possible to install cavity-wall insulation, we will consider installing insulation to the inside or outside of your home, depending on technical and planning conditions.

Energy efficiency

The 'SAP' rating is a measure of how energy efficient your home is on a scale of 1 to 100. The higher the rating, the more efficient your home is. We have worked out the SAP rating for your home so that we know how energy efficient it is.

A SAP rating of less than 35 means that a home does not meet current national housing standards. If your home has a SAP rating of less than 50, we will carry out work to bring the SAP rating up to 60 or over, wherever this is possible. We may decide to do the work at a later date as part of a programme of work we are planning to carry out to a number of homes. We will give priority to improvement to homes with low SAP ratings.

If you ask us, we will provide you with an energy performance certificate for your home. If we do not already have the details we need for this, we will arrange for a qualified assessor to survey your home and carry out an energy assessment. This certificate will include a SAP rating and will suggest ways in which we can improve your home.

We will also provide you with advice on energy-efficient appliances.

Delivering these standards

We have a contract in place (called our 'Heating Partnership') which delivers the commitments set out in the section above. We regularly renew the contract, and we involve our residents in choosing the contractors and deciding what should be included in the contract.

Maintaining the outside of your home

Roof and chimney

We will inspect your roof at least every five years. If it is in poor condition and is not worth repairing, we will replace it. Once a roof is over 60 years old, we will assume that it is likely to need replacing, unless our surveyors recommend otherwise.

At all other times we will make sure that your roof is kept in a good state of repair and we will repair or replace the roof covering if necessary.

We will inspect your chimney at least every five years. If it is in poor condition we will repoint it. If it is not worth repairing, we will rebuild it or remove it and, if necessary, provide you with a different form of heating.

Gutters and downpipes

We will inspect all your gutters and downpipes every five years. If necessary, we will repair or replace them as part of our programme of work to the outside of our properties. We will clean out gutters more often than this if necessary.

Walls

We will inspect the outside walls and structure of your home every five years, and carry out any repairs, repointing and rendering which is needed.

Woodwork on the outside of your home

We will inspect fascias, soffits and bargeboards every five years as part of our programme of work to the outside of our properties. If necessary, we will repair and paint woodwork.

Where appropriate, we will replace wood on the outside of our properties with low-maintenance materials, such as uPVC.

Painting the outside of your home

We are responsible for painting the outside of your home and all shared areas. We will redecorate at least once every five years. We will usually give you a range of colours to choose from when we redecorate.

Windows

We will replace any window which is more than 30 years old or in poor condition with a modern equivalent which meets current regulations and Secured by Design standards (a standard approved by the police). If your home has wooden window frames which need painting, we will usually replace them every 15 years.

If your home is a listed building, or is in a conservation area, there may be restrictions on the work we can carry out to your windows.

Outside doors

We will repair or replace any outside door which is in poor condition. If your door is more than 30 years old or does not meet Secured by Design standards, we will replace it on a planned programme of work with a modern equivalent which meets current regulations and Secured by Design standards. You will be able to choose the door design from our standard range. If your home is a listed building, or is in a conservation area, there may be restrictions on the work we can do to your outside door.

Delivering these standards

We have a contract in place (called our 'external refurbishment' contract) which delivers all the commitments set out in the section above. Whenever we renew the contract, we involve our residents in choosing the contractors and deciding what should be included in the contract.

Adapting your home

If you are disabled or have difficulties moving around (mobility problems), we will adapt your home if this will make it easier for you to manage and be comfortable in your home.

If the work will cost less than £1000, we will do it as soon as possible at a time to suit you. If the work will cost more than £1000, we will consider each case on an individual basis. We may also need to work with the local council as they sometimes help pay for work that costs over £1000. If the work is going to be very expensive (over £10,000), we may not be able to do it without the help of the local council. If we need to do any of these things, we will appoint one member of our staff to talk to you and anyone else involved so that you know who to contact, and what is going to happen when.

If you want more information about adapting your home, there is a link on the first page of our website or you can ask us for a copy of our leaflet about adaptations.



Safety

We provide a range of day-to-day and more specific services to keep your home safe. Some of these are health and safety duties we must carry out by law. You can help keep your home safe by reducing hazards in your home and keeping appointments for us to carry out work such as servicing our gas appliances.

Gas safety

We will check and service our gas appliances at least once every year. We will give you a copy of the inspection report and we will organise any maintenance work that is recommended.

We will write to you when the gas service is due. It is important that you respond to this letter. If you cannot keep the appointment we have suggested, you must contact us to arrange another. Faulty gas appliances can be dangerous, and you are risking your life, and the lives of your family, if you do not let us into your home to carry out this service.

If you have a gas appliance of your own, it is your responsibility to have it checked for safety. We will do this for you if you ask us to, but will charge you for doing this.

Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas that is produced by faulty gas appliances. We will install a carbon monoxide detector in your home if you have a gas appliance. We will check the detector as part of the gas service, and replace it when recommended by the manufacturer.

Smoke detectors and fire alarms

We install smoke detectors in all our homes. Many already have them, and a programme of work will make sure that all our homes have them within five years. We will inspect smoke

detectors as part of the regular electrical test we carry out. In between these tests, if the back-up battery needs replacing, you should replace it. (You will know when the battery needs replacing as the smoke detector will beep.)

If you have a battery-operated smoke detector you should check that it is working once a week. You are responsible for replacing the battery when necessary.

If you are elderly or have difficulty reaching a detector to change the battery, we will change the battery for you if you contact us through the repairs line.

You can get a free fire-safety check on your home by calling the local fire service. They will check your home for fire risks, give you advice, and install extra smoke alarms if they think you need them.

Avon Fire Service: 0117 9232061

Somerset Fire Service: 01392 872200

Gloucestershire Fire Service: 01452 753333

Electrical wiring

We will carry out an electrical-safety test on your home every five years, and give you a copy of the electrical-safety certificate.

Radon

We have worked with the Health Protection Agency and residents to measure levels of the naturally-occurring gas radon in our properties. Where we found high levels of radon, we have installed equipment to control it, and we will carry out more tests to see how effective the equipment has been. If we have installed equipment to control radon in your home, we will need you to give us access to service it each year. If you tell us that the equipment is not working, we will check it and carry out any necessary repairs.

Asbestos

We employ experienced and qualified asbestos surveyors to carry out surveys to identify any materials which may contain asbestos. We carry out surveys of all shared areas. We will carry out asbestos surveys in all our homes by 2015.

We keep a register of all areas where we have found asbestos, and we can give you details if you ask us. If you would like general information on asbestos or specific information about asbestos in your home, or if you would like us to carry out a survey before you start any work in your home, please contact us. If you are planning any major work, you must ask for our permission. We will check our asbestos register and give you general advice on precautions to take when we respond to your request.

If we find asbestos in your home, our surveyors will recommend whether we should remove it or manage it in some other way. We will carry out those recommendations.

Water safety

We check samples of higher-risk water supplies to identify any areas of risk, and we will take appropriate action. To prevent the build-up of harmful germs, you should keep hot water at 60 degrees or above, descale shower heads every three months and, if you haven't used a tap for a while, let it run first to allow fresh water through.

Lifts and stairlifts

We service and repair any lifts in blocks of flats. We will also look after stairlifts in both shared areas and in individual homes.

Door-entry systems

Many of our blocks of flats are fitted with an electronic door-entry system to provide extra security. Some blocks also have electronic gates which control access to the car park or gardens.

We will keep these in good repair, and we will regularly check that electronic gates are safe. Please make sure that children are supervised when they are near electronic gates.

Ice and snow

We will do our best to help keep shared paths clear and gritted in cold weather. Our schemes for older people will always be our first priority.

Personal alarm systems

If you live in a scheme for older people, you will have access to a 24-hour personal alarm system, using a pull cord in your home or a pendant that you wear around your neck.

Fire-risk assessments

We carry out fire-risk assessments on all shared areas in our flats and houses. This identifies any possible risks and anything that we should do to reduce the risk.

Housing health and safety

The Government has set national standards for safe and healthy housing. We check that our homes meet this standard whenever we carry out major work or as part of a general housing stock survey we carry out, normally every five years. If you have concerns about the safety of your home, please let us know straight away and we will arrange an assessment. We will deal with urgent work immediately, and will agree with you how we will deal with other work that is necessary.

Your home

Noise

If we find that the way a building is built is causing problems with noise, we may carry out work to improve the sound insulation. If you live in a listed building, where changes to the property may be difficult, we will work with the local council to try to find a solution.

Water conservation

We will fit a six-litre capacity cistern to any new toilet that we install and aerating taps to new sinks and wash basins to reduce the amount of water you use.

Day-to-day repairs

We have set out separate standards for how we repair your home, and what you can expect when you move into one of our homes. We publish these standards on our website, and we can send you printed copies if you ask us.



Neighbourhoods

Footpaths and roads

We are responsible for looking after the paths and roads on your estate unless the local council has taken over responsibility for them. When the paths and roads are beyond economic repair, we will renew them. If they are more than 30 years old, we will inspect them and decide what to do.

Improving our neighbourhoods

We will carry out improvements to provide new or better facilities in neighbourhoods where we think that this will contribute to making the area a safer and more pleasant place to live. We consult residents to help us work out priorities for spending, and make sure that improvements meet residents' needs.

Security and safety

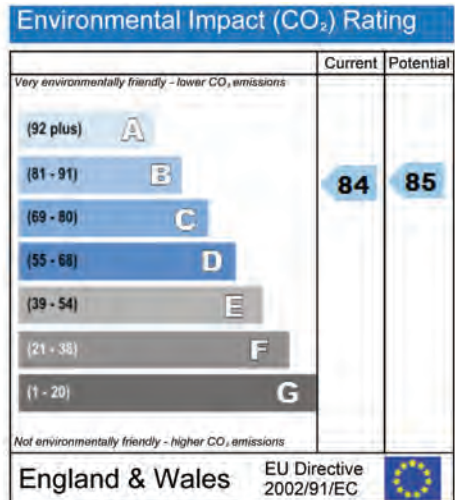
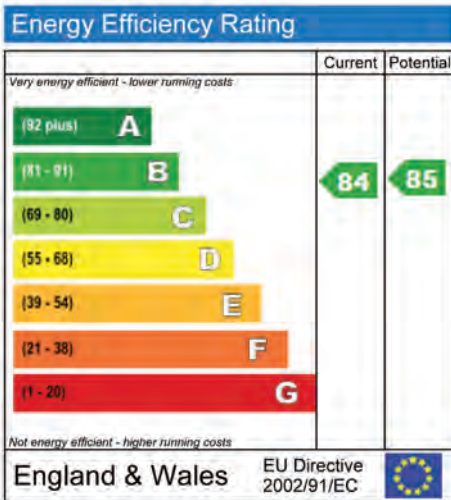
We will improve the safety and security of our neighbourhoods through improvement programmes. These may include improving street lighting, installing door and gate entry systems or changing the design of our estates. We will make sure the work we carry out meets the Secured by Design standards. We will consult residents and the police about our plans and invite representatives to join project teams.

The environment

We are committed to reducing the damage our homes do to the environment.

In the sections above we have referred to ways in which we do this, for example, by making our homes more energy efficient and conserving water. We will also look at ways in which we can improve on these commitments, and we will consider new ways, and new technology, in the future.

We will also make sure that the contracts through which we deliver the above commitments use energy-efficient products that can be maintained in the long term without harming the environment for future generations.



Communication and consultation

Programmes

We will publish details of our planned programmes of work for the coming five years. This will be available on our website, and we will include a summary in our tenants' newsletters.

Choosing contractors and materials

We will invite tenants (and leaseholders where appropriate) to help us choose the contractors who will work on their homes, and to check that they work to the expected standards.

We also want to make sure that the products we use have been chosen by tenants and leaseholders, and that they meet the performance standards we have agreed.

Consulting you

Before we carry out any work to your home, we will consult you about what we are planning to do. We understand that your home is special to you, and that every tenant has different needs and concerns.

We will arrange for someone to visit you before we carry out any major work so that we can discuss your needs and you can have a say in the design and the plans for the work. We will talk to you about the timetable for the work, how you will manage while it is going on, and whether you will need any help to cope with the work.

We won't insist on doing work if you really don't want us to (unless the work is needed to make your home safe, or is needed by law). However, we hope that we can reassure you

that the work will make your home better and that we will cause as little disruption and distress to you as possible.

Satisfaction surveys

The views of tenants who have had work done are very important to us. They help us improve our service. When we do major work in your home we will usually leave a satisfaction survey for you to fill in. Please help us by filling in the survey for us. (Sometimes we might carry out the survey over the phone or in some other way.)

Focus groups

We have a number of different ways for you to help us improve our standards and services. Residents have contributed to the standards in this document, and there are various panels which give us feedback on how we meet tenants' expectations. We have a working group that oversees the way we carry out maintenance and planned work. We also have less formal ways you can get involved, for example through tenants' days and fun days.

If you are interested in being involved in a focus group, or in any of the other residents' groups or events that help us to achieve the Somer Home Standard, please contact a member of our resident involvement team.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, on audio tape or CD, or if English is not your first language and you need a translation, we can get one for you.



01225 366000

Somer Housing Group's members are:



Arabic

إذا كانت لغتك الأصلية ليست الإنجليزية وكنت بحاجة إلى ترجمة فإنه بإمكاننا ان نوفرها لك.

Bengali

ইংরেজী যদি আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার একটি অনুবাদের প্রয়োজন হয় তবে আমরা আপনার জন্য তা সরবরাহ করতে পারবো।

Chinese

如果你主要说用的语言不是英语而需要翻译服务，我们能够给你安排。

Hindi

यदि अंग्रेज़ी आपकी प्रथम भाषा नहीं है और आपको अनुवाद चाहिये, तो हम आपके लिए ला सकते हैं।

Italian

Se l'inglese non è la vostra lingua e avete bisogno di una traduzione, possiamo procurarvene una.

Polish

Osobom nie znającym języka angielskiego możemy zapewnić tłumaczenie.

Somali

Haddii aanu af Ingiriisigu ahayn luqad-daada kowaad oo aad u baahan-tahay turjumid, anaga ayaa mid kuu heli karayna.

Spanish

Si el Ingles no es tu lengua materna y necesitas una traducción, nosotros te lo podemos traducir.

Thai

หากภาษาอังกฤษไม่ใช่ภาษาแรกที่ท่านพูดและท่านต้องการให้แปล เป็นภาษาอื่น เราสามารถจัดบริการให้ท่านได้

Urdu

اگر انگریزی آپ کی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو ترجمہ درکار ہے تو ہم آپ کے لیے اس کا بندوبست کریں گے۔

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