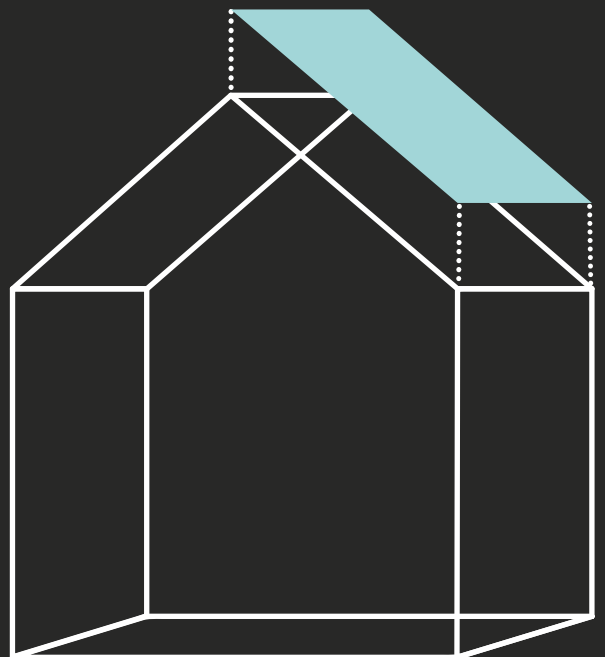


2 Decent conditions

Words like 'safe', 'warm' and 'secure' are among the first that come to mind we asked the public what makes a home. All aspects of wellbeing can be severely compromised by poor conditions, in the most extreme cases putting lives at risk.

The public were quick to reach a consensus on many aspects of decency, although coming to agreement on the exact definitions of what is and is not acceptable was sometimes the source of intense debate. The final set of attributes which describe decent conditions in the Living Home Standard are outlined overleaf.



Essentials

- **The home can be heated safely and effectively**

The public discussed the wide range of ways in which being able to keep their home warm impacted them – from their physical health, through to emotional wellbeing. It impacted a wide range of activities, such as children having a comfortable environment to do homework. Our quantitative research revealed heating the home was the most important aspect of decency that we tested.

“You wouldn’t be able to function right if you’re in a cold place.”

- **The home has hot and cold running water**

The public spontaneously raised access to hot and cold running water as one of the primary needs that a home should fulfil. It was consistently agreed this was an essential part of what makes a home habitable.

- **The home is free from safety hazards such as faulty wiring or fire risks**

The public felt strongly that a home must be safe to live in, and that homes with significant hazards could not be judged to be meeting the Living Home Standard. This was amongst the most basic requirements a home should meet.

- **The home is structurally sound with no important defects to the roof and/or walls**

One of the most fundamental functional aspects of home is that it provides safe shelter. The ‘roof over your head’ providing protection from the elements and a solid structure providing physical security were considered essential.

- **The home has a toilet, and a bath and/or shower**

Basic bathroom facilities were believed to be an essential part of an acceptable home. There was some discussion about whether it was adequate to have a shower, or whether a bath was also necessary. Some people, particularly those with children or certain health issues,

felt that having a bath in the property was important, but others argued that this wasn’t an essential requirement for all. The final conclusion was that whilst one or other was essential, it wasn’t necessary to have both.

- **The home feels physically secure (for example with adequate locks on doors and windows)**

When people talked about what home meant to them, there was a strong sentiment that it should be somewhere you can shut out the outside world and relax. Confidence in the physical security of the home was an important part of what allowed people to feel safe. Some people talked about fear of intruders or the experience of being burgled, and how this undermined their feeling of security.

- **The home is free from pest problems**

Whilst there was widespread agreement amongst the public that major infestations of vermin or other pests were a serious problem and unacceptable, there was much debate over the point at which issues with pests become unacceptable. Was it reasonable to expect a home to have no pests at all, or were occasional mice or ants acceptable? The final decision was that whilst no pests at all in the home was an unreasonably high expectation, it was not sufficient simply to be free of ‘infestations’ – an acceptable standard was a home free from ‘pest problems’.

- **The home is free from mould or damp problems**

During the research people explained how living with damp and mould in their homes had affected them, including having an impact on their physical health. Some believed that any amount of mould or damp was unacceptable, whilst others believed that some degree of mould or damp was common and could be easily dealt with.

“It’s an embarrassment. I can’t see the mould but the smell of it is so strong that I know this is what’s affecting [my] children’s health.”

Recognising that some people felt that minor amounts of mould or damp were acceptable, the final definition asks people to consider whether their home has mould or damp problems.

- **The home is suitable for the current age and/or disability related needs of everyone in the household**

The public recognised that some people have different needs that impact what they require from a home. They noted young children and older people may have age-related needs, and that some people with disabilities may have additional needs: it was essential for a home to be suitable for these needs in order to meet the Living Home Standard.

There was some discussion that ideally a home should be able to be adapted to meet future needs, for example so a home could remain suitable as people get older. However, it was agreed that it wasn’t realistic for all homes to be able to be adapted to meet all possible future needs, and it was decided that it was sufficient that a home should meet current needs related to age or disability.

- **There are electrical sockets in the main living areas, kitchen and bedroom(s)**

The public discussed the importance of having access to enough electrical sockets, particularly given the growth in use of a large number of electrical devices in home in recent years. It was considered inconvenient to not have sockets where they are needed, and unsafe if they end up being overloaded.

Tradables

A home must meet 2 of 4 of these statements to meet the Living Home Standard.

- **The home is free from outside noise that regularly disrupts sleep or daily activities**

The issue of disruption caused by noise outside the home was the source of some debate. Whilst it was recognised that severe noise nuisance could be very detrimental to wellbeing, there was also acceptance amongst some that a certain amount of disruption from noise had to be tolerated as part of the reality of living close to others. The extent to which noise was tolerable depended on the volume, frequency and time of day it occurred.

- **The home has enough natural light in the main living areas, kitchen and bedroom(s)**

The public felt that it was important for wellbeing to have sufficient natural light within the home. There was some debate about whether it was essential in all rooms in the house, with agreement that it was somewhat dependent on individual circumstances. For some people who only used their bedrooms for sleeping, natural light in these rooms was less important, but this was not the case for people who also used their bedrooms as a living space.

“My daughter rents a room in a house. It’s the only room without natural light. Her mood has gone right down. We’re thinking about people who’ve got houses where they can go to somewhere else – but some people are living in one room.”

This variation in the way people used space and required natural light meant that this attribute was considered to be tradable.

- **Able to dry laundry in the home without causing mould or damp problems**

For people who needed to regularly dry laundry within their home, it was important to have adequate ventilation so that this didn’t cause or contribute to mould or condensation problems.

- **It is possible to access the internet from the home or get an internet connection if needed**

For many people, being able to access the internet at home is extremely important, but for some it is less important or not relevant at all. Including this attribute as a tradable condition of the Living Home Standard took this variation in importance into account.