



Living Proof — Standards For Housing In Wigan Rise

Friday 12th August 2005

Housing conditions in Wigan are significantly better than the national average, a major independent report has revealed.

The vast majority of homes meet the government's Decent Homes Standard and the authority has achieved government targets ahead of schedule — according to the results of the borough's latest housing condition survey.

Every five years the council commissions a housing condition survey of the borough. It looks at the condition of housing and records householders' views about their homes and the areas they live in.

Earlier this year the council appointed independent Leigh-based consultants Michael Howard Associates to conduct the latest survey. They surveyed 2,413 randomly selected homes using government methodology.

The results show that Wigan is consistently performing above national averages in terms of housing conditions.

The main findings are:

Decent Homes Standard

This is the current government standard for homes and covers fitness, repair, modern facilities, insulation and heating.

- 72.7 per cent of private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people meet the Decent Homes Standard. This means that government targets for 2006 and 2010 have already been met.
- 80.2 per cent of council homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. The government has set a target for all council homes to meet this standard by 2010. Wigan is on track to meet it by 2008.
- The report found 17.6 per cent of all homes do not meet the Decent Homes Standard, compared with 38 per cent nationally. It is estimated that £125.78m is needed to improve these homes.

Fitness Standard

This is a component of the Decent Homes Standard and is the current minimum legal standard for all homes.

- 97.9 per cent of homes are fit, compared to 95.8 per cent nationally.
- 97.7 per cent of owner occupied homes are fit, compared to 96.8 per cent nationally.
- 99.4 per cent of council homes are fit, compared with 95.3 per cent nationally.
- All housing association homes are fit, compared to 96.6 per cent nationally.
- 94.5 per cent of privately rented homes are fit, compared to 89.1 per cent nationally.
- It is estimated that £21.75m is needed to remedy all unfitness.

Empty Homes

- 97.4 per cent of homes are occupied, compared with 97 per cent nationally.

Energy Efficiency

This is rated using a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). The higher the SAP, the more energy efficient the home is. A SAP of less than 40 is considered poor.

- The average SAP rating for homes in the borough is 59 compared to 51 nationally.

Improvement Trends

The level of improvements in housing conditions in the borough over the last 10 years is summarised below:

Housing Condition Survey	1996	2000	2005
Fit Homes (%)	92	95	97.9
Occupied Homes (%)	95	97	97.4
Energy Efficient Homes (%)	42	73.6	93

Wigan Council's Cabinet Member for Community Protection Cllr Keith Cunliffe said the results confirmed the success of the council's housing strategy.

"When it comes to housing we are committed to achieving a great deal," said Cllr Cunliffe.

"From improving private sector housing by declaring renewal areas to bringing empty homes back into use through enforcement."

Cllr Cunliffe added:

"What is also clear from this survey and the pattern of improvement it illustrates is the tremendous impact the creation of the Arms Length Management Organisation — Wigan & Leigh Homes — has had on improving council homes and estates.

"Our aim is to improve the quality of life for everyone in Wigan and while we are delighted that the survey suggests we are doing the right things and continuing to improve we are by no means complacent.

"Clearly there is more work to be done and we will continue to strive to do our very best for all tenants and residents of the borough."

Notes to Editors

- General findings of the survey:
 - There are 134,050 homes in the borough.
 - 76 per cent are owner-occupied, compared to 70 per cent nationally.
 - 15.4 per cent are rented from the council.
 - 4.4 per cent are rented from housing associations.
 - 4.2 per cent are privately rented, compared to 10 per cent nationally.
- The council's Housing Strategy was one of the first to be assessed as 'fit for purpose' by the Government Office North West.
- The council's Private Sector Housing Section has a three star Best Value assessment from the Housing Inspectorate of the Audit Commission (one of only two in the country).
- Wigan & Leigh Housing has a two star Best Value assessment from the Housing Inspectorate of the Audit Commission.
- The council has received Beacon Council awards for Neighbourhood Renewal and Housing Renewal (one of four in the country).
- For more information contact Wigan Council Private Sector Housing Manager, Anees Mank on (01942) 733338.