

# **HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION**

## **Standard Guidance**

**Houses in Multiple Occupation – Standards Guidance**

These standards apply to licensed houses in multiple occupation, and may be enforced through housing legislation. The standards apply to houses occupied as bedsits, flatlets, and shared student lettings. They do not apply to houses fully converted into self-contained flats (although they may apply to a flat in multiple occupation in such accommodation) or bed and breakfast establishments.

Aspects of these standards are also enforceable in non-licensable HMOs, and where they are not legal requirements they represent good practice and are recommended as such.

There may be other ways of achieving an adequate standard in the property rather than following the specifications set down in this document. Should you feel that there are alternative measures that are more suitable in your property, please contact the Residential Premises Team for further advice before commencing work.

As well as being subject to these standards, houses let as HMOs are also subject to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS evaluates the risk to the health and safety of tenants and visitors presented by a wide range of potential housing hazards. Many of the items described in the following standards can also be required by HHSRS (possibly to a higher level than described in this document). They need to be included in this leaflet as they can be specified as conditions of an HMO licence.

In addition to licensing and HHSRS, the Management of HMOs (England) Regulations 2006 apply to HMOs. Furthermore there may be Planning, Building Control, Trading Standards etc. implications for your HMO.

*You are advised to contact the Residential Premises Team for advice on these, and other, requirements. We may not be able to advise you fully on "non housing" matters, but we will point you in the right direction.*

## **Space and Amenity Standards**

## A. Room Sizes

### One person units of accommodation

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| One room units                | 13 m <sup>2</sup> with kitchen facilities<br>10 m <sup>2</sup> with separate shared kitchen |
| Shared kitchens shall provide | 3 m <sup>2</sup> per person using kitchen   |
| Two or more room units        |   |
| Each kitchen                  | 4.5 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Each living/kitchen           | 11 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Each living room              | 9 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Each bedroom                  | 6.5 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Each living/bedroom           | 10 m <sup>2</sup>   |

### Two or more person units of accommodation

|   |   |
|---|---|
| One room units  | 20.5 m <sup>2</sup> with kitchen facilities<br>16 m <sup>2</sup> with separate shared kitchen |
| Shared kitchens shall provide   | 3 m <sup>2</sup> per person using kitchen   |
| Two or more room units  |   |
| Each kitchen  | 7 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Each living/kitchen   | 15 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Each living room  | 12 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Each single person bedroom  | 6.5 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Each double bedroom   | 10 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Each living/bedroom   | 14 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Rooms used as bedrooms shall not be shared by persons of different sex, over the age of 10, unless married/co-habiting. Rooms used as bedrooms may be shared by persons of the same sex that are not co-habiting if there is a minimum of 6.5 m <sup>2</sup> of space per person. |   |

### Room sizes general information

Dimensions of room layouts shall be based on *free* usable space and will not include passageways, unusable alcoves or areas with a ceiling height under 1.53m. All rooms shall have a minimum floor to horizontal ceiling height of 2.3m over not less than 75% of the room area.

No staircase or landing nor any room which has been appointed as a kitchen or bathroom shall be deemed suitable for sleeping accommodation.

Special requirements apply to basements and attic/loft space rooms. Further advice is available on this matter.

Properties occupied by families where children are also living, will require extra space and be considered separately from these standards.

## B. Personal Washing Facilities

1. Each separate occupancy shall be provided, where reasonable and practicable, with a wash hand basin together with its own supplies of hot and cold (drinking) water, delivered by way of fixed taps, situated within the unit of accommodation, and of minimum dimension 500mm x 400mm. A 300mm tiled splash back is to be provided. These must be fit for purpose.

If a sink is provided to comply with the requirements in section D, a separate wash hand basin will not be required.

Where there are only 4 occupiers sharing facilities (e.g. the other parts of the licensable HMO have exclusive use of amenities) a separate wash hand basin will not be required.

2. All baths and showers must be located in a proper room of adequate size and layout and the room and fittings must be fit for their purpose. Baths and showers shall not be provided in kitchens. Every sharing occupant must have access to such a shared bathroom within one floor's distance of his or her letting and be readily accessible (unless en-suite).

3. Flooring must be water resistant, readily cleansable and suitably sealed to adjoining surfaces. This must be fit for purpose and not a high slip surface.

4. Each separate occupancy shall be provided with its own bath or shower. Where this is not practicable, for all sharing occupants there must be a readily accessible bathroom or a shower room in the following ratios:

|                |   |                             |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 - 5 persons  | - | 1 bathroom or shower room   |
| 6 - 10 persons | - | 2 bathrooms or shower rooms |
| 11- 15 persons | - | 3 bathrooms or shower rooms |

5. Baths should be at least 1.67m in length.

A 300mm splash back shall be provided to each wall adjacent to the bath. Where a shower is provided over this is to be extended to ceiling height, and a suitable shower curtain or screen provided.

6. Shower trays should be at least 800mm x 800mm.

Where a shower is provided, a shower curtain or shower door is to be provided to the opening side. An impervious splash back is to be provided to all sides. The splash back is to extend to ceiling height.

7. The hot water supply shall be of sufficient capacity, temperature and flow for the bath or shower and be available at all times. The fitting must be permanently plumbed into the hot/cold water system. See section E for shared facilities.

8. Bathrooms must be provided with effective and safe means of heating.

9. An effective means of natural/artificial ventilation shall be provided in accordance with the standards of the current building regulations.

### C. Drainage and Sanitary Conveniences

1. All above and below ground drainage shall be fit for purpose.
2. Every water closet, and associated wash hand basin, shall be fit for its purpose.
3. Where all or some of the units of living accommodation do not contain toilet facilities for the exclusive use of each individual occupant, for all sharing occupants there must be toilet facilities in the following ratios:

|                |   |                 |
|----------------|---|-----------------|
| 1 - 5 persons  | - | 1 water closet  |
| 6 - 10 persons | - | 2 water closets |
| 11- 15 persons | - | 3 water closets |

Where only one toilet is required this shall be separate from the bathroom. Where more than one toilet is required, at least 50% of the toilets shall be in accommodation separate from the bathrooms.

External water closets shall not be reckonable for this purpose.

Every sharing occupant must have access to such a shared toilet within one floor's distance of his or her letting.

4. Each shared water closet shall be situated in a room separate from a bathroom or shower room and shall have independent means of access from a common area. All water closet compartments must be of adequate size, and safely and conveniently laid out.
5. There must be adequate natural or mechanical ventilation. Any water closet sited so as to open directly and immediately on to a space intended for the storage or preparation of food shall be provided with mechanical ventilation in accordance with Building Regulations.
6. Flooring must be water resistant, readily cleansable and suitably sealed to adjoining surfaces. This must be fit for purpose and not a high slip surface.  
  
HHSRS will require that the risk of falls/slips is assessed.
7. A wash hand basin shall be provided in each separate water closet compartment. If this is not possible provide adjacent to the compartment. Each wash hand basin must be supplied with continuous supplies of hot and cold running water delivered by way of fixed taps. A tiled 300 mm splash back shall be provided immediately above each wash hand basin.

### D. Facilities for Storage, Preparation and Cooking of Food, and the Disposal of Waste Water

1. Satisfactory kitchen facilities shall be provided for the safe preparation of food and hot drinks. The layout and location of these facilities must be satisfactory for the numbers of occupiers using them. The kitchen shall be of such a size as to comply with section A for the number of people using it.

|   |
|---|
| 2. Preferably each single person household shall have for its own exclusive use a proper kitchen. Where this is not possible a shared kitchen may be provided in accordance with the requirements below.  |
| 3. Shared kitchens are not acceptable for households of more than one person.   |
| 4. Kitchens must be provided as close to living accommodation as possible, to a maximum of 1 floor distance, unless there is a living room or dining area provided on the same floor as the kitchen.  |
| 5. A set of kitchen facilities is to include those specified in paragraphs 8 to 18 below.   |
| 6. The layout of the shared kitchen facilities provided must permit the safe preparation of food and hot drinks. The layout and location of these facilities must be satisfactory for the numbers of occupiers using them.  |
| 7. Shared kitchens shall be provided on a scale of one facility for a maximum of five persons using it in accordance with requirements of paragraphs 8 to 15 below. Where a second set of amenities is to be provided, the Council will consider the provision of a microwave of 27 liter capacity with grill, in lieu of a cooker, and a dishwasher in lieu of a sink.   |
| <b>Food Storage and cupboards</b>   |
| 8. A refrigerator with a freezer compartment, of a size to suit the number of occupants. In a shared kitchen this may be provided in the individual accommodation, where on the same floor as the kitchen.  |
| 9. A dry food store of a minimum size of 0.1 m <sup>3</sup> (e.g. a 500mm wall cupboard) shall also be provided for each person using the kitchen. In addition, a cupboard for the storage of cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery etc. shall be provided of a minimum size of 0.15 m <sup>3</sup> (e.g. a 500mm base unit). In shared kitchens these must be lockable or may be provided in the individual accommodation, where on the same floor as the kitchen.                                    |
| 10. The space in a base unit below the sink will not be accepted for the purpose of food storage.   |
| <b>Preparation</b>  |
| 11. Suitable 500mm work top(s) shall be provided. In separate kitchens these must be a minimum total area of 0.5 m <sup>2</sup> . In shared kitchens these must be of a minimum total area of 1.0 m <sup>2</sup> .<br><br>The area of worktop supporting a worktop sited cooking appliance shall not be counted for this purpose.<br><br>In all cases, a work top of not less than 500mm X 500mm shall be placed next to each cooking appliance to allow the safe removal of hot foods from the cooker. |
| <b>Cooking</b>  |
| 12. The minimum acceptable for a proper cooking appliance will be:<br><br>a) two rings or hot plates AND either a grill or oven for single person use, or<br>b) a cooker with three or four rings or hot plates AND grill and oven facilities for use by more than one person.  |

13. Kitchens must also be provided with an electric socket which must be situated above each worktop. A minimum of 2 double sockets are to be provided for the use of work top appliances (in addition 1 per major appliance such as microwaves, washing machines, cookers, refrigerators etc).

#### **Sink and Disposal of Waste Water**

14. A sink (with drainer) with its own permanently connected supplies of hot and cold (drinking) water.

15. The hot water system is to be provided from an instantaneous gas water heater, hot water cylinder (hot water from a gas boiler or immersion heater), or 5 litre point of use electric storage water heater.

A 300mm splash back is to be provided.

#### **Kitchen Ventilation**

16. An effective switched mechanical extractor fan which shall be additional to any window existing. The specification of the extractor fan shall be to the standard set down in the current Building Regulations.

#### **Flooring**

17. Flooring must be water resistant, readily cleansable and suitably sealed to adjoining surfaces. This must be fit for purpose and not a high slip surface. The Housing Health and Safety Hazard Rating System (HHSRS) will require the risk of falls/slips to be assessed.

#### **Kitchen Fire Precautions**

18. A fire blanket in a proper container. The container shall be securely fixed to the wall in a prominent and readily accessible position, sited so as to prevent a user from being trapped in the event of the fire becoming out of control.

#### **Shared Kitchens**

19. See section regarding electricity and gas supplies etc.

A fire door shall be provided to each shared kitchen.

20. Each shared kitchen shall be provided with a lidded refuse storage container.

### **E. Water Supply**

1. There must be an adequate supply of hot and cold running water. The cold water must be suitable for drinking and food preparation purposes.

In the case of single occupiers and where the Council is satisfied that this provision for exclusive use is not practicable, the following shall apply:

Where facilities are shared, a proper water supply suitable for drinking shall be provided to each kitchen area and marked accordingly where other supplies exist. The cold supply shall be from the rising main.

N.B. A proper suitably sited water supply and pressure must be maintained to all appliances and fittings, which shall be protected against frost damage and fitted with an adequate stop-tap or valve.

2. Hot water supplies shall be capable of giving a continuous supply to all facilities in the property. A traditional boiler with hot water cylinder will be allowed subject to adequate supplies of hot water being available to all tenants. On large systems with a number of sinks and basins a loop system for the hot water using a circulation pump would reduce energy consumption by providing constant hot water.

## **F. Refuse, Storage and Disposal**

1. Refuse storage facilities must be provided sufficient for the needs of the house and of a type acceptable to the local authority (and in accordance with its recycling requirements).
2. This should normally be in the ratio of one standard refuse container per household. This provision is additional to any refuse storage containers provided in shared kitchens.
3. All containers should be located on hard-standing with suitable access for cleansing of the area and removal of containers.

*You should be aware that the manager is responsible for ensuring that a nuisance or health risk does not arise from refuse problems; such a problem is a evidence of failure to provide adequate "facilities", and may give rise to enforcement action by the council.*

## **G. Space Heating**

1. Each unit of accommodation shall be provided with satisfactory fixed heating in accordance with HHSRS requirements. The heating needs to be sufficient to maintain the temperature of the room at 21°C when the external temperature is -1°C. The output of the heater needs to reflect the thermal characteristics of the accommodation which include the heat losses through walls and draughts and the volume of the room. Gas central heating, throughout the property, which is controllable by the tenants or an equivalent standard would meet this requirement.



2. Such heating provision must be capable of being used at any time. Heating may be by means of either:
  - Central heating
  - Gas heaters connected to a suitable flue and terminal outlet
  - Electricity. If electricity is to be used to heat a room, an electric point shall be provided for that exclusive purpose. Individual heaters (except oil filled radiators) must be a fixed installation.
  - Oil heaters connected to a suitable flue and terminal outlet
  - Solid fuel in the form of an authorised smokeless fuel or alternatively solid fuel burnt in a smokeless appliance. If solid fuel is used proper fuel storage facilities shall be provided outside the building in a readily accessible position for each unit of accommodation
3. Except for central heating, wherever practicable heaters shall be fixed to an centre of the existing chimney breast or otherwise be positioned so as to direct heat towards the room.
4. The use of portable paraffin or oil fired heaters and liquefied petroleum gas heaters (LPG) (Bottled Gas heaters) shall not be acceptable under any circumstances, whether provided by the landlord or the tenant.

## **H. Natural Lighting**

1. All habitable rooms shall have an adequate level of natural lighting. A window of at least 1/10th usable floor area of a room is required, glazed with clear glass except in bathrooms and WCs which must be obscure glazing. Clear glass in an external door leading directly off the room to the external air will be included as part of this requirement. In the case of bathrooms, kitchens, WCs, staircases and hallways, adequate artificial lighting may be provided as an alternative where natural lighting cannot be achieved.

## **I. Artificial Lighting**

1. All areas of the property shall be adequately lit by means of electricity and usable at all times with suitably positioned switches. Timed switches will only be allowed on staircases and hallways where safe usage by a person of those areas can be ensured. All lighting to common parts to be provided, maintained and paid for by the landlord or the agent.

## **2. Electricity Supply**

Electrical socket outlets shall be provided to individual rooms or lettings to a minimum standard as follows:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Living rooms                           | - 4 sockets                                  |
| Bedrooms/Studies                       | - 4 sockets                                  |
| Bedrooms within Multiple Room Lettings | - 2 sockets                                  |
| Bedsits containing cooking facilities  | - 3 in kitchen area<br>- 3 elsewhere in room |

In separate kitchens or bedsits kitchen area, at least 2 socket outlets shall be located above the work surface for the use of portable appliances

All socket outlets shall be located in positions which permit their safe, convenient and proper use at all times, having regard to likely room layout. They shall not be positioned where vulnerable to damage, likely to be obstructed, or where the resulting appliance cables are likely to pose a safety hazard.

Electric cookers shall be provided with a dedicated cooker point outlet suitable for the rating of the cooker and fixed electric space or water heating appliances shall be provided with a separate dedicated electric point.

All new electrical equipment shall comply with Building Regulations requirements and shall be suitably certified.

## **J. Ventilation**

1. All habitable rooms shall have an openable window with a minimum size of at least 1/20th of floor area (doors are not acceptable as an alternative).
2. Kitchens and bathrooms may alternatively have mechanical ventilation where the above cannot be achieved. This ventilation system shall provide at least 15 litres per second for bathrooms, 6 litres per second for WCs and 60 liters per second for kitchens, unless it is within 300mm of the center line of a hob, when it shall be 30 litres per second. It shall be connected to the lighting circuit with an overrun device for at least a 10 minute period.
3. Permanent supply of fresh air is also required in bathrooms, WCs, Kitchen (anywhere containing cooking and/or washing facilities) and in any room in which there is a gas heating appliance.
4. Special requirements apply to basements and attic/loft space rooms.

## **K. Electricity, Gas, and Water Supplies**

1. The supplies of electricity, gas (where provided) and water to each letting shall be sufficient to carry out normal domestic activities. Where landlord's submeters are provided, the charge for the power used shall be within the limits set by the maximum retail price of electricity and gas.
2. Where lighting, heating, ventilation, kitchen, hot water, electrical sockets or alarm systems are provided for the shared use of all, or several households, then:
  - These services shall be available at all times, and sufficient for the needs of the users in the function being carried out and,
  - The electricity and gas (where provided) shall be provided from quarterly meters.
3. All heating and cooking appliances shall be properly maintained. Gas operated equipment shall be tested annually by a competent person (Corgi registered) and a certificate must be obtained which should be given to the tenant and a copy forwarded to Sutton Council. It is also strongly recommended that a Carbon Monoxide alarm or indicator is suitably positioned in all rooms containing a gas appliance. A dedicated supply shall be provided to each appliance.
4. Ensure that every fixed electrical installation is inspected and tested at intervals not exceeding 5 years by a qualified person, and supply a certificate to the Council within 7 days of receiving a request.
5. All items of portable electrical equipment to be subject of a PAT Test, in accordance with the relevant Code of Practice issued by the Institution of Electrical Engineers

## **Management**

The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 are applicable to all HMOs, not just licensable ones, except some converted blocks of flats.

The following is an abbreviated version of the Regulations.

The manager of an HMO must ensure that:

### **1. Information**

His name, address and telephone number is available to all occupants and are clearly displayed in the HMO.

### **2. Safety measures**

- The means of escape from fire in the HMO is free from obstruction and maintained in good order and repair.
- All fire fighting equipment and fire alarms are maintained in good working order.
- Signs to indicate means of escape from fire are displayed.
- Reasonable measures are taken to protect occupants from injury.

### **3. Water supply and drainage**

- The water supply and drainage system is maintained in a good, clean and working condition.
- Any tanks used for storage of water for drinking purposes are kept good, clean and in working condition with a cover.
- Every part of the water supply and drainage system is protected from frost damage.
- Water supply or drainage is not interrupted unnecessarily.

### **4. Supply and Maintenance of gas and electricity**

- Every gas installation is tested annually (by CORGI Engineer).
- Electric supply is tested at least every five years (by IEE recognised engineer).
- Gas and electric test certificates must be made available on demand
- Gas or electric supplies are not interrupted unnecessarily.

### **5. Common Parts & Installations**

- All common parts and installation are in good, clean decorative repair and are in working condition and kept reasonably free from obstruction.
- Handrails, banisters are kept in good repair.
- Stair coverings are safely fixed and in good repair.
- All windows and other means of ventilation in common parts are in good repair.
- Common parts have adequate lighting available to all occupants.
- All installations used by occupants are in good and safe repair.

### **6. Maintain Living Accommodation**

- Each unit of living accommodation and any furniture supplied is in a clean condition at the beginning of a persons occupation.
- All furniture should comply with current regulations – ‘The Furniture and

## Fire Precautions

Appropriate fire precaution facilities and equipment must be provided and maintained in the property in accordance with current British Standards, the requirements of the Housing Act 2004 (The Health and Safety Hazard Rating System) and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The following fire safety measures will reduce the risk of death or injury from fire:

- The provision of a 30 or 60 minute fire protected route of escape
- Fire separation between units of accommodation, including walls and ceilings
- Fire doors
- Cold smoke seals, intumescent strips and self-closing devices fitted to doors, and quick release locks
- Automatic and manual fire detection systems
- Emergency lighting
- Whole stair lighting – one switch turns all lights on
- Escape windows
- Sprinkler and mist systems
- Fire extinguishers and fire blankets

Different minimum standards will apply to different types of HMOs. Detailed advice is available in the document "London Fire Safety Guidance for Houses in Multiple Occupation" which can be downloaded from the council's web site.