

LICENSING OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Property Standards (Bedsitting, Shared Housing)



PART ONE - AMENITY STANDARDS

Room sizes

Bedrooms

Number of people	Shared Lounge	Shared Kitchen	Room Size (m ²)
One	Yes	Yes	6.5
One	No	Yes	10
One	No	No	13
Two	Yes	Yes	10
Two	No	Yes	14
Two	No	No	20.5

A single room should not be occupied by more than one household.

It is not normally acceptable for a bedroom to be occupied by more than two people in one household. Please consult the Private Rented Team for advice in this situation. An assessment using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) will be carried out to determine the risk from 'Crowding and Space'. Where this is unacceptable improvement will be required. See Part two.

Shared Lounges

Shared lounges must be of sufficient size and have sufficient soft furnishings, to allow at least two thirds of occupiers to sit together and socialise. Occupiers should be able to use this room to relax without interference from other activities. This may arise if the lounge or 'communal area' is adjacent to the kitchen. Dining, sitting areas adjacent to kitchens are acceptable as provision of 'shared lounge' providing both areas are large enough to comfortably allow the use of both areas at the same time.

Measurement of Rooms

Room sizes are calculated by taking wall to wall measurements directly above the height of the skirting board. In general, where the layout of the room prevents some parts of it being properly used, these areas will be excluded from the assessment of size. This includes areas which can only be used for access (e.g. some "L" shaped rooms with a narrow area in front of a doorway) are excluded. Also excluded are all parts of rooms located below sloping ceilings etc where the maximum ceiling height is less than 1.5m. The minimum standards apply to each room and the equivalent amount of space cannot be made up by using two smaller rooms.

Provision of bathrooms and WCs

Each separate occupancy should be provided with its own bath or shower and WC. Where this is not practicable, for all sharing occupants there must be readily accessible bathrooms or shower rooms and WCs in the following ratios.

Number of people ^{1,4}	Minimum Bathroom and toilet requirements ³
One to four	One bathroom, one WC can be combined ²
Five	One bathroom and one separate WC ²
Six to eight	Two bathrooms and two WC's (separate WC not required) ²
Nine to 10	Two bathrooms and two WC's (one WC must be separate) ²
11 to 12	Three bathrooms and three WC's (separate WC not required) ²
13 to 15	Three bathrooms and three WC's (one WC must be separate) ²

¹This refers to the number of people using shared facilities.

²All compartments/rooms containing a WC must contain a wash hand basin.

³External water closets cannot be included for this purpose. Baths or showers cannot be provided in kitchens

⁴Numbers over 16 will be considered in accordance with the above principles.

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

- All baths, showers and WCs must be located in a proper room of adequate size and layout and the room and fittings must be fit for their purpose. The room must also be fitted with a privacy lock.
- In bath/shower rooms there must be sufficient room for washing/bathing, drying, dressing and the placing of dry clothing.
- The hot water supply must be of sufficient capacity, temperature and flow for any wash hand basin, bath or shower and be available at all times. In the case of showers the water temperature must be thermostatically controlled. In the case of wash hand basins the cold water supply must be potable (drinking water quality). All fittings must be permanently plumbed into the hot/cold water system and properly connected to mains drainage.
- An effective means of natural/artificial ventilation must be provided. 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.
- Flooring must be water resistant, readily cleansable and suitably sealed to adjoining surfaces. When choosing floor coverings consideration must also be given to the possibility of slips and falls. On inspection an assessment using HHSRS will be carried out to determine the risk of slips and falls, where this is unacceptable improvement will be required.

Where a bath is provided:

- A 300 mm splashback shall be provided to each wall adjacent to the bath.

Where a shower is provided:

- A suitable waterproof covering is to be fitted to the walls to ceiling height or at least 2.1 metres above the base of the shower, whichever is the lesser.
- A suitable shower curtain or screen must be provided.

Wash hand basins

- A 300 mm splashback must be provided immediately above each wash hand basin.

In some circumstances wash hand basins may be required within sleeping rooms. This may be to compensate for a lack of a wash hand basin in a WC compartment or bathroom (due to restricted space) or because there is an excessive distance of travel to the nearest wash hand basin for example.

Also note below metering requirements for supply of gas/electricity to shared facilities.

See also 'Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage' in Part Two.

Facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food and for the disposal of waste water

Satisfactory and safe kitchen facilities must be provided for the preparation of food and hot drinks.

Kitchens must be provided as close to living accommodation as possible, to a maximum of 1 floor distance, unless there is a dining area within the kitchen or on the same floor as the kitchen and there is sufficient dry and refrigerated storage space within the kitchen.

Preferably each household shall have for its own exclusive use a proper kitchen. Where this is not possible a shared kitchen may be provided.

Shared Kitchens

Shared kitchens shall be provided on a scale of one set of facilities for a maximum of **five** persons. Provision of microwave ovens and dish washing machines in addition to the standard set of facilities may allow variation to the specified standard if a second set of facilities is required within a kitchen.

The layout of the shared kitchen facilities provided must permit the safe preparation of food and hot drinks. The size, layout and location of these facilities must be satisfactory and safe for the numbers of occupiers using them. Although no minimum size has been set you should aim to provide around 3m² for each person using the kitchen. The amount of space needed will depend on the layout of the facilities, shape of the room etc and whether or not there are associated dining facilities.

On inspection kitchens will be assessed using HHSRS to determine if there are risks of burns and scalds, collision, falls, fire or poor ergonomics with regard to size and layout. Where risks are considered to be unacceptably high improvements will be required.

Each shared kitchen shall be provided with a lidded refuse storage container sufficient for the numbers of people using the facilities in addition to the standard set of facilities below.

Also note below metering requirements for supply of gas/electricity to shared facilities.

A set of kitchen facilities is to include:

- A suitable number of electric sockets located in a safe place above each worktop. A minimum of 2 sockets are to be provided for the use of work top appliances (in addition to any that may be needed for microwave cookers, refrigerators and other large kitchen appliances).

Food storage and cupboards

- A refrigerator with a freezer compartment. In a shared kitchen this may be provided in the individual accommodation, where on the same floor as the kitchen.
- A dry food store of a minimum size of 0.1m³ (e.g. a 500mm wall cupboard) for each person using the kitchen.
- A cupboard for the storage of cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery etc, of a minimum size of 0.15 m³ (e.g. a 500mm base unit).
- In shared kitchens cupboards should be lockable or may be provided in the individual accommodation, where on the same floor as the kitchen. Locks on cupboard doors may be required if problems arise (ie theft of food).

The space in a base unit below the sink is not suitable for food storage.

Preparation of food

- Fixed cleansable worktop(s) must be provided with a minimum depth of 500 mm. In separate kitchens these must be a minimum total area of 0.5m² or 1 metre run. In shared kitchens these must be a minimum total area of 1.0m² or 2 metre run.
- Any area of worktop on which items such as microwaves are permanently sited is excluded from the measurement of 'free' worktop.
- Each cooking appliance must have an unobstructed area of worktop not less than 500mm by 500 mm adjacent to it to allow the safe removal of hot foods from the cooker.

Cooking of food

As a minimum the following must be provided:

- Single person use - two rings or hot plates together with either a grill or oven
- Multiple Users - a cooker with three or four rings or hot plates together with grill and oven.

Sink and Disposal of Waste Water

- A sink (with drainer) with its own permanently connected supplies of hot and cold (drinking) water and suitably connected to mains drainage and with a splashback of at least 300 mm to be provided.
- Hot water 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. Hot water must be available at all times.

Flooring

Flooring must be water resistant, readily cleansable and suitably sealed to adjoining surfaces. When choosing floor coverings consideration must also be given to the possibility of slips and falls.

Ventilation

Adequate ventilation must be provided including artificial ventilation where necessary.

Single Household Use Kitchens

In some cases the landlord is not contractually bound to provide kitchen facilities. In such situations there is no obligation (under the licensing legislation) for the owner to provide cooking or refrigeration appliances. Provision of these facilities is covered by the HHSRS. In this type of property it would usually be considered to be both normal and appropriate for the landlord to provide the facilities.

Space heating

Adequate space heating must be provided to all units of accommodation, including common areas (ie shared kitchens, lounges, bathrooms, halls and stairs). See 'Excess Cold' in Part Two for details of the standard that will be required.

Fire safety

Appropriate fire precautions must be provided in the property. See 'Fire' in Part Two for details of the standards that will be required.

Electricity, gas and water supplies

The supplies of electricity, gas (where provided) and water to each letting shall be sufficient to carry out normal domestic activities.

Sufficient electrical sockets must be provided to units of accommodation and kitchens to avoid the excessive use of extension leads and multi point adaptors. This includes provision in common areas to allow the use of vacuum cleaners etc.

All gas and electrical installations must be safe for use.

Where landlord's sub meters are provided, the charge for the power used shall be within the limits set by the maximum retail price of electricity and gas.

It is recommended that prepayment sub meters are operated by a key or card which is rechargeable by the tenant at his/her convenience. Tokens or cards provided by the landlord may lead to disconnection if the tenant cannot contact the landlord to obtain further credit. This may amount to a breach of the Management Regulations (see Part Three) and leave the tenant without heat, light or cooking facilities.

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 must 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) must be provided from quarterly meters. Normally these will be landlords' meters. However, in the case of some, smaller, shared housing, metering may be the collective responsibility of all the occupiers.

Also see 'Carbon Monoxide etc', 'Uncombusted Fuel Gas', 'Water Supply', 'Electrical Hazards' in Part Two.

Refuse, storage and disposal

Refuse storage facilities must be provided sufficient for the needs of the number of

- people occupying the house and of a type acceptable to the Local Authority (and in
- accordance with its recycling requirements).

All containers should be located on hard standing with suitable access for cleansing of the area and removal of containers.

Also see 'Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Refuse' in Part Two.

Part Two – Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

There are no 'set' standards in this section. The following are all 'hazards' that need to be assessed in each property. Improvement will be required where the hazards are found to give rise to unacceptable risks. Some hazards occur frequently and others vary rarely. Those that occur most regularly are indicated with an asterisk.

Damp and Mould*

The property needs to be reasonably free from damp and mould that would be prejudicial to health. This includes the presence of black spot mould resulting from condensation. Typically this requires that there is adequate heating, ventilation and insulation and that these provisions and the property as a whole are maintained in good order.

Excess cold*

Each unit of accommodation, including associated bathrooms and other common areas must be provided with an adequate fixed heating system. This needs to be sufficient to maintain the temperature of the main room at 19°C when the external temperature is -1°C.

The outputs of the system need to reflect the thermal characteristics of the accommodation which include the heat losses through walls (including walls to the stairwell) etc, draughts and the volume of the room.

On inspection an HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk from excess cold and where this is unacceptable, improvement will be required. The assessment will include consideration of heating provision, its control, and the thermal characteristics of the property.

A properly designed gas central heating system, throughout the property, which is controllable by the individual occupiers, combined with adequate insulation, would meet this requirement. Systems of equivalent efficiency (when combined with insulation measures and including consideration of costs to run) will be acceptable.

Also note metering requirements in Part One for supply of gas/electricity to shared facilities.

Excess Heat

Provision must be made to allow heat to disperse from the property and prevent excessive heat gain for example in loft conversions.

Asbestos

Any asbestos in the property must be adequately protected against damage and dispersal of fibres into the air. Particular care must be taken when contractors are on site and their work may disturb asbestos. Note also the requirements of the **Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006** which apply to the common areas of HMOs.

Biocides

This covers threats to health from those chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth in dwellings.

Carbon Monoxide and fuel combustion products

This category includes hazards resulting from the presence of excess levels in the atmosphere of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and smoke. These are products associated with the combustion or incomplete combustion of gas, oil and solid fuel for heating and cooking. Problems can arise with poor installation and inadequate servicing/maintenance.

Lead

This covers threats to health from the ingestion of lead – mainly relates to small children unless there is still lead piping in the water supply.

Radiation

This covers the threats to health from radon gas and its daughters, primarily airborne, but also radon dissolved in water. Plymouth is a Radon Affected Area and there may be problems in some lower ground floor/ground floor rooms.

Uncombusted Fuel Gas

This category covers the threat of asphyxiation resulting from the escape of fuel gas into the atmosphere within a dwelling.

Volatile Organic Compounds

These are a diverse group of organic chemicals which includes formaldehyde, that are gaseous at room temperature, and are found in a wide variety of materials in the home. This is more likely to be a problem when materials have been used without due regard to safety or where there is inadequate ventilation.

Crowding and Space

There must be adequate space for normal household activities to be undertaken safely. This relates to room sizes and numbers of people occupying the property.

Entry by Intruders*

The property must have a reasonable level of security. A higher level may be required in some areas than others depending on the crime statistics for that area. Areas with high numbers of HMOs typically have a higher incidence of crime.

Lighting

Adequate artificial lighting shall be provided in all areas sufficient for (a) the safe use of the accommodation (including external and common areas) (b) the maintenance of its cleanliness and (c) the carrying out of normal domestic activities. Adequate natural lighting and outlook should also be available. This can be a problem in lower ground floor rooms.

Also note metering requirements for supply of gas/electricity to shared facilities in Part One.

Noise

This covers threats to physical and mental health resulting from exposure to noise inside the dwelling or within its curtilage.

Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Refuse*

This covers hazards which can result from:

- Poor design, layout and construction such that the dwelling cannot be readily kept clean and hygienic
- Access into, and harbourage within, the dwelling for pests; and
- Inadequate and unhygienic provision for storing and disposal of household waste.

Food Safety

This covers threats of infection resulting from inadequacies in provision and facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food.

Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage*

This covers threats of infection and threats to mental health associated with personal hygiene, including personal washing and clothes washing facilities, sanitation and drainage.

Water Supply

This category covers the quality and adequacy of the supply of water within the dwelling for drinking and for domestic purposes such as cooking, washing, cleaning and sanitation. It includes threats to health from contamination by bacteria, protozoa, parasites, viruses and chemical pollutants.

Falls*

- Associated with baths, showers or similar
- On level surfaces – where any change in level is less than 300 mm
- On stairs/steps/ramps etc – where any change in level is more than 300 mm
- Between levels – where the change is more than 300 mm – this refers to falls from windows, balconies, landings, roofs etc.

Typical problems include lack of handrails, uneven steps, steps different in height, unguarded landings/roofs, low window sills, windows without restrictors.

Electrical Hazards*

This category covers hazards from shock and burns resulting from exposure to electricity, including from lightning strikes (protection would be required in buildings with significant risk of lightning strike only).

Fire*

Appropriate fire precautions must be provided in the property. The minimum requirements for the granting of an HMO licence are:

- A 10 year sealed battery operated smoke alarm fixed to the ceiling of each hall and landing.
- A fire blanket in a proper container in any shared kitchens. 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.
- A fire door to each shared kitchen. The fire door is to be fitted in accordance with LACORS Fire Safety Guidance.

On inspection an HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk from fire and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required. It is unlikely that the minimum requirements quoted above will be sufficient. The assessment will take account of what fire precautions are provided, the layout and size of the property and whether there are any factors which increase the likelihood of fire.

The Council has adopted the standard of fire safety described in the document “Housing - Fire Safety” published by LACORS (July 2008). A copy of this can be downloaded from the LACORS website www.lacors.gov.uk or from the private housing fire safety pages of the Council website www.plymouth.gov.uk.

Also note metering requirements for supply of gas/electricity to shared facilities in Part One and the requirements of the Fire Safety Order in Part Four.

Flames and hot surfaces*

This category covers threats of:

- Burns – injuries caused by contact with a hot flame or fire, and contact with hot objects or hot non water based liquids and
- Scalds – injuries caused by contact with hot liquids and vapours.
- Includes burns caused by clothing catching fire from a controlled fire or flame eg by reaching across a gas flame.
-

Typical problems are associated with poorly designed kitchen layouts.

Collision and entrapment

This category includes risks of physical injury from:

- Trapping body parts in architectural features, such as trapping limbs or fingers in doors or windows; and
- Striking (colliding with) objects such as architectural glazing, windows, doors, low ceilings and walls.

Explosions

This category covers the threat from the blast of an explosion, from debris generated by the blast, and from the partial or total collapse of a building as the result of an explosion.

Position and operability of amenities etc

This category covers threats of physical strain associated with functional space and other features at dwellings. An example would be having to stand on a chair to open a window or operate a switch.

Structural collapse and falling elements

This category covers the threat of whole dwelling collapse, or of an element or a part of the fabric being displaced or falling because of inadequate fixing, disrepair or as a result of adverse weather conditions. Structural failure may occur internally or externally within the curtilage threatening occupants, or externally outside the curtilage putting at risk members of the public.