

## PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

### Standards applicable to houses in Multiple Occupation

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 (typically 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 licensed 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 Private Rented 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 Standard etc. implications for your HMO.

**You are advised to contact the Private Rented 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.**

## Amenity and space standards (Bedsit and Student accommodation)

### A - SPACE STANDARDS

Bedrooms			
Number of people	Shared Lounge	Shared Kitchen	Room Size (m <sup>2</sup> )
1	Yes	Yes	6.5
1	No	Yes	10
1	No	No	13
2	Yes	Yes	10
2	No	Yes	14
2	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 HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk from crowding and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required.

#### Measurement of rooms

Rooms sizes are calculated by taking wall to wall measurements directly above the height of the skirting board. 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.

### B - SPACE HEATING

Each unit of accommodation must be provided with satisfactory fixed heating. This 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 etc, draughts and the volume of the room.

An HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk from cold and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required. Assessment of this takes account of the heating supplied, 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.

### C - FIRE PRECAUTIONS

Appropriate fire precautions must be provided in the property; any works required must be carried out within the licence period.

An HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk from fire and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required. We will discuss the works and negotiate a timescale for them. 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](http://www.lacors.gov.uk) or from the private housing fire safety pages of the Council website [www.plymouth.gov.uk](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk).

The minimum requirement for the grant of an HMO licence is that:

- A battery operated smoke alarm is fixed to the ceiling of each hall and landing.

If this minimum standard is provided then the property will reach a standard where a licence may be issued. However, you may be required to carry out further fire safety works to further reduce the risk from fire. Also see the section on kitchens/shared kitchens where further works may be required as a condition of licence (Section H).

#### **D - 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.

#### **E - 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. 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.

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. 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.

#### **F - PERSONAL WASHING FACILITIES**

- 1 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. Where this is the case it must be provided with a supply of hot and cold (drinking) water, delivered by way of fixed taps and properly connected to mains drainage. A 300mm tiled splashback is to be provided.
- 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. There must be sufficient room for washing/bathing, drying, dressing and the placing of dry clothing. Baths or showers cannot be provided in kitchens. Where a bath is provided, a 300 mm splashback shall be

provided to each wall adjacent to the bath. It must be provided with a supply of hot and cold water, delivered by way of fixed taps and the waste must be properly connected to mains drainage. Where a shower is provided 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. Showers must be provided with appropriate hot and cold water supplies which can be thermostatically controlled and the waste suitably connected to mains drainage.

- 3 The hot water supply shall be of sufficient capacity, temperature and flow for any wash hand basin, bath or shower and be available at all times. The fitting must be permanently plumbed into the hot/cold water system. See Part E for metering of shared facilities.
- 4 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 HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk of slips and falls, and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required.
- 5 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:

Number of people <sup>1</sup>	Minimum Bathroom and toilet requirements
1-4	1 bathroom, 1 WC can be combined <sup>2</sup>
5	1 bathroom and 1 separate WC <sup>2</sup>
6-8	2 bathrooms and 2 WC's (separate WC not required) <sup>2</sup>
9-10	2 bathrooms and 2 WC's (1 WC must be separate) <sup>2</sup>
11-12	3 bathrooms and 3 WC's (separate WC not required) <sup>2</sup>
13-15	3 bathrooms and 3 WC's (1WC must be separate) <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This refers to the number of people using shared facilities.

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

- 6 Bathrooms must be provided with effective and safe means of heating. See Part E for metering of shared facilities.
- 7 An effective means of natural/artificial ventilation shall be provided. See Part E for metering of shared facilities.

## **G - 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 ratios as shown below:

Number of people <sup>1</sup>	Minimum Bathroom and toilet requirements
1-4	1 bathroom, 1 WC can be combined <sup>2</sup>
5	1 bathroom and 1 separate WC <sup>2</sup>
6-8	2 bathrooms and 2 WC's (separate WC not required) <sup>2</sup>
9-10	2 bathrooms and 2 WC's (1 WC must be separate) <sup>2</sup>
11-12	3 bathrooms and 3 WC's (separate WC not required) <sup>2</sup>
13-15	3 bathrooms and 3 WC's (1WC must be separate) <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This refers to the number of people using shared facilities.

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

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. WCs separate from a bathroom or shower room shall be provided as indicated above 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. See Part E for metering of shared facilities.
6. 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 HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk of slips and falls, and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required.
7. A wash hand basin shall be provided in each separate water closet compartment. Each wash hand basin must be supplied with continuous supplies of hot and cold running water delivered by way of fixed taps and connected to mains drainage. A tiled 300 mm splashback shall be provided immediately above each wash hand basin. See Part E for metering of shared facilities.

## **H - FACILITIES FOR STORAGE, PREPARATION AND COOKING OF FOOD AND FOR 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.
- 2 Preferably each household shall have for its own exclusive use a proper kitchen. Where this is not possible a shared kitchen may be provided.
- 3 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 of sufficient size in relation to the number of people using the kitchen on the same floor as the kitchen.
- 4 A set of kitchen facilities is to include the items specified in paragraphs 7 to 13 below.
- 5 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.
- 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.

### **Food Storage and cupboards**

- 7 A refrigerator with a freezer compartment shall be provided. In a shared kitchen this may be provided in the individual accommodation, where on the same floor as the kitchen.
- 8 A dry food store of a minimum size of 0.1m<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. The requirement for locks on cupboard doors may be waived by this department with consent of the tenants.
- 9 The space in a base unit below the sink will not be accepted for the purposes of food storage.

### **Preparation of food**

- 10 Suitable 500mm work top(s) shall be provided. In separate kitchens these must be a minimum total area of 0.5m<sup>2</sup>. In shared kitchens these must be of a minimum total area of 1.0m<sup>2</sup>.

Any area of worktop on which items such as microwaves are permanently sited is excluded from the measurement of 'free' worktop.

In all cases, a work top of not less than 500mm by 500mm shall be placed next to each cooking appliance to facilitate the safe removal of hot foods from the cooker.

### **Cooking of food**

11 A proper cooking appliance shall be provided

The minimum acceptable with be:-

- a) two rings or hot plates together with either a grill or oven for single person use, or
- b) a cooker with three or four rings or hot plates together with grill and oven facilities for use by more than one person.

12 Kitchens must also be provided with electric sockets which must be situated 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 and refrigerators and other large kitchen appliances).

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

13 A sink (with drainer) with its own permanently connected supplies of hot and cold (drinking) water and suitably connected to mains drainage. A 300mm splashback is to be provided

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.

### **Kitchen Ventilation**

14 An effective form of ventilation shall be provided to each kitchen area, sufficient for the use and design of the facilities. In shared kitchens, **it is recommended** that a switched mechanical extractor fan is provided in addition to any window opening. The necessity, or otherwise, of requiring mechanical extraction, will be determined on inspection taking into account the existing provision of ventilation, the size and layout of the kitchen and fittings provided, the presence (or likely presence) of dampness in the property and the difficulty of fitting the appliance having regard to the benefits this would provide.

### **Flooring**

15 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 HHSRS assessment will be carried out to determine the risk of slips and falls, and where this is unacceptable improvement will be required.

### **Kitchen Fire Precautions**

16 A fire blanket must be provided 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**

- 17 See Part E regarding electricity and gas supplies etc.
- 18 A fire door shall be provided to each shared kitchen. The fire door is to be fitted in accordance with the detailed specification provided in the Plymouth City Council's fire precautions guide.
- 19 Each shared kitchen shall be provided with a lidded refuse storage container

### **Single Household Use Kitchens**

- 20 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.

#### **I. 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 dustbin or equivalent per household. This provision is additional to any refuse storage containers provided in shared kitchens.
3. All containers should be located on hardstanding with suitable access for cleansing of the area and removal of containers.

Items I.2 and I.3 are recommendations for the storage and disposal of refuse. 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 evidence of failure to provide adequate "facilities", and may give rise to enforcement action by the Council.