

GUIDANCE ON STANDARDS FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMOs)

1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance covers both licensed and non-licensable houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and is intended to assist landlords in complying with minimum legal standards, which will in part depend on the number of people living in a property.

The purpose of the guidance is to ensure that a proportionate, “entry-level” standard of protection is provided to occupiers. In many cases, it is anticipated that these standards will be exceeded and that this will depend on the local market for privately rented housing.

In line with decisions made by the Residential Property Tribunal, **ultimately, a property as a whole will be considered when the council determines its suitability under housing law for the number of people living there.**

This guidance refers to and should be considered alongside legislation and other guidance on the regulation of conditions and the management of privately rented homes, including:

- Part I of the Housing Act 2004 (including the Housing Health and Safety Rating System)
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System: Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals
- The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) (Regulations) 2006
- Housing – Fire Safety: guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing (the “LACORS” guidance)
- Building Regulations

Where recommendations are made, there is no requirement to carry out any work, but landlords may wish to consider these as part of any planned improvements or refurbishment work.

Further information about HMOs is available on the council’s website at www.southampton.gov.uk/hmo, by calling 023 8083 3006, option 5, and from landlords associations.

2. EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES OF HMOs

The number of amenities and the health and safety standards that are appropriate for an HMO are related to the differing needs of different types of occupiers. Guidance is given on different standards for different categories of HMOs as described below:

Bedsit Type Accommodation

These are HMOs comprising parts that are rented as individual lettings with exclusive use of certain rooms. Occupiers may share washing, toilet and kitchen facilities, but do not usually have a communal living room. The occupiers of this type of HMO tend to live completely independently of each other and have individual tenancy agreements.

This would include:

- Single room bedsits – may have exclusive use of, or may share, personal washing, toilet and kitchen facilities
- Flatlets – multi-room lettings sharing some personal washing, toilet and kitchen facilities

Shared Houses – Joint Tenancy Agreement

These are HMOs that are rented to a group of people, commonly students or young professional adults, who are on a group/joint contract. Occupiers share personal washing, toilet and kitchen/dining facilities and usually have a communal living room. The occupiers of this type of HMO have come to the property together and tend to operate communally.

Shared Houses – Individual Tenancy Agreement

These are HMOs that are rented as individual rooms to people who are on individual tenancy agreements and rent rooms independently of each other. The occupants of the house will generally share kitchen and bathroom facilities with communal living space. Occupiers may or may not live communally.

Hostels

These are HMOs that are generally referred to as hostels, guest houses, or bed and breakfast accommodation which provide accommodation for people with no other permanent place of residence. The accommodation is often on a temporary basis.

This category includes hostel and bed and breakfast establishments used by local authorities for housing homeless people, or similar establishments which provide accommodation for single people whose only financial support is state benefit and who would otherwise be homeless.

3. STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL HMOs

Standard	Guidance
<i>HHSRS</i> HMOs shall, wherever possible, be free from category 1 hazards, when assessed using the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9425/150940.pdf
<i>Heating</i> All HMOs must be fitted with an adequate form of space heating. Each unit of accommodation must have its own controllable source of fixed heating.	Further guidance is available in the HHSRS guidance (see above). Where gas fired central heating is installed in the property, it is recommended that radiators are fitted with thermostatic radiator valves.
<i>Ventilation</i> Each bedroom and living room must be provided with adequate background ventilation.	Further guidance is available in the HHSRS guidance (see above). Ideally, this will be an openable window. In rooms only fitted with patio or French Doors, where the opening of doors may pose a security risk, it may be appropriate to install trickle vents or air bricks to allow constant background ventilation. Bathroom extraction is recommended to be humidistat controlled.
<i>Lighting</i> All units of accommodation must be provided with adequate natural lighting and adequate artificial lighting commensurate with the use of the room. Where tenants are responsible for changing light bulbs, light fittings must be easily accessible and light bulbs must be of a type that can be easily replaced. External lighting should be installed as appropriate to ensure that occupants can safely reach the front door of their property.	Further guidance is available in the HHSRS guidance (see above). It is not generally acceptable for internal rooms to be used as bedrooms unless the occupant has sole use of a room which does have natural lighting.

Fire precautions

A principle of risk assessment applies to all properties when determining if fire precautions are acceptable.

Emergency lighting may be needed on escape routes particularly at changes in levels, where the escape route is not straightforward and where there is no borrowed light from the street. Further guidance is given in the LACORS guidance (see below), table C5, pages 26-27. Any emergency lighting provided must be capable of running for at least one hour in the event of mains electricity failure.

More details on fire precautions required can be found in the national guidance, Housing – Fire Safety: guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing (the “LACORS” guidance).

This guidance can be downloaded via the council’s website at www.southampton.gov.uk/hmo

As a minimum, all HMOs must be provided with mains wired smoke detectors on all floors, located in the escape route and any communal living room and mains wired heat detectors located in all rooms containing cooking facilities. All detectors must be interlinked to sound simultaneously. A higher level of fire detection system may be necessary dependent on the size and risk of the property and any additional risk from occupants.

Fire doors are not likely to be required in one or two storey properties occupied as shared houses, dependent on layout and risk. However doors must be of sound construction. Hollow panel doors and doors in poor condition will not be acceptable.

Windows

Windows must be in good repair and condition and able to be opened and closed easily.

Fire doors will be required in properties that are occupied as bedsits.
Locks on exit doors and bedroom doors must be openable from the inside without the use of a key (i.e. thumb turn or snibs). Hasp and staple locks, padlocks and sliding bolt mechanisms are unacceptable for use on the outside of bedroom doors.

Fire blankets conforming to British Standards (BS EN 1869:2019) are required in all rooms containing cooking facilities. Fire blankets must be wall mounted in an appropriate location close to, but not above or behind, cooking facilities.

If the electricity is supplied to the property via a prepayment meter (i.e. key or card meter) where a landlord is responsible for the bills, then a separate supply should be provided to supply the fire detection system with electricity.

Where the property is occupied or is likely to be occupied by children, openable windows that have a low sill height (less than 1.1metre from floor level) should be fitted with restrictive opening devices that prevent the windows being opened more than 10cm. Devices should be easily removed by an adult in case of emergency.

Where single glazed windows are installed, they should be free from excessive draughts. Secondary glazing or draught proofing may be necessary.

Any replacement windows installed must conform to current Building Regulations.

Staircases

All stairs in the property must be suitable for their purpose and be maintained in a good condition.

It is unlikely that alternate tread staircases will be considered suitable.

All staircases must be provided with appropriate balustrading and handrails. Gaps between balusters should not normally exceed 10cm.

Any stair covering must be kept in good repair and condition.

External steps should be appropriately lit and in good condition. If steps are steep or likely to be slippery, a handrail may be necessary.

Cycle storage

It is generally not acceptable for cycles to be stored in hallways of properties as this may compromise escape routes.

Gas safety

As required by the Gas Installation Supply and Use Regulations 1998, all gas appliances must be inspected at least every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a certificate produced. Tenants must be provided with a copy of this certificate at the start of the tenancy and when the gas safety checks are done during the tenancy.

Carbon monoxide detectors

Landlords must take reasonable precautions to prevent the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning in the accommodation, where such a risk exists.

The installation of a carbon monoxide alarm (conforming to EN 50291-1:2018 or EN 50291-2:2018 for battery units), and kitemarked, is now a legal requirement in rooms with solid fuel or gas-burning appliances under The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022. Alarms must be tested and maintained in working order.

Electrical safety

All electrical installations must be inspected at least every five years by a competent person as required by the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

Any electrical equipment provided by the landlord must be safe and fit for purpose.

Each habitable room must be provided with an adequate number of appropriately located electrical sockets (at least four). Failure to do so may result in the use of extension leads which increases the risk of fire and may lead to tripping hazards.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

An EPC survey must be carried out at least every ten years and a copy of the EPC given to tenants at the

One method of ensuring that this is done is by employing a competent person to carry out Portable Appliance Tests on a regular basis, including at change of tenancy, or by ensuring that a suitable Residual Current Device (RCD) protects all circuits, in accordance with the [IEE \(IET\)](#) wiring regulations ([BS 7671](#):2022 18th Edition)

The responsibility remains with the landlord to ensure that any appliances provided are safe for use. The same responsibility will apply to any electrical equipment in the property at start of tenancy even if the landlord claims it was left by previous tenants.

It is unlawful to let or continue to let a property that does not meet a minimum standard of energy

commencement of their tenancy, in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 and the Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007.

Waste disposal

Adequate general and recyclable waste containers must be provided & maintained.

Clear instructions must be passed to tenants concerning correct recycling of items to prevent incorrect use of bins.

efficiency, defined using the EPC scale of A to E.

Further information on this and funding schemes to improve energy efficiency of privately rented homes is available from the [Southampton Healthy Homes – the Environment Centre \(tEC\)](#)

This is generally considered to be one standard wheelie bin of each type per five occupants.

Enquiries about additional bins should be made to [Change your bin size](#)

Bathrooms and Personal Washing facilities

The term 'bathroom', as used in the standards, normally means a bathroom containing a bath or shower, a toilet and a wash hand basin. The basin should be of an adequate size for normal personal hygiene purposes including personal washing, the cleaning of teeth and shaving.

No personal washing or toilet facility should be more than one floor distant from the users of those facilities, in the case of a bedsit HMO or hostel, or two floors distant in the case of a shared house.

A wash hand basin with a constant adequate supply of hot and cold running water must be provided for each toilet. If the toilet is separate from a bathroom then a small hand rinse basin will suffice.

All amenities must be appropriately connected to hot and cold water supplies and drainage system. New facilities must be installed in accordance with Building Regulations.

Shared Houses – Single Joint Tenancy

Bathrooms and toilets should be provided at a ratio of 1 to 5 occupiers.

Wash hand basins are not required in bedrooms, although landlords may choose to fit these where reasonably practicable.

Occupiers *	Up to 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Shared bathrooms	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3
Wash hand basins are not required in bedrooms, although landlords may choose to fit these where reasonably practicable. It is recommended that, wherever possible, wash hand basins are fitted in the number of bedrooms stated in the table.	1	2	0	1	2	3	4	0

*Occupiers who have their own en-suite facilities are not counted

Shared Houses – Tenants on Individual Tenancy Agreements

Bathrooms and toilets should be provided at a ratio of 1 to 5 occupiers.

In addition, each bedroom must be provided with a wash hand basin with hot and cold water supplies and connected to the drainage system where reasonably practicable, having regard to the age and character of the property, water pressure and the existing provision of wash hand basins, toilets and bathrooms. The property as a whole will be considered when reaching a decision.

Occupiers *	Up to 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Shared bathroom	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3

*Occupiers who have their own en-suite facilities are not counted

Bedsit Accommodation

Bathrooms and toilets should be provided at a ratio of 1 to 5 occupiers.

Each unit must be provided with a wash hand basin with hot and cold water supplies and connected to the drainage system except where there is a kitchen sink provided in the room.

Occupiers *	Up to 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Shared bathroom	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3

*Occupiers who have their own en-suite facilities are not counted

Kitchen Facilities

No kitchen facility should be more than one floor distant from the users of that facility. This will not apply if a communal living space or dining space is available on the same floor, or is not more than one floor away from the kitchen.

A standard cooking appliance for shared use should comprise four rings or hot plates, an oven and a grill. Microwave ovens may be satisfactory as supplementary cooking appliances but should not be the only cooking appliances. An appliance with 2 rings or hot plates and oven is satisfactory for a one person unit of accommodation.

Sinks must be provided with a draining board and adequate constant supplies of hot and cold running water.

An extractor fan, venting air to outside, is to be provided.

A wall mounted fire blanket is to be provided (appropriately sited not immediately adjacent to or above the cooker).

Each kitchen should also be provided with adequate storage space for crockery and cutlery in drawers or cupboards.

Shared Houses – Single Joint Tenancy or Individual Tenancies

Cookers	1 for up to 5 occupiers (electrical cookers must operate from an independent, switched fused spur). The addition of a PAT tested* microwave oven will allow the facilities to be used by up to 7 occupiers. If there are more than 7 occupiers, two cookers must be provided, for up to 10 occupiers.
Sink	1 for up to 5 occupiers. For 6-10 occupiers, 2 sinks or 1 sink and a full-sized dishwasher.
Adequate number of suitably located electrical power outlets (adjacent to worktop)	One per occupier, with a minimum of four power sockets. Additional sockets are needed for the refrigerator and may also be needed for a dishwasher, microwave oven and washing machine, if provided.
Worktops	A minimum surface area of worktop that can be reasonably used for food preparation of 1 m ² or 0.2m ² per person (whichever is the greater) (excluding any space occupied by a microwave oven).
Dry food storage	Single 400mm wide wall unit per occupier or equivalent.
Refrigerated storage	Standard sized fridge (0.15m ³) per 5 occupiers. Separate standard sized freezer should be provided per 5 occupiers. Fridge or freezer may be under worktop or free-standing. If a double height fridge or freezer is provided it will be counted as equivalent to two.

For 10 or more occupants it may be appropriate to provide a second kitchen, depending on the size and layout of the property.

* Any electrical appliances provided by the landlord must be safe and fit for purpose. One method of ensuring this is for a competent person to carry out a Portable Appliance Test (PAT) on a regular basis. An alternative to PAT testing is to ensure that a suitable Residual Current Device (RCD) protects all circuits, in accordance with the [IEE \(IET\) wiring regulations \(BS 7671:2008 17th Edition\)](#). See page 7 for further information.

Bedsit Accommodation

Individual units to be provided with:

- A cooker. Single person units may be provided with appliances with 2 rings or hot plates and an oven (or the equivalent)
- Sink and drainer
- Standard size fridge with freezer compartment
- At least 0.5m of worktop
- Sufficient shelving, cupboard and drawer space for storage of food, crockery and utensils
- At least 2 electrical sockets above worktop not in use for fridge, oven or washing machine

Shared facilities should be provided on a ratio of 1 to 5, except for fridges, which should be provided on a ratio of one per household. Wall units in communal areas should be lockable.

Room Sizes

It is recommended, wherever practicable, that some form of communal living space is provided.

Sleeping rooms should not be occupied by more than two people. No persons should share a room unless:

- they are married, or living together as if married
- they are parent and child (as long as the child is the same sex as the parent, or the child is under 10 years of age if opposite sex)
- they are related children of the same family and are both of the same sex, e.g. two brothers (if below 10 years of age, opposite sexes can share a room)

There may be exceptions to the above sharing rule in genuine hostels and similar establishments. Advice should be sought from the council in these cases.

MANDATORY CONDITION

From 1st October 2018 minimum room sizes are to be imposed as a condition of Part 2 Housing Act 2004 licenses. Please note these are the statutory **minimum** standards and the standards imposed by Southampton City Council are higher (see following tables).

Minimum sleeping room sizes set out in legislation;

6.51m² for one person over 10 years of age
10.22m² for two persons over 10 years of age
4.64m² for one child under the age of 10 years

Where rooms are found to be between 4.64m² and 6.51m² these will be conditioned as only suitable for a child under ten and only if the property benefits from separate communal living space as stated in the Southampton City Council HMO standards.

Any area of the room in which the ceiling height is less than 1.5m cannot be counted towards the room size.

The room sizes do not include any en-suite bathroom facilities that may be provided.

Southampton City Council is required to specify for each HMO the maximum number of persons over 10 years of age/and or persons under 10 years of age who may occupy specified rooms provided for sleeping accommodation.

All rooms must be suitable for purpose and capable of containing all furniture required in that room. Furniture would normally consist of bed, wardrobe, drawer unit and study desk for student houses.

Kitchens must be of a sufficient size to fit in the required kitchen facilities and to enable them to be used safely.

Shared Houses – Single Joint Tenancy or Individual Tenancies

Bedroom for one occupant over 10 years of age	10m ² except where a separate communal living space is provided in which case the bedroom may be 6.51 m ²
Bedroom for one occupant under 10 years of age	10m ² except where a separate communal living space is provided in which case the bedroom may be 4.64 m ²
Bedroom for two occupants over 10 years of age (as 1 household)	14m ² except where a separate communal living room is provided in which case the bedroom may be 10.22 m ²
Bedroom for two occupants under 10 years of age (as 1 household)	10.22m ² except where a separate communal living room is provided in which case the bedroom may be between 6.5m ² and 10.22 m ² dependent on ages of the children
Minimum size of kitchen	7m ² for up to 5 occupants (a smaller floor area may be acceptable for properties occupied by 3 or 4 people, if all kitchen facilities in the room can be used safely) 8 m ² for 6 or 7 occupants 9 m ² for 8 or 9 occupants 10 m ² for 10 occupants.
Combined kitchen/living room or combined size of kitchen and living rooms (subject to minimum size of kitchen as shown above)	11.5 m ² for up to 5 occupants (a smaller combined floor area may be acceptable for properties occupied by 3 or 4 people, if the room(s) can be shown to be suitable to use) 13 m ² for 6 occupants 15 m ² for 7 occupants 16 m ² for 8 occupants 18 m ² for 9 occupants 19.5m ² for 10 occupants.

Bedsit Accommodation

One room unit for one occupant	10m ²
Two room unit for one occupant	Kitchen – 4.5m ² Living / kitchen – 11m ² Living room – 9m ² Bedroom – 6.51m ²
One room unit for a co-habiting couple	14m ²
Two or more roomed unit for two persons living as a single household	Kitchen – 4.5m ² Living / kitchen – 11m ² Living room – 9m ² Bedroom – 10.22m ²
Shared Kitchen	7m ² for up to 5 occupants (a smaller floor area may be acceptable for properties occupied by 3 or 4 people, if all kitchen facilities in the room can be used safely) 8 m ² for 6 or 7 occupants 9 m ² for 8 or 9 occupants 10 m ² for 10 occupants.

It is not considered acceptable for one room units to be occupied by children over the age of 12 months. Two room units may be suitable as long as there is adequate space for play and children over the age of 10 of the opposite sex are not sharing rooms.

Standards for Hostels

Bathroom	1 per 5 occupiers
Toilet	1 per 5 occupiers A wash hand basin must be provided with every toilet
Wash hand basin	In licensable HMOs 1 WHB to be provided within each letting where it is reasonably practicable. It will be the responsibility of the landlord to demonstrate that it is not reasonably practicable for WHB to be provided in each room. Regard should be had to the age and character of the HMO, the size and layout of each room, and its existing provision for wash hand basins, toilets and bathrooms. A wash hand basin must be provided with every toilet.
Cooker	1 cooker for up to 5 lettings. 2 cookers for up to 10 lettings and one cooker per additional 5 lettings thereafter.
Sink	1 sink for up to 5 lettings. 2 sinks for up to 10 lettings and one sink per additional 5 lettings thereafter.

Room Sizes for Hostels

ROOM(S)	MINIMUM ROOM SIZE
1 person	6.51m ² if communal area provided. 9m ² if no communal area.
2 persons	10m ² if communal area provided. 13m ² if no communal area.
Kitchen facilities located within the letting	Add 3m ² to each of the room sizes given above
Shared kitchens (for use by occupants)	7m ² for up to 5 occupants. 10m ² for 6 – 10 occupants.
Kitchen/dining rooms	11.5m ² for up to 5 persons. 19.5 m ² for 6-10 persons
Lounge/dining area	12m ² for up to 5 persons. 16.5m ² for 6-10 persons. Dining space to be in close proximity to kitchen

For hostels of more than 10 people, contact the council for details of size requirements.