



**STANDARDS FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE  
OCCUPATION (HMO'S)**

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## CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	page 3
2.0	HMO Minimum Room Sizes	page 4
3.0	Kitchen Facilities:	page 5
3.1	Kitchen ratios	page 5
3.2	Kitchen sink	page 5
3.3	Cooking facilities	page 5
3.4	Kitchen worktop	page 6
3.5	Food storage	page 6
3.6	Refrigerators/Freezers	page 6
3.7	Kitchen cupboards	page 6
3.8	Power sockets	page 7
3.9	Refuse storage	page 7
3.10	Kitchen ventilation	page 7
3.11	Kitchen lighting	page 7
3.12	Kitchen floors	page 7
3.13	Kitchen walls	page 7
3.14	Kitchen ceilings	page 7
3.15	Kitchen safety	page 7
4.0	Personal Washing Facilities:	page 8
4.1	Ratios and location	page 8
4.2	Ventilation	page 8
5.0	Heating	page 9
6.0	Electrical Installation	page 9
7.0	Gas Installation	page 9
8.0	Fire Precautions:	page 9
8.1	Fire Doors	page 9
8.2	Maintenance of fire detection systems	page 10
8.3	Contact details	page 10
9.0	Application of Standards	page 10
10.0	HMO Licensing and Planning Guidance	page 10
11.0	Contact Information	page 10
	Flowchart Guide to HMOs	page 11

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Housing Act 2004 (“the Act”) introduced a new definition of ‘house in multiple occupation’ (HMO), together with a national mandatory licensing scheme for certain HMOs.

The definition of HMO can be found in Sections 254-259 of the Act. It is a building that is occupied, as the only or main residence, by more than one household, and includes:

- Buildings that consist of bedsit rooms where some of the facilities are shared;
- Buildings with multiple units of accommodation that all have their own exclusive facilities but which are not self-contained;
- Shared houses (e.g. houses let to a group of friends, often students, who have their own bedrooms but share a degree of communal living, including the use of at least one room as a common room);
- Hostels or hotels where some of the occupiers have no other permanent place to live;
- Buildings converted into self-contained flats that don’t comply with the Building Regulations 1991 and where less than two thirds of the flats are owner occupied;
- Buildings which contain a mixture of the above types.

A household comprises:

- An individual
- Persons who are married or co-habiting (including single-sex relationships)
- Relatives of an individual or of married/co-habiting partners (child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or cousin)
- Foster children or domestic employees (e.g. au pairs, nannies, maids, etc).

There are a number of exemptions to this definition:

- Any house or flat occupied by only two people;
- Any house or flat where, apart from the resident owners and their family, there are a maximum of two other persons;
- Any building which is controlled or managed by a public sector body;
- Any building which is controlled or managed by an educational establishment on an approved list;
- Any building which is occupied by a religious community.

Under Part 2 of the Act certain HMOs are required to be licensed with the Council. These are HMOs of 3 or more storeys **and** occupied by 5 or more persons (NB ‘storeys’ includes habitable basements, attic rooms, habitable mezzanine floors and floors occupied on a commercial basis).

Licensing is intended to make sure that:

- Landlords of HMOs are fit and proper people, or employ managers who are;
- Each HMO is suitable for occupation by the number of people allowed under the licence;
- The standard of management of the HMO is adequate;
- High risk HMOs can be identified and targeted for improvement.

## **2.0 HMO MINIMUM ROOM SIZES**

All lettings shall be large enough to provide sufficient space for living, sleeping, food storage and food preparation (except where there is a separate shared kitchen provided elsewhere)

All rooms shall be of a convenient and usable shape for their intended purpose. Where the ceiling height is less than 1.5 m2 the floor area is not counted. Space that cannot be used because of its shape or location must not be included when calculating room size to meet the space standards.

No staircase, landing, passage, kitchen or bath/shower room shall be used for sleeping accommodation

For the purpose of this standard:

- No more than two persons shall occupy any room (no account shall be taken of a child under the age of 12 months but a child over 12 months is considered as a separate person in terms of these standards)
- Persons of the opposite sex who are aged 10 years and over and who are not cohabiting shall not be obliged to sleep in the same room.

### **2.1**

<b>Individual rooms:</b>	<b>1 Person Unit</b>	<b>2 Person Unit</b>
Bedroom	6.5 m2	10 m2
Combined bedroom and living room	9.5 m2	13 m2
Combined bedroom, living room and kitchen	12 m2	16 m2
Kitchen	4 m2	4.5 m2
Living room	9 m2	11 m2

### **2.2**

<b>Rooms shared by occupiers:</b>	<b>1 - 3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7-10</b>
Kitchen	5 m2	6 m2	7 m2	9 m2	11m2
Kitchen (more than 10 people)	An extra m2 per person recommended				
Dining Area	2 m2 per person is recommended				
Living room (1-6 people)	11 m2				
Living room (more than 6 people)	An extra 2m2 per person recommended				

A communal living room is not required if all individual bedroom/living rooms meet the standard in 2.1 above.

Bedrooms must not be more than one floor distance from the kitchen except where a suitable dining area is provided e.g. dining room, living room.

### **3.0 KITCHEN FACILITIES**

5 persons can share one full set of kitchen facilities. More than 5 persons will require an additional set of kitchen facilities.

#### **3.1 Kitchen ratios**

<b>Maximum Number of Individuals allowed to share kitchen</b>	<b>Number of sets of kitchen facilities</b>
5	1
10	2
15	3

- All equipment must be fit for purpose.
- Kitchen facilities shall be in a properly designed room or area, laid out so to allow the safe and hygienic preparation of food.
- Where the bedrooms are more than one floor away from the kitchen, the kitchen must be provided with facilities to eat meals, i.e. a kitchen diner or in a separate room adjacent to the kitchen.
- A kitchen diner must be provided with an adequate size table and number of chairs for the number of users.
- One full set of kitchen facilities will include the following:
  - Kitchen sink
  - Cooking facilities
  - Worktop
  - Food storage (dry goods cupboards and fridge freezers)
  - Kitchen cupboard
  - Power sockets
  - Refuse storage

#### **3.2 Kitchen sink**

Sink and a drainer of a suitable and practical size on a base unit, properly connected to the drainage system, and provided with an adequate and constant supply of potable drinking water and an adequate and constant supply of hot water, without fluctuation in temperature.

Each sink must have an appropriate splashback of minimum height 300 mm.

A dishwasher will be acceptable as a second sink.

#### **3.3 Cooking facilities**

Any cooker to be located away from exit doors and away from windows.

- Individual use – minimum shall be an electric two rings, conventional oven and grill. If a 'portable' cooker is installed it shall be installed at a safe working height and properly secured, and have the capability to operate all rings and oven simultaneously.

- Shared use for up to 5 persons – full sized electric cooker with a minimum of four rings, conventional oven and grill, to be securely fitted.
- A 25 litre microwave with an oven and grill will be acceptable as a second cooker.

### **3.4 Kitchen worktop**

A properly secured, readily cleansable work surface shall be provided in a suitable position adjacent to the cooker in every kitchen. Worktop to be at the same height as the cooker.

Minimum dimensions 600 mm deep x 1000 mm wide for 1-3 persons, plus a further 500 mm (linear width) per additional person sharing up to a maximum 3000 mm.

### **3.5 Dry food storage**

One cupboard for the storage of dry goods per person, with a minimum storage capacity of 0.2 cubic metres. The recommended minimum dimensions to meet this requirement are:

Width: 60cm  
 Depth: 50cm  
 Height: 70cm

The cupboard space in the unit below the sink is not suitable for dry goods storage.

### **3.6 Refrigerators/Freezers**

- A refrigerator with a freezer compartment, with a minimum capacity 140 litres for 1 to 2 persons.
- Kitchens shared by more than 2 people to have a separate refrigerator and freezer of worktop height. Each tenant must be provided with a shelf or area of adequate size, within the refrigerator and freezer appliances for their sole use. The minimum capacity for each appliance is:
  - 3 – 4 persons 160 litres
  - 5 persons 200 litres

### **3.7 Kitchen cupboards**

Sufficient cupboards for the storage of kitchen utensils and crockery in shared kitchens.

### **3.8 Power sockets**

There shall be a minimum of four electrical sockets at worktop height plus one socket for each major appliance (e.g. refrigerator/freezer, washing machine

etc.) per full set of kitchen facilities. Therefore, two sets of kitchen facilities require at least 8 sockets at worktop level plus one socket for each major appliance.

### **3.9 Refuse storage**

Impervious refuse storage containers (bins) with suitable close fitting lids. There shall be an adequate number of bins for the number of occupants and they should be readily accessible.

### **3.10 Kitchen ventilation**

In addition to openable windows, mechanical ventilation extracting 60 litres/second to the outside air or 30 litres/second if sited adjacent to the hob.

### **3.11 Kitchen lighting**

Kitchens and dining areas must have adequate artificial lighting.

### **3.12 Kitchen floors**

All kitchens and kitchen areas must be provided with suitable impervious and readily cleansable floor covering.

### **3.13 Kitchen walls**

Walls to be readily cleansable and those directly adjacent to cookers, sinks and food preparation areas shall be provided with impervious splash backs.

### **3.14 Kitchen ceilings**

Ceilings shall be in good repair, readily cleansable, smooth and impervious.

### **3.15 Kitchen safety**

All kitchens and kitchen areas must have a safe and practical layout. In particular:

- (a) cooking appliances should have an adjacent work surface
- (b) no soft furnishings are to be within 600mm of the cooking appliances
- (c) other than an extractor hood, no fixtures or fittings are to be sited directly above cooking appliances.

## **4.0 PERSONAL WASHING FACILITIES**

All facilities should be located in rooms of an adequate size and layout no more than one floor distant from any bedroom and accessible from communal

areas unless provided as an en-suite facility for the exclusive use of that occupant.

All baths, toilets and wash hand basins (WHB) should be fit for purpose. Each WHB is to be provided with an appropriate splashback.

Walls and floors should be reasonably smooth and non-absorbent and capable of being readily cleansed.

#### **4.1 Ratios and location of washing facilities**

1 – 4 persons	At least 1 bathroom with a fixed bath or shower, WHB and a WC (which may be sited in the bathroom).
5 persons	<i>In bedsit type HMOs:</i>  At least 1 bathroom with a fixed bath or shower AND 1 separate WC with WHB (the WC can be part of a second bathroom).  <i>In shared house HMOs:</i>  At least 1 bathroom with a fixed bath or shower, a WC and a WHB.
6 – 10 persons	2 bathrooms AND  2 WCs with WHBs (but one of the WCs can be contained within one of the bathrooms).
11 – 15 persons	3 bathrooms AND  3 separate WCs with WHBs (but two of the WCs can be contained within bathrooms)

In addition a wash hand basin is to be provided in each sleeping room *where practicable*.

#### **4.2 Ventilation**

Bathrooms to have mechanical ventilation capable of extracting 15 litres/second to the outside air in addition to any openable window.

Each toilet in a separate compartment is required to have a window that is easily accessible and equivalent to 1/20<sup>th</sup> (5%) of the floor area OR mechanical ventilation extracting at least 6 litres/second to the outside air.

#### **5.0 HEATING**

Fixed space heating to be provided in every room including bathrooms, WC compartments and kitchens. There should be adequate controls to allow the occupants to regulate the temperature within their unit of accommodation. The system to be an adequate size for the building with adequate thermal



insulation to the fabric of the building. The method of heating must be both safe and affordable.

## **6.0 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION**

Electrical installation to be tested every 5 years by a competent electrical engineer and a copy of the test certificate provided to the council

## **7.0 GAS INSTALLATION**

A copy of the current Gas Safety Certificate should be provided to the council on an annual basis.

## **8.0 FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

Fire precautions should be provided as far as is practicable in accordance with the LACORS publication "Housing – Fire Safety. Guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing" dated August 2008.

### **8.1 Fire Doors**

The construction of fire doors should be such that when subjected to fire conditions they will act as an effective barrier to the passage of flame, heat and smoke for a specified period of time.

"Fire Door" means a fire resisting door and frame constructed to comply with the appropriate rating requirement of BS476: Part 22: 1987 and BS 8214: 1990.

Two different types of fire door may be specified for HMOs:

- half hour fire doors (FD30)
- half hour (smoke stop) fire doors (FD30S)

Both types of door require intumescent strips but smoke stop doors are also provided with smoke seals.

The upgrading of existing doors is not accepted as an alternative to the installation of new fire resisting doors.

Sliding doors are not acceptable in fire resisting elements.

Fire doors must be capable of being opened from the inside without the use of a key.

### **8.2 Maintenance of fire precautions**

The manager/person in control must ensure that any fire fighting equipment, emergency lighting and fire alarms are maintained in good working order. A maintenance contract must be arranged (with a competent contractor) at the time of initial installation for regular servicing in accordance with the relevant British Standard.

The fire alarm system must also be tested on a weekly basis by the manager/person in control and all such tests should be properly recorded within the log book supplied by the installer during the handover procedure.

### **8.3 Contact details**

Contact details of the person responsible for the maintenance of the fire precautions should be displayed in a prominent position in the HMO in accordance with the current HMO Management Regulations.

## **9.0 APPLICATION OF STANDARDS**

When a licensing application is received, the Council will check whether the property complies with these standards. If the property does not fully comply any remedial works will become a licence condition and conditions are usually to be met within 6 months from the date the license is issued.

Even if a property complies with these standards, the Council may still require other work to be carried out throughout the duration of the licence. Within five years of the license being granted, a Council Officer will carry out a full inspection of the property to check whether any further work is required to bring the property up to a reasonable standard under the Housing, Health and safety Rating System (HHSRS). The officer will also check that the property is being properly managed and maintained.

## **10.0 HMO LICENSING AND PLANNING GUIDANCE**

HMO owners and their agents are advised to ensure that any licensable HMO does not contravene any planning restrictions or requirements. The granting of an HMO licence does not confer any planning permission and advice should be sought directly with the Planning Department if there are any issues arising.

## **11.0 CONTACT INFORMATION**

For further information please contact:

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## Guide to HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

Is your property an HMO? Is it licensable?

Use this sheet if your property is a house shared by tenants, a house converted into bedsits or accommodation above commercial premises.

