



Housing Act 2004

Property and Management Standards Applicable to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

(HHSRS)

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The housing health and safety rating system is a new method of assessing how poor or dangerous housing conditions can affect the health and safety of occupiers.

The legislation is contained within the Housing Act 2004 and came in to effect on 6th April 2006 along with the licensing provisions.

It replaces the former Housing Fitness standard under the Housing Act 1985 and applies to all dwellings regardless of whether they are HMOs or single households and regardless of the type of tenure.

The basic theory behind the system is that all dwellings should provide a safe and healthy environment for all occupiers, potential occupiers or their visitors. The system relies upon an assessment of the whole dwelling to identify any deficiencies which could pose a risk to health and safety.

Deficiencies are then related to a wide range of hazards ranging for example from excess cold, falling on stairs to fire and structural collapse (the full list contains 29 identified hazards).

To assess the seriousness of any particular hazard an assessment is made as to the likelihood of a person suffering harm during the forthcoming twelve months and how serious the harm is likely to be. For example if a house has a steep poorly lit staircase with no handrail, an assessment is made as to the likelihood of a person falling on the stairs and if they do fall, how serious will their injuries be. An assumption is made that the dwelling is occupied by the most vulnerable age group. For example when assessing falling on stairs it is assumed that the dwelling is occupied by a person aged 60 or over.

In order to reach an informed decision the Government has issued guidance based upon national accident and ill health statistics.

By application of a prescribed formula, hazards are given a numerical score. The scores have been divided in to bands ranging from A to J for ease of comparison.

Hazards which have a score in the top 3 bands (A, B, and C) are known as Category 1 hazards and every local authority has a duty to take some form of action to remove or lessen the hazard, once identified, using a range of new powers contained in part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.

Hazards falling in the lower bands, D to J are known as Category 2 hazards for which every local authority has discretionary powers to take action to remove or lessen the hazard.

This is a very brief description of the HHSRS and to find out more you are advised to refer to a new document recently issued by the Government (Department for Communities and Local Government) entitled : HHSRS – Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals.

You can download a version of the document from the website
www.communities.gov.uk

Follow the links to Housing and enter HHSRS in the search box.

Alternatively you can obtain a copy from:

DCLG Publications
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Quote the publishing ref ISBN: 978 185 112 8563 published on 26/5/06).

This DCLG document gives a full explanation of the HHSRS and how you as a landlord can carry out your own assessments to reduce risks to the health and safety of your tenants.

Local authorities are under a duty to inspect every property for which a licence has been issued within 5 years from the date of application to assess for hazards under the HHSRS.

Carrying out your own risk assessment and attending to any hazards so identified is therefore considered very worthwhile in order to lessen the likelihood of any enforcement action having to be taken following this compulsory inspection by the City Council.

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