



Housing Act 2004

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

Physical Property Standards Bedsits

Physical Property Standards

This section sets out the minimum required room sizes plus the minimum provisions of amenities, fire precautions and heating for the various categories of HMO. Further details of the required standard of materials and installation of the basic amenities and associated services are specified in Section 3.

Bedsits

Definition

Houses occupied as individual rooms where there is some exclusive occupation (usually bedroom/living room) and some sharing of amenities (bathrooms and / or toilets). Cooking and food preparation facilities are usually provided within the individual units of accommodation but some occupants may share a communal kitchen. There is usually no communal living room and each occupant lives otherwise independently of all others.

Room Sizes And Permitted Occupation

The following are the minimum floor areas required:-

(a) One person units of Accommodation

(i) One Room Units

- A single room including kitchen facilities 13 m²
- A bed /sitting room with a separate kitchen 10 m²

(ii) Two or more roomed units

- Each combined living room / kitchen 11 m²
- Each living room (without kitchen facilities) 9 m²
- Each bedroom 6.5 m²
- Each separate kitchen 3.5 m²

(b) Two or more person units of Accommodation

(i) One room units

- A bed sitting room including kitchen facilities for two persons 20 m²
- A bed sitting room for two persons with separate kitchen facilities. 15 m²

(ii) Two or more Roomed Units

• Each combined living room / kitchen	15 m ²
• Each living room	12 m ²
• Each bed /sitting room	15 m ²
• Each single bedroom	6.5 m ²
• Each double bedroom	10 m ²
• Each separate kitchen for exclusive use of up to three occupants, living as one household	4.5 m ²

NB. A unit of bedsit type of accommodation is unlikely to be occupied by more than three persons. In cases where more than three persons are or are likely to be accommodated within any particular unit of accommodation then the advice and agreement of the City Council must be sought.

General Principles Of Occupation

- Children below the age of 10 years now count as a whole person
- In no case shall any room be occupied by more than two persons
- Persons of the opposite sex over the age of 12 shall not be permitted to share the same room for sleeping purposes unless they are of marriageable age and are either married or living as partners.
- The sharing of a room for sleeping purposes by persons who are neither related or living as a married couple or partners shall be permitted only when both persons give their consent.
- No unit of accommodation shall be occupied on the basis of a divided or shared tenancy or licence. This is to avoid the situation arising whereby a unit of accommodation may be occupied by different persons at different times of the day or different days of the week (for instance shift workers or seasonal / migrant workers who occupy a property in connection with their employment).
- Only rooms designated as living rooms, bedrooms or bed/sitting rooms may be used for living or sleeping purposes.
- Circulation spaces such as hallways, landings and other rooms such as kitchens, bathrooms, or cellars, roof spaces etc shall be deemed unsuitable for use as sleeping or living accommodation.
- Irrespective of overall floor area, consideration will be given to the shape and useable living space within the room when determining its suitability for occupation No account will be taken of any part of a room where the ceiling height is less than 1.525 m (5ft)
- A single bed/sitting room containing cooking facilities is not suitable for accommodating a child below the age of 5 years.

Kitchen Facilities For Bedsits

Each unit of accommodation must be provided with adequate facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food and the disposal of waste water. Wherever possible, such facilities should be for exclusive use and be located within the unit of accommodation. Where this is not practicable, the kitchen must be located not more than one floor distant from the accommodation. In exceptional circumstances whereby the provision of kitchen facilities for exclusive use is not practicable or appropriate, shared facilities may be provided on the basis that no more than three units of single person occupation have use of each set of facilities in any one kitchen. The shared kitchen is to be not more than one floor distant from any individual letting having use of it.

The kitchen facilities appropriate for any of the circumstances mentioned above are: -

(a) **Bedsitting Room With Combined Kitchen (this is the most usual situation)**

The facilities shall comprise as a minimum: -

- **Cooking**

Single person: a gas or electric cooker with two burners/hobs, oven and grill

Two persons: a gas or electric cooker with four burners/hobs, oven and grill

A combination microwave oven may be substituted for one or two of the burners/hobs respectively or in place of a conventional oven

- A metal or ceramic kitchen sink and drainer with a constant supply of hot and cold water
- Sufficient fixed work surface to enable each user to prepare food safely and hygienically. A minimum of 500 mm clear run of work surface will be required for a single person bedsit and 1000 mm for a double room.
- A suitable refrigerator of sufficient size to store an average persons dietary requirements on a day to day basis. A freezer compartment is desirable but not essential in a single person bedsit.
- Sufficient storage cupboard space for dry and canned food goods plus cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery.
- Electric power sockets: two twin switched power sockets set at a convenient height and safe position in relation to the kitchen facilities.

Additional requirements specific to kitchen areas within bedsitting rooms:-

- The kitchen area must be provided with an easily cleansable non-slip floor covering to an adequate extent and separated from any adjoining carpeted floor area by suitable dividing strips securely fixed in position.
- Cookers must be safely positioned within the room such that they do not compromise escape in the event of a fire associated with the cooker i.e. they must not be positioned adjacent to the exit doorway – in particular gas cookers must not be positioned directly adjacent to openable windows where flames are likely to be extinguished by excessive draughts or where curtains are likely to catch fire.

(b) Separate Kitchen Directly Off the Bed sitting Room

The kitchen must be of sufficient size and layout to enable food to be prepared safely and hygienically. A minimum floor area of 3.5 m² for a single person letting and 4.5 m² for a two person letting is normally required for this purpose. The facilities to be provided are as those for kitchens within the bed sitting room.

(c) Separate Kitchen For Exclusive Use But Accessed From Outside The Unit Of Accommodation

The facilities are as those for separate kitchens off a bed sitting room. The kitchen is to be not more than one floor distant from the unit of accommodation.

(d) Communal Kitchen Shared With Other Units Of Accommodation

- A set of kitchen facilities must be provided for each three single person units of accommodation having use of the shared kitchen
- There shall be no more than two sets of facilities within any one kitchen
- Kitchens for use by 2 to 3 persons shall have a minimum floor area of 7 m² and 4 to 6 persons a minimum floor area of 10m²
- The kitchen is to be not more than one floor distant from any unit of accommodation having use of it.

- A set of kitchen facilities shall comprise: -
 - A gas or electric cooker with four burners/hobs grill and oven. A combination microwave oven/grill may be used in place of a conventional oven.
 - A metal or ceramic sink and drainer with a constant supply of hot and cold water
 - Sufficient fixed work surface to enable each user to prepare food safely and hygienically. A minimum 500 mm clear run of work surface per person will be required.
 - Two twin switched electric power sockets set at a convenient height and safe position in relation to the kitchen facilities in addition to any sockets serving any major appliances.

Shared kitchens within bedsit type accommodation should not be used for communal food storage purposes (either refrigerated or dry food storage). This is due to the fact there may be little interaction between each occupancy which could result in poor storage practice and the likelihood of conflict between residents. A suitable refrigerator and food storage cupboard should therefore be provided within each unit of accommodation.

Personal Washing And Bathing Facilities For Bedsits

(a) Baths and Showers

Each occupancy shall be provided where practicable with a bath or shower in a separate room. Otherwise a readily accessible bathroom containing a bath or shower shall be provided not more than one floor distant from any user on a ratio of one bath or shower to every 5 persons sharing.

Bathrooms intended to be shared by two or more households are to be accessible from a common area. A shower facility installed over a bath will not count as an additional shower

(b) Wash Hand Basins

Each separate occupancy shall be provided with a wash-hand basin together with constant supplies of hot and cold water and sited within the unit of accommodation.

If a sink is provided in a single bedsit room, then a separate wash hand basin will not be required. All bathrooms or separate compartments containing a WC must be provided with a wash-hand basin.

Toilet Facilities For Bedsits

Toilet facilities being not more than one floor distant from any user shall be provided in the following ratios: (with respect to the total number of occupants of the house)

- 1 – 4 persons - 1 WC which may be separate or located within a bathroom
- 5 persons - 1 WC which must be separate from the bathroom but can be contained within a second bathroom
- 6 – 10 persons - 2 separate WCs but one of the WCs can be contained within a bathroom
- 11 – 15 persons - 3 separate WCs but two of the WCs can be contained within two bathrooms

This sequence would continue proportionally for every additional five persons.

Fire Precautions in Bedsits

Full details of the required level of fire protection can be found in an advice booklet entitled “A guide to Fire Protection in Multi-Occupied Residential Properties” which has been produced by the Homestamp consortium. A copy of the advice booklet mentioned above can be found on the website www.homestamp.com or you can request a copy from the Housing Standards Team by telephoning 01782 232087. To ensure consistency the level of fire protection has been taken from the latest housing fire safety publication by the Local Authority Co-ordinating body on Regulatory Services (LACORS now called Local Government Regulation).

Heating In Bedsits

All units of accommodation must be provided with an adequate fixed form of heating to all habitable rooms.

For heating to be properly used by the tenants, it must be affordable. Central heating is the preferred option but electric night storage heaters and/or balanced flue gas heaters are also satisfactory.

Where open-flue gas fires are provided in a room used for sleeping purposes, they must be of modern design and fitted with an automatic oxygen depletion cut-off device. All heaters, other than water filled radiators, must be suitably positioned such that there is at least two metres between the heater and any bedding and such heaters must not be located where curtains are likely to catch fire.

Heaters that use full price electricity are not normally acceptable as the main form of heating.

Whichever form of heating is installed it must be controllable by the occupants of each individual unit at all times. Where heating is provided to any communal rooms or areas, the running costs must be met out of general rental charges or general energy charges rather than any type of prepayment meter.

Paraffin heaters, LPG heaters and freestanding plug in electric heaters are not acceptable.

In fully insulated and draught – proofed accommodation, full price electricity may be a viable option if it can be shown that the overall costs are affordable.

All heating appliances must be fixed to either the wall or the floor and be provided with an appropriate base or surround if one is specified by the appliance manufacturer.

All gas heaters or boilers of any type must be properly serviced and maintained in a safe condition in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations and the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (as amended).

All bathrooms, whether for exclusive or shared use must also be provided with a fixed form of heating.

Electric fan or radiant wall heaters are acceptable in bathrooms provided they are designed to operate in moist atmospheres.