

A landlords' guide to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

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Houses in multiple occupation landlord's handbook

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Introduction

Many privately rented houses are let to people from several different families, either as flats, bedsits or as shared houses. Houses like this are known as houses in multiple occupation, or HMOs.

This handbook is a guide to the legal requirements of landlords of HMOs to ensure that their property meets an acceptable standard. In addition, it has information about which HMOs must be licensed and contains some useful contact information.

What is a house in multiple occupation (HMO)?

Under the Housing Act 2004, a house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a building, or part of a building, occupied by persons who do not form a single household (see below for the definition of household). Examples of HMOs include:

- a house converted into three or more bedsits
- a house converted into self-contained flats where less than two thirds of the flats are owner occupied and the flats were not converted in accordance with the 1991 Building Regulations
- a house occupied by three friends who rent from a private landlord;
- a house let to a group of three students
- a flat with three or more bedsits (even if the flats were converted in accordance with the 1991 Building Regulations and more than two thirds of the flats in the building are owner occupied) (tenanted)
- a house let to a married couple and a friend.

If you are not sure whether your property is classed as an HMO, or if you want more information, email customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk or contact us on 01284 757069

What is a household?

A household is a group of people who live together. They must be connected by marriage, civil partnership, be a recognised couple (same sex or opposite sex), be related – a child, parent, sister, brother, nephew, niece or in-law for instance – or have another recognised connection such as fostering or adoption.

People that live in the same place, but are not connected in this way, are not counted as a single household. So, for example, a group of five students or adult friends count as five households, even if they live at the same address and share facilities.

Licencing of HMOs

Mandatory HMO licensing applies across England has changed. From 1 October 2018, all HMOs occupied by five or more persons forming more than one household will need to have applied for an HMO license.

If you own or manage an HMO, answer these questions to find out if you need a licence:

1. Is the property occupied by five or more people?
2. Do these people live in two or more households?
3. Do tenants share any amenities such as the bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities?

If you have answered 'yes' to all these questions you will need to apply for a licence as soon as possible; operating a licensable HMO without a licence could result in heavy penalties including fines of up to £20,000. A tenant living in a property that should have been licensed, but was not, can apply to the Residential Property Tribunal to claim back any rent they have paid during the unlicensed period (up to a limit of 12 months). The council can also reclaim any housing benefit that has been paid during the time the property was operating without a licence.

The council charges a fee in order to cover the administration costs of the licence procedure, and the resources needed to regularly inspect licensable properties.

For further information and to obtain a licence application form please email: customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk or telephone Public Health and Housing on 01284 757069.

Council's rights of entry

The council's authorised officers are empowered by the Housing Act 2004 to enter premises at any reasonable time, on giving 24 hours written notice of their intentions to the occupier and owner, if the owner is known.

For certain specific reasons, officers may enter at any reasonable time without giving 24 hours written notice.

Legal powers of entry are only used where difficulty is anticipated and in most cases officers will enter premises where invited by occupier or tenant.

The reasons for entry may include inspections of the property to check compliance with housing legislation, to assist tenants in securing necessary repairs or improvements by the landlord, to advise the landlord on the standards required and enforce fire safety and management standards.

Guidance on fire precautions and fire safety

People who live in HMOs are more likely to die in a fire than those who live in a house occupied by a family. Therefore, fire safety is an important consideration in HMOs. The following standards are the minimum to be achieved. **Please note, these standards should be used as a guide only; the actual provisions**

required will be dependent on a risk assessment undertaken by a council officer.

Where reference is made to a specific standard, for example a British Standard (BS), then it is the latest version of that standard that should be followed. Application of a comparable standard will have to be provided with evidence to demonstrate an equal, if not better standard, is achieved.

The guidance specifications below refer to **shared houses** and **bedsit** type properties:

A **shared house** is one where all tenants share the same tenancy agreement and have exclusive access to all areas of the property, for example, a group of friends who know each other and arrived in the property at the same time.

A **bedsit** type property is one where the tenants rent a bedroom and have shared use of a kitchen, bathroom and lounge. The tenants will not always know each other and will have locks on their bedroom doors.

Shared house scenario – no more than two storeys

- Sound general construction to partition walls and ceilings.
- 30 minutes fire separation between basement/cellar and ground floor.
- Mains wired interlinked optical type smoke detectors/alarms in the common area (hallways, lounge/dining room) and basement/cellar and a heat detector in the kitchen (BS 5839-6 Grade D, LD3).
- Escape windows (to current building regulations standard, see Approved Document B, Volume 1 – Dwelling Houses).
- Close fitting doors.
- Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Shared house scenario – three or four storeys

- Mains wired interlinked optical type smoke detectors/alarms in the common area (hallways, lounge/dining room) and a heat detector in the kitchen (BS 5839-6 Grade D, LD3).
- 30-minute fire resisting doors to all habitable rooms and the kitchen.
- 30-minute fire resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms from other habitable rooms, kitchens and the common escape route.
- 30-minutes fire separation between basement/cellar and ground floor.
- Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen

Bedsit scenario – no more than two storeys

- Mains wired interlinked optical type smoke detectors/alarms in common parts, basement/cellar and in all habitable rooms and a heat detector in the kitchen (BS 5839-6 Grade D, LD2).

- 30-minute fire resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms from other habitable rooms, kitchens and the common escape route.
- Fire doors with 30-minute fire resistance complete with intumescent strips and cold smoke seals (FD30S) and an overhead self-closing device (BS EN 1154).
- Emergency lighting to common parts (BS 5266-1) where the escape route is long or complex.
- Fire escape signage (BS 5499) where the escape route is long or complex.
- Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen and a 9-litre water extinguisher to each floor level

Bedsit scenario – three or four storeys

- Mains wired interlinked optical type smoke detectors/alarms in common parts, basement/cellar and in all habitable rooms and a heat detector in the kitchen (BS 5839-6 Grade A, LD2).
- 30-minute fire resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms from other habitable rooms, kitchens and the common escape route.
- Fire doors with 30-minute fire resistance complete with intumescent strips and cold smoke seals (FD30S) and an overhead self-closing device (BS EN 1154).
- Emergency lighting to common parts (BS 5266-1) where the escape route is long or complex.
- Fire escape signage (BS 5499) where escape route is long or complex.
- Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen and a 9-litre water extinguisher to each floor level.

Purpose built flats and buildings converted into flats

- Purpose built flats and buildings converted into flats that can demonstrate compliance with the 1991 Building Regulations, or Building Regulations thereafter, will usually be considered sufficient and may not require additional fire safety measures as described above.

Where any doubt exists, this must be discussed with the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) on a case by case basis who will advise on the measures that may need to be taken.

Suppression systems

This authority is committed to protecting the community of Suffolk by ensuring suitable and sufficient fire safety measures are in place. We proactively endorse the installation of suitable suppression systems, for example sprinklers and water mist, and firmly believe that they save lives and improve safety. Where installed they reduce the environmental, social and economic impact of fires in domestic, and other premises.

As such, this authority recognises there may be relaxations in some fire safety measures where a suitable suppression system is installed, this should be discussed with the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) on a case by case basis.

Sprinkler systems should be installed to BS 9251 and water mist systems installed to BS 8458.

Guidance on amenities

The kitchen and bathroom facilities that you are expected to provide depend on the type of HMO and the number of occupants sharing the accommodation. The following table indicates the level of amenities that must be provided regardless of the level of risk.

Schedule of amenity provisions in relation to number of persons	
1– 5 Persons	<p>At least one kitchen, not more than one floor distance from furthest bedroom. Where there is more than one floor distance an additional kitchen should be provided, or, a dining room provided on the same floor as the kitchen.</p> <p>At least one bathroom and one toilet. Where there are five persons the bathroom and toilet must be separate, although the bathroom may also contain a toilet.</p>
6 –10 Persons	<p>At least two kitchens, not more than one floor distance from furthest bedroom. Where there is more than one floor distance a dining room should be provided on the same floor as the kitchen.</p> <p>or</p> <p>One large kitchen with dining room, with two sets of facilities - dependant upon the actual number of tenants.</p> <p>Two bathrooms and two separate toilets with WHBs (but one of the toilets can be contained within one of the bathrooms)</p>
10 + Persons	<p>At least two kitchens, not more than one floor distance from furthest bedroom. Where there is more than one floor distance a dining room should be provided on the same floor as the kitchen.</p> <p>or</p> <p>One large kitchen with dining room, with sets of facilities dependent upon the actual number of tenants.</p> <p>Three bathrooms and Three separate toilets with WHBs (but two of the toilets can be contained within the bathrooms)</p>

Additional guidance on kitchen requirements:

Minimum floor area of kitchen

1-5 persons 7m²

6-10 persons 10m²

Kitchens shall be provided no more than one floor away from any occupied rooms, unless a dining area is available.

Each kitchen for up to five persons shall be provided with the following:

- one cooker with 4 rings, oven and grill
- one sink with hot water, cold drinking water, base unit and drainer
- one single wall or floor cupboard per person for food storage (min size 300 x 1000 x 900mm) *or*
one double wall or floor cupboard for food storage per two persons (min size 300 x 1000 x 900mm)
- one 900mm x 600mm worktop for food preparation per 3 persons *or*
2000mm x 600mm worktop for food preparation per 5 persons
- 1 standard fridge per 3 persons (with separate shelf for each person) *or*
one large fridge per 5 persons (with separate shelf for each person)
- one dedicated electrical socket per fixed appliance (such as a fridge)
- two undedicated electrical sockets above an area of worktop
- Separate cooker panel for electric cookers.

The kitchen shall be of sufficient area for the safe provision of all necessary facilities.

Cookers shall not be placed adjacent to doorways and there shall be sufficient floor space for the safe retrieval of items from the oven and for the safe circulation of occupants.

Space standards

All licensable HMO's have to comply with the National minimum room size. The following space standards will be required in HMOs. We recommend that you consider these standards when buying houses to let or when improving existing HMOs.

If a room is smaller than the minimum acceptable size, a legal notice shall be served on the landlord, either prohibiting the use of the room or limiting the number of people who may occupy it. This does not mean that the tenant who currently occupies the room has to leave, but when they do leave the landlord must not re-let the room.

Bedrooms

The following space standards will be required in all HMOs:

Minimum bedroom size with separate living room (11m²):

1 person 6.51m²
two persons 10.22m²

Minimum bedroom size study/living room where there is no separate living room:

one person 10m²
two persons 15m²

Bed-sitting room containing cooking facilities

one person 13.0m²
two person 18.0 m²

Living room

Minimum living space

1-5 persons 11m² Or 13m² combined kitchen/dining room

6-10 persons 14m² Or 16.5m² combined kitchen/dining room

Unless related, persons should not be required to share bedrooms. It is accepted, however, that some groups may wish to share rooms.

Dining room

To be provided as an alternative to a living room or where a bed-sitting room is provided which is more than one floor distance away from a kitchen:

1 - 5 persons 11.0m²

6 - 10 persons 16.5m²

11-15 persons 21.5m²

16 + persons 25.0m²

Kitchen/diners are acceptable, where the dining area is separate from cooking and sink areas and is of the above dimensions.

Management of houses in multiple occupation

The law's emphasis is now on the way in which houses are run, rather than concentrating on physical standards. This demands a more active approach from landlords and letting agents.

We aim to ensure that all HMOs in the district are managed in a proper manner so that tenants can live in safe conditions. The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 places legal duties on both managers and tenants to ensure that the property is maintained to a good standard.

Summary of the management regulations:

Duties of manager

- To display his or her name, address and phone number prominently in the house.
- To keep the premises generally safe, but in particular:
 - keep the means of escape from fire in good order and free from obstruction
 - make any unsafe roofs or balconies safe or inaccessible
 - fit window restrictors alternatives to low windows to prevent accidents
- To keep water supply and drainage in proper working order and fit covers to all water tanks.

- to supply to the council the latest Gas Safety Certificate and the latest Electrical Safety Certificate within seven days of being asked to do so (gas appliances must be tested annually and electrical testing must be carried out every five years.)
- To maintain in good repair, clean condition and proper working order all stairs, banisters, carpets, lights and any other parts that are used in common by two or more households.
- To maintain in good repair, clean condition and good order any outbuildings, yards, forecourts, boundary walls, fences and railings.
- To keep the garden safe and in a tidy condition.
- To make sure every letting room and any furniture supplied with it is clean at the beginning of every tenancy.
- To make sure all fixtures, fittings or appliances are in good repair and in proper working order and maintain them in this condition.
- To make proper arrangements for the storage of refuse and litter pending their disposal.
- To make appropriate additional refuse disposal arrangements for occasions when the local authority's collection service is insufficient (for example at the end of term or when furniture has been replaced).

The council may request certificates which should be provided within seven days of the request.

Duties of occupiers

- To take reasonable care to avoid causing damage and disrepair.
- To cooperate in a reasonable way with the manager and provide information to allow the manager to carry out his/her duties.
- To comply with any reasonable arrangement made by the manager regarding means of escape from fire, refuse storage and disposal.
- To allow the manager access to their rooms at all reasonable times to carry out their duties.

Failure to comply **with the management regulations** is an offence for which you may be prosecuted. If taken to court and found guilty, you could be fined up to £5,000 for each offence or you may receive a civil penalty notice for up to £30,000.

We all know that a well-managed HMO gives fewer problems for the owner, manager, occupiers, neighbours and the council.

One of the biggest complaints from people living close to HMOs is the problems caused by tenants not putting their household waste out on the right day/in the right place or in the right bin. For further information on waste and recycling please email: customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk or telephone on 01284 757069

Fire alarm systems

If you have a fire alarm and detection system this must be maintained in working order.

You should keep a log book to record the regular inspections of the system. Table 1 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'log book' for recording purposes.

It is strongly recommended that you take out a maintenance contract with a suitably qualified person to undertake maintenance of the system on your behalf.

You should make sure that regular tests on the automatic fire detection system are undertaken. In the case of a system with control panel, detectors, sounders and call points, and so on, the following is required:

- **Weekly** - a manual call point should be operated during normal working hours. It should be confirmed that the control equipment is capable of processing a fire alarm signal and providing an output to fire alarm sounders. A different call point should be tested each week.
- **Six monthly and annual inspection must be carried out by a competent person with specialist knowledge of fire detection and alarm systems.**

The frequency of the testing will largely depend on the alarm system and the type, size and layout of the property. A judgment therefore needs to be made in each case as to what frequency of visit is necessary.

The landlord of a large four storey 15 bed hostel for vulnerable people for example, might be expected to stick to the letter of the code. On the other hand it may well be acceptable for the landlord of a five person, three storey shared house HMO occupied by young professional people to visit the house on a less frequent basis to carry out the required checks. The important thing is to be proactive rather than reactive in the maintenance of the alarm system.

Emergency lighting system

If your property is fitted with an emergency lighting system you have a responsibility to ensure it is maintained in working order.

You should keep a log book to record the regular inspections of the system. Table 2 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'log book' for recording purposes.

It is strongly recommended that you take out a maintenance contract with a suitably qualified person to undertake maintenance of the system on your behalf.

You are required to ensure the following tests are undertaken:

- **Monthly** - each emergency light must be activated from its battery by simulating a failure in the normal supply and an inspection made of each luminaire (emergency light) to ensure that it is functioning properly.
- **Six monthly** - each emergency light must be activated as before, but left on for a prolonged period. In the case of lights with batteries rated at three hours the light must be left on for one hour, and in the case of lights with batteries rated at one hour, these must be left on for fifteen minutes. An inspection must be made of each luminaire to ensure that they are functioning correctly.
- **Three yearly** - as for the six monthly test, but the batteries must be tested to their full duration – that is luminaires with batteries rated at three hours should remain lit for that period.

Fire fighting equipment

Fire extinguishers

You should ensure that any fire extinguishers within the premises are serviced by a competent engineer **at least annually** to ensure that the extinguishers are safe and will always function in an emergency. Competent engineers are often registered by the British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE) and are members of the Fire Industry Association (FIA).

You should also conduct an 'in house' examination of your fire extinguishers at least monthly to check for any signs of tampering, missing or used extinguishers. Document any issues found and ensure suitable remedial action is taken (for example make sure tamper tags are replaced and the extinguisher is refilled). Table 3 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'log book' for recording purposes.

It is advisable that you follow the simple guidelines below when siting fire fighting equipment, as it is essential that the appliances provided are positioned in the correct locations:

- hung on brackets with handle approximately 1m from the floor
- away from heaters
- not obstructing escape routes
- not in recesses or out of direct sight.

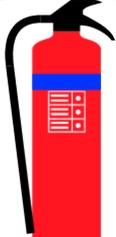
Fire blankets

Make sure that only fire blankets which conform to the current British standard are provided, and are wall mounted in the kitchen so that the base of the container is about 1.5m above floor level.

Types of extinguishers/fire blankets

The following table is a useful guide as to the different types of fire extinguisher and how to use them. It also discusses fire blankets.

Type of extinguisher	Best used for	How to use
red – water 	Wood, cloth, paper, plastics and so on. Fires involving solids. DANGER: Do not use on live electrical appliances or on burning fat or oil such as chip pan fires.	Point the jet at the base of the flame and keep it moving across the area of the fire. Seek out any hotspots after the fire is out.
Blue – dry powder	Fires involving solids and fires involving liquids, such as paint and petrol. Safe on live electrical equipment, although	Point the jet or discharge horn at base of flames and with a rapid sweeping motion drive the flames towards the far

	<p>does not penetrate the spaces in equipment easily and the fire may flare up again. DANGER: Do not use on chip pan fires</p>	<p>edge until all the flames are out. If the extinguisher has a shot off control, wait until the air clears and if you can still see the flames, attack the fire again.</p>
<p>Cream - foam</p> 	<p>Fires involving liquids. Warning: not suitable for all liquids – check instructions. DANGER: Do not use on chip pan fires. These extinguishers are generally not recommended for home use.</p>	<p>Do not aim the jet straight at the liquid. Where the liquid on fire is in a container, point the jet at the inside edge of the container or on a nearby surface above the burning liquid, allow the foam to build up and flow across the liquid.</p>
<p>Black – Carbon Dioxide</p> 	<p>Fires involving liquids. Clean, effective and safe on live electrical equipment. DANGER: Do not use on chip pan fires.</p>	<p>Warning: This type of extinguisher does not cool the fire very well and you will need to watch out that the fire does not start up again. Danger: Fumes from CO² extinguishers can be harmful to users in confined spaces, ventilate the area as soon as the fire has been controlled.</p>
<p>Fire blanket</p> 	<p>Fires involving solids and fires involving liquids. Good for small fires in clothing and chip pan fires provided the blanket completely covers the fire.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turn off the gas or electricity supply. 2. Remove the fire blanket from its container and hold it by the fabric straps. 3. To prevent burns on the hands and arms, make sure you wrap the top edges of the blanket around your hands to protect them. 4. Roll up your sleeves so they do not catch in the flames. 5. Carefully cover the flames with the fire blanket, making sure that you cover the whole area so that you can effectively cut off the airflow and extinguish the flames. 6. However, if the fire is larger than the blanket, do not attempt to put it out.

		<p>Get out and call the fire brigade immediately.</p> <p>7. Do not touch the fire blanket or anything underneath it until at least an hour has passed since the fire was extinguished.</p>
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Fire doors and structural means of escape

It is strongly recommended that regular inspections of the property are undertaken to check that passive fire safety measures are in a well maintained condition. Fire doors should be regularly checked for damage to surfaces or intumescent strips and cold smoke seals, and to ensure that they are self-closing and self-latching.

Check that the main final exit door **does not** require the use of a key to escape. Any lock requiring the use of a key **must** be removed.

Check that partitions around the staircase are complete and undamaged. Check that walls and ceilings are complete and undamaged. Check that no items are stored on and obstructing the escape route.

The frequency of inspection is a matter of judgment in each case. It is accepted that access to lettings may be difficult in some cases and that landlords should not intrude unduly on tenants privacy. However most of the 'fire escape' provision in an HMO will in fact be visible from the common areas and there should be no difficulty whatsoever in gaining access to such areas on a regular basis.

It is advisable that you record any issues found. Table 4 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'log book' for recording purposes.

Fire instructions to tenants

All tenants must be familiarised with the routine to be followed in the event of fire and advised how the fire alarm system works. It is well worth incorporating such fire safety information in the tenancy agreement paperwork.

Advise your tenants that in the event of a fire they should:

1. sound the alarm/alert the other residents
2. get out of the building as quickly as possible and close all doors
3. telephone the Fire Brigade (999)
4. do not go back into the building for any reason.

You should also advise them of the following:

- DO NOT** block corridors, landings and so on, which are an escape route.
- DO NOT** tamper with self closing devices on fire doors.
- DO NOT** prop open fire doors.

- DO NOT** tamper with fire equipment for example smoke detectors, fire extinguishers.
- DO** know where fire exits are located.
- DO** report any damage to fire equipment to the landlord immediately.

It is recommended that a copy of leaflets 1 and 2 at the back of this handbook are displayed in the house and given to each occupant at the start of a tenancy.

Electrical safety

The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 requires landlords to ensure that the wiring within HMOs is maintained in a safe condition and in good working order.

The wiring must be inspected periodically (normally every five years) and you must get a certificate that shows the test results and confirms that the installation is safe for continued use. Someone registered with one of the following organisations is regarded as competent:

- ECA (Electrical Contractors Association)
- ELECSA (part of the ECA group)
- NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting)
- NAPIT (National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers)

If the electrical installation in your HMO is found to be in a defective condition, you should arrange repairs without delay. The council can serve notices on landlords requiring remedial works to remove the risk of injury to tenants.

You should also arrange, at least once a year, for a qualified electrician to carry out a portable appliance testing (PAT) safety test on any portable electrical equipment you provide for tenants, like kettles, fridges and toasters. The PAT tester will give you a dated certificate and put stickers on the plugs of appliances to show that they are safe.

Gas safety

Under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, all landlords have a duty to ensure that gas appliances provided within rented accommodation are properly maintained. The regulations are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) but the council can also ask you to show the latest certificate to us.

Landlords must:

- make sure that any gas appliance or pipework in houses let by him/her should only be maintained in a safe condition by a GAS SAFE registered gas installer
- make sure all appliances (that is gas boiler, fire, cooker, water heater and flues) are checked for safety at intervals of not more than 12 months by a Gas Safe registered gas installer
- keep a record of such safety checks, which must be kept for at least two years
- provide evidence to all tenants within 28 days of gas safety inspection that annual safety checks of gas appliances and flues have been carried out

- provide new tenants with a copy of the gas safety record when the tenancy agreement is signed.

These regulations are principally designed to prevent death or injury to tenants from carbon monoxide poisoning. Any breach of these regulations is an offence and you risk being prosecuted, and this could result in you facing imprisonment or a fine of up to £20,000, or both, for each offence.

If you think there is a gas leak in your building, call the National Grid gas emergency number immediately on **0800 111 999**.

Fire safety of furniture and furnishings

If you let furnished accommodation, all furniture you provide must be fire resistant. The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 set levels of fire resistance for domestic upholstered furnishings. These regulations are enforced by Trading standards officers from Suffolk County Council.

Upholstered furniture filled with polyurethane foam tends to burn quickly and gives off large amounts of smoke and poisonous fumes. Older or second-hand furniture may only be used if it has the appropriate label showing that it is cigarette and match-resistant.

The regulations apply to:

- beds, mattresses, headboards and pillows
- sofa beds, futons, scatter cushions and seat pads
- loose and stretch covers for furniture.

The regulations do not apply to:

- sleeping bags or loose covers for mattresses
- bed clothes, duvets and pillow cases
- carpets and curtains.

New furniture that complies with the regulations is sold with a permanent label stating that it is cigarette and match-resistant. Landlords should ensure that they do not let accommodation with furniture that is not fire resistant.

Building control

Building regulations are designed to protect the health and safety of people living in or near a building, control structural stability, drainage, fire escape routes and many other things.

Building regulations approval is required for:

- new building work
- conversion of a building into flats
- installing toilets, sinks, baths, showers and so on
- replacement windows

- replacement heating systems
- structural alterations including removing load bearing walls
- most electrical work within a building.

If you intend to carry out works that may require approval under the Building Regulations, you must contact a Building Control Officer to discuss your plans on 01284 757053.

Planning

If you want to change the use of a house into a HMO for more than six people you will need planning permission. Planning does not have to be sought to revert back to a single dwelling. Please contact a Planning Officer to discuss your plans on 01284 757069.

If you are making any external alterations or extensions to a building, planning permission is usually required.

If you wish to alter a listed building you will also need to contact the Conservation Officer, please telephone 01284 757053.

HMO Inspection Programme

HMOs on our data base are inspected on a regular basis. The frequency is determined on a risk assessment basis and programmed inspections are carried out, every one, two, three or five years. Higher risk properties are inspected annually and the lower risk properties five yearly.

Risk factors include number of storeys, fire precautions, the housing health & safety rating system, amenities and management.

All newly identified HMOs will be inspected within six months and incorporated into the inspection programme.

Risk factor	Category	Score
Number of storeys	1	5
	2	10
	3	15
	4+	30
Fire Precautions HHSRS hazard (24)	Full fire protection	0
	Partial fire protection	20
	No fire protection	40
Amenities HHSRS hazards (16), (17) and (18)	Satisfactory	0
	Unsatisfactory minor	5
	Unsatisfactory major	10
HHSRS Other hazards	No hazards	0
	Lower score category 2 (F-J)	5
	Category 2 hazards (D & E)	10
	Category 1 hazards (A-C)	20
Management	Confident	0
	Reasonably confident	15
	Little confidence	30

	No confidence	60
	HMO check	160

Inspection frequency

Score	Inspection frequency
5-10	Five yearly
15-55	Three yearly
60-80	Two yearly
85-160	Yearly
165+	Six monthly

The Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

To understand how the council assesses the suitability of housing conditions visit:
https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/upload/HHSRS_Assetskills.pdf

Useful contact details

Public Health and Housing: email customerservices@westsuffolk.gov.uk or telephone 01284 757053.

Gas Safe Register: www.gassaferegister.co.uk or telephone: 0800 408 5500

National Grid Emergency: telephone 0800 111 999

NICEIC (Finding a registered electrician): www.niceic.com or telephone: 0333 015 6625

ECA (Finding a registered electrician): 020 7351 5000

Housing Options (Matters relating to tenancy rights and regulations): email: customerservices@westsuffolk.gov.uk or telephone: 01284 757053

Anglian Water (reporting a leak) telephone: 0800 771 881

FIRE KILLS

Advice to occupants of houses in multiple occupation

If you live in a house in multiple occupation, you are more at risk from fire than if you live in a single-family dwelling house. In order to reduce the likelihood of fire:

Remember

- 1. NEVER wedge open fire doors**
- 2. NEVER remove door closing devices**
- 3. NEVER tamper with fire alarms or equipment**
- 4. NEVER overfill chip pans**
- 5. NEVER leave children alone with matches or in rooms with cooking or heating appliances**
- 6. NEVER smoke in bed**
- 7. NEVER block halls and stairways**
- 8. DO become familiar with escape routes and exits from the building**
- 9. DO unplug electrical appliances at night**
- 10. CLOSE room doors**
- 11. CHECK for burning cigarettes before going to bed**
- 12. DO NOT use paraffin or bottled gas heaters**
- 13. DO report any damage to fire equipment to the landlord immediately**

FIRE!

Notice to all tenants

The stairway in this building is protected to provide a route to safety in the event of a fire.

This protection also depends upon the manner in which you and the other occupants observe certain basic rules.

Fire resisting self-closing doors can be found in most parts of the building including the entrance doors to all of the individual rooms/flats. These doors are provided to stop the spread of smoke and fire and they must be kept closed.

As tenants you must not

- Remove any doors**
- Tamper with any self-closing devices**
- Wedge open doors**
- Block or obstruct any doors, corridors or passageways**

In the event of a fire

Make sure the door of the room on fire and your front door are closed on vacating.

Alert other occupants in the building and call the fire service.

If you have any problems or defects occur to the means of escape from fire at your house, these should be reported to:

