

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Suffolk Landlord's Handbook

This handbook is a guide to the legal requirements for landlords of HMOs to ensure that their property meets an acceptable standard developed in partnership by Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council in consultation with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, it has information about which HMOs must be licensed and gives details of the student housing accreditation scheme.

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1. Introduction

Guidance overview

- 1.1 Many privately rented houses are let to people from several different families, either as flats, bedsits or shared houses. Such houses are known as houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).
- 1.2 This handbook is a guide to the legal requirements for landlords of HMOs to ensure that their property meets an acceptable standard developed in partnership by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District, East Suffolk, Ipswich Borough and West Suffolk Councils in consultation with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, it has information about which HMOs must be licensed and gives details of the student housing accreditation scheme. It also provides some useful contact information in Section 8.

What is a house in multiple occupation (HMO)?

- 1.3 Under the Housing Act 2004, a house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a building, or part of a building, occupied by three or more persons who do not form a single household (see below for the definition of household). Examples of HMOs include the following:
 - a. A house converted into three or more bedsits.
 - b. A house or flat rented out on a room-by-room basis to three or more unrelated persons.
 - c. A house converted into self-contained flats where less than two-thirds of the flats are owner occupied and the flats are not converted in accordance with the 1991 Building Regulations.
 - d. A house occupied by three or more unrelated friends who rent from a private landlord.
 - e. A house let to a group of three or more unrelated students.
 - f. A flat with two or more bedsits, with three or more occupiers (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).

- g. A privately rented house occupied by a married couple and a friend.

If you are not sure whether your property is classified as an HMO or if you want more information, please contact the HMO licensing representatives of your local council; their contacts can be found in Section 8.

What is a household?

- 1.4 A household is a group of people who live together, and who are connected by marriage, civil partnership. They must 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.
- 1.5 People who live in the same place, but are not connected in this way, do not count as a single household. For example, a group of five unrelated students or adult friends counts as five households, even if they live at the same address and share facilities.

Mandatory licensing of HMOs

- 1.6 The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Prescribed Description) (England) Order 2018 has revised the criteria for HMO licensing. Since 1 October 2018, any HMO occupied by five or more people forming two or more separate households requires a license, regardless of the number of storeys.
- 1.7 If you own or manage an HMO, answer these questions to find out if you need a license:
- a. Is the property occupied by five or more people?
 - b. Do they live as two or more households?
 - c. Do they share any amenities such as the bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities?
- 1.8 If you answer 'yes' to all of these questions you must apply for a licence with the local authority as soon as possible. The licensing process requires evidence of responsible management and lettings practices. This includes:
- a. Satisfactory and up to date Gas Safe certificate if the HMO has a gas supply.
 - b. Submission of a Fire Risk Assessment.
 - c. Provision of smoke alarms on each storey containing living accommodations and maintaining them in working order.
 - d. Providing the authority, on demand, with declarations about the safety of electrical appliances and furniture supplied by the landlord, and the condition and positioning of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

- e. Providing each occupant with a written statement (tenancy agreement) of the terms of occupancy.
- f. Ensuring that every electrical installation in the house is in proper working order and safe for continued use and supplying the local authority with a declaration confirming the safety of the electrical installation (EICR) if requested.
- g. Meeting minimum room size standards and adhering to occupancy limits (see Paragraph 1.9 below).
- h. Complying with the local authority's scheme for storing and disposal of household waste generated by HMOs.

- 1.9 If you apply for an HMO licence after 1 October 2018 and your property does not meet the newly introduced room size standards, you will be granted up to 18 months to make necessary adjustments. During this adjustment period, your licence remains valid, and you will not face any legal penalties for this specific non-compliance. Full guidance on the applicable minimum room standards including for sleeping areas is provided in Section 3.
- 1.10 Operating a licensable HMO without a licence could result in heavy penalties including an unlimited fine or a civil penalty of up to £30,000. A tenant living in a property that should have been licensed, but was not, can apply to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) to claim any rent they have paid during the unlicensed period (up to a limit of 12 months). The council can also reclaim any housing benefit paid during the time the property was operating without a licence.
- 1.11 The council charges a fee to cover the administration costs of the licence procedure, as well as inspection costs.
- 1.12 For further information and to obtain a licence application form, please contact HMO licensing representatives of your local council; contacts are detailed in Section 8.

University of Suffolk (UoS) Student Accreditation Scheme

- 1.13 If you are the landlord of a student property, you may consider renting your property through the UoS Accreditation Scheme.
- 1.14 The UoS Accreditation Scheme has been developed by Ipswich Borough Council with our partners, University Campus Suffolk, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Fire and Rescue and Suffolk Constabulary.
- 1.15 This is a voluntary scheme that aims to promote good management practice and high standards amongst student landlords. If you want to join the scheme you must sign up to a code of conduct and pay a fee to register. Your property must meet all necessary health and safety requirements, and the university or the council will conduct spot checks to ensure that accredited houses are up to standard. Once accredited, landlords can advertise on the university's accommodation list.

- 1.16 For more information, please contact the UoS Accommodation Office: phone 01473 338833 or email accommodation@uos.ac.uk.

Councils' rights of entry

- 1.17 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.
- 1.18 For certain specific reasons such as, checking whether a property is an HMO, officers may enter at any reasonable time without giving 24 hours written notice.
- 1.19 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.
- 1.20 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 enforcement of fire safety and management standards.

2. Guidance on fire precautions and fire safety

Overview

- 2.1 For landlords and managers of HMOs (houses in multiple occupation), it is crucial to prioritise fire safety as a hazard that can be a significant risk to life and severe injury as residents in HMOs face a higher risk of fire-related incidents compared to standard family homes.
- 2.2 **The actual fire safety precautions including fire alarm specifications will be dependent on the buildings fire risk assessment.**
- 2.3 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. The current British Standard relating to the Installation of fire alarm systems is BS 5839-6:2019. Application of a comparable standard will have to be provided with evidence to demonstrate an equal, if not better standard, is achieved. When assessing an HMO for fire risk, the level of fire precautions will be determined with reference to national guidance. The type, size and layout of the HMO, and how it is occupied are the two main factors that influence the standard of fire protection. There are typically two occupancy scenarios that are followed.
- 2.4 The guidance specifications below refer to shared houses and bedsit-type properties:
- a. 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.

- b. 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.

2.5 The standards are set out with the following themes clearly defined for varying sizes and property types:

- a. **Fire doors and structural means of escape:** For ensuring tenant safety in HMOs, it is imperative to establish clearly defined escape routes and robust fire separation measures, adhering to the appropriate guidance documents, building regulations and fire safety standards.
- b. **Fire detection and alarm system:** A comprehensive fire detection and alarm system, compliant with legal requirements, is crucial in HMOs for early fire detection, safeguarding residents by providing prompt alerts in case of fire emergencies.
- c. **Fire fighting equipment:** In HMOs, especially larger ones, the provision of appropriate fire fighting equipment like fire extinguishers and fire blankets maybe required. These should be installed without obstructing escape routes. They should only attempt to extinguish a fire if it is safe and they feel competent to do so, primarily to clear escape routes. Landlords are responsible for training tenants on the safe use of fire extinguishers.

2.6 Please see Section 5 for more information on fire precautions and alarm systems in HMOs, including requirements for testing and maintenance. Section 9 of this Handbook also contains useful sources of reference and other information on fire safety and management in HMOs.

Premises specific guidance on fire precautions and fire safety

2.7 Below is a summary of the requirements for structural means of escape, fire detection and alarm systems, and fire fighting equipment to ensure fire safety in buildings. The standards are provided for a selection of common HMO style residential premises. For detailed guidance, please refer to the main set of guidance documents listed in Section 9 of this Handbook for the particular type of premises you are responsible for under licensing and fire safety legislation.

Fire detection and alarm systems grades and categories

2.8 Fire detection and fire alarm systems are classified into different grades and categories based on their functionality and installation locations. The system should be installed to the requirements of British Standard 5839-6: 2019. (BS 5839-6: 2019+A1:2020. Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings - Code of practice for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection and fire alarm systems in domestic premises).

The system 'grades' are as follows:

- a. **Grade A:** This system includes equipment for receiving, indicating, controlling, and relaying signals from fire detectors and manual call points,

as well as activating fire alarm devices. Comparable to systems used in non-domestic premises, they feature a control and indicating equipment (CIE) and a battery backup capable of operating the system for 72 hours during a mains power failure.

- b. **Grade D:** This grade is divided into:

- D1:** With a tamper-proof battery

- D2:** With a user-replaceable battery.

- c. **Grade F:** This is a battery-only system, further divided into:

- F1:** With a tamper-proof primary battery

- F2:** With a user-replaceable battery.

- 2.9 The system 'categories' determine the areas where detectors are installed, with detectors sited in accordance with the recommendations BS 5839-6: 2019:

- a. **Category LD1:** Detectors are installed throughout the premises, including all circulation areas, escape routes, and rooms except for those with negligible ignition sources like bathrooms.
- b. **Category LD2:** Detectors are located in all circulation areas, escape routes, and in high-risk rooms or areas, such as kitchens and principal habitable rooms.
- c. **Category LD3:** This system features detectors in circulation areas forming part of escape routes.

Shared house scenario – no more than two storeys

2.10 Fire doors and structural means of escape

- a. Partition walls and ceilings must be of sound general construction.
- b. Escape windows, where required, must comply with the current building regulations, as outlined in Approved Document B, Volume 1, for dwelling houses.
- c. 30-minute fire separation is required between the basement/cellar and the ground floor.
- d. Doors should be close-fitting to minimise gaps through which fire and smoke can spread.

2.11 Fire detection and alarm system

Grade D1, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

2.12 Fire fighting equipment

Kitchen equipment: provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Shared house scenario – three storeys

2.13 Fire doors and structural means of escape

- a. The property should have a 30-minute fire-protected route, usually the main staircase.
- b. 30-minute fire-resisting doors to all habitable rooms and the kitchen required. Fire doors must be self-closing and fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals. Doors to letting rooms and final exit doors should be openable without a key.
- c. 30-minute fire separation between basement and ground floor required.
- d. 30-minute fire-resisting structure to partition walls and ceilings must separate habitable rooms from other habitable rooms (for example bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms), kitchens and the common escape route.

2.14 Fire detection and alarm system

Grade D1, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

2.15 Fire fighting equipment

Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Shared house scenario – four storeys

2.16 Fire doors and structural means of escape

- a. The property should have a 30-minute fire-protected route, usually the main staircase.
- b. 30-minute fire-resisting doors to all habitable rooms and the kitchen required. Fire doors must be self-closing and fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals. Doors to letting rooms and final exit doors should be openable without a key.
- c. 30-minute fire separation between the basement and ground floor required.
- d. 30-minute fire-resisting structure to partition walls and ceilings must separate habitable rooms from other habitable rooms (for example. Bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms), kitchens and the common escape route.

2.17 Fire detection and alarm system

Grade D1, Category LD1 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

2.18 Fire fighting equipment

Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Shared house scenario – five or six storeys

2.19 Fire doors and structural means of escape

- a. 30-minute fire resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms kitchens and the common escape route.
- b. Fire separation is needed for the top floor in five-storey buildings and top two floors in six-storey buildings.
- c. For five-storey buildings, lobby protection is required on all floors except the top, while six-storey buildings need lobby protection on all but the top floor and a secondary escape route from the top two floors.
- d. 30-minute protected route is required to communal escape route.
- e. 30-minutes fire separation between basement or cellar and ground floor is required.
- f. Fire doors with 30-minute fire-resistance complete with intumescent fire and cold smoke seals (FD30S) and an overhead self-closing device (BS EN 1154) to common escape routes. FD30S fire doors to letting rooms and final exit doors should be openable without a key.
- g. Emergency lighting to common parts (BS 5266-1) where the escape route is long, dark or complex.
- h. Fire escape signage (BS 5499) where the escape route is long or complex.

2.20 Fire detection and alarm system

- a. Grade A, Category LD1 automatic fire detection and alarm system (new or materially altered premises)
- b. Grade D, Category LD1 automatic fire detection and alarm system (existing premises)

2.21 Fire fighting equipment

Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen and a simple multipurpose extinguisher to each floor level.

Bedsit scenario – no more than two storeys

2.22 Fire doors and structural means of escape

- a. 30-minute fire-resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms, kitchens and the common escape route.

- b. Fire doors with 30-minute fire-resistance complete with intumescent fire and cold smoke seals (FD30S) and an overhead self-closing device (BS EN 1154) to common escape routes. FD30S fire doors to letting rooms and final exit doors should be openable without a key.
- c. Emergency lighting to common parts (BS 5266-1) where the escape route is long, dark or complex.
- d. Fire escape signage (BS 5499) where the escape route is long or complex.

2.23 Fire detection and alarm system

- a. Individual dwelling units or bedsits comprising a single room including cooking facilities:
Grade D1, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.
- b. Individual dwelling units, within the HMO, comprising two or more rooms:
Grade D1, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.
- c. Communal areas of the HMO:
Grade A, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

2.24 Fire fighting equipment

Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen and a simple multipurpose extinguisher to each floor level.

Bedsit scenario – three or four storeys

2.25 Fire doors and structural means of escape

- a. 30-minute fire-resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms from other habitable rooms, kitchens, and the common escape route.
- b. Fire doors with 30-minute fire-resistance complete with intumescent fire and cold smoke seals (FD30S) and an overhead self-closing device (BS EN 1154) to common escape routes. FD30S fire doors to letting rooms and final exit doors should be openable without a key.
- c. Emergency lighting to common parts (BS 5266-1) where the escape route is long or complex.
- d. Fire escape signage (BS 5499) where escape route is long or complex.

2.26 Fire detection and alarm system

- a. Individual dwelling units or bedsits comprising a single room including cooking facilities:
Grade D1, Category LD1 automatic fire detection and alarm system.
- b. Individual dwelling units, within the HMO, comprising two or more rooms:
Grade A, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

- c. Communal areas of the HMO:
Grade A, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

2.27 Fire fighting equipment

Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen and a simple multipurpose extinguisher to each floor level.

Bedsit HMO scenario – five or six storeys

2.28 Fire doors and structural means of escape

30-minute fire-resisting structure to walls and ceilings separating habitable rooms kitchens and the common escape route.

- b. Fire-resistant separation is needed for the top floor in five-storey buildings and top two floors in six-storey buildings.
- c. For five-storey buildings, lobby protection is required on all floors except the top, while six-storey buildings need lobby protection on all but the top floor and a secondary escape route from the top two floors.
- d. 30-minute protected route is required to communal escape route.
- e. 30-minutes fire separation between basement or cellar and ground floor is required.
- f. Fire doors with 30-minute fire-resistance complete with intumescent fire and cold smoke seals (FD30S) and an overhead self-closing device (BS EN 1154) to common escape routes. FD30S fire doors to letting rooms and final exit doors should be openable without a key.
- g. Emergency lighting to common parts (BS 5266-1) where the escape route is long, dark or complex.
- h. Fire escape signage (BS 5499) where the escape route is long or complex.

2.29 Fire detection and alarm system

- a. Individual dwelling units or bedsits comprising a single room including cooking facilities:
Grade D1, Category LD1 automatic fire detection and alarm system.
- b. Individual dwelling units, within the HMO, comprising two or more rooms:
Grade A, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.
- c. Communal areas of the HMO:
Grade A, Category LD2 automatic fire detection and alarm system.

2.30 Fire fighting equipment

Provision of a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen and a simple multi-purpose extinguisher for each floor level.

Purpose-built flats and buildings converted into flats

- 2.31 The Home Office Guidance published in March 2023, '[A guide to making your small block of flats safe from fire](#)' provides comprehensive advice for those responsible for fire safety in small blocks of flats, specifically those limited to three storeys.
- 2.32 The guide focuses on fire safety responsibilities in the common parts of small blocks of flats, including the building's structure, external walls, and the doors between flats and communal areas. It is designed as a support tool to apply fire safety legislation effectively and includes advice on completing a fire safety risk assessment. Published under Article 50 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO), the guide assists responsible persons in meeting their duties under the FSO.
- 2.33 The guide not only assists 'responsible persons' in complying with legal requirements but also encourages the adoption of best practices in fire safety management. This includes regular fire risk assessments, maintenance of fire safety equipment, and ensuring clear evacuation routes and procedures. It is crucial to refer to this guidance to understand your responsibilities and ensure compliance with fire safety laws.
- 2.34 If your block of flats falls outside the scope of this specific guide (that is, larger than three storeys or not a small block of flats), it is recommended that you instead refer to the guidance provided in '[Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats](#).' 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.
- 2.35 Please note that 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.

Inner rooms

- 2.36 An 'inner room' in fire safety terms is a room where the only escape route is through another, known as an 'access room'. This configuration presents an unacceptable fire safety risk to occupants and should be avoided wherever possible. However, where unavoidable it may be accepted where the inner room is a kitchen, laundry or utility room, a dressing room, bathroom, WC (water closet - toilet) or shower room. For habitable spaces like living rooms, bedrooms, or studies, specific criteria must be met:
- The room must have either an alternate escape route or an escape window that meets safety standards if it is within 4.5m of the ground level.
 - The rooms must have an effective fire detection system and a fire-resisting door (usually of FD30S standard).
 - Escape windows must meet relevant building and fire safety standards.
- 2.37 In every case, the same person should control both the inner and outer access rooms, and escaping should not require passing through more than one outer

room. Ideally, the outer room should not be a high fire risk area. However, if it is, having an escape window as an alternative exit might be acceptable.

Mixed commercial and residential use

- 2.38 Residential spaces above or within commercial premises face a heightened fire risk, especially at night. Fire risk assessments evaluate the threat level, which can be significantly higher in such mixed-use buildings, particularly when residential areas are over establishments like pubs, restaurants, or dry cleaners.
- 2.39 A 60-minute fire-resistant barrier is typically required between residential and commercial areas. However, this can be reduced to 30 minutes in lower-risk commercial spaces if there's an automatic fire detection system linked to the residential system. In higher-risk areas, even with a 60-minute barrier, it's advisable to have a linked fire detection system.
- 2.40 Where creating a fire-resistant separation is impractical, such as in some accommodations above pubs, alternative safety measures like fire-protected lobbies, secondary escape routes, or water suppression systems in high-risk commercial areas should be considered.
- 2.41 Mixed-use buildings necessitate careful planning of shared staircases for escape and access. Current design guidelines offer advice for new buildings, but it's not implied that older buildings must retroactively meet these standards.
- 2.42 The fire risk in mixed-use buildings escalates with the building's height, size, and number of flats. Shared staircases may be acceptable in smaller, low-rise buildings, depending on other factors like adequate escape routes and enhanced fire warnings. Such buildings might require simultaneous evacuation plans.
- 2.43 In mixed-use buildings, areas occupied for different uses should be fire separated. For example, a mixed-use building might have commercial spaces like shops or restaurants on the lower floors, while the upper floors are used for residential purposes. Doors between these areas are usually only allowed as escape routes.

Automatic fire suppression systems

- 2.44 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 systems and 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.
- 2.45 Automatic fire suppression systems may provide an alternative compensatory measure as part of an overall fire safety solution to ensure an appropriate means of escape from fire from a building or residence. 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.

- 2.46 For residential landlords, it is crucial to understand the updated fire safety standards and regulations for both new and existing buildings, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Where required, sprinkler systems in these buildings must comply with BS 9251, and water mist systems should follow the BS 8458: 2015 standard. Recent amendments to the Building Regulations (Approved Document B) have lowered the mandatory sprinkler system installation height in flats from 30 metres to 11 metres.

3. Guidance on amenities

Kitchen and bathroom facilities

- 3.1 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.

a. One to five persons:

- At least one kitchen, not more than 1 floor distance from furthest bedroom. Where there is more than 1 floor distance an additional kitchen should be provided, or a dining room provided on the same floor as the kitchen.
- At least one bathroom and one WC. Where there are five persons the bathroom and WC must be separate, although the bathroom may also contain a WC.

b. six to 10 persons

- At least two kitchens, not more than one floor distance from the furthest bedroom. Where there is more than one floor distance a dining room should be provided on the same floor as the kitchen.

or

one large kitchen with dining room, with two sets of facilities - dependent upon the actual number of tenants.

- two bathrooms

and

two separate WCs with wash hand basins (WHBs) (but one of the WCs can be contained within one of the bathrooms).

c. 10+ persons

- At least two kitchens, not more than one floor distance from the furthest bedroom. Where there is more than one floor distance a dining room should be provided on the same floor as the kitchen.

or

one large kitchen with dining room, with two sets of facilities - dependent upon the actual number of tenants.

- three bathrooms

and

three separate WCs with WHBs (but two of the WCs can be contained within the bathrooms).

Additional guidance on kitchen requirements

3.2 Minimum floor area of the kitchen

- one to five persons - 7m²
- 10 persons - 10m²

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

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

- one cooker with four 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 (minimum size 1 x 500mm wide and of standard height and depth), or
- one double wall cupboard for food storage per two persons (minimum size 1 x 1,000mm wide and of standard height and depth)
- 1,000mm x 600mm worktop for food preparation per three persons or
- 2,000mm x 600mm worktop for food preparation per five persons plus an additional worktop for the safe storage of kitchen appliances
- one standard fridge with a freezer compartment per three persons (with a separate shelf for each person), or
- one large fridge-freezer per five persons (with a separate shelf for each person)
- one dedicated electrical socket per fixed appliance (such as a fridge)
- a minimum of two undedicated double electrical sockets above an area of worktop
- separate cooker panel for electric cookers.

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

3.6 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.

Guidance on space standards

3.7 All licensable HMOs must 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.

- 3.8 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

- 3.9 The following space standards will be required in all HMOs:
- a. Minimum bedroom size with separate living room (11m²):
 - one person - 6.51m²
 - two persons - 10.22m²
 - b. Minimum bedroom size study/living room where there is no separate living room:
 - one person - 10m²
 - two persons - 15m²
 - c. Bed-sitting room containing cooking facilities.
 - one person - 13.0m²
 - two person - 18.0m²

Living room

- 3.10 The following space standards will be required in all HMOs:
- a. Minimum living space:
 - one to five persons - 11m² **or** 13m² combined kitchen and dining room
 - six to 10 persons - 14m² **or** 16.5m² combined kitchen and dining room

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

Dining room

- 3.12 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:
- a. one to five persons - 11.0m²
 - b. six to 10 persons - 16.5m²
 - c. 11-15 persons - 21.5m²
 - d. 16+ persons - 25.0m²
- 3.13 Kitchen-diners are acceptable, where the dining area is separate from the cooking and sink areas and is of the above dimensions.

Guidance on adequate means of heating, ventilation, and carbon monoxide detection in licensed HMOs

- 3.14 Prescribed standards for licensed HMOs require each unit of accommodation to have adequate means of heating. Sufficient ventilation is also recommended for cooking areas to avoid hazards from condensation and related dampness and mould growth. Washing facility requirements also stipulate that all bathrooms in an HMO must be suitably and adequately heated and ventilated.

Heating

- 3.15 In order to achieve adequate means of space heating within a licensed HMO adherence to the following guidance is recommended.
- 3.16 The heating system should be maintained in good and safe working condition capable of heating all habitable rooms, bathrooms, and toilet rooms. The main living room should reach 21°C, and other rooms 18°C, at an external temperature of -1°C, without exceeding 25°C. Occupiers should be able to effectively control and time the heating and hot water systems. Fuel-burning devices must vent outside in accordance with manufacturer specifications and standards. Chimneys should be maintained as per manufacturer guidelines.

Ventilation

- 3.17 It is recommended that ventilation in the kitchen and bathrooms is provided by mechanical extraction ducted to the outside of the building. Habitable rooms such as bedrooms, living rooms and studies must have a window or skylight opening to the outside, which can be securely fixed open. The minimum total openable area in each room should be 5 per cent of its floor space. All means of ventilation within a building should be well-maintained and functional.

Carbon monoxide (CO) detection

- 3.18 Rooms with gas, oil, or solid fuel appliances, or an associated flue, require a well-maintained and properly functioning CO detector. Detectors must meet BS EN 50291 standards, be battery-powered for their lifespan, and have an end-of-life warning.
- 3.19 Carbon monoxide detection and fuel combustion appliance regulations are governed by The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 and its 2022 amendment. Under the regulations all relevant landlords must:
- Ensure that at least one smoke alarm is installed on each storey of their properties where there is a room used as living accommodation.
 - Ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room used as living accommodation that contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers).
 - Ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced once it is informed and found that they are faulty.
- 3.20 The requirements are enforced by local authorities, who can impose a fine of up to £5,000 if a landlord fails to comply with a remedial notice.

Waste disposal and management in licensed HMOs

- 3.21 From 1 October 2018, local authorities are required to regulate a condition on the provision of suitable refuse storage facilities in HMOs. This is due to the recognition that HMOs, with multiple and separate households, typically generate more waste than single-family homes. Accordingly, all licensed HMOs are required to adhere to local authority schemes for the storage and disposal of domestic refuse where such schemes exist. 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 bag.
- 3.22 Non-compliance by a licence holder is considered a breach of the licence and a criminal offence. For further information on waste and recycling in your district, please contact HMO licensing representatives of your local council detailed in Section 8.

4. Management of houses in multiple occupation

Overview

- 4.1 A well-managed HMO leads to reduced issues for the owner, manager, residents, neighbours, and the local Council. 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 and The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006 place legal duties on both managers and tenants to ensure that the property is maintained to a good standard. The Management Regulations are summarised below.

Duties of manager

- 4.2 The regulations require the person managing an HMO to:
- a. display his or her name, address and phone number prominently in the house
 - b. keep the premises 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 bars or alternatives to low windows to prevent accidents.
 - c. keep water supply and drainage in proper working order and fit covers to all water tanks.
 - d. 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 conducted every five years.)

- e. 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
- f. maintain in good repair, clean condition and good order any outbuildings, yards, forecourts, boundary walls, fences and railings
- g. keep the garden safe and in a tidy condition
- h. make sure every letting room and any furniture supplied with it is clean at the beginning of every tenancy
- i. make sure all fixtures, fittings or appliances are in good repair and in proper working order and maintain them in this condition
- j. make proper arrangements for the storage of refuse and litter pending their disposal
- k. 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).

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

Duties of occupier

4.4 The regulations impose duties on occupiers of an HMO to allow the person managing the HMO to effectively perform their duties as detailed above by:

- a. taking reasonable care to avoid causing damage and disrepair
- b. co-operating in a reasonable way with the manager and providing information to allow the manager to conduct his or her duties
- c. complying with any reasonable arrangement made by the manager regarding means of escape from fire, refuse storage and disposal
- d. allowing the manager access to their rooms at all reasonable times to perform their duties.

4.5 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 receive an unlimited fine or civil penalty of up to £30,000 for each offence.

5. Fire precautions and alarm systems testing and maintenance

Fire alarm systems

- 5.1 If you have a fire alarm and detection system, it is crucial that this is maintained in full and good working condition.
- 5.2 You should regularly document all regular inspections, testing and maintenance in a fire safety logbook. Table 1 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'logbook' for recording purposes.
- 5.3 It is important to be aware of the two most common types of fire alarm and detection system found in HMOs, Grade A (A system of electrically operated interlinked smoke/heat detectors linked to a control panel and call points), and Grade D (a system of interlinked mains powered smoke/ heat detectors).
- 5.4 **Grade A** systems must be tested **weekly**, using a different call point on a rotating basis, to ensure they are working satisfactorily. In addition to this test, which can be carried out by the manager, **six monthly** inspections and service of the system must be carried out by a suitably qualified fire alarm engineer with specialist knowledge of fire detection and alarm systems. The service certificate must be retained by the HMO manager and made available to the council within seven days of a request being made.
- 5.5 **Grade D** systems must also be tested **weekly** to ensure they are working satisfactorily. In addition, all the detectors must be **cleaned annually** in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, this must be recorded in the fire safety logbook.
- 5.6 **It is strongly recommended that you enter into a maintenance contract with a suitably qualified fire safety professional to undertake maintenance of the system on your behalf.**
- 5.7 The inspection and testing frequency of fire alarm systems may differ based on the system and property type.
- 5.8 For instance, a landlord managing a large four-storey, 15-bed hostel accommodating vulnerable individuals is expected to adhere strictly to safety regulations. For a smaller HMO, such as a three-storey house occupied by five young professionals, less frequent inspections might suffice.
- 5.9 It is important to ensure a proactive rather than reactive approach to the maintenance and good working condition of the alarm system.

Emergency lighting system

- 5.10 If your property is fitted with emergency lighting (EL), the light must be maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5266, Part 1. As the landlord, you have a responsibility to ensure it is maintained in working order.
- 5.11 You should keep a logbook to record the regular inspections of the system. Table 2 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'logbook' for recording purposes.

- 5.12 **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.**
- 5.13 You are required to ensure the following tests are undertaken:
- **Weekly** - The EL system must be checked to ensure it is operating correctly, including the luminaries (ensuring they are lit), general cleanliness and for disrepair by a designated responsible person.
 - **Monthly** - Each EL 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; the outcome of each test must be recorded in the fire safety logbook.
 - **Six-monthly** - Each EL 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 15 minutes. An inspection must be made of each luminaire to ensure that they are functioning correctly.
 - **Annually** - The EL system shall be subject to a full discharge test and service by a suitably qualified person to ensure that the emergency lighting system is functioning correctly. Testing requirements are the same 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.
- 5.14 A service certificate shall be issued by the person undertaking the test. The certificate shall be retained by the HMO manager and made available to the council within seven days of such a request being made.

Fire fighting equipment

Fire extinguishers

- 5.15 The need to install fire extinguishers, the type of extinguisher and the location, depend on the fire risk assessment undertaken for the building. Different types of fire extinguisher are only suitable to be used on certain types of fire. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the correct extinguisher is installed.
- 5.16 If extinguishers are provided, they must be installed safely to ensure that they do not obstruct to the escape route. Generally, no tenant should put themselves at risk by attempting to return to a property to attempt to extinguish a fire. The advice should be to 'get out and stay out.' A tenant should only attempt to extinguish a fire if they feel competent to do so in a safe and controlled manner to free up the means of escape. It will be your responsibility to ensure all tenants are trained on how to use a fire extinguisher safely.
- 5.17 Generally, HMOs of a conventional layout and low-risk premises will not require fire extinguishers to be installed in the escape routes. Only those HMO

properties that have a large and complex layout will likely require fire extinguishers within the escape route. In most cases, a small multi-purpose extinguisher will be required only in the kitchen areas.

- 5.18 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 function in an emergency. They must be maintained and tested by a competent engineer at least annually in accordance with the relevant British Standard. Competent engineers are usually registered by the British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE) and are members of the Fire Industry Association (FIA).
- 5.19 A service certificate shall be issued by the person undertaking the test. The certificate shall be retained by the HMO manager and made available to the council on request.
- 5.20 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. You must also document any issues found and ensure that suitable remedial action is taken (for example ensure tamper tags are replaced and the extinguisher is refilled). Table 3 (Section 10) at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'logbook' for recording purposes.
- 5.21 You should follow the simple guidelines below when siting fire-fighting equipment, as the appliances provided must be positioned in the correct locations that is:
- hung on brackets with handles approximately 1m from the floor (or 1.5m for extinguishers of less than 2kg)
 - away from heaters
 - not obstructing escape routes
 - not in recesses or out of direct sight
 - sited with the appropriate instruction signage.
- 5.22 The following table is a useful guide regarding different types of fire extinguisher and how to use them:

Type of extinguisher	Details
Red – water	<p>Best used for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood, cloth, paper, plastics and so on • fire involving solids. <p>Danger Do not use on live electrical appliances or on burning fat or oil such as chip pan fires.</p>

	<p>How to use 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.</p>
Blue – dry powder	<p>Best used for Fires involving solids and fires involving liquids, that is paint and petrol. Safe on live electrical equipment, although it does not penetrate the spaces in equipment easily and the fire may flare up again.</p> <p>Danger Do not use on chip pan fires.</p> <p>How to use Point the jet or discharge horn at the base of the flames and with a rapid sweeping motion drive the flames towards the far edge until all the flames are out. If the extinguisher has a shut-off control, wait until the air clears. If you can still see the flames, attack the fire again.</p>
Cream – foam	<p>Best used for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires involving liquids. • Warning: not suitable for all liquids – check instructions. <p>Danger Do not use on chip pan fires. These extinguishers are generally not recommended for home use.</p> <p>How to use 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>
Black – carbon dioxide	<p>Best used for Fires involving liquids. Clean, effective and safe on live electrical equipment.</p> <p>Danger Do not use on chip pan fires.</p> <p>How to use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; therefore, ventilate the area as soon as the fire has been controlled.

Fire blankets

- 5.23 Ensure that only the fire blankets that conform to the current British Standard (BS EN 1869:1997) are provided in each kitchen, and are wall mounted so that

the base of the container is about 1.5m above floor level. The fire blanket should be sited at an accessible point away from the cooker position but near the exit door.

5.24 The summary guidance below shows the different types of fire blankets:

Fire blankets	
Best used for	Fires involving solids and fires involving liquids. Good for small fires in clothing and chip pan fires provided the blanket completely covers the fire.
How to use	<p>If it is safe to attempt to extinguish a fire using a fire blanket the following instructions should be followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off the gas or electricity supply. • Remove the fire blanket from its container and hold it by the fabric straps. • To prevent burns on the hands and arms, make sure you wrap the top edges of the blanket around your hands to protect them. • Roll up your sleeves so they do not catch in the flames. • 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. • However, if the fire is larger than the blanket, do not attempt to put it out. get out and call the fire brigade immediately. • Do not touch the fire blanket or anything underneath it until at least an hour has passed since the fire was extinguished.

Fire doors and structural means of escape

- 5.25 Regular inspections of the property are essential to check that passive fire safety measures (fire-resisting doors, walls and ceilings) are in a well-maintained condition. Fire doors should be regularly checked for damage to surfaces or intumescent strips and cold smoke seals, as well as to ensure that they are self-closing and self-latching.
- 5.26 Check that the main final exit door and doors to individual bedsit rooms do not require the use of a key to escape. Any lock requiring the use of a key to exit must be removed.
- 5.27 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 in or obstruct the escape route.

- 5.28 The frequency of inspection is a matter of judgement in each case. It is accepted that access to lettings may be difficult in some cases and that landlords should not intrude unduly on their tenants' privacy. However, most of the 'fire escape' provision in an HMO should be visible from the communal areas and there should be no difficulty in gaining access to such areas regularly.
- 5.29 It is advisable that you record any issues found and the action that you take to rectify any problem. Table 4 at the back of this handbook is offered as a model 'logbook' for recording purposes.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022: Fire door guidance

- 5.30 The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, effective from 23 January 2023, implemented key recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. These regulations are particularly relevant to building owners and managing agents (responsible persons), who must comply to avoid criminal offenses in the event of fire-related risks.
- 5.31 Regulation 10 focuses on fire doors in buildings with two or more domestic premises and communal areas used for evacuation during fires. The guide assumes your fire risk assessment has already evaluated the fire doors' suitability, with ongoing checks ensuring they remain effective. This applies to all blocks of flats with common parts, including both purpose-built blocks and conversions. It requires the Responsible Person to:
- inform residents about flat entrance doors
 - routinely check fire doors in buildings where the top storey is over 11 metres high (typically more than four-storeys). These checks include all flat entrance fire doors (every 12 months) and fire doors in communal areas (every three months).
- 5.32 A fire risk assessment should already be in place to identify and evaluate fire doors. These doors are crucial for preventing fire and smoke spread and must be maintained and, if necessary, replaced by a competent person. Routine checks are straightforward and do not require specialists. However, any issues or repairs identified during these inspections must be addressed by a competent contractor as soon as practicable. Maintaining fire doors is not just a regulatory requirement; it is a crucial step in ensuring the safety of occupants in case of fire.

Fire instructions to occupiers

- 5.33 All occupiers must be familiarised with the routine to be followed in the event of fire and advised how the fire alarm system works. It is advisable to incorporate such fire safety information in the tenancy agreement paperwork.
- 5.34 Advise the occupiers that in the event of a fire they should:
- sound the alarm or alert the other residents
 - get out of the building as quickly as possible and close all doors

- telephone the Fire Service (999)
- **do not** go back into the building for any reason.

5.35 You should also advise occupiers 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 and fire extinguishers
- **do** find out where fire exits are located
- **do** report any damage to fire equipment to the landlord immediately.

5.36 **It is recommended that a copy of Leaflets 1 and 2 at the back of this handbook be displayed in the house and given to each occupant at the start of their tenancy.**

Fire risk assessment and responsible persons

5.37 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) imposes a duty on individuals who have control over premises, such as landlords or managers, to significantly reduce fire risks and ensure safe evacuation in the event of a fire. The designated 'responsible person' or those in control are required to undertake specific fire safety obligations, including confirming that general fire precautions are adequate for conducting a thorough fire risk assessment.

5.38 The Fire Safety Order (FSO) is broadly applicable, encompassing almost all premises and a wide range of buildings and structures. This includes shared areas or common parts of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). All buildings containing more than one dwelling (regardless of whether they also contain common parts) must have a current and up-to-date fire risk assessment for identifying and undertaking 'general fire precautions' to comply with the appropriate and current fire and building safety requirements.

5.39 For premises governed by the FSO, adherence to the principles of the Fire Safety Order fire risk assessment typically involves the following five steps:

- a. **Identify fire hazards:** Recognising potential fire sources, combustible materials, and other elements that could contribute to a fire outbreak.
- b. **Identify people at risk:** Determining who may be at risk in the event of a fire, including employees, visitors, residents, and particularly vulnerable groups such as children or the elderly.
- c. **Evaluate and mitigate risks identified:** Assessing the likelihood and potential impact of identified hazards and implementing measures to

mitigate these risks, such as installing fire detection systems, ensuring clear evacuation routes, and providing fire safety training.

- d. **Record, plan, and train:** Keeping a detailed record of identified hazards, risk assessments, and precautionary measures. Developing an emergency fire response plan and ensuring that staff or occupants receive adequate fire safety training.
- e. **Review and update:** Regularly reviewing the fire risk assessment and updating it as necessary, particularly in the event of significant changes to the premises or its use.

5.40 For comprehensive understanding and compliance, it is crucial to read this guide in conjunction with the detailed provisions of the Fire Safety Order 2005 and the associated Fire Safety Order Guidance. This five-step process is distinct from a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk assessment undertaken by local authority officers, which determines whether any significant hazards, including fire, exist in a dwelling of the 29 listed hazards.

5.41 While it is often possible for an informed lay person to conduct such an assessment, if there is any doubt about the fire safety requirements, or if an assessment is required for a large and complex premises, it is advisable to engage a qualified fire engineer or fire safety consultant (See also Building Safety Act 2022). The National Fire Chiefs Council has published guidance on finding a suitable assessor. Please see the [fire safety risk assessment guidance](#) for further information.

5.42 The Fire Safety Act 2021 updates the rules for buildings with two or more domestic dwellings, like flats. It clarifies that the Fire Safety Order applies to:

- The building's structure and external parts, including walls, windows, balconies, cladding, insulation, and attachments
- All doors leading to shared areas, such as flat entrance doors.

5.43 This act makes it clear that both the doors of each flat and the building's external structure are covered by the Fire Safety Order. This order demands that the fire risk assessment of the building must be thorough and appropriate. Additional rules and advice about fire doors were also drafted following the first phase of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. These are detailed in Sections 5.30 to 5.32.

Local authority and fire rescue service responsibilities

5.44 The [LACoRS \(Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services\) Guidance](#) on fire safety, published in 2008, established a 'Protocol' between local housing authorities (LHAs) and fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) to improve fire safety in residential dwellings and to avoid duplication and potential conflicts in working arrangements. A generic version of the Protocol is included in Appendix 2 of the LACoRS Guide. As a landlord, understanding the key elements of the guidance is crucial, especially given the responsibilities outlined in the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

- 5.45 LHAs primarily use the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) for assessing risks in dwellings, focusing on identifying and addressing significant hazards, including fire, in all types of housing. You can find more information on the HHSRS in Section 7. LHAs are also responsible for implementing various licensing requirements under the Housing Act 2004 also described in this handbook. In premises occupied by single households, only the HHSRS will apply.
- 5.46 Alongside the Housing Act 2004, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ('the Fire Safety Order') introduced duties in relation to fire safety in the communal areas of some HMOs, flats, maisonettes and sheltered accommodations in which personal care is not provided. The requirements of the Fire Safety Order are enforced by fire and rescue authorities. You can find more information on the Fire Safety Order in Section 5.39 of this handbook.
- 5.47 The authority, expected to take the lead in inspection, advice and enforcement action in different types of residential property, are as follows:
- Single dwellings, including shared housing – LHA
 - All houses in multiple occupation (HMO) – LHA
 - All self-contained flats, whether purpose built or converted – LHA
 - Premises with mixed commercial and associated residential accommodation and sheltered housing – FRA
 - Hostels, bed and breakfasts 9(B&Bs) and hotels – FRA
 - All multiple-occupied accommodation owned or managed by the LHA – FRA.
- 5.48 The lead authorities outlined serve as a general guideline; however, they do not encompass every scenario, and some premises may belong to multiple categories. Buildings with unique challenges, such as tall structures, necessitate a coordinated effort from multiple agencies. Additionally, in cases of fire hazards within HMOs or communal areas of buildings with flats, local authorities typically consult with fire and rescue authorities.
- 5.49 In Suffolk, the Fire and Rescue Service and Local Housing Authorities have developed collaborative strategies to enhance fire safety in high-risk buildings and situations. This ensures a uniform approach to enforcing fire safety regulations. Establishing clear protocols between fire and rescue authorities and local housing authorities is essential. These protocols define best practices and establish reliable communication channels, ensuring effective and coordinated fire safety management.

6. Installations and safety requirements

Electrical safety

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The wiring must be inspected periodically (at least 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) space?
 - NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting)
 - NAPIT (National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers)
- 6.3 An electrical installation condition report shall be issued by the person undertaking the inspection. The report shall be retained by the HMO manager and made available to the council within seven days of such a request being made.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 You should also arrange, at least once a year, for a qualified electrician to conduct portable appliance testing (PAT) for safety checks on any portable electrical equipment (that is over one year old) you provide for tenants, such as kettles, fridges and toasters. The PAT tester will give you a dated certificate and stickers placed on the plugs of appliances to denote their safety.

Gas safety

- 6.6 Under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, all landlords must 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 to see the latest certificate.
- 6.7 Landlords must:
- ensure that all gas appliance or pipework in houses let by them are maintained in a safe condition by a Gas Safe registered gas installer
 - ensure 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, 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 conducted
 - provide new tenants with a copy of the gas safety record when the tenancy agreement is signed.

- 6.8 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; this could result in imprisonment or a fine of up to £20,000, or both, for each offence.
- 6.9 A service certificate must be issued by the person undertaking the test. The certificate shall be retained by the HMO manager and made available to the council within seven days of such a request.

If you suspect a gas leak in your building, call the National Grid gas emergency immediately on 0800 111 999.

Fire safety: furniture and furnishings

- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 Upholstered furniture filled with polyurethane foam tends to burn quickly and gives off substantial 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.
- 6.12 The regulations apply to:
- beds, mattresses, headboards and pillows
 - sofa beds, futons, scatter cushions and seat pads
 - loose and stretch covers for furniture.
- 6.13 The regulations do not apply to:
- sleeping bags or loose covers for mattresses
 - bed clothes, duvets, pillowcases, carpets and curtains.
- 6.14 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

- 6.15 Building regulations are designed to protect the health and safety of people living in or near a building, as well as control structural stability, drainage, and fire escape routes among other things.
- 6.16 Building regulations approval is required for:
- new building work
 - conversion of a building into flats
 - installation of toilets, sinks, baths, showers and so on
 - replacement of windows
 - replacement of heating systems
 - structural alterations including removing load bearing walls; and most electrical work within a building.
- 6.17 If you intend to carry out works that may require Building Control's approval, you must contact a Building Control Officer at the council; the contact details for the representatives of your local council can be found in Section 8. Any significant works or changes are known as 'material alterations' and may require approval from a building control body or approved inspector. Understanding how current building regulations apply to alterations is crucial as making changes to a building without proper approval can compromise its fire safety.

Planning

- 6.18 If you wish to change the use of a property into an HMO for more than six people you will need planning permission. However, no planning is required if you wish to revert your property to a single dwelling. If you wish to make any external alterations or extensions to a building, you will usually require planning permission. If you wish to make alterations to a listed building, or your property is in a conservation area, you must also contact the Conservation Officer. Contact details for the representatives of your local council can be found in Section 8.

Article 4 Directions and HMOs

- 6.19 Article 4 is a direction under planning law in England which allows local planning authorities to remove certain permitted development rights. Permitted development rights allow property owners to make specific changes to a building without the need to apply for planning permission.
- 6.20 For houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), Article 4 is particularly significant. Normally, smaller, shared houses or flats occupied by between three to six unrelated individuals can be classified as small HMOs and do not require planning permission to change from a family home (C3 class) to a small HMO (C4 class). However, under Article 4, this right can be deemed invalid in certain

areas. In such cases, landlords must seek planning permission to convert such properties into small HMOs.

- 6.21 Within the Suffolk region, different districts have directions in place that affect the operation of HMOs in those areas. To find out if your area is affected, please navigate to your local council's website to find out more. Alternatively, you can contact your local council to query this information.

7. HMO Inspection Program and HHSRS

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

- 7.1 The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 empowers local authorities to address poor housing conditions. When inspecting a property, officers assess potential risks to occupants due to any deficiencies that might lead to hazards. The severity of the risk is evaluated based on the likelihood of harmful incidents occurring within the next year and the potential seriousness of harm.
- 7.2 Officers make these assessments with reference to the most vulnerable age groups, ensuring that if a dwelling is safe for these groups, it is safe for all. This approach allows for the assessment of even vacant properties. Officers use the formal scoring system of HHSRS to indicate the seriousness of the hazards identified. This scoring system is outlined in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005 and the statutory HHSRS Operating Guidance.
- 7.3 The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) applies to all housing types, including houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), which are considered to pose a higher risk to health and safety. In HMOs, each accommodation unit and shared area is evaluated for potential hazards. The assessments consider the state of common parts, using the same enforcement tools used as in other housing.
- 7.4 There are 29 potential hazards, including fire, which may be identified using the HHSRS assessment process. For a full understanding of the HHSRS hazards, it is recommended that landlords refer to the [HHSRS Landlords Guide and Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance](#).
- 7.5 If any hazards are found, the property owners and landlords must address them. Serious hazards, classified as Category 1 (scoring bands A-C), require local authorities to act. For less severe Category 2 hazards (scoring bands D-J), authorities have the discretion to intervene if deemed necessary.

HMO inspection programme

- 7.6 HMOs on our database are inspected regularly. 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 years.

- 7.7 Risk factors include the number of storeys, fire precautions, the housing health and safety rating system, amenities, and management.
- 7.8 All newly identified HMOs will be inspected within six months and incorporated into the inspection program.

Risk factor: Number of storeys	
Category	Score
1	5
2	10
3	15
4+	30

Risk factor: Fire precautions HHSRS hazard (24)	
Category	Score
Full fire protection	0
Partial fire protection	20
No fire protection	40
Risk factor: Amenities HHSRS hazards (16), (17) and (18)	
Category	Score
Satisfactory	0
Unsatisfactory minor	5
Unsatisfactory major	10
Risk factor: HSRS other hazards	
Category	Score
No hazards	0
Lower score category 2 (F-J)	5
Category 2 hazards (D&E)	10
Category 1 hazards (A-C)	20
Risk factor: Management	
Category	Score
Confident	0
Reasonably confident	15
Little confidence	30
No confidence	60
HMO check	160

7.9 Inspection frequency

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

8. Contact details

8.1 Customer Services and HMO Licensing

- a. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils: phone 0300 1234000
- b. East Suffolk Council: phone 03330 162 000
- c. Ipswich Borough Council: phone 01473 432000
- d. West Suffolk Council: phone 01284 763233

8.2 Housing Options (tenancy rights and regulations)

- a. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils: phone 0300 123 4000
- b. East Suffolk Council: phone 03330 162 000
- c. Ipswich Borough Council: phone 01473 433003
- d. West Suffolk Council: email customerservices@westsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 01284 757053

8.3 Private Sector Housing

- a. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils: phone 0300 123 4000
- b. East Suffolk Council: phone 03330 162 000
- c. Ipswich Borough Council: phone 01473 433003
- d. West Suffolk Council: email customerservices@westsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 01284 757053

8.4 Waste and Recycling

- a. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils: email recycling@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 0300 123 4000
- b. East Suffolk Council: phone 01394 444000 or 01502 527100
- c. Ipswich Borough Council: phone 01473 432090

- d. West Suffolk Council: email customer.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 01284 757069

8.5 Building Control

- a. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils: phone 01449 724506
- b. East Suffolk Council: phone 01394 444219
- c. Ipswich Borough Council: phone 01473 432951
- d. West Suffolk Council: email building.control@westsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 01284 757393

8.6 Planning

- a. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils: phone 0300 123 4000
- b. East Suffolk Council: phone 01394 444557 or 01502 523029, or email planningpolicy@east Suffolk.gov.uk
- c. Ipswich Borough Council: phone 01473 432913
- d. West Suffolk Council: email planning.technical@westsuffolk.gov.uk or phone 01284 763233

8.7 Other agencies

- a. Anglian Water (reporting a leak): phone 0800 771 881
- b. Gas Safe Register visit <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk> or phone 0800 408 5500
- c. National Grid Emergency: phone 0800 111 999
- d. ECA (Finding a registered electrician): phone 020 7351 5000
- e. NICEIC (Finding a registered electrician): visit <https://www.niceic.com> or phone 0333 015 6625
- f. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service: phone 01473 260588
- g. UoS (University of Suffolk) Accommodation Team: email accommodation@u0s.ac.uk or phone 01473 338833

9. References and sources of information

- 9.1 [Approved Document B: Fire Safety Volume 1: Dwellings \(2019\)](#)
Issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, this document is relevant to new or newly converted buildings.
- 9.2 [Fire Safety in Specialised Housing \(National Fire Chiefs Council, 2017\)](#)
Published by the National Fire Chiefs Council, it covers sheltered housing, extra care housing, and supported housing, focusing on person centered risk assessment, including advice on hoarding.
- 9.3 [Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats \(Local Government Association, 2011\)](#)

Originally drafted in 2011, this guide applies to existing purpose-built flats and is currently under revision.

9.4 [Fire Safety - Guidance on Fire Safety Provisions for Certain Types of Existing Housing \(LACoRS, 2008\)](#)

Published by the Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS), the guide targets various types of existing residential premises. **LACoRS was published in 2008 and some of its content is becoming dated, with particular regard to the provision of domestic fire detection and the provision of firefighting equipment, which are updated within the relevant sections of the handbook.** However, it remains the most current and appropriate guidance for a range of existing residential premises including the following:

- single household properties
- shared houses
- bedsit HMOs
- buildings converted into self-contained flats, to a standard not in compliance with the Building Regulations 1991
- small hostels for which the HM Government Sleeping Accommodation Guide is inappropriate.

9.5 [Fire safety risk assessment: Sleeping accommodation \(DCLG, 2006\)](#)

This covers student halls of residence and seminaries. It is due for an update by the Home Office.

9.6 [Fire safety risk assessment: Sleeping accommodation](#)

This is a proposed guide for small blocks of flats, expected to be published in 2022.

9.7 [Housing health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\) including Guidance for Landlords and Property-related Professionals](#)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities protect residents against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. In 2018, the government commissioned a review of the HHSRS to update and enhance the enforcement of housing standards. The two-year review was conducted by RH Environmental Ltd., which concluded in 2022. New regulations, necessitated by the review's conclusions, will eventually replace the existing guides referenced above.

10. Testing, maintenance records and tenant information leaflets

Table 1 - Fire alarm system – record of tests

Automatic fire detection systems (AFDs) must be maintained in accordance with BS 5839: Part 1 (L2 Systems); Part 6 (LD2 and LD3 Systems). It is important that occupiers and fire alarm receiving centres (where applicable) are contacted before and after fire detection and alarms testing to avoid false alarms.

Weekly or monthly

Visual checks and testing of the call points must be conducted by a designated 'responsible person' during reasonable hours. Inspection must include visual inspection of detectors for damage, disrepair and other conditions likely to interfere with the correct operation of the detector. Frequency is dependent on risk.

Annually

(LD3 and LD2 AFDs)

Inspection and testing undertaken by a competent person, or an approved contractor or engineer.

Date	Call point location or number	Satisfactory (Yes or No)	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

Date	Call point location or number	Satisfactory (Yes or No)	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

Table 2 – Emergency lighting system – record of tests

Emergency lighting (EL) must be maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5266, Part 1.

Weekly

The EL system must be checked to ensure it is operating correctly, including the luminaries (ensuring they are lit), general cleanliness and for disrepair by a designated responsible person.

Monthly

Testing of all luminaries by simulating the failure of a normal lighting supply, for sufficient time to allow all luminaries to be checked for proper function.

Bi-annually

Test of self-contained and central battery systems, by simulation of a failure of the normal lighting supply, for a continuous period of one hour including a check of all luminaries for proper function.

Annually

Full checks and testing by competent persons, contractors, or engineers.

Date	Type of test (frequency)	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

Date	Type of test (frequency)	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

Table 3 – Fire extinguishers – record of tests

The maintenance of various types of fire extinguishers, including those filled with water, foam, carbon dioxide, and powder, is necessary to adhere to the specifications laid out in BS 5306: Part 3. This standard outlines the necessary procedures and frequency for maintaining these essential fire safety tools.

Monthly

A 'Responsible person' must check that fire extinguishers are correctly positioned, have not been discharged or have lost pressure, and have not suffered any obvious damage. The inspections should be more frequent if circumstances require them.

Annually

The annual testing by competent persons or approved contractors/engineers is also a requirement of BS 5306-3. It should follow the manufacturer's recommended procedures and instructions. This is to ensure that the extinguishers are in an efficient working state, in working order, in good repair, and suitable for the fire safety hazards.

Date	Extinguisher type and location	Satisfactory (yes or no)	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

Date	Extinguisher type and location	Satisfactory (yes or no)	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

Table 4 – Fire doors and structural means of escape – record of defects, obstructions and so on

Regular checks are essential for all fire safety installations. The responsible person must conduct these checks, including a thorough visual inspection to ensure that all components are in good repair and functioning effectively. Key areas to focus on include:

Fire doors

- **Closure:** Ensure that fire doors close fully and securely against their rebates.
- **Condition:** Check that doors and frames, including any glazing, are in good condition, with no signs of damage or wear.
- **Signage:** Verify that fire doors are clearly marked with appropriate signage, which is a crucial aspect for all doors except those leading to bedrooms.
- **Self-closing devices:** Confirm that self-closing devices are operational and not removed or tampered with.
- **Gaps and seals:** Inspect for appropriate gap sizes and intact intumescent seals.

Fire exit doors

- **Accessibility:** Ensure that exit doors can be easily and fully opened.
- **Signage:** Confirm that exit doors are correctly marked with clear signage.
- **Locking mechanisms:** Check that locks and mechanisms function properly without sticking or jamming.

Fire protective walls, floors, and ceilings

- **Integrity:** Maintain these structures to at least a 30-minute fire protective standard.
- **Condition:** Regularly inspect for signs of disrepair, such as cracking, holes, or poor surface finishes, which can compromise fire resistance.
- **Modifications:** Any alterations to these structures should be reviewed for their impact on fire resistance and compliance with safety standards.

It is important to log all inspections, findings, and corrective actions in the Record of defects, obstructions and so on, logbook. You must ensure that any identified issues are addressed promptly to maintain the effectiveness of fire safety measures. Regular updates to this logbook will serve as a record of proactive fire safety management.

Date	Item	Obstruction or defect and so on	Remedial action taken	Date completed	Signed

See leaflet 1 below for printing: Fire Kills -Advice for occupants of houses in multiple occupation

See leaflet 2 below for adding contact details and printing: Fire! Notice to all tenants.

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. To reduce the likelihood of fire:

Remember:

Never wedge open fire doors!

Never remove door closing devices!

Never tamper with fire alarms or equipment!

Never overfill chip pans!

Never leave children alone with matches or in rooms with cooking or heating appliances!

Never smoke in bed!

Never block halls and stairways!

Do become familiar with escape routes and exits from the building!

Do unplug electrical appliances at night!

Do close room doors!

Do check for burning cigarettes before going to bed!

Do not use paraffin or bottled gas heaters!

Do report any damage to fire equipment to the landlord immediately!

Fire!

Notice to all tenants

The stairway in this building is designed to provide a safe route in the event of a fire. This safety measure depends on how you and other occupants follow basic rules.

Fire-resisting, self-closing doors are located throughout the building, including the entrance doors to all rooms or flats. These doors prevent the spread of smoke and fire and must always 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:

- immediately leave the building and operate the nearest call point to activate the alarm if it has not already been triggered.
- phone the Fire Service on 999.

Please report any problems or defects related to fire escape routes in your house to: