



Housing Act 2004 - Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Guidance to Housing Standards

What is the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)?

The HHSRS is a scoring system that is used by all local authorities to risk assess the effect of certain hazards on the health, safety and wellbeing of the occupants. The system allows local authorities to take action to remedy these hazards in order to ensure housing is safe to live in.

How is a hazard assessed?

A local authority officer will complete a full inspection of a property and base their assessment on the likelihood of the occupants suffering harm, as a direct result of the condition of the property. The hazards are then appropriately scored by the officer, using the rating system. This will determine whether there are any serious hazards (Category 1) or moderate hazards (Category 2) present.

Who does the HHSRS affect?

The local authority has enforcement powers to ensure owners and landlords, including social landlords, comply with the HHSRS.

How is it enforced?

If the local authority discovers there is a Category 1 hazard present, it has a duty to take appropriate enforcement action. In the first instance, the local authority will endeavour to deal with all matters informally. However, if unsuccessful the local authority can take formal action by serving a statutory notice requiring works to be carried out. The council also has the power where necessary to prohibit the use of the whole or part of a dwelling, restrict the number of permitted occupants or take emergency action. Alternatively where hazards are of low risk it may be more appropriate to serve





a hazard awareness notice to draw occupants attention to the problem.

If a category 2 hazard is found within a property, the local authority has the discretion to take action if necessary.

What are the hazards?

There are a total of 29 hazards; advice on how to prevent a hazard existing is as follows. Further information can be found in the HHSRS Operating Guidance and HHSRS Guidance for Landlords and Property related Professionals available at www.gov.uk

Damp and mould – Dwellings should be warm, dry and well-ventilated. The structure of the dwelling must be maintained free from rising and penetrating dampness, and persistent condensation.

Excess cold – A whole-house heating system, which is time and temperature controllable, must be provided. Furthermore, adequate structural thermal insulation is required and windows must be in good condition and not draughty and ill-fitting.

Excess heat – Adequate thermal insulation and ventilation, whether it is natural or mechanical must be provided to prevent excessive heat within a property. Large expanses of south facing glazing should be provided with appropriate shuttering or blinds. Heating systems must have adequate controls.

Asbestos – Properties should ideally be free from asbestos. However if asbestos is present and removal is likely to result in airborne fibres being released, it can be left in-situ provided it is in good condition and unlikely to be damaged or disturbed.

Biocides – These are the chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth in dwellings, and where possible the use of biocides should be avoided. Biocides must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products including nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and smoke – Gas, oil and fuel burning appliances including solid fuel fires must be correctly installed and maintained. Rooms with appliances should be provided with

adequate ventilation. Flues must be regularly checked and cleaned. Gas appliances must be checked annually by a Gas Safe engineer, who will issue a certificate. Carbon monoxide detectors should be properly sited and maintained. For further information see Building Regulation Approved Document J.



Entry by intruders – Properties must be capable of being secured to prevent unauthorised entry. For further information see the British Standard BS 82200 Guide for security of buildings against crime – Part 1: Dwellings.

Radiation – New dwellings are built to achieve as low a radon level as is possible. For existing dwellings in radon affected areas remedial measures should be adopted. For further information see Building Regulation Approved Document C.

Uncombusted fuel gas – This relates to the threat to health from the escape of fuel gas into a dwelling. Gas should be supplied by an authorised supplier and be of standard composition and at a standard pressure.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) – VOCs are a group of organic chemicals including formaldehyde, which are gaseous at room temperature. Emissions of VOCs from building materials and furnishing should be minimised. Dwellings should be provided with adequate and appropriate ventilation.

Crowding and space – Within dwellings there should be sufficient space for the separation of different household activities. There should be sufficient provision for sleeping having regard to the numbers likely to be accommodated in the dwelling. Furthermore there should be an adequate living area for the household. For further information please refer to the LACORS Crowding & Space Guidance at **www.lacors.gov.uk**

Lead – Lead pipework should not be present in dwellings. Installation of lead pipes is prohibited in the UK and paint containing lead is no longer available. If lead paintwork is present it is often safer to paint over it than remove it.

Lighting – A property must be provided with sufficient natural and artificial light. In order to achieve this, windows should be of adequate size and shape, and artificial lighting must be suitably located to allow domestic tasks to be undertaken.

Noise – To prevent issues with noise, properties must have adequate levels of insulation. If a property is affected by high noise levels double or secondary glazing, and lobbies to external doors may be necessary.

Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse – The design, layout and construction of a dwelling should enable it to be kept clean and prevent the accumulation of dirt. Walls, floors and ceilings should be smooth and easy to clean. Externally, the property must be free of cracks and pest proof. There should be suitable and sufficient provision for the storage of refuse, which should not attract or be accessible to pests.

Food safety – Kitchens must be designed and constructed to ensure the safe and hygienic preparation of food. Walls, floors, ceilings, work surfaces, food storage units and flooring must be smooth, impervious



and readily cleansable. Corners and wall-floor junctions must be sealed so they can be kept clean. Walls immediately adjacent to cookers, sinks and work surfaces must be provided with an appropriate splash back, which can be easily cleaned. Adequate lighting and ventilation must be provided to the kitchen in particular above the cooking area. Sufficient work surfaces and food storage facilities must be provided to enable raw and cooked foods to be prepared and stored separately. There should be space for the installation of cooking facilities. Sinks must be provided with a constant supply of hot and cold water.

Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage – Properties must be provided with a sufficient number of baths, showers and wash hand basins with a constant supply of hot and cold water at a controllable temperature.

Baths or showers must be sited in a properly designed bathroom, which is heated, lit and ventilated. Basins should be sited in the same compartment or immediately adjacent to the WC. It is preferable, however for an additional basin to be provided within the WC, even when it is next to the bathroom. Baths, showers, toilets and basins must be connected to a drain capable of safely carrying waste to the drainage system.

There should ideally be space for a washing machine with appropriate power socket. Furthermore, foul waste once outside the dwelling, must be safely removed for disposal. No air should be released at low level or close to windows or vents.

Water must be supplied at a pressure adequate for appliances. Hot water must be maintained above 60 degrees to prevent legionella.

Falls associated with baths – Baths and showers should be stable and securely fixed, ideally with slip resistant surfaces and safety features such as handles or grab rails. The space within a bathroom should allow for it to be used safely and not increase the likelihood of a fall.

Falling on level surfaces – This hazard covers falls on level surfaces or where there is a change in level of less than 300mm. In order to reduce the likelihood of falls, paths and yards should have effective drainage to reduce the likelihood of water pooling. Adequate lighting must be provided to enable occupants to identify obstructions, trips or projected thresholds.



Water supply – Properties must have a constant supply of wholesome drinking water. The entire installation, including the taps, pipes and storage tanks should not affect the water quality.





Falls on stairs – The design and layout of stairs should comply with current Building Regulations. There should be no openings on stairs, either to the stairs themselves, or to the guarding, of more than 100mm. A handrail must be provided at a height of 900-1000mm from the top of the handrail to the floor or stair. The handrail must be shaped to allow easy grasp and extend the full length of the flight. The headroom to stairs must be a minimum of 2000mm. Open sided staircases must be provided with appropriate guarding. Staircases must be provided with appropriate lighting and reasonable landing space at the top and bottom. Consideration should also be given to the surface of the stairs to ensure they are slip resistant.

Falling between levels – Windows above ground level should be fitted with appropriate safety catches to restrict the distance a window can be opened to 100mm. All internal window sills should be at least 800mm from the floor level.

Electrical hazards – To prevent shocks and burns from exposure to electricity any live parts must be covered with non-conducting material to prevent the risk of electric shock. All exposed metal parts of the installation must be earthed. Other exposed metalwork such as gas and water pipes should also be connected to the main earth terminal. If equipment is operating at 230 volts or higher RCD protection must be provided. Additional precautions are required in kitchens, bathrooms and other areas where individuals could be in contact with electricity and water. Apart from a 12 volt AC shaver socket, there should be no socket outlets in bathrooms.





Fire – The design, construction and condition of a property should limit the chances of fire occurring and spreading. Furthermore a safe means of escape must be provided. Dwellings must be constructed of fire and smoke-permeable resistant materials. Internal doors should be made of appropriate materials and properly fitted. All fitted appliances and equipment which present a possible source of ignition should be correctly and safely installed and maintained. The space for cookers should be safe, with no flammable materials immediately adjacent. All fixed heating appliances and open fires should be properly designed, installed and regularly serviced and maintained. There should be sufficient and appropriately sited electrical sockets to prevent overloading. Furthermore the electrical installation should meet current requirements, and be maintained and regularly checked and tested. For further information about fire protection and detection measures that should be installed

please refer to the LACORS Fire Safety Guidance, which can be found at www.lacors.gov.uk

Flames & hot surfaces – To prevent scalds and burns, there should be adequate guarding of any open flames. The temperature of exposed hot surfaces e.g. radiators, taps, storage heaters should be limited to 43 degrees, or appropriately guarded. However hot water must be stored at 60 degrees or more to prevent legionella. Therefore to prevent scalding thermostatic mixer valves should be fitted to baths to limit the temperature of water delivered to between 44 and 46 degrees. Water may be delivered to kitchen sinks at a maximum of 60 degrees to ensure food safety.

Kitchens should be of adequate size and layout to ensure cookers and worktops are safely sited away from doors, thoroughfares or other hazards. Cookers should be in good working order, stable and securely placed.

Collision and entrapment – This hazard relates to the risk of physical injury from trapping body parts or striking objects. For example openable windows should not project over pathways as this could obstruct users. Doors and windows must be fully maintained. Safety glazing must be provided in doors and windows in vulnerable locations.

Explosions – Gas supplied to dwellings should satisfy the requirements of the current quality regulations and should be supplied by an authorised supplier at a standard pressure and be of standard composition. There should be appropriate gas regulators, meters and pipework installed by a Gas Safe installer. The installation should be regularly tested. Furthermore gas appliances must be tested and maintained in accordance with the relevant safety regulations. Hot water systems should also be correctly installed to meet the safety regulations.

Position and operability of amenities – The layout of dwellings, in particular kitchens and bathrooms should be such as to make their use convenient, easy, safe and allow easy cleaning.

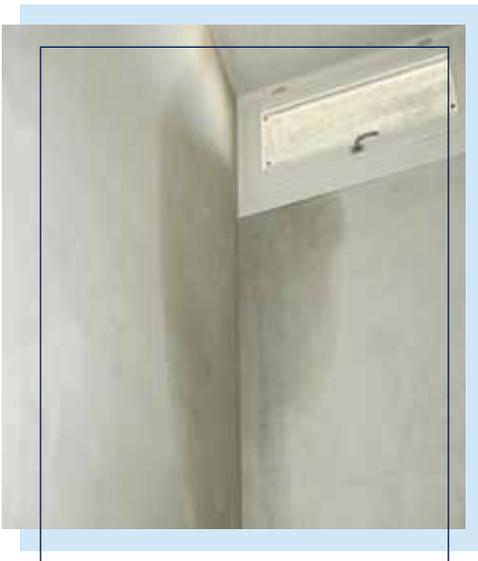


Structural collapse and falling elements

– To prevent dwelling collapse, foundations and loadbearing external walls of properties should be designed, constructed and maintained to be of sufficient strength to support the weight of the building, fittings, furnishings and its users. Any disrepair should not interfere with structural integrity. All openings to external walls should be properly constructed and maintained. The roof structure should be strong enough to support the weight of the covering and be wind and weather-tight. External pipework and eaves gutters should be securely fixed and maintained. Floors, walls and ceilings must be designed, constructed and maintained to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Advice for tenants who are experiencing problems with their rented property

- Inform the landlord or agent by telephone or in writing. If by telephone or text message,



keep a note of the date, time and person contacted, with a summary of the conversation. If writing, keep a paper or electronic copy of the letter. Also if you are given a reference number by a housing association ensure you keep a note of this.

- Any required works should be carried out within a reasonable amount of time, with serious matters such as a defective toilet being dealt with urgently. It is advisable to look at your tenancy agreement to see if a timescale for repairs is detailed.
- If the works are not carried out within a reasonable period of time, tenants can contact the Environmental Housing Team who may arrange a visit to investigate and assess whether there is a health and safety hazard which requires action.

The Decent Homes Standard

The Decent Homes Standard is a Government led initiative, which aims to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a property which is warm, weatherproof and with reasonably modern facilities.

The Standard is not legislation and is therefore not enforceable. However, it is a government standard that Local Authorities and Housing Associations are expected to implement. Furthermore the local



authority will have regard to this standard when giving advice to property owners.

A decent home meets the following criteria:

- It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing i.e. there are no Category 1 hazards.
- It is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services (including a kitchen which is 20 years old or less; a bathroom which is 30 years old or less; an appropriately located bathroom and WC and adequate insulation against noise)
- It has a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, efficient insulation and heating.

Housing Financial Assistance

Decent Homes Assistance -

Owner-occupiers with a property that requires works to meet the Decent Home Standard, including to resolve a Category 1 hazard may qualify for financial assistance to help pay for the works. To determine whether the proposed improvements are eligible, an officer will need to carry out an inspection. If eligible, an assessment of the owners finances will then be undertaken to determine whether assistance can be offered. Financial assistance will either be in the form of a Home Trust Loan or a charge on your property, which will be recovered when it is sold. For more information please contact the Environmental Housing Team or see www.chichester.gov.uk

Landlord Accreditation Assistance

– Landlords who apply to join our Landlord Accreditation Scheme are eligible for financial assistance towards the cost of a wide range of works required to meet the Accreditation Scheme Standards.

Landlord Accreditation Assistance is provided at a rate of 50% of the total cost of the eligible works, up to a maximum of £4000. Financial assistance is available towards the cost of the majority of works required to meet the scheme standards. However portable items such as fire blankets and battery powered carbon monoxide detectors, etc are not included.

If you are interested in applying to join the scheme, please contact the Environmental Housing Team. Further information can be found at www.chichester.gov.uk





For further information and advice please
contact a member of the
Housing Standards Team on
Tel: (01243) 785166 or
Email: housingstandards@chichester.gov.uk