



Guidance for Owners, Occupiers and Contractors on General Requirements at Houses in Multiple Occupation

These notes are intended to give broad guidance on health and safety requirements at houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). An HMO is generally a house converted for use as flats, hostels or bedsits.

The Council appreciates that major works of improvement may have financial implications and are willing to allow a reasonable time for completion providing that adequate progress is made.

Detailed requirements are contained in the Housing Acts, relevant British Standards and Government guidance documents. The following is a summary: -

Management/Fitness

The manager must ensure satisfactory standards of management, for example there should be no furniture or other combustible materials stored in escape routes or circulation areas, and all common areas must be kept clean and in good repair. Occupiers should co-operate with owners in maintaining satisfactory conditions at the premises.

Repairs

Dwellings must be in reasonable repair, weatherproof, electrical and gas installations must be safe.

Amenities

Self-contained accommodation must be provided with satisfactory kitchen facilities, water closets, wash hand basins and baths (or showers). At hostels and bedsits, facilities may be shared by no more than 5 people.

Security

The provision of burglar alarms is recommended. All HMOs must have secure external doors and windows, and the following may be required: -

Flat entrance door(s) must be provided with a good quality locking system, which must not compromise its use as an escape door in the event of fire.

The main communal entrance door and all other shared external doors having a secure latching device, self-closing device and a door viewer/small glazed panel.

Externally accessible windows to have a method allowing the windows to be secure when closed and also in a night vent position but not compromising possible use of the window as an alternative means of escape in the event of fire.

Flats to have a separate identified doorbell or preferably an entry phone system.

A secure mailbox system, with separate provision for each occupancy.

Adequate standards of external lighting.

The main entrance and unit entrances to be clearly named/numbered.

Sliding patio and French windows must be provided with a secure lock/latch, anti-theft device and laminated/secure glazing.

Refuse containers to be sited to minimise the risk of arson and the use of bins to gain access to the building.

A secure storeroom may be required for bicycles, prams etc. If this is sited off the common means of escape it needs to provide 30 minutes fire resistance.

The establishment of "house rules" to make residents aware of steps that they need to take to encourage good security are recommended.

Fire Safety

Internal Layout

Living rooms and bedrooms must have access to a means of escape without the need to go through another room or pass an unprotected kitchen area.

Automatic Fire Detection

A suitable system must be installed in all properties with a complex layout or a third floor. It is strongly recommended in all dwellings. It should be a mixed system conforming to BS 5839 Part 6. This briefly consists of a system of smoke detectors on the escape routes in the common parts linked to a detector (preferably heat) behind all doors opening onto the common escape routes, all linked to alarms audible within every part of the house, the sound

should be at least 75 DB at every bedhead with all doors shut. In addition each individual unit needs its own stand alone mains wire self-contained smoke alarm. In larger units more than one of these alarms may be necessary and these should be interlinked within the flat.

Fire Fighting Equipment

The property must be equipped with suitable fire extinguishers. AFFF (aqueous film forming foam) type extinguishers rated at 13A on each landing are recommended. They should be mounted on wall brackets in accordance with BS 5428 : 1987.

Each kitchen must be equipped with a fibreglass fire blanket or equivalent in a quick release container in accordance with BS 6576 and sited at eye level, unobstructed and clear from any immediate hazard.

Structural Fire Separation/Mean of Escape

It is important that in the event of a fire in one unit, that it does not easily spread to other areas.

Elements that provide separation should offer 30 minutes fire resistance.

Where the separation is provided by floor/ceiling structures then lath and plaster ceilings in good condition together with either tongue and groove floorboards in good condition or square edged floorboards overlaid with hardboard are accepted as providing 30 minutes resistance.

- ◆ Where the separation is provided by walls then either solid masonry or stud walls lined with either plaster and lath or plasterboard in good condition on both sides are accepted as providing 30 minutes resistance.
- ◆ All doors leading onto the common means of escape need to be fire doors FD30(S) standard complete with appropriate self closing devices, heat activated and cold smoke seals.
- ◆ Doors need to be a good fit within the frames with a maximum of 10mm between the bottom and any floor covering being considered satisfactory. Smoke seal should just fill the gap.
- ◆ Doors can sometimes be upgraded by the addition of suitable fire resisting board. Any rebated panels should be infilled with similar material prior to fixing of the board.
- ◆ The common exit doors need to be openable from the inside without the use of a key.
- ◆ All store cupboards on the common means of escape needs either to be emptied and screwed shut or upgraded to provide a 30 minutes fire resistant enclosure complete with fire door FD30(S) standard.
- ◆ All surface finishes within the common escape routes should achieve at least Class 1 surface spread of flame.

Consents

You should ensure that you have the necessary planning or building regulation consent for the use of the property and for this work. In particular, where any works involve altering the loading on the structure then you should ensure that the structure is capable of supporting the load safely.

There is a registration scheme covering some higher risk HMOs.

Produced by the Home Environment Team

For Further Information Contact:

Mid Beds District Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Beds.
SG17 5TQ

Tel: 08452 304040 or 01462-611222 Fax: 08702 432 122

Customer.Services@midbeds.gov.uk

www.midbeds.gov.uk

The Mid Beds DC out of hours emergency number is: **0800 212462**

- ◆ This information can be provided in an alternative format or language on request call 01462 611222
- ◆ যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে অন্য কোনও আকারে বা ভাষায় এই তথ্য আপনি পেতে পারেন। 01462 611222 (Bengali)
- ◆ 你可以要求以另一種格式或語言提供這些訊息 01462 611222 (Chinese)
- ◆ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। 01462 611222 (Punjabi)
- ◆ یہ معلومات آپ کے درخواست کرنے پر متبادل ڈیزائن یا زبان میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (01462 611222) (Urdu)
- ◆ Questa informazione puo' essere fornita su richiesta in un altro formato o un'altra lingua telefonando al numero 01462 611222 (Italian)
- ◆ Informację tą można uzyskać również w innym formacie lub innym języku dzwoniąc pod numer 01462 611222. (Polish)

Further guidance will be provided on who to contact for translation of documents, please contact Policy and Performance Management on ext 72196. Please remember that Language Line telephone interpretation service is available on 0845 310 9900.