Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/landlords/houses-multiple-occupation-hmos/hmo-definition

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HMO definition

This information is for private landlords of properties in Northern Ireland.

If you are a tenant, you can find advice here.

If you are a landlord or letting agent in Northern Ireland seeking advice, you can:

- send a message to Landlord Advice, or
- call 028 90 245 640 (Option 1)

House in multiple occupation (HMO) definition

A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a type of shared housing. Landlords of HMOs have extra legal responsibilities.

A landlord of a HMO must have a valid licence before letting out the property.

What is the definition of a HMO?

Your property is a HMO if:

- three or more people live there, and
- they form at least three separate families or households, and
- at least one person pays some form of rent to live in the property

Who counts as a family or household member

You should be aware of whether your tenants are related to one another. This is important to avoid your property becoming an unlicensed HMO.

For HMO licensing, family or household members are:

- people living together as a couple
- relatives of either member of the couple
- anybody employed as a live-in carer or live-in domestic worker

Who counts as a 'relative'

For HMO licensing purposes, a relative means a:

- partner
- parent
- grandparent
- child
- grandchild
- brother or sister
- uncle or aunt
- nephew or niece

For example, Paul and Alex live together as a couple. They will be considered one household. If Paul’s mum and Alex’s nephew also live in the property, all four people will still count as one family.

Exceptions to HMO licensing requirements

Some properties, such as care homes, meet the definition of a HMO but do not need a licence. These properties are exempt from HMO legislation as they are regulated by other bodies.

Most rental properties will be considered HMOs if they meet the definition.

Your property will not be a HMO if:

- you live in the property, or
- a member of your household lives in it

This will be the case even if other people live in the property and pay rent.

Flats in sub-divided properties

A self-contained flat or apartment will only be considered a HMO if:

- it is occupied in a way that meets the HMO definition, or
- all the flats are owned by the same person, and
- occupants of the building share at least one basic amenity