Housing Rights

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

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HMO standards

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)

You will need to show the council that you have proper management arrangements for your HMO.

You'll also need to demonstrate that the accommodation meets certain safety standards.

HMO management standards

The council will check whether the person(s) managing the HMO:

- is competent to do so
- is a fit and proper person
- is registered with the Landlord Registration Scheme
- has appropriate management and financial structures in place

HMO code of practice

The council will expect you, and the property manager, to follow the code of practice for the management of houses in multiple occupation.

The code of practice covers issues such as:

- accommodation standards
- electrical, gas and fire safety
- responsibility for repairs
- cleaning and disposing of rubbish
- information that must be given to tenants

You must display a copy of the code in your property.

How the HMO code of practice applies to tenants

Your tenants also have responsibilities under the HMO code of practice. You must give tenants a copy of the code and make sure they understand it.

Tenants must:

- allow the HMO manager reasonable access
- follow the HMO manager’s instructions on disposing rubbish
- provide the HMO manager information needed to comply with the code of practice

Tenants must not:

- stop or obstruct the HMO manager from carrying out their duties
- use portable gas appliances
- damage the property

Give tenants a written warning if they do not follow the code of practice. You may be able to end the tenancy if they regularly break the code of practice.

HMO living accommodation standards

As well as meeting minimum property standards, a house in multiple occupation has to meet extra standards to get a HMO licence.

Meeting these living accommodation standards reduces the risk of fire and makes sure people living in shared housing have safe facilities.

Lighting

You must ensure:

- rooms must have enough natural light
- there is artificial lighting throughout the property
- light switches are easily accessible

Ventilation

You must make sure that:

- rooms must have windows that open
- rooms with an open flue gas appliance must have permanent ventilation

Kitchens, bathrooms and toilets can have a ventilation system instead of a window. But a standard (or louvred) door is not acceptable as the only source of ventilation.

Heating and plumbing

HMO heating systems must:

- must be safe, efficient and under the control of occupants
- maintain a temperature of 21°C when the temperature outside is -1°C

You must ensure:

- water supply and drainage system are kept in good working order
- water fittings must be protected against frost damage

Electrical safety

You must ensure:

- electrical systems are inspected by a qualified electrician every five years
- electrical appliances provided by the landlord are tested every five years

You will need to give a copy of the electrical safety certificate to the council.

Bathing and toilet facilities

HMOs must have:

- enough bathing and toilet facilities for the number of occupants
- at least one bathroom or shower room and one toilet for every five occupants

Preparing and storing food

You must make sure there is:

- enough space to store and prepare food
- a fixed worktop in the kitchen
- a cooker, grill and oven for every five occupants

If there are six or seven occupants, a microwave can be provided instead of a second cooker.

Dealing with rubbish

You must:

- provide the right number of wheelie bins and recycling bins
- explain to tenants how to dispose of rubbish
- give tenants information on when bins are collected

Fire safety equipment

You must ensure that the property has carbon monoxide detectors and fire safety equipment.

Fire safety equipment must comply with requirements outlined in the Fire Safety Guidance for HMOs.

Decoration

You must maintain the outside of the property, including:

- gardens
- paintwork and walls
- pipes, gutters, joinery and roof tiles

HMO managers must ensure the inside of the property is clean and sound, including:

- paintwork
- staircases and handrails
- flooring, ceilings skirting boards

Properties that do not meet HMO standards

Your tenants can ask the council to inspect the property if they think it falls below these standards.

If the council finds that the property is not suitable for use as a HMO, your licence could be revoked.

More advice

- HMO licensing
- HMO definition
- Problems with HMOs