



A Landlord's Guide Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)



www.eden.gov.uk

Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to introduce what housing officers at Eden District Council look for when inspecting rented properties and what action can be taken by landlords to reduce the common hazards found within the private rented sector.

The Housing Act 2004 brought in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which is the legal method of inspecting houses.

HHSRS involves checking for any defects and deficiencies to the whole of the dwelling, including access paths, gardens and outbuildings, which could potentially harm the health and safety of any occupants or visitors to the property.

How does the HHSRS Work?

HHSRS addresses twenty-nine hazards that are found in the home, from damp and mould growth to structural collapse. An officer must check the property for all twenty-nine different hazards when assessing a dwelling.

Assessment of hazards is a two stage process, addressing first the likelihood of an occurrence and then the range of probable harm outcomes. Each hazard is given a score which will fall into one of ten bands from band A to band J. Scores that fall into band A indicate a hazard which is much more severe than one which scores in band J.

Scores in bands A-C are called Category 1 hazards and the local authority is obliged to take action.

Scores in bands D-J are called Category 2 hazards, and the local authority can use discretion whether to take action.

As a Landlord it is your responsibility to ensure that your property is free from hazards, or that they are reduced to an acceptable low risk. This guide has been produced to enable you to understand the measures that should be taken to avoid

hazards, and the ideal standard that should be achieved. This guide only covers the most common hazards so that these can be addressed more fully. It should not be used as a full statement of housing law.

For further information contact:

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Housing.services@eden.gov.uk

www.eden.gov.uk/housing

The 29 Hazards

Damp and Mould Growth

This hazard covers threats to health associated with increased presence of house dust mites, mould and fungal growth resulting from dampness or high humidity. Damp and mould is a common complaint.

Reducing the Hazard

1. The property should be free from rising and penetrating damp and condensation.
2. The property's damp proof course should be in good condition.
3. Providing drying facilities for clothes will discourage tenants from drying clothes on heaters, causing damp/mould.
4. Plumbing should be properly installed to prevent leaks and damp caused by splashing during normal use. Facilities should be properly connected to waste pipes and regularly maintained.
5. Guttering and down-pipes should be correctly installed, secure and maintained to prevent build up of debris.
6. Extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms should be fitted to help remove moisture.
7. Air bricks, trickle vents and roof and under-floor vents allow natural ventilation.
8. Frost protection will help avoid problems such as burst pipes and tanks.
9. There should be adequate thermal insulation, and appropriate means of space heating



Excess Cold

This hazard covers threats to health from excessively cold indoor temperatures. A healthy indoor temperature is around 21°C.

Reducing the Hazard

1. Structural thermal insulation should be provided to minimise heat loss. This includes loft insulation (min 270mm), and cavity wall insulation if the property has a cavity wall.
2. A fully working heating system, in all rooms of the dwelling, including halls, should be controllable by the occupants and have a timer switch. It should be properly installed and maintained by a suitably qualified engineer.
3. Draught proofing of windows and doors, and double glazing will also help the property to maintain heat.
4. In multi-occupied buildings provision for space heating may be centrally controlled. Controls must allow the occupants to regulate the temperature within their dwelling.



Carbon Monoxide and Un-combusted Fuel Gas

These hazards cover threats to health and asphyxiation resulting from escape of fuel gas into the property, or excess levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and smoke.

Reducing the Hazard

1. Landlords have a duty to ensure a Gas Safety check is carried out on the installation and each appliance and flue, at each rented property, every twelve months by a registered Gas Safe engineer. A copy of the certificate must be shown to a new tenant before they move in or to an existing tenant within twenty-eight days. Officers will ask tenants if they have seen a valid safety certificate prior to or during their tenancy. A Carbon Monoxide detector should be installed to give warning to occupants if gas is building up within the dwelling. These should be appropriately sited and maintained.

3. Flues should be maintained regularly and not sited close to an openable window. Lack of maintenance and a poor seal between appliance and flue are common.

4. Gas, oil and solid fuel burning appliances must be correctly installed and maintained. Ventilation must be provided in accordance with manufacturers guidelines.

5. LPG is heavier than air, so ground level ventilation should be provided where LPG is used.

Electrical Hazards

This covers hazards from shock and burns resulting from exposure to electricity, including lightning strikes. On inspection, an officer will visually inspect the electrical installation, including meters, fuses, wiring, sockets, light fittings and switches. Any defect noted may be subject to further action.

Reducing the Hazard

1. Electrical safety checks should be undertaken by a suitable qualified and competent electrician, eg NICEIC registered, and a Periodic Test Certificate

covering the whole installation, usually valid for a period of five to ten years, should be obtained. Landlords of Houses in Multiple Occupation must obtain a certificate every five years.

2. A Residual Current Device (RCD) can provide additional safety. These can be incorporated into the consumer unit. An RCD is a device which detects deficiencies in the electrical system and switches off the supply.

3. Exposed metalwork such as gas and water pipes should be connected to the main earth terminal.

4. There should be an adequate number of appropriately sited sockets and light switches so as to supply power to all necessary appliances and reduce the need for extension cables. As a guide, the kitchen should have three double sockets above the worktop and two

double sockets below the worktops. All other bedrooms and living rooms should have at least two double sockets.

5. There should be no socket outlets in bathrooms other than 12 volt AC (eg shaver sockets).

6. A Lightning Protection System (LPS) may need to be present where there is an unacceptable risk of a lightning strike.



Fire Safety

This covers threats from exposure to uncontrolled smoke and fire.

Reducing the Hazard

1. An appropriate fire alarm detection system should be installed in the property. Once installed the system should be suitably maintained and regularly tested. You should seek further advice from the council on an appropriate system before making a property available for letting.
2. There should be a safe means of escape in case of fire from all parts of the dwelling. There may be a need for an escape window on the first floor, particularly where stairs open into a living room or kitchen, rather than a hallway leading to an external exit.
3. The dwelling should be constructed of fire resistant materials. The design and construction should help contain and limit the spread of fire. Internal doors (including

entrance doors to flats) should be fire resistant, properly fitted and have self-closers where appropriate.

4. Sufficient and appropriately sited electric sockets will reduce the need for extension leads and overloading of sockets. The electrical installation (distribution board, wiring etc) should meet the current regulations, and should be properly installed and regularly checked and tested. There should be no defects to sockets or switches.
5. Residual Current Devices (RCDs) help prevent fires caused by electrical deficiencies.
6. All fitted appliances and equipment which present a possible source of ignition should be correctly installed and maintained. A fixed heating system should be properly installed and regularly serviced. This will discourage the use of portable heaters.

Food Safety

This covers threats of infection resulting from inadequate facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food. An Officer will check that the kitchen is of an adequate size, design, and layout to ensure the occupants can store, prepare and cook food in a safe and hygienic manner.

Reducing the Hazard

1. There should be space for sufficient cooking facilities away from any through route.
2. There should be sufficient appropriate power sockets above and below the worktop.
3. There should be adequate lighting to the kitchen, and appropriate means of ventilation.
4. There should be enough food storage facilities which should be finished internally and externally with smooth impervious surfaces.
5. The sink and drainer with suitable splash backs must be in good repair and easy to clean. There must be an

adequate supply of hot and cold water at all times.

6. Wall surfaces should be smooth and easy to clean. Worktop surfaces should be of an adequate size and have an impervious finish. The joint between any sink, drainer or worktop and the adjacent wall should be sealed and watertight.



7. Corners and junctions should be sealed and covered to avoid unhygienic junctions.
8. The kitchen floor should be fitted with appropriate covering, such as tiles or lino, which is easy to clean and free from cracks and other disrepair.

Falls

There are four 'falls' categories, dealing with hazards associated with baths and showers, falls on level surfaces such as floors, yards and paths, falls associated with stairs and steps, and falls between levels, for instance out of a window or from a balcony.

Reducing the Hazard

1. There must be adequate natural and artificial lighting in all rooms and to staircases to minimise the risk of falls.



2. Guarding should be provided to stairs, landings and balconies. It should be at least 1,100mm high and strong enough to support the weight of people leaning against it. There should be no openings to the guarding larger than 100mm.

3. Stairs should have a minimum width of 900mm to allow the stairs to be negotiated by a child and adult side-by-side.

4. Tread lengths should be 280-360mm and riser heights should be 100-180mm. These should remain the same throughout the flight.

5. Sturdy handrails should be sited 900-1,000mm above the stair and should be easy to grasp and extend the full length of the flight.

6. There should be reasonable space at the top and bottom of any stairs, with no projections or sharp edges. It is not acceptable to have non-safety glass doors located near the foot of a flight of stairs.

7. The headroom to stairs themselves should be a minimum of 2,000mm.

8. Floorboards should be laid to an even finish, and carpets and floor fittings throughout the property should be in good repair and properly fitted to ensure there are no trip hazards

9. Where internal window sills are lower than 1,100mm from the floor, safety glass and/or guarding should be provided.

10. Floors, yards and paths should be in good condition. Any change in levels should be clearly defined and well lit.

Crowding and Space

Reducing the Hazard

1. There must be an adequate number of bedrooms for the people occupying the house, depending on room sizes, sex of occupants and relationship of occupants.

2. The kitchen, living area, and bathrooms should also be of an adequate size for the household.

3. Each bath, shower and WC should be sited in a bathroom with a lockable door.



Entry by Intruders

Reducing the Hazard

1. The use of window locks, deadlocks, burglar alarms, security lights, window grilles, spy holes and chains on entrance doors can improve security.

2. Tenants must have access to keys for all locks.

3. Excess security measures can hamper means of escape in case of fire.

Domestic Hygiene, Pests and Refuse

This covers hazards resulting from poor design, layout and construction, such that the property cannot be kept clean and hygienic. It also covers pest access and harbourage, and hazards arising from inadequate provision for storage and disposal of household waste.

Reducing the Hazard

1. The design, construction and maintenance of the dwelling, including kitchen and bathroom, should enable it to be kept clean.



2. The exterior of the property should be free from any cracks, holes or gaps in order to prevent access by pests,

particularly around pipes and cables. The property should not provide harbourage for pests. There should be suitable provision for the storage of refuse outside and inside the dwelling.

Personal Hygiene, Sanitation and Drainage

This covers threats associated with inadequate personal washing and clothes washing facilities, sanitation and drainage.

Reducing the Hazard

1. The WC compartment or bathroom should have adequate heat, light and ventilation.

2. A wash hand basin with hot and cold water should be provided in the same compartment as a WC.

3. Each bath, shower, WC and wash hand basin should be stable and secure, and be able to be easily cleaned. WCs should have a working flush.

4. The bathroom should be provided with a lockable door capable of giving privacy.

5. All water-using facilities must be properly connected to adequate waste pipes carrying the waste from the dwelling to a drainage system. Each waste pipe should incorporate a trap to provide a water seal to prevent draughts and foul air entering the dwelling.

6. Connections between WCs and the drain must be air-tight and adequately ventilated to avoid leakage of the foul sewage or smells. The system should be designed and constructed so as to ensure that the pipes do not block.

Collision and Entrapment

Reducing the Hazard

1. Openable windows should not project over pathways.
2. Self-closers on doors should be adjusted so as not to slam.
3. Doors and windows should be maintained in good repair.
4. Safety glazing should be provided in doors and windows where necessary.

Lighting

Reducing the Hazard

1. Windows should be of adequate size, shape and position to allow for reasonable daylight into rooms.
2. There should be adequate artificial lighting in all rooms throughout the property, especially rooms of limited natural lighting.
3. Windows should be wide enough to provide a reasonable view of the immediate surroundings to allow supervision of outside recreation space and the means of access to the dwelling.

Heat

This category covers threats from excessively high indoor temperatures. Where temperatures exceed 25c, mortality increases and there is an increased risk of strokes.

Reducing the Hazard

1. There should be openable windows throughout the property and mechanical ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens controllable by the occupier.
2. The heating system should be programmable and controllable by the tenant.
3. Blinds or shuttering could be used if there is a large expanse of south facing glazing.

Noise

This category covers threats to physical and mental health resulting from exposure to noise inside the property or within its boundary.

Reducing the Hazard

1. Double glazing, triple glazing, internal lobbies and sound insulation can help to reduce external noise.
2. The separating walls and floors, particularly in flats, should be properly constructed to reduce sound transmission.

Other Hazards Included in HHSRS are:

- **Asbestos and Manufactured Mineral Fibres** covers the harm caused when exposure occurs to the products fibres.
- **Biocides** covers harm which may be caused by chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth in dwellings.
- **Lead** covers harm when lead is ingested into the body, usually from paint and water pipes.
- **Radiation** includes radon and its gases, mainly airborne radiation; however it can include gas dissolved in water.

- **Volatile Organic Compounds** are gaseous at room temperature and may cause harm to individuals when exposed to these compounds. They include formaldehyde and are found in a wide variety of materials in the home.
- **Explosions** cover not just the initial explosion but also the effects of the debris generated and also any potential collapse of the building causing harm to an individual.
- **Position and Operability of Amenities** covers harm associated with physical strain due to design and use of the functional space.
- **Structural Collapse and Falling Elements** covers threat of whole property collapse, or an element being displaced or falling due to inadequate fixing, disrepair, or adverse weather conditions.
- **Hot Surfaces and Materials** covers threats of burns and scalds caused by contact with flames, hot objects and liquids, and include burns caused by clothing catching alight from contact with cookers and heaters.
- **Water Supply** covers the quality and adequacy of supply for domestic purposes, and includes threats from contamination by bacteria, viruses and chemical pollutants.

Dealing with the Hazards

The Housing Act 2004 gives councils extensive powers to intervene where housing conditions are unacceptable and could impact on health and safety of occupants and visitors.

In relation to Category 1 and 2 hazards, actions available are:

- **Serve an Improvement Notice** which specifies remedial action required within a period of time. The council may carry out necessary works and recover the cost if the notice is not complied with. It is an offence not to comply with the notice. This becomes operative after 21 days. Can be suspended until a time or the occurrence of an event.
- **Serve a Prohibition Order** which may prohibit the use of part or all of the premises for some or all purposes. Prohibition Orders may include specifying the maximum numbers of

persons, or prohibiting a specific group of persons. This becomes operative after 28 days. Can be suspended until a time or the occurrence of an event.

- **Serve a Hazard Awareness Notice** typically in response to a minor hazard. This notice draws attention to desired works and gives advice, but does not require action by the recipient.

- In only very specific circumstances:

Make a Demolition Order Declare a Clearance Area

In addition to the above, the following actions are also available in relation to Category 1 hazards:

- **Take emergency remedial action** where a hazard presents an imminent risk of serious harm. The council can take steps to remove the immediate risk without giving prior notice to

the owner and then recover its costs.

- **Serve an Emergency Prohibition Order** which imposes the same requirement as a normal Prohibition Order, but is effective immediately and therefore used where there is an imminent risk of serious harm.

Appeals

In deciding the most appropriate course of action, the council will take into consideration the wishes of both tenants and owners. You can also appeal against enforcement action to the Residential Property Tribunal (RPT).

RPTs are informal bodies and hear cases presented by each side. Parties who appeal do not need to be represented by lawyers. The RPT can decide to allow an appeal (rule in favour of the owner), dismiss the appeal or vary the requirements of a notice or order.

For more information about RPTs you can call:

0845 100 2614, or email **northern.rap@communities.gsi.gov.uk**

Alternatively you can write to:

**Residential Property
Tribunal Service
First Floor
25 York Street
Manchester
M1 4JB.**

Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The Eden Landlord Accreditation Scheme encourages high standards throughout the private rented sector and aims to recognise those landlords who already provide such standards.

The aim of the scheme is to recognise good practices and responsible letting by landlords who are providing quality rented accommodation. The scheme sets out minimum physical standards for the property and minimum management standards for the running of the property and dealing with tenants.

The property will be inspected using the Housing Health and

Safety Rating System to assess hazards within the property. There must be no Category 1 hazards and any Category 2 hazards which are identified must be actioned as directed following an inspection of the property by a member of the Housing Team.

If you would like more information on becoming an accredited landlord and what benefits the scheme entitles you to, please contact:

The Housing Team, Eden District Council, Mansion House, Penrith, CA11 7YG
(01768) 212455

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Information on all our services is available 24/7 at www.eden.gov.uk

Accessibility Information

Summaries of the information contained in Accreditation Standards are available upon request in alternative languages and formats.

If you have any concerns or queries contact Eden District Council's Communication Officer tel: (01768) 817817 or email: communication@eden.gov.uk



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