

Fire Safety guidance in HMO properties

This leaflet is intended to act as **a guide only** and reference should be made to THE LACORS GUIDANCE ON FIRE SAFETY, BS5839-6:2019 and THE HOUSING ACT 2004

The Housing Act 2004 Housing Health and Safety rating system is the principle tool used to assess and regulate fire safety standards, along with guidance from Lacors Guidance on Fire Safety.

Fire safety provision and maintenance are the responsibility of the person having control of the HMO (usually the landlord).

The responsible person must carry out a fire risk assessment. A fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at the premises, the actions carried out there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises.

The aim of the fire risk assessment is to:

- identify fire hazards
- reduce the risk of these hazards causing harm
- decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of the occupants

It is your responsibility to ensure the property you own/manage is safe and up to standard.

Bedsit style HMO definition

These are HMOs which have been converted into a number of separate non-self-contained bedsit lettings.

Typically, there will be individual cooking facilities within each bedsit, or shared cooking facilities within a communal kitchen. Toilets and bathing/washing facilities will mostly be shared. There is unlikely to be a communal living or dining room.

Each bedsit or letting will be let to separate individuals who will live independently with little or no communal living between tenants. Each letting will have its own individual tenancy agreement and there will usually be a lock on each individual letting door.

Below are a couple of examples of **bedsit HMOs** to assist you in determining the level of fire protection you may need and serves as a guide only.

EXAMPLE 1: BEDSIT TYPE HMO – up to 2 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade D1 Category LD1 (BS5839-6:2019)
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms with integral battery back-up located throughout the escape route
- Mains wired interlinked heat detector in any kitchen
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in any lounge/dining room and cellar
- Bedrooms without cooking facilities - mains wired interlinked smoke alarms
- Bedrooms with cooking facilities - mains wired interlinked heat detectors plus a non- interlinked smoke alarms
- Property must have a 30 minute minimum protected route, therefore walls and floors must be of sound construction
- All doors leading onto the escape route must be fire doors providing 30 minute fire protection. Doors must be fitted with approved self-closers and fitted with smoke seals and intumescent strips. They should have 3 steel butt hinges and able to withstand 800 degrees Celsius. Door gaps need to be maximum 3mm on the sides and top with 6mm at the base.
- Fire blanket to be provided in each bedsit with cooking facilities and in the shared kitchen located at a height of 1.5 metres from the ground and fixed to the wall between the cooker and the exit.
- Any internal windows in the escape route, including above the door fanlights must be either Georgian wired safety glass or covered with 12.5mm plasterboard to each side.
- A protected loft hatch which provides 30 minutes fire protection
- Where there is no natural or borrowed light, emergency lighting may be required to the escape route.
- All doors to bedrooms to have thumb turn locks which do not require the use of a key to exit the room.
- Fire safety signs to be placed along the escape route if the escape route is complex

EXAMPLE 2: BEDSIT TYPE HMO – 3 or 4 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade A Category LD1 (BS5839-6: 2019)
- Grade A: a fire detection and alarm system that is designed and installed in accordance with the recommendations of BS 5839: part 6 (2019). This comprises a system of electrically operated smoke and /or heat detectors which are linked to a control panel. The control panel must conform to current BS 5839: part 4 (or equivalent). In general the system must incorporate manual call points which should be located next to final exits and in larger multi- storey

properties, on each landing. The alarm system must achieve sound levels of not less than 65 dB (A) in all accessible parts of the building and not less than 75 dB (A) at all bed-heads when all doors are shut, to arouse sleeping persons.

- Mains wired interlinked smoke detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape route from the dwelling and in all bedrooms and areas that present a high risk to occupants (risk rooms), including basements and cellars
- Mains wired interlinked heat detector in the kitchen.
- Mains wired interlinked smoke detector in any lounge/dining room
- Property must have a 30 minute minimum protected route, therefore walls and floors must be of sound construction
- All doors leading onto the escape route must be fire doors providing 30 minute fire protection. Doors must be fitted with approved self-closers and fitted with smoke seals and intumescent strips. They should have 3 steel butt hinges and able to withstand 800 degrees Celsius. Door gaps need to be maximum 3mm on the sides and top with 6mm at the base.
- Fire blanket to be provided in each bedsit with cooking facilities and in the shared kitchen located at a height of 1.5 metres from the ground and fixed to the wall between the cooker and the exit.
- A protected loft hatch which provides 30 minutes fire protection
- Any internal windows in the escape route, including above doors fanlights must be either Georgian wired safety glass or covered with 12.5mm plaster board to both sides
- Where there is no natural or borrowed light, emergency lighting will be required to the escape route.
- All doors to bedrooms to have thumb turn locks which do not require the use of a key to exit the room.
- Fire safety signs to be placed along the escape route if the escape route is complex

Shared house HMO definition

HMOs described as shared houses are where the whole property has been rented out by an identifiable group of unrelated sharers such as students, work colleagues or friends as joint tenants. They share kitchen, dining facilities, bathroom, WC, lounge and all other parts of the house. All tenants will have exclusive legal possession and control of all parts of the house, including all the bedrooms.

There is normally a significant degree of social interaction as they know each other. There is a single joint tenancy agreement with vicarious responsibility and therefore the landlord does not decide who lets a room should someone leave.

BS5839-6:2019 specifies that a HMO can only be referred to as a 'shared house HMO' for fire purposes if the property is shared by no more than 6 people.

Below are a couple of examples of **shared house HMOs** to assist you in determining the level of fire protection you may need and serves as a guide only.

EXAMPLE 1: SHARED HOUSE HMO – UP TO 2 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade D1 Category LD2 (BS5839-6:2019)
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in the hallway and landing including any cellar or basement
- Mains wired interlinked heat alarm in the kitchen area
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in the lounge
- Fire blanket in the kitchen located 1.5m off ground between the cooker and the exit.
- Property must have a route that leads to a place of ultimate safety.
- Doors leading onto the escape route must be close fitting solid timber or panelled of substantial construction. Doors of flimsy construction or hollow infill-type doors (known as 'eggbox') or with non-fire-resisting glazing will not be accepted.
- A protected loft hatch
- Any internal windows in the escape route, including above doors fanlights must be either Georgian wired safety glass or covered with 12.5mm plaster board to both sides
- Keyless exit.

EXAMPLE 2: SHARED HOUSE HMO – 3 or 4 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade D1 Category LD2 (BS5839-6 : 2019)
- Mains wired interlinked heat alarm in the kitchen.
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in the hallway and landing including any cellar or basement
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in the lounge and all risk rooms including all bedrooms
- Property must have a 30 minute minimum protected route, therefore walls and floors must be of sound construction
- Fire doors 30 minute protection on all exits on to the protected route. Doors must have a correct door furniture (rising butt hinges are not acceptable) and

able to withstand 800 degrees Celsius. Door gaps need to be maximum 3mm on the sides and top with 6mm at the base.

- Where smoke or heat detectors have been fitted in the risk rooms, then all fire doors leading onto the escape route must be fitted with approved self-closers and smoke seals and intumescent strips.
- Fire blanket in the kitchen located 1.5m off ground between the cooker and the exit.
- Property must have a route that leads to a place of ultimate safety.
- A protected loft hatch
- Any internal windows in the escape route, including above doors fanlights must be either Georgian wired safety glass or covered with 12.5mm plaster board to both sides
- Where there is no borrowed light or if the route is long and complex, emergency lighting may be required
- Keyless exit.