

Fire Safety guidance in HMO properties

Licence holders and managers must ensure that a fire risk assessment is undertaken in accordance with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Licence holders and managers must then take action to reduce fire risks at the property based on the fire risk assessment.

This document provides introductory guidance. It is essential to consult the LACORS Guidance on Fire Safety, BS 5839-6:2019+A1:2020, and the Housing Act 2004 for definitive information.

Fire safety standards are principally assessed and regulated through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) as outlined in the Housing Act 2004, alongside the guidance provided by LACORS and BS 5839-6:2019+A1:2020.

Bedsit Style HMO

A building which have been divided into individual non-self-contained lettings, let to unconnected individuals.

Each bedsit letting will usually comprise only one room (sometimes more) which may contain cooking/food preparation facilities, washing facilities and living/sleeping space. Usually bathrooms and WCs are shared between a number of bedsits. The actual facilities contained within each bedsit letting will vary from property to property. Often there will be a lock on each individual letting door and each letting will have its own individual tenancy agreement.

The following examples of typical bedsit HMOs are provided to assist in determining appropriate fire protection levels and serve as a guide only.

EXAMPLE 1: BEDSIT TYPE HMO – up to 2 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade D1 Category LD1 (BS5839-6:2019+A1:2020)
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms with tamper proof integral battery back-up located throughout the escape route
- Mains wired interlinked heat alarm with tamper proof integral battery back-up in any kitchen
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms with tamper proof integral battery back-up in any lounge/dining room and cellar
- Bedrooms without cooking facilities - mains wired interlinked smoke alarm with tamper proof integral battery back-up.
- Bedrooms with cooking facilities - mains wired interlinked heat alarms with

tamper proof integral battery back-up plus an additional non-interlinked smoke alarm with tamper proof integral battery back-up located in each bedsit.

- 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 be 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 meters 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 removable key to exit the room.
- Exit doors from all premises fitted with locks/catches which are openable by the occupiers from the inside without the use of a removable key.
- 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+A1:2020)
- A system of electrically operated smoke and /or heat alarms 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 alarms with tamper proof integral battery back-up located 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 alarm with tamper proof integral battery back-up in the kitchen.
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarm with tamper proof integral battery back-up 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 removable key to exit the room.
- Exit doors from all premises fitted with locks/catches which are openable by the occupiers from the inside without the use of a removable key.
- Fire safety signs to be placed along the escape route if the escape route is complex

Shared house style HMO

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 an 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.

The following examples of typical shared HMOs are provided to assist in determining appropriate fire protection levels and serve as a guide only.

EXAMPLE 1: SHARED HOUSE HMO – UP TO 2 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade D1 Category LD2 (BS5839-6:2019+A1:2020)
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarm with integral battery back-up in the hallway and landing including any cellar or basement
- Mains wired interlinked heat alarm with integral battery back-up in the kitchen area
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms with integral battery back-up in the lounge
- Fire blanket in the kitchen located 1.5m off ground between the cooker and the exit.
- 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
- Exit doors from all premises fitted with locks/catches which are openable by the occupiers from the inside without the use of a removable key.

EXAMPLE 2: SHARED HOUSE HMO – 3 or 4 STOREYS

Fire Safety Requirements:

- Grade D1 Category LD2 (BS5839-6: 2019+A1:2020)
- Mains wired interlinked heat alarm with integral battery back-up in the kitchen.
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms in the hallway and landing with integral battery back-up including any cellar or basement
- Mains wired interlinked smoke alarms with integral battery back-up 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 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 alarms 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.
- 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
- Exit doors from all premises fitted with locks/catches which are openable by the occupiers from the inside without the use of a removable key.