

**Economy Place & Skills Directorate  
Housing Implementation**

# **Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation**

**October 2010**

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 These standards have been compiled in order to assist landlords and managing agents in the management and maintenance of houses in multiple occupation to ensure that tenants are provided with safe and suitable accommodation. These standards are subject to change as legislation, standards and guidance are constantly updated but useful contacts and links to information sources are provided within this document so further clarification may be sought if required. This document should be read in conjunction with relevant guidance notes, British Standards etc, where indicated.
- 1.2 These standards apply only to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's). The definition of an HMO as depicted in the Housing Act 2004 is given as:
- 1.2.1 A house or flat which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households who share amenities such as kitchens, bathrooms or toilets.
  - 1.2.2 A house which has been converted into bedsits or similar and which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households and where there is a shared use of facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms or toilets.
  - 1.2.3 A building which has been converted into flats which are not fully self-contained so there is sharing of amenities and which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households
  - 1.2.4 A building which has been converted into self-contained flats if converted before 1991 or do not meet the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies.
- 1.3 The standards recommended for certain types of accommodation such as night-shelters, women's refuges, bed and breakfast, guest houses, hotel and hostel accommodation will differ slightly from those provided within this document. To obtain further information or advice in relation to the above please contact the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team:

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Economy, Place and Skills Directorate  
Room 310, Civic Centre  
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Oldham  
OL1 1UH

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## 2 Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation

- 2.1 Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 introduced a requirement for landlords to obtain a licence to operate certain larger, higher-risk HMOs. The licensing regime has been introduced to improve conditions and management standards in relation to these dwellings with the aim of protecting occupants. If you own/manage a HMO where all three below apply you may need to apply for a licence:
  - 2.1.1 HMOs comprising of three or more storeys. This includes basements and attics if accessible from the accommodation and used – either as part of the accommodation or for storage. It also includes commercial premises so for example accommodation above pubs, shops and offices.
  - 2.1.2 HMOs accommodating five or more people comprising of two or more households (unrelated persons)
  - 2.1.3 Where persons share, or lack one or more basic amenities (where people share a bathroom, cooking facilities or toilet)
- 2.2 If you believe that you have a licensable HMO and have not yet applied for a licence you should contact the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team as soon as possible to obtain an application form as it is an offence to operate a licensable HMO without a licence. If found guilty in a Magistrates Court you could be fined up to £20,000.
- 2.3 Once you have obtained an application form, you should complete it and return it to the Council along with the required fee. The proposed licence holder will also be required to declare certain criminal convictions – the Housing Act 2004 dictates that licence holders must be ‘fit and proper’. Council officers will then inspect the property to make sure it is safe and suitable for occupation, and will then grant a licence for the property. The licence will have conditions attached to it and will set a maximum occupancy limit for the HMO based on the amenities provided in the accommodation. The conditions are attached to regulate the way in which HMOs are managed and maintained. It is an offence if a landlord or person in control of the property allows a property to be occupied by more people than is permitted in the licence and the breaching of licence conditions can result in fines of up to £5,000 per breach.

## 3 Space standards

3.1 Space standards vary depending on the kind of accommodation provided.

3.1.1 No room shall be occupied for sleeping by more than 2 persons, irrespective of age, and rooms shall not be shared unless the individuals concerned consent to share the room. In no case shall sleeping arrangements be such that any two persons being twelve years old or more, of opposite sexes, be required to sleep in the same room, unless they are co-habitees.

3.1.2 No bathroom, WC, office, lobby, kitchen, cupboard, corridor or circulation space shall be used for sleeping purposes.

3.1.3 Inner bedrooms are not deemed acceptable (this is a bedroom which can only be accessed by passing through another room such as a lounge, kitchen or bedroom).

3.1.4 All rooms used as sleeping accommodation shall have a ceiling height of at least 2.14 metres over a minimum of 75% of the room area. Any floor area where the ceiling height is less than 1.53 metres shall be disregarded when calculating the room size.

3.1.5 Irrespective of the floor area, consideration will be given to the shape and useable living space within the room when determining whether or not it is suitable for use as sleeping accommodation.

3.1.6 Although basements and loft spaces may be used as sleeping accommodation it is recommended that you contact the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team to obtain advice as there are often additional hazards associated with loft spaces and basement rooms. No person shall sleep within a room with no access to natural light and ventilation (i.e. basements without windows).

### 3.2 Bedsits (rooms provided with cooking facilities)

3.3 For bedrooms with cooking facilities provided in the room (i.e. bedsits), the following minimum room sizes shall apply:-

3.3.1 If occupied by one person 13m<sup>2</sup>

3.3.2 If occupied by two persons 20.5m<sup>2</sup>

3.3.3 No separate communal lounge is required.

### 3.4 Shared houses/flats

3.5 For bedrooms, the following minimum room sizes shall apply:-

3.5.1 6.5m<sup>2</sup> for a single person, as long as a separate shared living room is provided which is not a kitchen or a kitchen/ dining room.

3.5.2 10m<sup>2</sup> for a single if no shared living room is provided.

3.5.3 10.5m<sup>2</sup> if occupied by two persons if an additional living room is provided

3.5.4 15m<sup>2</sup> for two persons if no additional living room is provided.

### 3.6 Common Rooms

3.6.1 Kitchens:	Used by 1-5 persons	7m <sup>2</sup>
	Used by 6-10 persons	10m <sup>2</sup>
3.6.2 Dining kitchens:	Used by 1-5 persons	11.5m <sup>2</sup>
	Used by 6-10 persons	19.5m <sup>2</sup>
	Used by 11-15 persons	24m <sup>2</sup>
	Used by 16+ persons	29m <sup>2</sup>
3.6.3 Living rooms & dining rooms:	Used by 1-5 persons	11m <sup>2</sup>

Used by 6-10 persons 16.5m<sup>2</sup>

Used by 11-15 persons 21.5m<sup>2</sup>

Used by 16+ persons 25m<sup>2</sup>

- 3.7 The minimum room size for a kitchen with one set of cooking facilities provided within is 7m<sup>2</sup>. The minimum room size for a kitchen with two sets of cooking facilities provided within is 10m<sup>2</sup> and kitchens shall be a minimum of 1.8m wide to allow for the safe circulation of occupants within the room. No more than two sets of cooking facilities shall be provided in one kitchen. One set of cooking facilities shall be provided for every five occupiers (please see below for requirements in relation to cooking facilities).

## 4 Facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food

- 4.1 Where practicable each letting shall have its own separate kitchen on the same floor level, or no more than one floor away from that letting.

- 4.2 If it is not practicable to have separate kitchens, each letting meeting the minimum room size requirement set out in paragraph 3.2 (i.e. 13m<sup>2</sup> for a single room) may have a set of cooking facilities provided within the room (bedsits). The occupants of the rooms which do not meet the minimum room size requirement, or if the property is to be let as a shared house rather than as bedsits, occupants must be provided with a communal kitchen up to a maximum ratio of one kitchen for every five persons.

- 4.3 A set of cooking facilities must include:

4.3.1 A cooker with four burners, oven and grill (in single room lettings, a cooker with a minimum of two burners, oven and grill is permissible).

4.3.2 A stainless steel sink and integral drainer (minimum size 0.5m x 0.9m) set on a base unit. The sink is to be provided with constant and adequate supplies of hot and cold mains fed (potable) water and properly connected to the drainage system. A tiled splashback (minimum 300mm high) shall be provided to the sink and drainer.

4.3.3 A standard double sink base unit (minimum 1.0m wide)

- 4.3.4 A standard double base unit (minimum 1.0m wide)
- 4.3.5 A standard double wall unit (minimum 1.0m wide)
- 4.3.6 A refrigerator, preferably with a freezer compartment.
- 4.3.7 Two double 13 amp electric power sockets situated at worktop height. These are in addition to electrical power sockets provided elsewhere in the letting. There should also be a dedicated 45A double pole cooker switch provided for electric cookers.
- 4.3.8 A suitable worktop (minimum surface area 1000mm x 600mm) to be provided which must be impervious and easy to clean. All joints must be effectively sealed. Worktops should ideally be provided to each side of the cooker and sink. Any surfaces adjoining food preparation areas should be readily cleansable (tiled or equivalent).

## 5 Personal washing facilities and W.C. provision

- 5.1 A readily accessible bathroom or shower room, being not more than one floor distant from any user, shall be provided for every five persons, regardless of age.
- 5.2 **For 1 to 4 persons-** there must be at least one bathroom with a fixed bath or shower, toilet (which may be situated in the bathroom) and a wash hand basin. Baths and wash hand basins shall be provided with appropriate splashbacks to a minimum of 300mm high.
- 5.3 **5 or more persons** - one separate toilet with wash hand basin for every five sharing occupiers; and at least one bathroom (which may contain a toilet) with a fixed bath or shower for every five sharing occupiers. Baths and wash hand basins shall be provided with appropriate splashbacks to a minimum of 300mm high.
- 5.4 All baths, showers and wash hand basins in an HMO must be equipped with taps providing an adequate and constant supply of hot and cold water. Hot water is to be provided by a means of an approved heating appliance. The use of electric hot water heaters to provide water to individual lettings is not recommended as the supply is neither instantaneous nor continuous.
- 5.5 All bathrooms in an HMO must be suitably and adequately heated and ventilated.
- 5.6 All bathrooms and toilets in an HMO must be located within the property and must be of an adequate size and layout.

- 5.7 All baths, toilets and wash hand basins in an HMO must be fit for the purpose.
- 5.8 All bathrooms and toilets in an HMO must be suitably located in or in relation to the living accommodation in the HMO.
- 5.9 Each bath shall be situated in a separate bathroom of an adequate size.
- 5.10 Each shower shall be situated in a suitable shower room.
- 5.11 Each shower shall be provided with an adequate and constant supply of hot and cold water. Hot water is to be provided by a means of an approved heating appliance.
- 5.12 Shower cubicles shall have fully tiled walls.
- 5.13 Showers to be provided with a suitable water resistant shower curtain or door to the cubicle.

## 6 Heating provision

- 6.1 All habitable rooms must be capable of being heated efficiently to 21°C when the outside temperature is -1°C, at reasonable cost and must be controllable by the tenants.
- 6.2 Adequate fixed space heating may be in the form of a central heating system provided by a SEDBUK band A or B condensing boiler, fixed gas heating appliances, fixed electric convector heaters or fixed electric storage heaters. Please note that full consideration must be given to room size, layout and furniture.
- 6.3 Fixed electric heating appliances must be connected to a fused spur for the exclusive use of the heater. All electrical works must be carried out in accordance with the current IEE Wiring Regulations.
- 6.4 All works associated with gas appliances must be carried out in accordance with the current Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1998 by a Gas Safe Registered Contractor.
- 6.5 Portable heating appliances such as fan heaters, halogen heaters, bottled gas heaters, oil radiators etc are not considered to be a suitable form of heating. Heating appliances must be wall mounted and either hard-wired or plumbed in.

## 7 Management arrangements and disrepair

### 7.1 The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006

Those managing houses in multiple occupation have certain legal responsibilities under these Regulations. Failure to meet the requirements of these Regulations is an offence and if the responsible person is found guilty at Magistrates Court he/she can be fined up to £5,000 for every breach. There must be suitable management arrangements in place to ensure that houses in multiple occupation are maintained in a safe condition. Failure to comply with the Regulations is a criminal offence.

#### 7.2 Duty of Manager to provide information to occupier

7.2.1 The Management Regulations state that it is the responsibility of the manager of the HMO to ensure that his name, address and any telephone contact number are made available to each household in the HMO and that such details are displayed in a prominent position in the HMO.

The manager must also ensure the following:

#### 7.3 Safety Measures

7.3.1 All means of escape from fire must be kept free from obstruction and maintained in good order and repair. Any fire fighting equipment and fire alarms must be maintained in good working order.

7.3.2 The manager must take all such measures as are reasonably required to protect the occupiers from injury, having regard to the design of the HMO, the structural conditions in the HMO and the number of occupiers.

#### 7.4 Water Supply and Drainage

7.4.1 All means of water supply and drainage in the house must be maintained, repaired, kept clean and be protected against frost damage. Tanks and cisterns should be clean and covered. The manager must not permit the supply of water or drainage that is used by any occupier at the HMO to be interrupted.

#### 7.5 Gas and Electrical Installations

- 7.5.1 The gas installation must be inspected annually by a Gas Safe Registered contractor.
- 7.5.2 Every fixed electrical installation must be inspected and tested at intervals not exceeding five years by a person qualified to undertake such inspection and testing. A certificate must be obtained from the person conducting the test.
- 7.5.3 The manager must supply to the local housing authority within seven days of receiving a request in writing, the latest gas or electrical test certificate in relation to the testing of any gas appliance or electrical installation at the HMO by a recognised engineer.

## **7.6 Common Parts, Fixtures, Fittings and Appliances**

- 7.6.1 All common parts of the HMO must be maintained in good and clean decorative repair, in a safe and working condition and reasonably clear from obstruction.
- 7.6.2 In particular the manager must ensure:
- All handrails and banisters are kept in good repair.
  - Such additional handrails or banisters as necessary for the safety of the occupiers of the HMO are provided
  - Any stair coverings are safely fixed and kept in good repair.
  - All windows and other means of ventilation within the common parts are kept in good repair.
  - The common parts are fitted with adequate light fittings that are available for use at all times by every occupier of the HMO.
  - Fixtures, fittings and appliances used in common by two or more households within the HMO are maintained in good and safe repair and in clean working order.
  - Outbuildings, yards and forecourts used in common by two or more households are maintained in repair, clean condition and good order.
  - Any garden is kept in a safe and tidy condition.
  - Boundary walls, fences and railings (including any basement area railings), are kept and maintained in good and safe repair so as not to constitute a danger to occupiers.
  - Any part of the HMO not in use, including any passage and staircase directly giving access to it, is kept reasonably clean and free from refuse and litter.

## **7.7 Living Accommodation**

7.7.1 Each unit of living accommodation and any furniture supplied with it must be in a clean condition at the beginning of a person's occupation of it. The manager must also ensure, in relation to each part of the HMO that is used as living accommodation, that:

- The internal structure is maintained in good repair.
- Any fixtures, fittings or appliances within the part are maintained in good repair and in clean working order.
- Every window and other means of ventilation are kept in good repair.

## **7.8 Waste Disposal Facilities**

7.8.1 Sufficient bins or other suitable receptacles must be provided that are adequate for the requirements of each household for the storage of refuse and litter.

7.8.2 Any further arrangements for the disposal of refuse and litter must be made having regard to any service for such disposal provided by the local authority.

## **7.9 Duties of Residents**

7.9.1 It is the duty of all residents of the property to ensure that the manager can effectively carry out his duties. All residents must:

- Conduct themselves in a way that will not hinder or frustrate the manager in the performance of his duties.
- Allow the manager access at all reasonable times, to any occupied room so that he/she may carry out his/her duties imposed by these Regulations.
- Provide the manager on request with any relevant information in order to allow him/her to carry out any such duty under these Regulations.
- Take reasonable care to avoid causing damage to anything which the manager is under a duty to supply, maintain or repair.
- Comply with arrangements made by the manager in respect of litter storage and disposal.
- Comply with the reasonable instructions of the manager in respect of any means of escape from fire, the prevention of fire and the use of fire equipment.

## 8 Housing Act 2004

- 8.1 Although hazards to health and safety are unavoidable those managing HMOs must attempt to minimise any hazards identified within a dwelling to an acceptable standard. Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 introduces a new system of assessing hazards which may have a detrimental impact on health, arising from a deficiency within a dwelling. The hazards are graded according to severity, the more severe hazards, which could potentially cause serious harm to tenants, are known as 'category 1 hazards'. If the council identifies such a hazard they have a duty to take enforcement action to minimise the hazard. Those hazards not deemed severe enough to be graded as 'category 1 hazards' are known as 'category 2 hazards'. The council may also take action to mitigate 'category 2 hazards', if they feel it necessary in order to protect the health of the occupants.
- 8.2 As well as being free from 'category 1 hazards', dwellings must be in a good state of repair. Roofs and external walls should be structurally sound and weatherproof. All gutters and downpipes should be in good condition. Properties should be free from damp and all windows and external doors should be in a sound condition and watertight. Internally, all ceilings, walls and floors should be in good repair and sound condition.
- 8.3 All gas installations and appliances must be tested and serviced annually by a suitably qualified Gas Safe Registered contractor and the installation must meet the requirements of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. A copy of the relevant and current gas safety certificate will be required by the council when they visit to check that the standards in this document have been complied with. A copy of the certificate must also be given to the tenants.
- 8.4 All electrical installations should be safe to use for domestic purposes. The installation should be inspected at least every five years by a competent person (NICEIC registered or equivalent), and the periodic inspection report forwarded to this department for inspection if requested.

## 9 Fire safety

- 9.1 Fire precautions must be installed in houses in multiple occupation in order to provide tenants with early warning should a fire occur so that they may be able to escape the building safely. The council have adopted the LACORS Fire Safety Guide which should be consulted before installing fire precautions. The LACORS Guidance makes recommendations which vary depending on the type of accommodation provided. For further information on any aspect of fire safety please contact the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team. The general principles are as follows:

## **9.2 The formation of a protected route**

- 9.2.1 The means of escape in the event of a fire must be protected to ensure that a fire can be contained whilst occupiers evacuate. The escape route must provide at least 30 minutes fire protection which can be achieved by fitting 30 minute fire doors to all doors exiting onto a shared means of escape, as well as to high risk rooms such as kitchens and lounges. Bathrooms do not need to be fitted with fire doors. Fire doors leading on to escape routes should be provided with intumescent strips and cold smoke brushes and should also be fitted with an approved self closing device (rising butt hinges not acceptable).
- 9.2.2 All ceilings must provide a minimum of 30 minutes fire resisting separation. Loft hatches should be constructed/upgraded to achieve this.
- 9.2.3 All walls enclosing the means of escape must provide at least 30 minutes fire-resisting separation. The following forms of construction suitably achieve this:  
Masonry blockwork 100mm thick, unplastered (load bearing)  
Masonry blockwork 75mm thick, unplastered (non load bearing)
- 9.2.4 Timber frame 75mm x 50mm minimum (non load bearing), studs at maximum 600mm centres with:  
12.5mm plasterboard unplastered, with skim finish to each side  
12.5mm fire-rated plasterboard to each side  
12mm proprietary fire resisting insulation board to each side
- 9.2.5 Polystyrene ceiling tiles must be removed from all common circulation spaces which form a means of escape as well as from rooms containing cooking facilities.
- 9.2.6 Meters situated in means of escape routes must be enclosed in a cupboard providing 30 minutes fire resisting separation.
- 9.2.7 Cupboards off the means of escape in HMOs consisting of three or more storeys (excluding basements) must either be kept locked, or alternatively be provided with an interlinked smoke detector.
- 9.2.8 There should be at least 30 minutes fire resisting separation between all risk rooms (including bedrooms, lounges and kitchen).

## **9.3 Separation between commercial units and residential premises.**

- 9.3.1 There must be a minimum of 60 minutes fire resisting separation between residential accommodation and commercial premises. Ceilings to commercial premises along with walls enclosing any entrance hallway, stairs or corridors adjoining a commercial premises should be upgraded where necessary to provide a minimum of 60 minutes fire resisting separation. The fire alarm system should be interlinked with detectors in the commercial unit (contact the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team for further information)

## **9.4 Fire Doors**

Fire doors can be vital in limiting fire spread to allow occupiers to exit a building safely in the event of a fire.

- 9.4.1 In general 30 minute fire doors should be fitted to any room containing cooking facilities (kitchens and bedsits) and in larger HMOs of three storeys or more to all rooms exiting onto a means of escape (excluding bathrooms and W.C. compartments). Fire doors separating commercial premises from a residential unit must provide 60 minutes fire-resisting separation.
- 9.4.2 It is difficult to upgrade existing fire doors as frames, hardware and ironmongery also need to be 'fire rated' so it is recommended that complete fire doorsets/assemblies are installed where a fire door is required. The doorleaf, frame, architraves, glazing system (glass, seal, bead and fixing), decorative finishes, seals, intumescents, ironmongery and door furnishings must all meet the appropriate British Standard.
- 9.4.3 All fire doors must be hung on one and a half pairs of hinges.
- 9.4.4 If fitting a fire door to existing frame any gaps between the frame and wall must be infilled with mineral wool, plaster or intumescent paste. It is recommended that advice be sought from the door manufacturer before fitting a door to an existing frame to ensure that the frame is suitable and that the door and frame can be suitably matched.
- 9.4.5 Fire doors should be supplied with or fitted with intumescent strips. In general fire doors should also be fitted with smoke seals to restrict the spread of smoke. The only instance where smoke seals will not be required is where a Grade D LD3 fire alarm system is in place.
- 9.4.6 All fire doors should be fitted with an approved self-closing device and must fit tightly into their frames, leaving no more than a 3mm gap between any side of the door and the frame.
- 9.4.7 Fire doors must be installed and maintained in accordance with BS 8214: 1990.

9.4.8 Occupiers should be able to escape in the event of a fire without having to use a key to exit through any door. If locks are fitted to individual bedrooms they must be thumb-turn locks and final exit doors must be either fitted with thumb turn locks or must be push-bar type.

## **9.5 Travel distances between lettings and point of safety**

9.5.1 Occupiers should not have to travel a great distance to reach a point of safety (outside of the building) in the event of a fire. Generally occupiers should not have to travel in excess of 9 metres from a letting to a place of safety, but this is not a rigid standard, it depends on the layout and fire precautions provided. The Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team will be able to advise further on visiting a HMO and will be able to recommend whether or not a secondary means of escape will be required.

## **9.6 Fire Risk Assessments**

9.6.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 introduced the requirement for the responsible person to undertake a fire safety risk assessment to identify what fire precautions are needed to adequately control fire risk in certain types of premises, including houses in multiple occupation.

9.6.2 Fire safety risk assessments need to take into account the common parts of a HMO as well as individual units of accommodation with the aim to identify potential fire hazards and reduce the risk of those hazards by deciding what fire precautions need to be installed.

9.6.3 The fire safety measures you may deem appropriate will include smoke alarms or automatic fire detection systems, fire doors and fire fighting equipment.

9.6.4 The risk assessment need not be undertaken by a fire safety expert, but is recommended in higher-risk HMOs (i.e. those of three or more storeys, mixed residential/commercial buildings and those with complex layouts).

9.6.5 The risk assessment process can be broken down into five steps:

- Identify the hazards
- Identify the people at risk
- Evaluate, remove or reduce risk and protect against remaining risk.
- Record, plan and inform or train.
- Review.

- 9.6.6 Fire safety risk assessments should be written down, but legally need only be if you employ five or more persons or if the premise is licensed. It is sensible to keep a written record or log to prove that you have done all you possibly can to control the risks associated with fire.
- 9.6.7 Having identified what precautions will be required to control the risk, you should implement them and also consider methods by which fire precautions are to be maintained, for example, automatic fire alarm systems should be serviced annually by a competent person. Someone must be responsible for implementing the steps identified in the risk assessment, ordinarily the manager of the HMO.
- 9.6.8 There are useful documents available to view on the Communities website, including step-by-step guidance on how to carry out your own fire safety risk assessment. Alternatively you can contact either the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team or Grater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (details provided in the ‘Useful Contacts’ section attached to this document.)

## **9.7 Fire Alarm Systems**

- 9.7.1 Fire alarm systems alert occupiers in the event of a fire, allowing them time to safely exit the building. All houses in multiple occupation should contain some form of smoke detection, but the type of fire alarm system will vary depending on the size, type of accommodation provided (bedsits, shared rooms, flats etc) and layout of the HMO. By undertaking a fire safety risk assessment you should gain an idea as to what system will be required, but recommendations for certain types of HMO are contained within this document.
- 9.7.2 Details relating to the design, installation, commissioning, maintenance and testing of fire alarm systems can be found in BS 5839: Part 6 (2004) and BS 5839: Part 1 (2002).
- 9.7.3 Ideally all houses in multiple occupation should be fitted with a fire alarm system to meet the requirements of BS 5839 Part 6.
- 9.7.4 BS 5839: Part 6 grades fire detection and fire alarm systems according to their complexity. There are six grades in total, but in HMOs Grade A and Grade D systems are the most appropriate and most commonly used.

### **9.7.5 Grade A Systems**

A Grade A system is a fire detection and alarm system that incorporates Part 1 system requirements and revisions made through clauses in the revised BS 5839: Part 6 (2004). In essence a Grade A system consists of interlinked, mains-operated smoke and/or heat detectors all linked to a control panel. The system should incorporate manual call points (to be situated next to final exit doors and on each floor in the common landing). The alarm signal must reach a minimum sound level of 65

dB (A) in all accessible parts of the building and no less than 75 dB (A) at all bed-heads when doors are shut in order to wake sleeping persons. Power supply equipment for Grade A systems shall be exclusive for the fire alarm system and comply with the requirements of BS EN 54–4. There should be a continuous supply to both the fire alarm system and emergency lighting, therefore pre-payment meters are not acceptable. This type of fire alarm system is generally recommended in large, high-risk houses in multiple occupation (e.g. large HMOs, or those where the tenants are particularly vulnerable or smoke in their rooms and HMOs above commercial units). This type of fire alarm system provides the greatest level of protection and is recommended in the larger HMOs, but may not necessarily be required.

#### **9.7.6 Grade D**

A system of one or more interlinked mains-operated heat and/or smoke alarms with an integral battery standby supply. The system can be connected to the local lighting circuit, rather than to an independent circuit at the dwelling's main distribution board. The battery standby will allow the system to operate in the event of a mains failure. Grade D systems are recommended in houses in multiple occupation of two storeys or less (or two storeys with basement).

#### **9.7.7 Mixed Grade Systems**

In certain types of HMO mixed systems are recommended. Mixed systems incorporate more than one type of alarm system for example a mixture of a Grade A and Grade D system. In buildings converted into flats for example, there could be a Grade A system for the communal areas and Grade D systems within each of the flats.

#### **9.7.8 System Coverage**

Not only are fire alarm systems graded according to complexity, they are also rated in terms of the coverage they provide (where detectors are sited within the building). The higher risk HMOs will require a greater coverage, so it is important to determine what level of coverage will be required by carrying out a risk assessment, as well as by consulting a suitably qualified engineer. The levels of coverage are specified within BS 5839: Part 6 (2004). Some levels are described briefly below:

- **LD1 coverage** – a system installed throughout the entire dwelling with detectors sited in all circulation spaces that make up the means of escape as well as in all rooms and areas where fires might start (risk rooms such as kitchens, lounges and bedrooms and areas used to store items such as basements, attics and large cupboards if located off the means of escape).
- **LD2 coverage** – smoke detectors to be sited at each level in the circulation spaces as well as detectors in risk rooms such as communal living rooms (smoke) and in kitchens (heat).

- **LD3 coverage** - Smoke detectors sited at each level in the circulation spaces that make up the means of escape only

Recommended grade for certain types of HMO:

- HMO – shared house of 2-4 storeys - Part 6 Grade D: LD3 interlinked coverage plus additional detection to the kitchen (heat detector), lounge and any cellar containing a risk.
- \*Essentially Grade D: LD3 coverage with additional detectors may be described as a Grade D: LD2 system / coverage for this type of property.
- HMO – shared house of 5+ storeys - Part 6 Grade A: LD2 interlinked coverage (detection in all risk rooms i.e. bedrooms, kitchen (heat detector) and lounge)
- Bedsit HMO of one or two storeys with individual cooking facilities within bedsits – mixed system required with Grade D: LD2 coverage in the common areas interlinked with heat detectors within the bedsits in addition a non- interlinked Grade D smoke alarm in each bedsit.
- Bedsit HMO of three or more storeys with individual cooking facilities within bedsits – mixed system required with Grade A: LD2 coverage in the common areas with interlinked heat detectors in bedsits in addition to a non-interlinked Grade D smoke alarm in each bedsit.
- Converted building of one or two storeys containing flats – Mixed system required with Grade D: LD2 coverage in common areas and an interlinked heat detector in each flat in the room/lobby opening onto the escape route in addition to a non-interlinked Grade D smoke alarm in the lobby/room opening onto the means of escape within each individual flat.
- Converted building of three or more storeys containing flats – mixed system required with Grade A: LD2 coverage in the common areas with an interlinked heat detector within the lobby/room opening into the means of escape in each flat in addition to a Grade D smoke alarm (non-interlinked) within the lobby/room opening onto the means of escape within each flat.
- Mixed residential/commercial use – if there is a commercial unit on the ground floor and a HMO above the fire alarm system should be interlinked with detectors in the commercial unit (contact the Housing Implementation – Enforcement Team for further information)

## **9.8 Emergency Lighting**

- 9.8.1 In the event of a fire occupants must be able to escape the building safely, which can be difficult if the escape route is full of smoke, people may become disorientated especially in larger buildings or in those with an awkward layout. Emergency lighting can help by illuminating escape routes.
- 9.8.2 HMOs of three or more storeys should ideally be provided, in addition to conventional lighting, with emergency escape lighting if the internal layout is complex and/or there is not sufficient natural lighting to the escape route. Emergency lighting must be designed to comply with BS 5266 and should illuminate the entire common escape route, highlight hazards such as staircases, changes in floor level or direction and illuminate fire alarm call points (where provided).

## **9.9 Fire-Fighting Equipment**

- 9.9.1 Fire fighting equipment may be provided in HMOs but it must be stressed that occupiers should be encouraged to evacuate the building rather than tackle fires. Only those who are trained to use fire fighting equipment should do so therefore it is recommended that fire fighting equipment is not provided
- 9.9.2 A wall-mounted fire blanket may be supplied in rooms containing cooking facilities. The blanket is to comply with BS 6575 and should be mounted on the wall approximately 1.5m from floor level but closer to the escape than to the cooking facilities (so it can be reached without occupant risking injury in the event of a fire).
- 9.9.3 A small multi-use extinguisher could also be provided such as a 2kg powder extinguisher. It should be wall mounted on brackets approximately 1.5m from the floor and comply with BS EN 3-7 and maintained in accordance with BS 5306-3 and be located close to the exit from each floor.
- 9.9.4 Fire fighting equipment must not obstruct common means of escape.

# **10 Building Control and Planning**

## **10.1 Planning Requirements**

Before converting a property into a house in multiple occupation you should contact the Council's Planning Department to find out whether planning permission will be required for a 'change of use'. Even if the property was used as residential accommodation previously you may still need to apply for planning permission for a conversion to a HMO, even if minimal building works will be carried out. Please note that if you fail to apply for planning permission where required the Council may take enforcement action

against you. Planning permission may also be required if building works are taking place which will alter the external appearance of the building. Contact the Planning Department for further information.

## 10.2 Building Control

Building works must be carried out in accordance to a recognised current standard. Before commencing building works advice should be sought from the Council's Building Control Service. Building Regulations applications may be made online, see the Council's website for further information.

The contact details for both Planning and Building Control are listed below.

# 11 Useful contacts and sources of further information

## Fire Safety:

LACORS Fire Safety Guide – available to download, free of charge from the LACORS website  
<http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/upload/19175.pdf>

Sleeping Accommodation Guide – available to download from the Communities website <http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/>

Fire Risk Assessments – guidance available on the Communities website <http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/>

Greater Manchester Fire Service (for fire safety advice and free home fire safety checks) - <http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/>

## Planning and Building Control:

[www.planningportal.gov.uk/](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/) also see Oldham Council's website: [www.oldham.gov.uk/](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/)

Planning and Building Control are both based at The Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UG

Building Control can be contacted on 0161 770 4122

Planning can be contacted on 0161 770 4105

**HMO Licensing:**

Information can be found on the Housing section of the Communities website [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) and on the Oldham Council website

**Relevant Legislation:**

Legislation can be viewed on the Office of Public Sector Information website <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/>

Housing Act 2004

Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order

**Other Useful information:**

Local Housing Allowance – levels of local housing allowance can be viewed on the LHA Direct website:

<https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/Secure/Default.aspx>

Tenancy Relations Advice – First Choice Homes employ a Tenancy Relations Officer Tel: 0161 770 4463

Alternatively you can seek advice on the Shelter website - <http://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Tenancy Deposit Schemes – Information available on the Directgov website <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TenancyDeposit/index.htm>