

## **Housing Health and Safety Rating System**

The Housing Act 2004 introduced a new approach in assessing housing conditions. It uses a risk assessment approach called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The aim is to provide a system, not a standard, to enable risks in dwellings to be removed or minimised.

### **What are the principles of the system?**

The HHSRS provides a method of grading the severity of threats to health and safety in any dwelling. A dwelling can include a:

- house
- self-contained flat
- non self-contained flat
- bedsit
- a room in a university hall or similar residential building;

and includes the means of access and shared or common rooms and facilities.

The key principle of the system is that a dwelling, including the structure and associated outbuildings and garden, yard and/or other amenity space, and means of access, should provide a safe and healthy environment for any occupants or visitors.

The inspection process is a risk based assessment and considers the effect of any 'hazards' in the property. Hazards are rated according to how serious they are and the effect they are having, or could have, on the occupants. This is, 'the effect of the defect'. The basic principle is that the property should be safe for occupation.

No home is "risk free" and all have potential hazards e.g.stairs, electrical outlets etc. It is not possible or desirable to remove all hazards. The emphasis is to minimise the risk to health and safety either by removing the hazard altogether or minimising the effect.

### **What are the hazards?**

The system covers 29 individual hazards.

This introduction is intended to help you understand how you can, if you want, assess your own property by considering the fifteen most likely risks in a home. It is not intended to cover all aspects of the HHSRS and if you want more detailed information you should contact us.

In assessing the hazards you will have to consider:

- The location of the defect or deficiency
- The degree or extent of the defect
- The cumulative effect of factors that affect the hazard

To try to simplify things, we have tried to break this down into simple headings and descriptions. The left hand column tells you the kind of things you should be looking at and the right hand column gives you some idea as to when you may have a serious problem in your property.

<b>Damp and Mould</b>	
Penetrating damp-leaking gutters, roof, very poor pointing Rising damp Mould growth on walls, ceilings Condensation Leaking baths, waste pipes	(Much depends on where the damp and/or mould growth is, how extensive it is and how long a person is exposed to it whilst in the house).  Mould growth, visible rising or penetrating damp in one or more rooms
<b>Cold</b>	
Loft insulation Cavity insulation – where it can be installed Single glazed windows Draughty windows and external doors Dampness – see above A good controllable whole house heating system	Cannot affordably heat the property  Heating not controllable and not to full house  Heating is not working correctly  As a rough guide it should be possible to heat the living rooms to 21°C and bedrooms to 18°C and maintain them at that temperature at an affordable cost
<b>Asbestos</b>	
Asbestos may be found in some artex, insulation, garages, soffits, fall pipes, heating installations for protection against fire etc	Damaged, flaking, disturbed asbestos  Deteriorating, unsealed asbestos
<b>Carbon Monoxide</b>	
Poorly maintained or installed gas appliances Gas Safety Certificate	Any defects to the gas installation
<b>Lead</b>	

Some old paints are lead based Lead cold water pipes	Loose and flaking lead based paints Excessive dissolved lead in drinking water
<b>Home Security</b>	
External doors and ground floor windows condition and locks fitted Overgrown hedges and gardens Security lights Lighting to front and rear yards/gardens Windows next to flat roofs	Hidden, unseen, unlit front and rear gardens/yards Doors and windows do not lock securely Doors and windows in poor condition Unprotected common entrance halls/stairways to flats
<b>Lighting</b>	
Overgrown gardens blocking natural light Basement windows Artificial lighting	Severely overgrown gardens No window well to basement windows No window to living rooms or bedrooms No artificial lighting or very badly positioned
<b>Internal finishes</b>	
Poor plasterwork Uncleanable surfaces	Collapsed and/or badly cracked ceilings Badly deteriorated wall plaster
<b>Kitchens</b>	
Sink with hot and cold water Secure and cleanable work tops Space for fridge and storing food Cooker	No hot or cold water to sink Sink and/or work surfaces are in poor condition and cannot be cleaned No fridge or space to store food Cooker is not large enough for

Space in kitchen	<p>number of people using it</p> <p>Insufficient space to prepare and cook food</p> <p>Very poor kitchen arrangements</p>
<b>Bathrooms and WCs</b>	
<p>Condition of bath, wash hand basin and toilet</p> <p>Hot and cold water supply</p> <p>Provision of wash hand basin next to toilet</p> <p>Door to give privacy</p> <p>Drainage</p>	<p>Bathroom facilities in a poor condition</p> <p>No hot or cold water</p> <p>External WC</p> <p>No wash hand basin in WC</p> <p>No shared WC's or bathrooms with commercial users</p> <p>Door to be lockable and glazing to be totally obscure</p> <p>Leaking drains</p>
<b>Falls on stairs/steps (including external steps)</b>	
<p>Tread lengths</p> <p>Riser heights</p> <p>Uniformity of treads/risers</p> <p>Friction on steps</p> <p>Handrail</p> <p>Balustrade</p> <p>Lighting to stairwell/steps</p> <p>Carpets</p>	<p>Broken/worn steps</p> <p>Variation in treads/risers</p> <p>Smooth/shiny step surfaces</p> <p>Missing/loose handrail or balustrade</p> <p>"Ranch style" balustrade</p> <p>Open balustrade (over 100mm gaps)</p> <p>Poor lighting</p> <p>Very steep pitch</p> <p>Loose or worn carpets</p>
<b>Falls from windows and balconies</b>	
<p>Window cill height</p> <p>Type of window opener</p>	<p>Cill height below 1100mm and where window is side opener/full top hung casement/tile and turn</p>

Window opener limiter Guarding to low window cills Balustrade to balconies	and no window limiter Balustrade to balcony is “ranch style” or open (over 100mm gaps) Balustrade to be sound and secure
<b>Electrical</b>	
Age of wiring Condition of wiring and fittings Number and siting of sockets Siting of meters/consumer unit/fuse box	Old and obsolete wiring Insufficient sockets Broken fittings and exposed wires Meters/consumer unit/fuse box are not boxed in and are easily accessible to children
<b>Fire</b>	
Condition of wiring Type of heating appliance Fire doors, alarms etc	Old and/or dangerous wiring Portable/unfixed appliances Means of escape does not satisfy the Fire Officer
<b>Structural Integrity</b>	
Condition of chimney, brickwork, roof and floors etc	Unstable or collapsing building elements Loose and/or insecure building components e.g. roof tiles, gutters, chimney pots

This is by no means a definitive list and if you need any help with this or any other issues regarding the condition of your property please contact us.

If the Council finds that a property is unsuitable then the options available to the Council are:

- **Hazard Awareness Notice**  
A notice advising the person on whom it is served that a hazard exists in the premises.
- **Improvement Notice**  
The Council can serve a notice on the owner of the property to carry out the necessary

repairs. The notice would specify the works required to remedy the defects and would also specify a reasonable time by which the works must be started and a reasonable period within which they are to be completed.

- **Prohibition Order**

This means the council issues an order to prevent the premises or part of the premises being lived in.

- **Demolition Order**

As the name suggests these orders are issued where demolition of the premises is the most satisfactory course of action