

Housing Health & Safety Rating System

This guide is to assist landlords who wish to risk assess their property.

The guide will be periodically updated. Landlords should ensure that they are using the current edition. All updated versions will be re-dated.

The guide adopts some of the principles of the Government's Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) that is the method used by local authorities when assessing the condition of privately rented accommodation.

There is no legal requirement for landlords to use HHSRS. Nevertheless in carrying out risk assessments as part of the process of ensuring that residential hazards are maintained as low as is practical, landlords will be acting responsibly and also will reduce the risk of enforcement action by local authorities.

However, landlords as 'responsible persons' do have a duty under the Fire Safety Order to carry out a risk assessment to determine any fire safety measures required in common parts of buildings comprising flats and in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

Landlords also have statutory repairing obligations under the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Defective Premises Act. Carrying out and documenting risk assessments, and acting on the findings, can assist landlords to satisfy their repairing obligations.

Step 1 - Awareness of hazards

Familiarise yourself with the 29 hazards that you will need to check your property for below.

Step 2 - Awareness of deficiencies that cause hazards

Familiarise yourself with the POTENTIAL deficiencies that cause hazards - click the hazards below.

LIST OF HAZARDS

HAZARD	VULNERABLE GROUP	COMMENTS
Asbestos		
Biocides		
Carbon monoxide	The Elderly	
Collision & entrapment		
Crowding & space		✓
Damp & mould growth	The Young	
Domestic hygiene		
Electrical hazards	The Young	
Entry by intruders		✓
Position & operability of amenities	The Elderly	
Excess cold	The Elderly	
Excess heat	The Elderly	
Explosions		
Falls in baths	The Elderly	
Falls between levels	The Elderly	
Falls on the level	The Elderly	
Falls on stairs	The Elderly	✓
Fire	The Elderly	✓
Food safety		
Hot surfaces	The Young	
Lead	The Young	
Lighting		✓
Noise		
Personal hygiene	The Young	
Radiation (Radon gas)	The Elderly	
Structural collapse		
Uncombusted gas fuel		
Volatile organic compounds		
Water supply		

Step 3 - Property Survey

Inspect your property to identify whether or not there are any hazards that need remedial action.

This is done by making a written note of any of the deficiencies that can cause a hazard.

Deficiencies can be defects e.g. disrepair, or shortfalls e.g. inadequate heating.

Step 4 - Assessing the risk from a hazard

Consider the likelihood of the hazard causing harm to an occupier or visitor to the property over a 12 month period, and the potential severity of that harm.

In the Description of Hazards on page 6 onwards, the matters that affect likelihood and severity are listed.

Using these lists as a scoring check sheet, score any deficiencies that you have identified using the following key:

Key	- Satisfactory	
	1 Not satisfactory	(Low priority)
	2 Defective	(Medium priority)
	3 Seriously defective	(High priority)

Landlords should also have regard to the vulnerability of their tenants, considering age, mobility, etc., in assessing the risk from hazard(s).

Take a look at the Cooke & Co leaflet entitled Risk Assessment Example.

Step 5 - Prioritising remedial works

The scores for any deficiencies will provide an indication of the priority that will need to be given to remedial works i.e. a low score would indicate low priority.

When considering what remedial works, if any, are needed to remove or reduce a hazard, take into account the relative seriousness of the deficiencies that have been scored. A hazard with an overall low score may still need priority action if some of the individual deficiencies scored are particularly hazardous.

The checklist scoring system is intended to provide a simple indication of whether remedial works to deal with a hazard should be low, medium or high priority. The system is not designed to be a scientifically accurate risk assessment process. This system does not enable a person to compare the relative scores between each hazard but merely highlights areas of most concern.

Occupancy should be taken into account when assessing priority of works. The very young and the elderly are particularly prone to some hazards - these have been highlighted on the list of hazards. Only when considering 'crowding' should primary regard to current occupation be made. The best course of action to deal with a hazard will take account of current occupancy and possible occupancy changes.

Although the private rented sector tends to cater for younger, able bodied people rather than vulnerable groups, landlords should be mindful of those hazards that put vulnerable people at higher risk and take the necessary remedial action as appropriate.

Step 6 - Deciding on remedial works

As a matter of principle hazards should be removed where practicable.

However some hazards are unavoidable. Unavoidable hazards should be reduced to as low a level of risk that is practicable and cost effective.

The cost of remedial works should be borne in mind in determining the best course of action.

Deciding on what works may be necessary to remedy some hazards may be straightforward e.g. those arising from disrepair. For example if a gas fire is unsafe it needs to be repaired/replaced. Likewise damp requires eradication. However deciding on remedial works for others will be more challenging.

To assist landlords the RLA have included some advisory suggestions within this guide for certain hazards, to ensure that they are at an acceptably low risk level, these include: excess cold, fire, crowding & space, lighting, falls on stairs.