

## The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

From April 2006, The Housing Act 2004 introduces the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

### What is the Housing Health & Safety Rating System?

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a system for assessing the health and safety risks in dwellings, and is designed as a replacement for the fitness standard.

### The Principle

The principle of HHSRS is that any dwelling (including the structure, associated out buildings, gardens, yards, amenity space and means of access) should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor.

A dwelling includes a house, a self contained flat, bedsit, a room in a hostel or similar residential building.

The assessment judges whether there is a hazard present in the dwelling, that is likely to cause harm to an occupier or visitor over a 12 month period.

The assessment is based on the most vulnerable potential occupant when deciding the best course of action. Hazards are rated according to how serious they are and the effect they are having, or could have, on the occupiers or visitors of a dwelling.

The rating system can also compare the risks associated with different types of hazards. Some are more long term and chronic in their nature, like dampness and cold, whilst others show their effects quickly, such as falls and trips. It should be borne in mind that all homes contain some inherent hazards such as stairs and electrical equipment. The aim of the rating system is to minimise the risks posed to occupiers, potential occupiers and visitors.

### The Hazards:

There are 29 hazards and these have been arranged into 4 main groups reflecting the basic health requirements:

<b><u>PHYSIOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS</u></b>	
<b><u>Hygrothermal conditions</u></b> Damp and mould growth Excess cold Excess heat	<b><u>Pollutants (non-microbial)</u></b> Asbestos and manufactured mineral fibre Biocides Carbon Monoxide and fuel combustion products Lead Radiation Uncombusted fuel gas Volatile Organic Compounds
<b><u>PSYCHOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS</u></b> <b><u>Space, Security, Light and Noise</u></b> Crowding and Space Entry by intruders Lighting Noise	<b><u>PROTECTION AGAINST INFECTION</u></b> <b><u>Hygiene, Sanitation and Water Supply</u></b> Domestic hygiene, Pests and Refuse Food safety Personal Hygiene Water supply

## **PROTECTION AGAINST ACCIDENTS**

### **Falls**

Falls associated with baths etc  
Falling on level surfaces etc  
Falling on stairs etc  
Falling between levels

### **Electric Shocks, Fires, Burns and Scalds**

Electrical hazards  
Fire  
Flames, hot surfaces etc

### **Collisions, Cuts and Strains**

Collision and entrapment  
Explosions  
Position and operability of amenities etc  
Structural collapse and falling elements

## **The Inspection and Risk Assessment**

Council Officers will use this system to assess the conditions of all houses. An officer will inspect a dwelling and note down all defects found. Once the inspection is completed the officer judges the hazards present and the likelihood of an incident causing harm to the occupiers. This results in a score representing the degree of risk of any hazard.

If the score for a hazard is in excess of 1000, this is known as a Category 1 Hazard, and there will be a legal duty on the Council to take appropriate enforcement action.

For scores less than 1000, known as a Category 2 hazards, the Council will have power to take action, but no legal duty.

### **How does the HHSRS affect me as a private landlord?**

Landlords are advised to self assess their property to determine whether there are hazards that may cause a health or safety risk to tenants. They should then carry out changes to their property to reduce this risk.

### **Enforcement Action**

The courses of action available to the Council, where they have either a duty or a power to act are as follows:

- Serve an improvement notice requiring remedial works;
- Make a prohibition order, which closes the whole or part of a dwelling or restricts the number of permitted occupants;
- Take emergency action to remove a hazard which poses an imminent risk of health or safety;
- Serve a hazard awareness notice to advise on the presence of hazard(s).

Every effort will be made to keep all those concerned with the property in question, including both landlords and tenants, informed. Their views will be taken into account before any formal enforcement decision is made.

The Act retains the powers available to authorities to act in default and prosecute lack of compliance. It also enables them to charge and recover costs of enforcement action.

### **Appeals**

An appeal against any enforcement action taken by the Council is possible and these will be made to a Residential Property Tribunal (RPT). Information on how to appeal and the grounds for appeal are provided with any formal documents served by the Council. For more information on the RPT refer to their website at [www.rpts.gov.uk](http://www.rpts.gov.uk).

For further information on the Housing Health and Rating System, please contact Strategic Housing Services on 01524 582257, or look on the following websites:

[www.lancaster.gov.uk](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk).  
[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)