

Expected standards for privately rented singly occupied dwellings

Note, this is **not** a guide for properties that are occupied as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), separate information is available from the Council regarding HMO's.

This information is provided as guidance to landlords as to the expected safe standards in privately rented houses. The information included is not definitive, nor exhaustive, and is only meant as a guide. For enforcement purposes, each house is assessed individually in accordance with the Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 in order to identify any works which may be required to provide satisfactory housing conditions. This document has been drawn from legislation, government guidance and good practice.

Structure

Buildings should be watertight, in good repair and structurally sound. The roof shall provide a waterproof covering over the entire building and be free of defective or loose material.

Gutters and drainpipes shall be in good condition, securely fixed, watertight and free flowing.

The dwelling should be free from dampness.

Stairs and steps shall be in good condition, and structurally sound. The surface should not be loose or slippery, especially when wet.

A handrail must be provided on one side where the stairs or steps are less than 1000mm in width and over two steps high.

Where the stair width is greater than 1000mm in width, or the stairs are particularly steep (more than 42°) a handrail should be provided on each side.

Stairs must be provided with adequate lighting, internally staircase lighting must be capable of being operated at the top and bottom of the staircase.

External doors should be close fitting, effectively draught and weather proofed and fitted with secure locks that are capable of securing the property against unauthorised entry.

Solid internal doors of conventional construction must be provided throughout the property (lightweight doors and doors with very thin panels should be avoided). They should be close fitting and latch securely with suitable door furniture.

The roof should be adequately insulated. For example a pitched roof should be insulated with mineral wool insulation to a depth of 270mm of loft insulation (when laid).

All water storage cisterns, tanks and pipework must also be adequately insulated.

Natural Lighting and Ventilation

Windows should be in good repair to allow easy operation of opening lights and sliding sashes, and be provided with effective draught proofing. Windows on the ground floor or first floor windows above a flat roof, should be fitted with adequate security protection that can be opened and closed by the occupant.

Every habitable room must have a window or windows opening directly to the external air with glazed area, ideally not less than one tenth of the floor area. Rooms below ground level must provide sufficient natural light on an average day for living in the lounge/bedroom without assistance of electric light.

Opening restrictors should be fitted to all windows above ground floor level that can be opened to 100mm or greater. Any restrictor should be easy to over-ride by an adult in the event of a fire.

Safety glass should be fitted;

- a) In any part of a door and/or adjacent partition that is between the floor and a height of 1500mm;
- b) In any part of a window and/or adjacent partition that is between the floor and a height of 800mm.

Kitchen and Cooking Areas

Adequate storage, preparation and cooking facilities should be provided. Generally the following minimum standard will apply:

- A sink with hot and cold water supplies with a drainer on one side and a fixed work top (minimum length 500mm) on the other with a sealed watertight joint to an impervious splash back.
- A cooker space with a gas and/or electricity supply in a suitable position at least 500mm away from a doorway or thoroughfare with an adjacent fixed worktop.
- A space for a refrigerator with an adjacent electric socket outlet.
- A space for a washing machine with an adjacent electric socket outlet and plumbing / waste connections.
- A minimum of 1 metre of suitably located fixed work surface with a smooth impervious surface and a sealed watertight joint to an impervious splash back.
- For single occupancies a minimum of 0.3m³ of properly constructed fixed floor and / or wall mounted storage cupboards with smooth impervious internal and external surfaces. A cupboard space under a sink will not count towards this requirement.
- A floor based storage cupboard of 500mm wide and standard depth and height, or a wall mounted food storage cupboard of 1000mm wide and standard depth and height.
- A minimum of 3 double electric socket outlets positioned above a fixed work surface (under counter appliances must be provided with separate sockets).

Bathrooms

Each dwelling must be provided with a Water Closet (WC) together with a bath or shower and a wash basin with adequate hot and cold water supplies. The facilities should be in good order and capable of being effectively cleaned.

Bathrooms and WC compartments must be adequately ventilated, ideally by an opening window and by mechanical ventilation with a minimum extraction rate of 15 litres per second.

Floors, floor coverings and decorations

Floors to be level and even. Aluminium joining strip (or similar) to be fixed on changes in floor finish to avoid tripping hazards.

Polystyrene tiles should be removed from all ceilings and walls.

Wall and floor coverings must be capable of being easily cleansed.

Heating and Hot Water Supplies

Dwellings should be provided with adequate thermal insulation and a suitable and effective means of space heating so that it can be efficiently maintained at a reasonable temperature.

A whole house programmable heating system with adequate controls, which is capable of heating the whole of the dwelling at a reasonable cost should be provided. All habitable rooms and bathrooms must be provided with a fixed heating appliance.

The system should be capable of achieving a temperature of 19°C in living rooms/bathrooms and 18°C in the remainder of the house with an external temperature of -1°C.

The water heating system must be capable of providing an adequate supply of hot water.

Efficient heating is defined as:

- Any programmable gas or oil central heating system;
- Electric storage heaters linked to an Economy 7 (or 10) tariff;
- Under floor heating, warm air systems;
- Programmable LPG/ solid-fuel central heating system;
- Electric storage heaters must be hard-wired into a dedicated and adequately rated fused control switch. All storage heaters shall have automatic charge control and a thermostatically controlled damper outlet;
- All habitable rooms and bathrooms and should have a heating provision capable of raising the temperature of the room to 21°C and maintaining that temperature when the outside temperature is -1°C;

- Communal areas should have a heating provision capable of raising the temperature of the areas to 18°C and maintaining that temperature when the outside temperature is -1°C;
- Portable appliances such as electric fires, convector or fan heaters, paraffin oil and LPG (bottled gas) should not be provided by the landlord. Tenants should not be put in the position to need to use a supplementary heating system in order to raise the temperature to a satisfactory level.

Electricity and Gas Installations

The electrical installation should be inspected by a competent person in accordance with BS 7671 every 5 years with a test certificate provided. It is recommended that the electrical installation is re-inspected after every change of tenancy. The installation should be maintained in good condition and any alterations to the electrical wiring should be completed in accordance with Part P of the Building Regulations.

Recommended number of electrical switched sockets	
Location	Minimum number of double sockets
Living Room	4
Dining Room	3
Kitchen	6 (of which 3 to be located above counter)
Bedroom	2

All portable electrical appliances provided by the landlord should be tested annually in accordance with the Institute of Electrical Engineers Code of Practice for In-service Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment.

A gas safety certificate must be provided in accordance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations. The certificate must be renewed annually and a copy provided for the tenant.

A Carbon Monoxide alarm must be installed in all rooms with an appliance that burns solid fuel, such as appliances that are powered using a type of fuel such as coal, wood, etc.

Fire Precautions

Each property must be individually assessed for fire safety but as a general rule the following fire safety provisions will be required as a minimum standard;

At least one smoke alarm to be installed on every storey which is used as living accommodation.

An ability to escape from the property without having to pass through another room, such as a living room, dining room and/or kitchen. In the event that this is the only means of escape at least one means of escape window on the first floor.

Walls, floors and ceilings are in good repair so as to prevent fire spreading easily to other rooms.

All furniture provided by the landlord must be kept in a good and safe condition and comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations.

Further information regarding fire safety can be found in LACORS – Housing Fire Safety, the webpage details can be found at the end of this document.

Note:

In other three storey houses, houses in multiple occupation, self-contained flats and accommodation above commercial premises it will be necessary to seek further advice on the fire safety requirements for individual properties.

Properties are different. This is a guide to what the Council would expect to see in a good house. There may be additional requirements in law that are required to be complied with that go above and beyond this guidance.

Top tips for good housing

Safe house and appliances

Provide your tenants with 'satisfactory' safety certificates for the electrics and gas.

Test your smoke alarms regularly and install carbon monoxide detectors for rooms with solid fuel appliances. Furniture and furnishings provided by you should be safe.

Get accredited

Show others how good you are! Search 'Nottingham Standard' on the internet. There are lots of benefits to being accredited including access to excellent training.

Licence your property

Does your house or flat need to be licensed? Check the internet for information about schemes in Nottingham.

Protect deposits

If you take a deposit, make sure that it's protected in a Government approved scheme and tell your tenants how and where their money is protected within 30 days. If making a deduction from a deposit, ensure that any charges accurately reflect the actual costs incurred.

Give tenants a written agreement

Provide a written tenancy agreement in simple language and make sure it's fair, so tenants are only responsible for things they should be.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

Provide an EPC to your tenants. Only properties categorised as A – E can be let from April 2018 (2020 for existing tenancies).

Give tenants an inventory

Take photos and get the tenants to sign an inventory at the start of a tenancy. This will evidence the contents and condition they rented it in.

Protect your property

A house is a significant and long-term investment. Have a plan for reducing risks to the health and safety of tenants and undertaking repairs and regular maintenance. Put money aside for this.

Insurance

Get the right insurance for rented properties (landlord insurance) and make sure you've told your mortgage company about your plans to let out your property.

Inspect your property

Regularly inspect your property to ensure the tenants are looking after it and it's not being sublet, giving a minimum of 24 hours' notice. Give your or your agents contact details to neighbours and ask them to contact you with any problems.

Deal with tenants' anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Have a plan for how you will deal with ASB from tenants, so you can show how you manage your property effectively.

Rent checks

Undertake right to rent checks on prospective tenants and provide them with the 'How to Rent' checklist.

Ending a tenancy

Ensure that you follow all correct and lawful procedures when you end a tenancy. Failure to do so may mean that you illegally evict the tenant, which is a criminal offence.

Further information

Housing 'how to' guides are available from the Gov.uk website;

www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-how-to-guides

HHSRS – Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals;

www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-health-and-safety-rating-system-guidance-for-landlords-and-property-related-professionals

LACORS – Housing Fire Safety

www.cieh.org/media/1244/guidance-on-fire-safety-provisions-for-certain-types-of-existing-housing.pdf