

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Introduction

Whenever a housing officer visits a property whether it is after receiving a complaint or during a routine housing inspection, they will look for any apparent hazards. This doesn't mean there will have to be any obvious structural problems.

The rating system is more concerned with the potential health and safety implications to both occupants and visitors. So for example, the absence of a handrail on a long flight of stairs, low level window sills on an upper floor, lack of smoke alarms or no loft insulation may result in a hazard.



The rating system is not a standard in itself so it will be hard to say if something is definitely a hazard before it is assessed. Having said that, lots of hazards can be identified through common sense, so for example if there are single glazed draughty windows in your house then it will probably mean there will be a risk of poor health to the occupants from cold and draughts.

To make an assessment using the HHSRS the Local Authority will have to thoroughly inspect a property where they will take photographs and make notes. Then to ensure fairness the paperwork side of the assessment will usually take place back at the office using the guidance available and the evidence collected from the inspection.

Once this is complete the Council will then be able to decide what action is needed including possible enforcement.

How it Works

The rating system is based mainly on two things.

The first is the likelihood that an occupant or a visitor will become injured. When this judgment is made the current occupants will not be taken into account but the group considered most at risk will and this is usually either young children or the elderly, but this depends on the hazard.

For example, if a property has outside concrete steps leading to the front door there is a likelihood that someone may fall or slip on these steps in wet or icy weather.



Now if you consider that there is no handrail and the concrete steps are worn and uneven there is an even greater likelihood that an elderly person may fall and injure themselves.



The second part of the assessment looks at how badly someone will get hurt if they have an accident.

So thinking again about the external steps leading to the front door, if the steps are higher then the injury will be worse and if the floor below is solid paving slabs then the injury will be even more severe, especially if you think that an elderly person may lay undiscovered for some time before help arrives.

The result of the assessment is determined by a complicated calculation, but basically it gives the hazard a banding from 'A – J' with 'A' being the worse and 'J' being the lowest risk.

Bands 'A – C' are classed as category 1 hazards and bands 'D' and below as category 2 hazards. It is these two categories that determine the possible requirements for enforcement.

The Hazards

There is a list of 29 hazards considered by the Rating System and only these hazards can be assessed.

Having said that, they are quite broad and most safety issues can be included in one or more of the hazards below.

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| 1. Damp and mould growth | 15. Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse |
| 2. Excess cold | 16. Food safety |
| 3. Excess heat | 17. Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage |
| 4. Asbestos (and MMF) | 18. Water supply for domestic purpose |
| 5. Biocides | 19. Falls associated with baths |
| 6. Carbon monoxide and fuel
combustion products | 20. Falling on level surfaces |
| 7. Lead | 21. Falling on Stairs etc. |
| 8. Radiation | 22. Falling between levels |
| 9. Uncombusted fuel gas | 23. Electrical hazards |
| 10. Volatile Organic Compounds | 24. Fire |
| 11. Crowding and Space | 25. Flames, hot surfaces |
| 12. Entry by intruders | 26. Collision and entrapment |
| 13. Lighting | 27. Explosions |
| 14. Noise Protection | 28. Position and operability of amenities |
| | 29. Structural collapse and failing elements |

Enforcement Options

Local Authorities have a duty to take action on Category 1 hazards and the power to take action on category 2 hazards. This will apply to all properties, regardless of whether they are owner occupied or rented.

In most cases the Council will usually contact the landlord or agent and informally request works to be done to remove or reduce the hazard. In some circumstances where a hazard has been identified as being an imminent risk of harm or requiring urgent attention then a legal notice may be served without prior notification.

In circumstances where an informal approach does not prove successful, the Council may serve a legal notice either requiring works to be done or restricting use of the property. Where the hazard is less serious then a notice simply advising the owner and occupiers of the hazard may be appropriate.

Where a legal notice is not complied with the Council then have the power to prosecute the owners of the property and carry out the works themselves and recover all costs.

Further Information

**Bath and North
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Website:

www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/Housing/default.htm

**Department of the
Communities and
Local Government
(DCLG)**

Tel: 020 7944 4400

Website: www.communities.gov.uk/hhsrs

**HHSRS Guidance
for landlords and
property related
professionals**

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/housinghealth

**HHSRS Operating
Guidance**

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/hhsrsoperatingguidance

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