

The additional licensing scheme came in on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 and so far the Council have received over 1000 additional licensing applications from the Oldfield, Westmoreland and Widcombe area.

We have found many aspects of good practice through the HMO sector and as expected, found the vast majority of landlords and agents to provide a good professional service. We have also found properties that fall below minimum standards and have started to put measures in place to ensure these homes are improved to provide safe and healthy places to live.

To keep you informed on some common issues we have come across we have produced this short update which we hope is helpful.

### When can I expect to get my Licence?

Our aim is to issue the majority of the proposed licences by Christmas 2014 with the final licences being issued in the New Year. Remember, if you have submitted a valid application then you have fulfilled your legal obligation & **you can still let your property.**

### Examples of what we have found

Our officers have completed over 1000 inspections and have identified -

- 30% of HMOs requiring significant work to bring them up to minimum management or health and safety standards.
- 80% requiring minor works

### Some common problems found:

- Inner room layouts which present a high fire risk requiring significant works
- Very small bedrooms
- Poor means of escape in terms of fire
- No mains powered smoke alarms
- Out of date fire extinguishers

### Completing works

You may have been asked to complete works following your inspection. Some of the works will form part of your licence conditions and need to be completed within a time period specified on the licence. Some works will not appear on your licence but will have been requested under other housing legislation. If you are unsure of what is required then please contact Housing Services.

### Improving energy efficiency

The B&NES Energy at Home Advice Service is now live. For free impartial advice and to find out if you qualify for any special offers call 0800 038 5680 or visit [www.energyathome.org.uk](http://www.energyathome.org.uk)

### **Selling / buying / re-mortgaging**

Licences are issued to a person(s) for a specific property and are not transferrable. If you are selling your property, please notify us once the property has been sold and we will either withdraw your application or revoke your HMO licence. If you don't tell us then we may unknowingly hold you responsible.

If you are buying an HMO then please ensure you apply for a licence as soon as you complete the purchase.

Mortgage companies often don't understand licensing and when re-mortgaging may ask you for various documentation which can't be provided. It is often best to ask them to call us direct as we cannot write to mortgage companies on your behalf.

### **Unlicensed HMOs**

We have carried out lots of work to identify unlicensed HMOs. If you are aware of any HMOs which are operating under the radar, please email us with details so we can investigate [hmo\\_licensing@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:hmo_licensing@bathnes.gov.uk)

### **Where can I find out more?**

If you have any queries please contact us:

Web: [www.bathnes.gov.uk/hmos](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/hmos)  
Email: [hmo\\_licensing@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:hmo_licensing@bathnes.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01225 396 444.

It is often better to speak to us than rely on hear-say!

**Bath & North East  
Somerset Council**

### **Give us feedback**

Tell us what you think by completing our 5 minute survey

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/hmos](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/hmos)

### **Bedrooms with internal windows**

We have come across a number of properties where bedrooms do not have external windows (e.g. a utility/living room has been built on the rear of a house over an existing window) and this leads to two main problems:

**1. Ventilation:** Lack of direct ventilation can lead to problems including heat and humidity, damp, mould and build-up of polluting gases. We may require additional passive or mechanical ventilation where this is not adequately provided.

**2. Additional fire risk:** There should usually be 30 minutes fire resistance between rooms. However, this is not the case where there is a standard window present between two rooms such as for example, a bedroom and living room. A fire starting in the living room could quickly spread to the bedroom. We may now require improvements (on a case by case basis) which could include the installation of additional fire detection or structural improvements to protect the occupants.

Up until recently we have not taken any action on these two issues, however, in consultation with Avon Fire and Rescue Service and the national fire safety guidance, as well as trying to strike a balance between ventilation and fire safety, we have decided that further works may be required to cover these two issues. Please bear this in mind when we conduct future inspections.