

EXPLANATORY NOTE HOUSING HEALTH AND SAFETY RATING SYSTEM (HHSRS)

Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS)

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is the method used by local authorities to assess housing conditions. The Housing Act 2004 Part 1 establishes the HHSRS as the current statutory assessment criterion for housing and it is based on the principle that:

- Any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor.

The system applies to all dwellings including owner occupied, privately rented and Council and Housing Association dwellings. Local authorities are required to keep housing conditions in privately owned property under review and also have a duty to inspect a property where they have reason to believe that this is appropriate to determine the presence of health and safety hazards.

The HHSRS is not a standard which the property must meet, as was the case with the previous fitness standard, but it is a system to assess the likely risk of harm that could occur from any 'deficiency' associated with a dwelling.

A deficiency is a variation from the ideal standard and may be due to an inherent design or manufacturing fault, or due to disrepair, deterioration or lack of maintenance. Unnecessary and avoidable hazards should not be present. It acknowledges, however, that some hazards may exist and provides a method of deciding whether or not the degree of risk is acceptable.

The use of a formula produces a numerical score which allows comparison of all the hazards. This score is known as the Hazard Score and irrespective of the type of hazard, the higher the score the greater the risk.

Scores are grouped in Bands from A to J according to the severity of the health risk. A hazard which has an A, B or C rating (a 'Category 1' hazard) is considered to present an unacceptable health risk and would cause the property to fall below the statutory minimum standard. Scores in Bands D to J are referred to as Category 2 hazards and are less serious.

Local authority housing or environmental health professionals undertake assessments and they must decide for each hazard what is:

- i. The likelihood, over the next twelve months, or an occurrence e.g. falling down stairs, electrocution etc. that could result in harm to a member of the vulnerable group; and
- ii The range of potential outcomes from such an occurrence e.g. death, severe injury etc.

There are 29 hazards associated with the system.

When an assessment is made, the current occupiers are ignored and the assessment is based on the likely affect of the hazard on the relevant vulnerable age group. For some hazards there is no relevant group, but for many hazards it may be either the young or the elderly.

Hazards

A hazard is any risk of harm to the health or safety of an actual or potential occupier that arises from a deficiency.

The system is concerned with disease, infirmity, physical injury, and also includes mental disorder and distress. There are 29 hazards, which need to be considered, and these have been divided into 4 groupings: Physiological, Psychological, Protection against Infection and Protection against injury/accidents.

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| <p>Physiological requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damp and mould growth • Excess cold • Excess heat • Asbestos and manufactured mineral fibre biocides • Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products • Lead • Radiation • Uncombusted fuel gas • Volatile organic compounds | <p>Protection against accidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls associated with baths • Falling on level surfaces • Falling associated with stairs and steps • Falling between levels • Electrical hazards • Fire • Flames and hot surfaces • Collision and entrapment • Explosions • Position and operability of amenities • Structural collapse and failing elements |
| <p>Psychological requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowding and space • Entry by intruders • Lighting • Noise | <p>Protection against infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse • Food safety • Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage • Water supply for domestic purpose |

Landlord responsibilities

As the HHSRS is not a standard there is no model guidance available to follow. Each property will have its own hazards depending upon its location, age, construction, design, state of repair etc., but landlords must take steps to make sure that the dwelling provides both a safe and healthy environment.

For enforcement purposes the landlord is responsible for the provision, state and proper working order of:

- The exterior and structural elements of the dwelling
 - this includes all elements essential to the dwelling including access, amenity spaces, the common parts within the landlords control, associated outbuildings, garden yard walls etc.
- The installations within and associated with the dwelling for:
 - the supply and use of water, gas and electricity
 - personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage

- food safety
- ventilation
- space heating; and
- heating water

It includes fixtures and fittings, but excludes moveable appliances unless provided by the landlord.

In multi-occupied buildings the owner, or manager is responsible for floor coverings e.g. carpets.
