

How can I make sure my rented property is safe?

A student guide

**Private Sector Housing
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www.runnymede.gov.uk 01932 838383



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The easiest way to make sure that a property you are going to be renting is safe is to pick a property on the Runnymede Accreditation Scheme. These properties have been inspected and accredited by us to ensure that they meet the minimum legal requirements.

To find a list of accredited properties please visit our website www.runnymede.gov.uk Properties are constantly being added to the list. We do not hold a public register of landlord details and should not be contacted to find accommodation.

All shared student properties with three or more students are Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). In addition to accreditation, mandatory licensing operates for Houses in Multiple Occupation which have five or more occupants and three or more storeys. A public register of licensed HMOs is held by us and can be viewed at the Civic Centre. If you believe that your property should be licensed please contact us.

Benefits of renting an accredited property

- well managed and well maintained properties.
- appropriate fire safety provisions in place.
- problems with the property can be promptly resolved.

What should I expect from the Landlord of my HMO?

- a copy of a valid gas safety check.
- a copy of a valid electrical safety certificate if the installation is over 10 years old.
- common parts of the HMO to be maintained in good repair and safe working order.
- the unit of accommodation and any supplied furniture should be in a clean condition at the beginning of the tenancy.
- every window and other means of ventilation should be in good repair.
- name, address and contact number of the Manager should be prominently displayed in the HMO.

What do I do if I have a problem with my rented accommodation?

In the first instance raise your concerns with your landlord or agent and try to get them to address them. If the landlord does not address the problems or you do not feel they have been addressed satisfactorily then contact us.

What sort of problems can we deal with?

Using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) we can deal with a whole range of hazards that might affect your health or safety. There are 29 in total which are grouped as follows:

- dampness, excess cold/heat.
- pollutants e.g. asbestos, carbon monoxide,
- lack of space, security or lighting, or excessive noise.
- poor hygiene, sanitation, water supply
- accidents – falls, electric shocks, fires, burns, scalds.
- collisions, explosions, structural collapse (all or part of the building falling down)

How does the system work?

The process happens in stages. First we will look around your home and make notes of any hazards. Each hazard will be scored according to how serious it is. Serious hazards are called category one hazards and less serious ones category two. Both categories of hazard are, by definition, worse than the average for that type of hazard. The scores for the hazards will then help us decide what needs to be done about them. What follows next will vary according to how serious any hazards are.

What happens if you find any hazards that need to be dealt with?

Following an inspection by us, we will take steps to make sure that your landlord deals as necessary with the hazards. This may be done informally, or we may serve a notice on your landlord. This could be one of four different types of notices:

1. Hazard Awareness Notice
2. Improvement Notice
3. Prohibition Order
4. Emergency notices or orders

If my landlord lives in the house, does HHSRS still apply?

Yes, the HHSRS applies to all types of “dwelling houses” regardless of who lives in them or who owns them.

What happens if my landlord fails to comply with a statutory notice?

We can either prosecute the landlord for failing to comply with a notice or alternatively carry out the work ‘in default’.

What happens if my landlord then charges me the tenant for the cost of the work?

In most cases landlords will not be entitled to charge tenants for the cost of the work but, depending on the details of your tenancy agreement, your landlord may (in a minority of cases) be able to charge for some of the work. Any work to the structure of the property will nearly always be the responsibility of the landlord.

Fire Safety

The major hazard we assess when looking at student properties is fire safety. As a minimum standard you should expect your property to have:

- automatic mains wired smoke detectors.
- a fire blanket and fire extinguisher in the kitchen.
- a fire door between the kitchen and the means of escape from the dwelling.

Please make sure that you do not keep fire doors wedged open as they are vital to stop a fire spreading through the dwelling and protect your safety.

Contact us

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