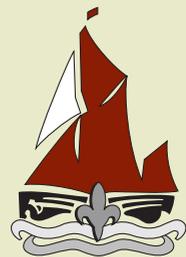


# housing health & safety rating system (HHSRS)



MALDON DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



# **What is the Housing Health & Safety Rating System?**

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk assessment tool introduced in April 2006 used to assess potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties in England and Wales.

HHSRS replaces the Housing Fitness Standard, which was set out in the Housing Act 1985 (with the exception of overcrowding, demolition or clearance).

## **Why is it needed?**

The assessment method focuses on the hazards that are most likely to be present in housing. Tackling these hazards will make more homes healthier and safer to live in.

## **Who does it affect?**

All owners and landlords, including social landlords.

The private sector contains some of the worst housing conditions and owners and landlords should be aware that any future inspections of their property will be made using HHSRS.

Private landlords and managing agents are advised to access their property to determine whether there are serious hazards that may cause a health or safety risk to tenants. They should then carry out improvements to reduce the risks.

Tenants should be aware of the new approach taken by local authorities to deal with bad housing conditions. They still have discretion over the action they take but are more likely to prioritise cases where there is some evidence of serious hazards.

## **How does it work?**

The method focuses on 29 hazards that are most likely to be present in homes.

Local authority officers will visit a property and conduct a risk assessment. This looks at the likelihood of an incident arising from

the condition of the property and the likely harmful outcome over the following 12 month period. For example, how likely is a fire to break out, what will happen if one does? The risk is also associated with a vulnerable age group regardless of the current occupants (with the exception of Crowding and Space).

The assessment will show the presence of any serious (Category 1) hazards and other less serious (Category 2) hazards.

## **How is it enforced and what are the penalties?**

If a local authority discovers Category 1 hazards in a home it has a duty to take the most appropriate action.

Local authorities are advised to try to deal with problems informally first. But if this is unsuccessful they could require a landlord to carry out improvements to the property. For example by installing central heating and insulation to deal with cold, fix a rail to steep stairs to deal with the risks of falls, or mend a leaking roof. Local authorities also have powers to prohibit the use of the whole or part of a dwelling or restrict the number of permitted occupants. Where hazards are modest they may serve a 'hazard awareness notice' to draw attention to a problem. Where an occupier is at immediate risk, the authority can take emergency remedial action.

For very serious hazards and risks to health, demolition and clearance of properties can be ordered.

A property owner who feels that an assessment is wrong can discuss matters with the inspector. The owner will also be able to challenge an enforcement decision through a Residential Property Tribunal. Failure to comply with a statutory notice could lead to a fine of up to £5,000.

## **The hazards under the HHSRS are as follows:**

### **1. Damp and mould growth**

This can be caused by dampness and high humidity and poses a threat to mental health and social wellbeing.

### **2. Excess cold**

Caused by below average indoor temperatures.

### **3. Excess heat**

Caused by excessively high indoor air temperatures.

### **4. Asbestos (and MMF)**

Caused by exposure to asbestos fibres and manufactured minerals fibres.

### **5. Biocides**

These are chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth in dwellings. Insecticides and rodenticides to control pest infestations (eg cockroaches or rats and mice), are not considered for the purposes of the HHSRS.

### **6. Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products**

Excess levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and smoke in the home.

### **7. Lead**

Threats to health from the ingestion of lead. This is mainly found in paintwork and water pipes.

### **8. Radiation**

This covers radon gas and possibly leakage from microwave ovens.

### **9. Uncombusted fuel gas**

Old and poorly maintained gas/fuel appliances can release gases and potentially cause asphyxiation.

### **10. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs)**

VOCs are a diverse group of organic chemicals which includes formaldehyde, that are gaseous at room temperature, and are found in a wide variety of materials in the home.

### **11. Crowding and space**

Health hazards linked to a lack of living space for sleeping and normal family/household life.

### **12. Entry by Intruders**

Problems keeping a dwelling secure against unauthorised entry.

### **13. Lighting**

Threats to physical and mental health linked to inadequate natural and/or artificial light and the lack of a window with a view.

### **14. Noise**

Threats to physical and mental health caused by noise exposure inside the home.

### **15. Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse**

Health hazards due to poor design, layout and construction to the point where the dwelling cannot be readily kept clean and hygienic. This also includes inadequate protection against pests and suitable storage for household waste.

### **16. Food safety**

Threats of infection due to inadequate facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food.

### **17. Personal hygiene sanitation and drainage**

Threats of infection and threats to mental health associated with personal hygiene, including personal washing and clothes washing facilities, sanitation and drainage.

### **18. Water supply**

The quality and adequacy of the water supply for drinking and for domestic purposes such as cooking, washing, cleaning and sanitation.

### **19. Falls associated with baths etc**

Falls associated with a bath, shower or similar facility.

### **20. Falling on level surfaces etc**

Falls on any level surface such as floors, yards and paths. It also includes falls associated with steps, thresholds, or ramps, where the change in level is less than 300mm.

### **21. Falling on stairs etc**

Falls associated with stairs, steps and ramps where the change in level is greater than 300mm. It includes falls on internal and external stairs or ramps within the home.

### **22. Falling between levels**

Falls from one level to another, inside or outside a home, where the difference in levels is more than 320mm. For example, falls out of windows, falls from balconies or landings, falls from accessible walls, and over garden retaining walls.

### **23. Electrical hazards**

Hazards from electric shock and electricity burns.

### **24. Fire**

Threats from uncontrolled fire and associated smoke.

### **25. Flames, hot surfaces etc**

Burns or injuries caused by contact with a hot flame, fire, hot surfaces and scalding.

### **26. Collision and entrapment**

This category includes risk of physical injury from trapping body parts in architectural features, such as trapping limbs or fingers in doors or windows.

### **27. Explosions**

Threat from the blast of an explosion, from debris generated by the blast and from the partial or total collapse of a building as the result of an explosion.

### **28. Position and operability of amenities etc**

This category covers threats of injury associated with the location of fittings and equipment and the design and layout of the home, eg awkward positioning of windows or low headroom.

### **29. Structural collapse and falling element**

The threat of the home or any part of it collapsing due to poor structure, disrepair or as a result of adverse weather conditions.

## **Self-inspection Process**

The following brief guide illustrates the process of inspection which should be followed by landlords to minimise the possibility of action as detailed above being implemented.

1. Inspect property room by room and common areas checking elements, fixtures and fittings. Record deficiencies etc, that may give rise to hazard.
2. Do these deficiencies contribute to any of the 29 hazards under the HHSRS and do they increase the likelihood of an occurrence or the severity of harm?
3. Identify and undertake necessary work to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.
4. Keep records of survey dates etc together with details of hazards identified and remedial works undertaken.
5. Review action to ensure that all identified hazards have been reduced or removed.
6. Re-inspect property eg when there is a change of occupant, etc.



For further information or advice please contact:  
Environment Services at Maldon District Council

Email: [customer.services@maldon.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@maldon.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.maldon.gov.uk](http://www.maldon.gov.uk)  
Write: Princes Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 5DL  
Tel: 01621 854477

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