

Standards in HMO's

Exeter City Council set out our standards for cooking, washing and toilet facilities in the types of HMO commonly occurring in Exeter. It also covers room sizes required in these HMOs.

Some less-common HMO types, for example Bed and Breakfast establishments for homeless people, are not covered. If you want information about the standards applying to those and any other HMOs not dealt with here, please contact us.

Many HMOs in Exeter are 'Shared- house' HMOs. A 'Shared - house' HMO is one where, although they are unrelated to one another, the occupiers live in a similar way to a family. Typically:

- the house has been rented by an identifiable group of sharers such as students or work colleagues;
- each occupant has his or her own bedroom but they share the other facilities of the house;
- all occupiers have exclusive legal possession and control of all parts of the house including all bedrooms;
- there is usually a significant level of social interaction;
- they have rented the house as one group;
- there is a single joint tenancy agreement

We have adjusted our standards as they apply to 'Shared-house' HMOs to make them more suited to the type of living pattern occurring in these properties. Look out for the references to 'Shared-house' HMOs as you read the standards.

Amenities in HMOs

Kitchen facilities

Each letting in an HMO should normally be provided with its own kitchen facilities.

Those facilities must consist of the following:

- A 4-ring cooker complete with oven and grill (in a single-person letting a 2-ring cooker complete with oven and grill will be accepted)
- A sink and draining board complete with constant supply of hot and cold running water
- A minimum of 1 metre of worktop (600 mm deep)
- 2 double 13-amp electric sockets over the worktop
- A refrigerator or refrigerators suitable for the number of people using the facilities
- Sufficient and suitable food storage cupboards
- Adequate refuse disposable facilities
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Kitchen facilities must not be located within a fire escape route (for example on a landing or in an under stairs cupboard) and must be separated from an escape route by a proper fire door.

Kitchens must be laid out so as to be safe and convenient in use. In particular, the sink and cooker must be so arranged that there is no risk of burns, scalds, electrocution or collision.

All rooms containing kitchen facilities must have adequate natural and/or artificial ventilation and artificial lighting.

Floors, walls and ceilings in kitchens must be capable of being easily cleaned and there must be at least 2 courses of tiles over sinks and worktops to act as a splashback.

Shared-house' HMOs, and HMOs where it is not practicable to provide facilities in each letting

- A complete set of facilities for each 5 (or part of 5) must be provided.

However:

In 'Shared-house' HMOs with up to 7 occupiers we can accept the following as an alternative to the second set of facilities:

- A suitably located and plumbed dishwasher;
- A combination-type microwave oven
- An extra 0.5 metre length of worktop
- An additional 13 amp electric socket

A shared kitchen must be at least 5.5 square metres in floor area. Where 2 sets of facilities are provided the room must be at least 11 square metres in area.

No more than 2 sets of facilities can be provided in any one kitchen.

Personal washing and toilet facilities

These standards apply to licensable and non-licensable HMOs alike

For each 5 occupants or part of 5 there must be:

- A fixed bath or shower with constant supplies of hot and cold running water
- A wash hand basin with constant supply of hot and cold running water
- An internal WC
- Where practicable the WC should be in a compartment separate from the bathroom/shower room. Where there are more than 5 occupants and 2 or more baths/showers, basins and WCs are required, at least one WC should be in a separate compartment.
- Any separate WC must contain a wash hand basin with supply of hot and cold running water. Where such a basin cannot be fitted because of inadequate space a basin must be provided in each bedroom.
- A bath with a shower fitment over it counts as a single bath/shower.
- Baths and showers must be provided with proper tiled surrounds to enable proper cleansing. There must be at least 2 courses of ceramic tiles over wash hand basins to act as splashbacks.
- All fittings must be provided with proper soil/waste drainage and be properly plumbed-in.
- Compartments containing baths, showers and WCs must be provided with adequate natural and/or artificial ventilation.

Minimum room sizes in HMO's

1. 'Shared-house' HMOs

a) Where a communal living room is provided:

- Single-person bedrooms: 6.5 square metres
- Two-person bedrooms: 11.0 square metres

b) Where there is no communal living room:

- Single-person bedrooms: 10.0 square metres
- Two-person bedrooms: 14.5 square metres

In each case, shared kitchens must meet these minimum size requirements:

- Use by 1-5 persons: 5.5 square metres
- Use by 6-10 persons: 11.0 square metres

Where communal living rooms are provided in 'Shared house' HMOs and they meet the following minimum floor areas we accept the smaller bedroom sizes shown in (i) above:

- Use by 1-5 persons: 12.0 square metres
- Use by 6-10 persons: 16.5 square metres
- Use by 11-15 persons: 21.5 square metres

2. Bedsits with kitchens in the rooms

(A bedsit is a single room letting used as a living and sleeping room)

- Single person bedsit: 13.0 square metres
- Two-person bedsit: 20.5 square metres

3. Bedsits with separate kitchens (shared or otherwise)

- Single person bedsit: 9.5 square metres
- Two-person bedsit: 17.0 square metres

Shared kitchens must meet these minimum size requirements:

- Use by 1-5 persons: 5.5 square metres
- Use by 6-10 persons: 11.0 square metres

Self contained flats

Bedrooms

- Single person bedrooms: 6.5m²
- Two person bedrooms: 10m²

Combined bedroom and living room

- 1 Person: 9.5m²
- 2 person: 17m²
- Combined bedroom, living room and kitchen
- 1 person: 13m²
- 2 person: 20.5m²

Kitchen

- 1 - 5 persons: 5.5m²
- 6 - 10 persons: 11m²

Heating

Fixed heating is to be provided to every room in a dwelling

Heating should be controllable by the occupiers and safely and properly installed and maintained.

It should be appropriate to the design and layout and construction, such that the whole of the dwelling can be adequately and efficiently heated.

The system shall be capable of maintaining the following internal temperatures when the external temperature is -1°C :

- Living room 21°C
- Elsewhere 18°C

If a dwelling is situated on the mains gas network, then a central heating system is the ideal type of heating to be provided.

- Radiators should be sited as to ensure even distribution of heat whilst minimising heat loss through walls and windows.
- The following controls should be provided to a central heating system:
- A suitably positioned room thermostat.
- A programmer.
- Thermostatic Radiator Valves on all radiators except on the one in the room containing the room thermostat (usually the hallway).

A fixed electrical system which is capable of efficiently heating all parts of the premises will be appropriate, as an alternative to a full gas heating system; subject to the following criteria:

- The living room shall be provided with a fan assisted combination storage heater with thermostatically controlled top up convector heater.
- The main bedroom, hallway and any other bedroom with a design heat- loss of 600w or over shall be provided with storage heaters.
- Small bedrooms where storage heating is deemed inappropriate shall be provided with wall mounted electric panel heaters with timers and electronic thermostats.
- The heating shall be fixed and ideally installed on individual circuits and not merely plugged into the nearest socket.
- Bathrooms where practicable shall be provided with storage heaters or otherwise with on peak down flow heaters.
- All storage heaters shall have automatic charge control and a thermostatically controlled damper outlet.

It should be noted that an electric heating system should only be considered an appropriate heating provision where the premises are well insulated and have a low heat demand due to size and location or it is not practicable to install a cheaper fuel or the existing electrical storage heating can be improved to a reasonable standard.