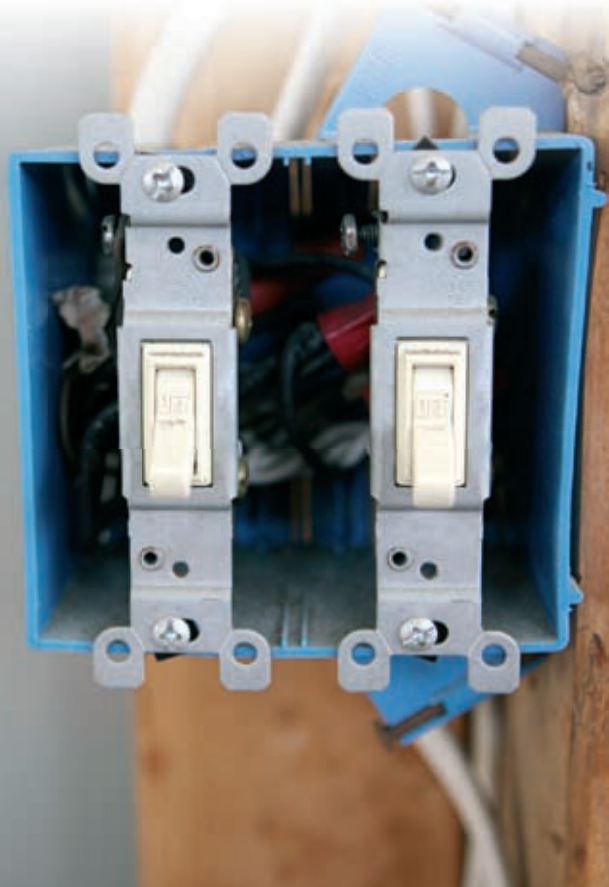


The Housing Health and Safety Rating System



The Housing Health and Safety Rating System

Our Environmental Health Department may be able to help tenants experiencing problems with private rented accommodation that is affecting their health and safety.

What should you do if you have a problem?

If you have a problem in your home such as disrepair to the building, or worries about fire, gas or electrical safety you should first alert your landlord, preferably in writing, to give them the opportunity to put matters right (your tenancy agreement might also require you to do this). It is a good idea to keep a copy of any letters you send so that you can refer to them later if necessary.

If the problem is still not sorted out you can contact the Environmental Health Department (see contact details below).

How is health and safety assessed?

Officers use a risk assessment tool called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess the potential risks in your home. They will assess how likely it is that an incident will occur, and the severity of the harm that might be caused.

Why is it needed?

This 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?

It affects all owners and landlords, including social landlords. Any future inspections of their property by Environmental Health Officers will be made using the HHSRS.

Private landlords and managing agents are advised to assess 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. To be decent, homes should be free of category one hazards (see below). Landlords should incorporate the HHSRS into their next planned stock condition survey and deal with category one hazards during planned refurbishment.

How does it work?

A risk assessment looks at the likelihood of an incident arising from the condition of the property and the likely harmful outcome. For example, how likely is a fire to break out, what will happen if one does?

This assessment gives a score, which, if over 1000, means the hazard is serious (category one) or, if less than 1000, less serious (category two). For example, if a staircase is very steep, in disrepair – perhaps with some broken steps and loose or frayed carpet, with no handrails, and perhaps the hallway light does not work. The likelihood of someone falling and injuring themselves on these stairs would be much higher than in an average house of a similar type. If there are sharp objects such as a radiator or a glass door at the foot of the stairs, any fall could result in even more severe injury. This could well result in a high hazard rating score.

If the staircase is very steep, but in reasonably good repair, with only one handrail, a fall might be less likely, but still slightly higher than average and an assessment might identify this as a category two hazard.

What are the most common category one hazards?

The most common category one hazards are cold, fire, falls, and hot surfaces that could lead to burns or scalds. For example, fires, heaters, cookers and hot taps.

What action will be taken by the Council?

The council may not always take action following a hazard assessment, but we have a duty to act when category one hazards are identified. When the less serious, category two hazards are identified we do not have a duty to act, but we do have the powers to do so.

We will only take action on category two hazards in exceptional circumstances.

If enforcement action is found to be necessary by the council there are several options available, such as serving a notice requiring repairs to be carried out, prohibiting use of the property or limiting the number of occupants, or serving a notice to advise of the presence of the hazard. Emergency action will be taken where there is imminent risk to the occupiers. A charge may be made for this enforcement action.

More information

The Department for Communities and Local Government has issued guidance on HHSRS for landlords and other property related professionals.

This can be viewed at www.communities.gov.uk

Alternatively you can contact the Private Sector Housing Team
Environmental Health Section London Borough Of Barnet, Building 4

North London Business Park

Oakleigh Road South

London N11 1NP

020 8359 7995 email hmos@barnet.gov.uk