



Worried about whether your home is safe and healthy?

A guide to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

www.rbkc.gov.uk



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

This leaflet is about the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). It tells you what the system is and how the Council uses it.

What is HHSRS?

HHSRS was introduced as part of the Housing Act 2004. It looks not only at the poor state of a property, but the health effects of this for both occupiers and visitors.

How does HHSRS work?

If you are worried about the condition of your home and privately rent it, you can ask the Council to carry out an HHSRS inspection. If you live in housing that is managed by the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) you should contact the TMO directly.

You can also ask us to inspect a neighbouring property if you think it is affecting where you live.

We will inspect your home and then give either you or your landlord advice about how to make it safer and healthy to live in. If your landlord does not make improvements, we can take enforcement action against them.

What does an HHSRS inspection cover?

The HHSRS assesses 29 hazards and the effects that each may have on the health and safety of occupants. They are split into four sections:

1. Physiological

- **Damp and mould growth**
- **Excess cold** – Risk to health from low temperatures.
- **Excess heat** – Risk to health from high temperatures.
- **Asbestos (and man-made fibres)** – Exposure to asbestos and man-made fibres, such as those found in wall and loft insulation.
- **Biocides** – Exposure to chemicals used to treat mould and timber in dwellings.
- **Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products** – High levels of nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and smoke in the home from heating and cooking appliances.
- **Lead** – Ingestion of lead (for example from old paint work or water pipes).
- **Radiation** – Threats to health from radon gas (unheard of in Kensington and Chelsea).
- **Uncombusted fuel gas** – Asphyxiation due to fuel gas escaping into the dwelling.
- **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)** – Chemicals which include formaldehyde and are found in a variety of materials within the home.

2. Psychological

- **Crowding and space** – Lack of living and sleeping space for the size of the household.
- **Entry by intruders** – Difficulties in keeping a property secure against unauthorised entry.
- **Lighting** – Inadequate natural/artificial light.
- **Noise** – Exposure to noise inside the dwelling.

3. Protection against infection

- **Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse** – Poor design, layout and construction that cannot be easily cleaned; access into the dwelling for pests such as rats and mice; inadequate provision for the storage of household waste.
- **Food safety** – Poor provision and facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food.
- **Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage** – Access (or lack of access) to facilities for personal washing and washing of clothes, sanitation and drainage.
- **Water supply** – The quality and adequacy of the water supply for drinking and domestic use.

4. Protection against accidents

- **Falls associated with baths** – Includes difficulty getting in or out of a bath or shower.
- **Falling on level surfaces** – Falls on floors or paths including trip steps, threshold strips, or ramps.
- **Falls on stairs** – Associated with steps where the change in level is above 300mm.
- **Falls between levels** – Inside or outside a dwelling (for example, falls from balconies).
- **Electrical hazards** – Shock and burns from exposure to electricity.
- **Fire** – Exposure to uncontrolled fires and smoke.
- **Flames, hot surfaces** – Injuries caused by a hot flame, hot objects or liquids.
- **Collision and entrapment** – Trapping of body parts in architectural features such as windows and doors, and colliding with features such as low ceilings.
- **Explosions** – Blast or an explosion, debris and the collapse of a property.

- **Position and operability of amenities** – Physical strain associated with functional space and other features (for example, where the layout of a dwelling puts residents at risk of strain).
- **Structural collapse and falling elements** – Whole building or part of a building being displaced and falling due to disrepair.

This list is not exhaustive and does not cover all hazards or risks within the home.

How are hazards assessed?

When we assess hazards, the enforcement officer looks at the property and assesses risk based on an age group that is most likely to be affected. For example, even if a young and fit person is currently living in the dwelling, we would consider a trip hazard dangerous if it could be a risk for someone who is older and less steady on their feet.

However, we cannot take individual medical conditions into account.

All properties contain a degree of hazard, so it may not be possible to completely remove the risk of harm. Some hazards are more likely to occur than others, for example, falling on the stairs is more common than exposure to asbestos. In the same way, the health risks are different for each hazard, with some having a greater impact on health than others.

Once an officer has looked at the risks, the hazard will be given a score; the higher the score, the greater the risk of harm. The score will be referred to as either a Category 1 or Category 2 hazard. Category 1 is the most serious. If the Council discovers a Category 1 hazard in a home, it has a duty to take appropriate action. The Council may still take action if a Category 2 hazard is discovered.

How is HHSRS enforced?

We will normally try to deal with problems informally, by firstly providing advice about how to solve the problem. If this is unsuccessful or the

situation is very serious, we can take enforcement action to require a landlord to carry out improvements. This could be, for example, installing central heating or insulation to deal with excess cold.

Failure to comply with a statutory notice could lead to a fine up to a maximum of £5,000. We also have the power to prohibit the use of the whole or part of a dwelling, or restrict the number of permitted occupants.

If an occupier is at immediate risk, we can take emergency remedial action.

What can I do if I don't agree with the results of an assessment?

If you feel that an assessment is wrong, you can discuss it with the officer. Enforcement action can also be challenged by an appeal to a Residential Property Tribunal.

For more information on the HHSRS visit the following websites:

For landlords and tenants: www.direct.gov.uk

For landlords: www.londonlandlords.org.uk

For leaseholders: www.lease-advice.org

Who to contact for more information

If you have any queries regarding your home, please contact the Private Sector Housing Team:

Private Sector Housing Team
Environmental Health
Council Offices
37 Pembroke Road
London W8 6PW

Tel: **020 7361 3002**

Email: eh.housing@rbkc.gov.uk

Website: www.rbkc.gov.uk

If you find it difficult to manage at home, the Council may also be able to help you by providing specialist equipment such as grab rails or stair lifts. Please call our Social Servicesline on **020 7361 3013**, or email socialservices@rbkc.gov.uk for more information.

English

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance please use the contact details below.

Arabic

يمكن توفير المعلومات التي وردت في هذا المستند بصيغ بديلة ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت في حاجة إلى مزيد من المساعدة، الرجاء استخدام بيانات الاتصال الواردة أدناه.

Farsi

اطلاعات حاوی در این مدارک به صورتهای دیگر و به زبانهای مختلف در دسترس می باشد. در صورت نیاز به کمک بیشتر لطفا از جزئیات تماس ذکر شده در ذیل استفاده کنید.

French

Les informations présentées dans ce document peuvent vous être fournies dans d'autres formats et d'autres langues. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide complémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

Portuguese

A informação presente neste documento pode ser disponibilizada em formatos alternativos e em línguas diferentes. Se desejar mais assistência, use por favor os contactos fornecidos abaixo.

Somali

Macluumaadka dokumentigan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luuqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawinaad intaas dhaafsiisan fadlan isticmaal xiriirka faahfaahinta hoose.

Spanish

La información en este documento puede facilitarse en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda por favor utilice la siguiente información de contacto.

Environmental Healthline

Tel: **020 7361 3002**

Email: **environmentalhealth@rbkc.gov.uk**