

Advice for **TENANTS** of Houses in Multiple Occupation

Residential Team

Housing Operations
Civic Centre
44 York Street
Twickenham
TW1 3BZ



HOUSING



Awarded for excellence



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The Residential Team aims:

- to maintain and improve the condition of dwellings in the private sector as part of a national and borough resource, and
- to maintain and improve the health of people living in the private sector and ensure that their homes are safe and meet legislative standards.

This advice is written for tenants who live in houses in multiple occupation. A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is any house or flat which is occupied by more than one household who share (or do not have) kitchen, bathroom or toilet facilities. If these facilities are for exclusive use but are not self-contained within the living accommodation, the property will still count as an HMO.

HMOs include bedsits, some shared houses, hostels and houses converted into flats. A household means members of the same family and includes co-habiting couples.

Self-contained flats in converted buildings may also be HMOs if they were converted before 1991 and at least one third of the flats are occupied under short tenancies.

With respect to HMOs, the aim of the department is to ensure that all HMOs are safe to live in. This means that HMOs must be kept clean and in good repair, well maintained with adequate amenities (kitchens, toilets, washing facilities etc.) and proper fire precautions.

To help meet this aim, the team will:

- provide guidance and general advice to landlords and tenants on disrepair issues
- advise where HMO licences are required and deal with licence applications
- carry out regular inspections of HMOs
- respond to complaints
- enforce housing standards
- administer the grant service to landlords.

The Team can be contacted by ringing 020 8487 5123 or writing to the Residential Team, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ, or by emailing residentialeh@richmond.gov.uk

Other council officers can offer help and advice. Their telephone numbers are given below

Contact Centre	08456 122 660
Housing advice (tenant/landlord relations)	020 8891 7409
Neighbour nuisance	020 8891 7737

Other useful numbers are:

Emergency Gas Number	0800 111 999
Fire Officer	020 7587 2948
Pest Control	020 8891 7800

GENERAL STANDARDS

How can we help YOU the tenant?

All Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) must comply with basic standards. These standards are required by law. They cover the areas listed below:

- HMO licence - 3 storeys and above
- essential repairs
- fire precautions
- washing, kitchen and bathroom facilities
- gas appliances
- general management, e.g. cleaning common areas

The Residential Team

The Residential Team (of the Council's Adult and Community Services Department) is responsible for maintaining the standards, and more detailed information about what you can expect in each of these areas is given in these sheets.

If you are worried about your home with regard to any of the matters listed above, please contact the Residential Team on 020 8487 5123 or email at residentialeh@richmond.gov.uk for advice and help. Alternatively, you can write to the Residential Team, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ.

The officer may visit your property and may then serve a Notice requiring your landlord to put things right. Officers are required to inform your landlord of the date and time of their visit to your home. If your landlord does not carry out the work within the specified time the Council will appoint a contractor to do the work and may also prosecute the landlord.

If you have any other concerns regarding your property, tell the officer handling your case, and he/she will put you in touch with the best person to help you.

ESSENTIAL REPAIRS

Have you any problems with?

- damp
- electrical wiring e.g. old sockets, bare wires
- fires, sparking sockets or flickering lights
- a leaking roof
- rotten windows or windows that can't be opened
- poor natural light and/or ventilation
- heating – there should be a radiator, fixed gas heater or fixed electric heater

If your landlord will not carry out repairs to your home please contact the Residential Team on 020 8487 5123 or 020 8891 7893/4/6, for further information.

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

Does your home have these fire precautions?

All HMOs must have adequate means of escape for all occupants.

They are required to have

- smoke/heat detectors to detect the presence of a fire, and
- self closing fire doors to prevent spread of fire

Some houses, especially houses with three storeys or more, may additionally require

- an HMO licence
- emergency lighting so that the escape route can be seen
- an electrically operated automatic fire detection system
- fire fighting equipment to extinguish small fires
- fire blankets in each kitchen area

NB. A battery-operated smoke/heat detector is not acceptable. *If you are a worried about fire protection in your home, ring the Residential Team on 020 8487 5123, for further information.*

HMO LICENSING

Does the property need a licence?

The owners of certain types of HMOs need to apply to the Council to have their property licensed. The Council must maintain a register of licensed HMOs for the public to view.

The legislation about licensing, including detailed definitions, is in the new Housing Act 2004 which can be found at:

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040034.htm>

The council's licensing HMO Policy is at:

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/houses_in_multiple_occupation_licensing_policy

An HMO must have a licence if all three of the following apply

- it is three or more storeys high (including basements and attics)
- it has five or more people in more than one household, and
- the occupants share amenities such as bathrooms, toilets or cooking facilities.

KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

The following exemptions apply:

- if the whole property is in self-contained flats
- if the basement is in commercial use and there are only two residential storeys above

Do they meet the standards listed below?

In a bed-sit

You must have a wash hand basin with hot and cold water. The cold water must be suitable for drinking.

If you cook in your room then a sink with drainer should be provided instead of a wash hand basin (both are not needed). It must have hot and cold water. Again, the cold water must be suitable for drinking.

Communal kitchens

If you share a kitchen then it must not be shared by more than 5 people, irrespective of age. It must be not more than one floor away from your room.

The kitchen or cooking area in your room

This must have:

- a cooking appliance with an oven, grill and two or more burners
- a fridge
- storage cupboards
- work surface
- at least two double electric sockets, one of which should be at worktop level.

Communal toilet and bathroom

If you share a bathroom or toilet then it must not be shared by more than 5 people, irrespective of age. It must not be more than one floor away from your room.

The bathroom must have:

- a wash hand basin with hot and cold water
- a bath or shower with hot and cold water
- a toilet

If the toilet is in a separate room then it should, where possible, have its own wash hand basin.

GAS APPLIANCES

Are your gas appliances safe?

Your landlord must have your gas appliances checked for safety at least once a year. You can ask your landlord for a copy of the certificate of safety, which must be from a registered fitter on the gas safe register.

Danger Signs:

- is there soot/staining on your gas fire or water heater?
- is your gas fire loose?
- is there an old fashioned gas water heater?
- is there a back plate behind your gas fire?
- does the appliance have a yellow/orange flame?
- unexplained illness including headaches, sickness, diarrhoea, dizziness
- can you smell fumes?

If you are worried about an appliance, stop using it and ask your landlord to have it checked and repaired or serviced as required.

If your landlord refuses your request then please contact the Residential Team on 020 8487 5123. We may be able to help you.

If you smell gas from any appliance then contact the gas emergency number 0800 111 999.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

Does your landlord properly manage your home?

Management Regulations are a national standard which set out the way a landlord must maintain the communal areas of your home. The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 2006 <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2006/20060372.htm> sets out certain requirements for landlords. Every landlord must ensure that the property is properly managed by fulfilling their duties to

- provide information to occupier (landlord's name, address and telephone number)
- take safety measures
- maintain water supply and drainage
- supply and maintain gas and electricity
- maintain common parts, fixtures, fittings and appliances
- maintain living accommodation (in good repair)
- provide waste disposal facilities

There are also duties on the occupiers of HMOs (See page 7).

SERVING A NOTICE

What happens if I ring or email the Residential Team about my home?

Your home will be visited by an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) who will carry out an inspection under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. The inspection is designed to identify repair problems that may affect the health, safety and welfare of the occupant/s. It involves looking at the repair problems, the bathroom/s, kitchen/s and fire precautions in the building.

What happens if work needs to be done?

Your landlord will receive a legal Notice requiring him/her to carry out all the listed essential repairs. A start date and a completion date for the work will be on the front of the Notice. You will be provided with a copy of the Notice.

What can I do if the landlord does not begin the work on time?

Ring the EHO handling your case. He/she may explain that

- the landlord has taken the matter to the Residential Property Tribunal to appeal against the Notice
- the landlord has applied to the Residential Team for a grant to help pay for the work, and is waiting for this to be fully processed, or
- the landlord has refused to do the work.

If the landlord has appealed, then the Notice will have to be suspended until either the Residential Property Tribunal makes a decision, or the landlord withdraws his appeal. This may take some time.

If the landlord has refused to do the work, then the Council will ask independent contractors to estimate for the work and will ensure that the work is done. This will take about 3 months to begin.

Throughout the project, the EHO is there to offer support and to ensure that you are not unreasonably disturbed by the work.

TENANTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

As a tenant you must ensure that

- you co-operate with the landlord to keep the house clean and safe
- the owner is allowed to access your accommodation at reasonable times to carry out repairs
- you must try not to damage any furniture fixtures or fittings
- comply with reasonable instructions in respect of fire protection.

You must not

- prop open fire doors
- block hall and stairways with furniture, bikes, rubbish etc,
- damage fire equipment, smoke detectors etc. or remove light bulbs.

Further Help and Advice

Would you like help and advice on any of the following?

- Neighbour noise - 8891 7737
- Food safety - 8891 7994
- Damp, mould and condensation - 8487 5123
- Pests such as mice and rats -8891 7800
- Consumer advice - 0845 040506

The Council's Housing Options Team can also offer help and advice in a variety of areas. Such as, if you have any concerns regarding your tenancy agreement, are suffering from harassment, fear of harassment or are worried about being made homeless. You can contact Housing Options on 020 8891 7409.

There is also a wide range of voluntary groups and charities in the borough which offer advice and support. Information about them can be obtained from Richmond Council for Voluntary Service at: www.richmondcv.org.uk

or at, 1 Princes Street, The Square, Richmond, TW9 1ED,
Tel 020 8255 8500.

Information about local doctors, health centres and dentists can be obtained from: www.pcass.nhs.uk/contact.htm

or at, The Primary Care Agency, 187 Ewell Road, Surbiton, KT6 6AU,
Tel 020 8335 1400.

Grants for Tenants

As a tenant you may be entitled to apply to us for a grant for energy efficiency work to the property. Please telephone the Energy line: 0800 512012.