

What is the Decent Homes Standard?

A decent home is one which is wind and weathertight, warm and has reasonably modern facilities (bathrooms and kitchens). The Government believes that everyone should have the opportunity to live in a decent home and has set targets for increasing the number of vulnerable households living in decent homes.

A decent home meets the following criteria:

- It meets the current minimum standard for housing. Dwellings which fail to meet this are those containing one or more category 1 hazards under the HHSRS.
- It is in a reasonable state of repair
- It has reasonably modern facilities and services
- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

The decent homes standard is not an enforcement standard and local authorities do not have powers to require owners to comply. However, the council will have regard to this standard when giving advice to property owners.

Further information

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Housing Standards Team

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E-mail: housingstandards@midsussex.gov.uk

Or see the Housing Standards section on the councils website, www.midsussex.gov.uk

A useful booklet, "Housing Health and Safety Rating System - Guidance for Landlords and Property related Professionals" is available on the governments website, which is www.communities.gov.uk



The Housing Health and Safety Rating System

Housing Standards Leaflet No. 1



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Or information on obtaining publications in a different format?

☎ 01444 458166

What is the Housing Health & safety Rating System?

The Housing Act 2004 introduced a new way in which Councils assess housing conditions. The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) uses a risk assessment approach to enable risks from hazards to health and safety to be removed or minimised and considers 29 hazards.

The system came into force from April 2006 and replaced the old housing fitness standard.

Who does it affect?

It applies across all residential premises, including homeowners and landlords, including social landlords. HHSRS assessments can be applied to any dwelling whether occupied or vacant.

How does it work?

The key principle of the system is that any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor.

The HHSRS is a system to assess the likely risk of harm that could occur from any deficiency associated with a dwelling.

A risk assessment inspection is carried out to consider the likelihood of an incident occurring as a result of the condition of the property and the likely harmful outcome if an incident did occur.

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

There are 29 hazards considered under the HHSRS, including damp and mould growth, excess cold, crowding and space and fire.

How is it enforced?

If the Council identifies any category 1 hazards in a dwelling, it has a duty to take the most appropriate action from a range of possible actions prescribed by law. Where any category 2 hazards are identified the council has discretion whether to take action or not.

The council will usually attempt to remedy a hazard through informal means, but if that approach is unsuccessful, the council can require property owners to carry out works to improve the property (an Improvement Notice).

The Council also has the power to prohibit the use of the whole or part of a dwelling (a Prohibition Order) or to require emergency works to be carried out immediately to deal with any dangerous situations (Emergency Remedial Action).

Where hazards are minor the Council can serve a Hazard Awareness Notice to draw the owners attention to the potential risks.

Anyone served with an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Order can appeal within 21 or 28 days respectively.

Appeals are heard by the Residential Property Tribunals which have replaced the previous role of the County Court.

What are the hazards?

The hazards are:

Physiological

- Damp and mould growth
- Excess cold
- Excess heat
- Asbestos
- Biocides
- Carbon monoxide
- Lead
- Radiation
- Uncombusted fuel gas
- Volatile organic compounds

Psychological

- Crowding and space
- Entry by intruders
- Lighting
- Noise

Protection against infection

- Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
- Food safety
- Personal hygiene, sanitation & drainage
- Water supply

Protection against accidents

- Falls associated with baths
- Falling on the level
- Falling on stairs
- Falls between levels
- Electrical hazards
- Fire
- Fumes and hot surfaces
- Collision and entrapment
- Explosions
- Ergonomics
- Structural collapse and falling elements