

Housing Act 2004

Housing Health & Safety Rating System

This information booklet has been designed by Bolton Councils Housing and Public Health Unit to explain the new Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

The HHSRS is a mechanism for assessing the health and safety risks in dwellings, and was introduced with the Housing Act 2004 and was designed as a replacement for the previous fitness standard.

The principle of the HHSRS is that any residential premises (including the structure, means of access, and any associated outbuilding, garden or yard) should provide a safe and healthy environment for any existing or future tenant or visitor. HHSRS is a risk assessment process and is comprehensive in its coverage of key health and safety risks in dwellings. In very broad terms, the HHSRS works by assessing the risk associated with certain home hazards and if the likelihood of harm is significant the Council may take action to ensure that the risk is removed or reduced

There are 29 hazards in total which are detailed in this booklet. For each hazard there is a brief description of the hazard, a description of any associated health effects along with any vulnerable groups.

Hazard number and title

Description of hazard details including associated health effects.

Vulnerable age group

1 **Damp and Mould Growth**

Health threats due to dust mites, mould or fungal growths, including mental and social well-being health threats associated with damp, humid, mouldy conditions.
Health effects: allergies; asthma; effects of toxins from moulds; fungal infections.

V.g **14 Years or less**

2 **Excess Cold**

Threats to health from sub-optimal indoor temperatures. Healthy indoor temperature is approximately 21°C
Health effects: respiratory (flu, pneumonia and bronchitis); cardiovascular conditions (heart attack and strokes); thermoregulatory system impairment (body's temperature control); etc.


V.g **65 years plus**

3 **Excess Heat**

Threats due to excessively high indoor air temperatures.
Health effects: dehydration; trauma; stroke; cardiovascular, respiratory and genitourinary disorders.

V.g **65 years plus**


4 Asbestos & Manufactured Mineral Fibers-MMF



Presence of, and exposure to, asbestos fibres and MMF within dwellings.
Health effects: pleural disease; lung cancer; mesothelioma **NOTE: Attempting to remove asbestos which is in good condition and not likely to be disturbed is significantly more hazardous than not removing it. Work on asbestos should be done by a contractor licensed by the HSE**

V.g **No specific group**


5 Biocides



Threats to health from chemicals used to treat timber and mould growth.
Health effects: risk from inhalation; skin contact; ingestion (eating or drinking the chemical)

V.g **65 years plus**


6 Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products



Hazards due to the presence of excess levels in the atmosphere of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and smoke within the dwelling.
Health effects: Dizziness; nausea; headaches; disorientation; unconsciousness; respiratory disorders; bronchitis and breathlessness.

V.g **CO-65 years plus; NO₂,SO₂-No specific group**


7 Lead



Health threat from lead ingestion. Lead sources: paint, water pipes, soil, fumes from leaded petrol.
Health effects: lead poisoning; nervous disorders; mental health; blood production issues; behavioural problems in children.

V.g **Under 3 years**


8 Radiation



Health threats from radon gas and its daughters, primarily airborne, but also radon dissolves in water; concern expressed about possible health effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs); Leakage from microwave ovens (rare)
Health effects: lung cancer caused by exposure to radon gas. Risk increased with dose and duration of exposure.

V.g **60-64yrs with lifetime exposure to radon**


9 Uncombusted fuel gas



Threats from fuel gas escaped into the atmosphere within the dwelling.
Health effects: suffocation

V.g **No specific group**


10 Volatile organic compounds



Diverse group of organic chemicals, include formaldehyde, that are gaseous at room temperature and found in a wide variety of materials in the home
Health effects: allergies; irritation to eyes, nose, skin and respiratory tract; headaches; nausea; dizziness and drowsiness.

V.g **No specific group**


11 Crowding and space



Hazards associated with lack of space for living, sleeping and normal household/family life.
Health effects: psychological distress and mental disorders; increased hygiene risk and risk of accidents; personal space and privacy needs compromised.

V.g **No specific group**


12 Entry by intruders



Difficulties in keeping a dwelling secure against unauthorized entry and the maintenance of defensible space.
Health effects: fear of burglary; stress and anguish caused by burglary; injuries caused by intruder.

V.g **No specific group**


13 Lighting



Threats to physical and mental health associated with inadequate natural/artificial light, including psychological effects associated with the view from the dwelling through glazing.
Health effects: depression and psychological effects due to lack of natural light, eyestrain from glare and inadequate light.

V.g **No specific group**


14 Noise



Threats to physical and mental health due to exposure to noise inside the dwelling or within its curtilage.
Health effects: psychological and physiological changes resulting from sleep disturbance; poor concentration; headaches and anxiety.

V.g **No specific group**


15 Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse



Poor design, layout and construction, such that the dwelling cannot be readily kept clean and hygienic; access into, and harbourage within the dwelling for pests; inadequate and unhygienic provision for storing and disposal of household waste.
Health effects: stomach and intestinal disease; infection; asthma; allergies; food spoilage; disease from rats and birds; physical hazards.

V.g **No specific group**


16 Food safety



Threats of infection from poor provision and facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food.
Health effects: stomach and intestinal disease; diarrhoea; vomiting; stomach upsets; dehydration.

V.g **No specific group**


17 Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage



Threats of infection and threats to mental health associated with personal hygiene, including personal and clothes washing facilities, sanitation and drainage.
Health effects: stomach and intestinal disease, including dysentery; skin infections; depression.

V.g **Children under 5**


18 Water supply for domestic purposes



The quality and adequacy of the water supply within the dwellings for drinking and domestic purposes, including threats to health from contamination by bacteria, protozoa, parasites, viruses and chemical pollutants.
Health effects: dehydration; fatigue; headaches; dry skin; bladder infections; stomach, intestinal & respiratory disorder; Legionnaires' disease

V.g **No specific group**


19 Falls associated with baths etc.



Falls associated with a bath, shower or similar facility.
Health effects: physical injuries; cuts; lacerations; swelling; bruising.

V.g **60 years plus**


20 Falls on the level



Falls on any level surface such as floors, yards and paths, including falls associated with trip steps, thresholds or ramps where the change in level is less than 300mm.
Health effects: physical injuries; bruising; fractures; head, brain and spinal injuries.

V.g **60 years plus**


21 Falls associated with stairs and steps



Falls associated with stairs, steps and ramps where the change in level is greater than 300mm. It includes falls associated with internal stairs or ramps within the dwelling; external steps or ramps within the curtilage of the dwelling; internal common stairs or ramps and external steps or ramps within the curtilage of the building containing the dwelling and giving access to the dwelling and those to shared facilities or means of escape in case of fire. It includes falls over balustrading associated with stairs, steps or ramps.
Health effects: physical injury; bruising; fractures; head, brain and spinal injuries.

V.g **60 years plus**


22 Falls between levels



Falls from one level to another, inside or outside a dwelling, where the difference in levels is more than 300mm. E.g. falls from balconies, landings, out of windows, over garden retaining walls etc.
Health effects: physical injuries.

V.g **Under 5 years**


23 Electrical hazards



Hazards from shock and burns resulting from exposure to electricity, including from lightning strikes.
Health effects: shock.

V.g **Under 5 years**


24 Fire



Threats from exposure to uncontrolled fire associated smoke at a dwelling. It includes injuries from clothing catching alight, which appears to be common when people attempt to extinguish a fire.
Health effects: burns, being overcome by smoke or gas, death

V.g 60 years plus


27 Explosions



Threat from blast of an explosion, from debris generated by blast and from the partial or total collapse of a building as the result of an explosion.
Health effects: while the likelihood of an explosion is small, injuries can include: physical injuries, crushing; bruising; puncture; fractures; head, brain and spinal injuries, scalding if involves hot water.

V.g No specific group


25 Hot surfaces and materials



Threats of burns – injuries caused by contact with a hot flame or fire, with hot objects or hot non-water based liquids; scalds – injuries caused by contact with hot liquids and vapours. Includes burns caused by clothing catching alight.
Health effects: burns, scalds; permanent scarring; death.

V.g Under 5 years


28 Ergonomics



Threats of physical strain associated with functional space and other features at dwelling.
Health effects: strain and sprain injuries.

V.g 60 years plus


26 Collision and entrapment



Risks of injury from trapping body parts in architectural features, e.g. trapping fingers in doors; and colliding with objects such as architectural glazing, windows, doors, low ceilings, walls.
Health effects: injuries through collision or entrapment involving doors and windows, e.g. cuts from glass, shutting door on part of body.

V.g 16 years plus

29 Structural collapse and falling elements



Threat of dwelling collapse or of a part of the fabric being displaced or falling due to inadequate fixing, disrepair or the result of adverse weather conditions.
Health effects: physical injuries

V.g No specific group

Further Information

The guidance document ***Housing Health and Safety Rating System – Guidance (Version 2)*** which is provided by the government offers more detailed information about the HHSRS and is available to download from the Department for Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk or can be ordered from Stationery Office Ltd, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN

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