

What is a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)?

A house in multiple occupation (HMO) is a building, or part of a building, occupied by three or more people, living as more than one household. A household is a group of people who live together. They must be connected by marriage, civil partnership; or be a recognised couple. Or they can be a family member - a child, parent, sister, brother, nephew, niece or in-law for instance.

People that live in the same place, but are not connected in this way, are not counted as a single household. So for example a group of three students or adult friends count as three households, even if they live at the same address.

New laws have extended the definition of an HMO to cover more property types. An HMO can be a shared house, a building split into bedsits or self contained flats, bed and breakfast accommodation, a hostel and many types of student accommodation.

An HMO licence is required if there are 3 or more floors to the property and it is occupied by at least 5 people and there is sharing of amenities.

All HMO's (regardless of whether they are licensable or not) are required to meet certain standards. Sevenoaks District Council produces documents giving full details of these:

- **Guidance to HMO Amenities Standards**
Includes information on provision of facilities / gas and electrical safety requirements.
- **Landlords Guide to the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation**
These regulations place duties on a person managing an HMO in respect of providing information, safety measures and maintenance.
- **HHSRS Housing Health and Safety Rating System**
This applies to all dwellings and is a risk assessment approach (not a standard) to enable risks from hazards to health and safety in dwellings to be removed or minimised.

Please contact us for copies or look on www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/housing Multiple Occupancy Homes.

People who live in Houses in Multiple Occupation are up to 6 times more likely to die in a fire than those who live in a house occupied by a family. Fire safety is an important aspect of the Council's involvement with HMO's. The Council requires landlords to improve the level of fire precautions to an acceptable standard.

Typically, for a two storey HMO occupied by 4 or less persons the following general terms may apply:

- Mains operated inter-linked smoke detectors with a battery back up in the common parts.
- An inter-linked fixed temperature heat detector in the kitchen.
- A fire blanket fixed to a wall in the kitchen.
- Main door locks which operate internally without the use of a key.
- Fire doors may be required in certain circumstances.

All properties are assessed on an individual basis; buildings of three or more storeys are assessed jointly by the council and the Fire Officer to determine the level of fire precautions needed.

Please contact the Council to arrange an advisory visit before you carry out any works.

If you are not sure whether your property counts as an HMO, or if you want more information about HMO's or licensing, contact:

Private Sector Housing on 01732 227000 or
private.sector.housing@sevenoaks.gov.uk