



Westmorland
& Furness
Council



Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Guide

healthyhomes.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk



What is HHSRS?

The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System, or HHSRS for short, is the legal system for rating how healthy and safe houses are.

Environmental Health Officers at Westmorland and Furness Council do housing inspections using HHSRS to gauge the condition of a property, any hazards, and how risks impact health and wellbeing to occupiers and visitors.

This also helps show how landlords and property managers can reduce hazards as much as possible. It also helps satisfy one of the tenant's rights: the property they live in must be safe, healthy, and well-maintained.

If a property is found to be in bad disrepair, improvements must be made.

How The HHSRS Works

HHSRS lists 29 hazards that can be found in homes, ranging from excess cold, damp and mould growth, to structural collapse. As part of the assessment, an officer must look for and rate each one.

The assessment has two parts: considering the likelihood of a hazard, and then the potential harm that hazard can have.

The officer classes each hazard as either Category 1 or Category 2. A Category 1 hazard means there is a very real and immediate risk to health and safety, and the officer must act. Category 2 hazards are less serious, but these risks still require attention and repair.

As part of managing your properties, it is your responsibility to ensure that hazards are not present, or, they are a very low risk according to HHSRS.

It is worth self-assessing your properties every year to ensure its state of repair is suitable for your tenants. It also means that repairs are less expensive when you catch them early.

You can use this guide to familiarise yourself with HHSRS, and carry out your own property checks so you know what inspectors will look for.

This page is designed as a brief guide to HHSRS, not as a full statement of housing law and should not be used as such.



The 29 HHSRS Hazards

The hazards listed include risks to physical health, mental and social wellbeing that any issues or disrepair may cause. As part of the assessment, all parts of the property are considered, including access paths, outbuildings, and any exterior space as well as the interior.

1. Damp and mould growth

Health threats arising from significant numbers of house dust mites, damp, mould/fungal growth caused by damp and/or high humidity.

These can include asthma, allergy flare-ups, and infection toxins caused by mould and fungal growth.



2. Excess cold

Risks to health caused by indoor temperatures that are too low. The colder the temperatures, the higher the risk.

Healthy indoor temperatures are between 18°C and 21°C. Anything below 16°C can cause serious risks to health.

Heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory conditions can be caused or aggravated by cold temperatures.



3. Excess heat

Health problems caused by indoor temperatures that are too high.

Temperatures above 25°C increases the risk of dehydration, heatstroke, cardiovascular issues, strokes, and respiratory problems.



4. Asbestos and MMF

The presence of and exposure to asbestos and manufactured mineral fibres (MMF). In the past, these materials were used as insulation before the health risks were discovered.

Asbestos can severely damage the lungs and cause cancer. MMF presents risks to the lungs, eyes, and skin.



5. Biocides

Biocides are used to treat mould growth and timber, but can cause health threats. Inhaling these chemicals and allowing them to make contact with the skin can be extremely dangerous.

Insecticides and rodenticides, though they are classed as biocides, don't apply under HHSRS.



6. Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products

Faulty boilers are one of the biggest causes of high levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, and smoke.

Threats to health include nausea, confusion, headaches, unconsciousness, respiratory issues, and death.



7. Lead

Lead can be found in paint, water pipes, soil, and leaded petrol fumes. Lead poisoning can cause serious health risks, including mental health problems, infertility, and blood production issues.

If lead poisoning is not addressed, it can result in death.



8. Radiation

Radon gas is produced when uranium breaks down in soil. It enters a property through basements and cellar floors as airborne particles, but can also be dissolved in water.

Radon gas and its daughters are linked to lung cancer and other issues.



9. Uncombusted fuel gas

The threat of suffocation caused by fuel gas escaping into the home atmosphere.

Uncombusted fuel gas can also cause unconsciousness, brain damage, and death.



10. Volatile organic compounds

Threats caused by VOCs, which are organic chemicals which remain in gas form at room temperature.

These can aggravate allergies, cause eye irritation, headaches, drowsiness, nausea, and dizziness.



11. Crowding and space

Risks that come from a lack of space for living, sleeping, and normal household life within a property.

Overcrowding can cause many hazards, both to physical health and wellbeing.



12. Entry by intruders

This category examines how difficult it is to keep intruders out of a property, and the maintenance of defensible space.

Risks include injuries caused by intruders, and the impact a burglary (or potential for burglary) would have on wellbeing.



13. Lighting

Risks to health and wellbeing stemming from inadequate light, both natural and artificial.

These include eyestrain, wellbeing impacts from a lack of natural light, or being unable to sleep due to too much artificial light.



14. Noise

Threats to health and wellbeing that come from noise within the home or its immediate surroundings.

These include stress, headaches, difficulty concentrating, a lack of sleep and its associated issues.



15. Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse

Poor design, layout or construction of a property can mean the home cannot easily be kept clean, making pests more likely, and improper storage and disposal of household waste all pose health risks.

These can include infections, diseases (including any caught from pests), breathing problems, and allergies.



16. Food safety

If the facilities for storing, preparing, and cooking food aren't adequate, these can result in risks to health, including digestive problems, infections, dehydration, and vomiting.



17. Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage

Facilities for personal and clothes washing, sanitation, and drainage have a large impact on health if they are not adequate.

These can cause digestive problems, skin irritation and infection, and mental health issues.



18. Water supply

The quality and adequacy of the water supply for drinking, washing, cooking, cleaning, and personal hygiene, among other purposes, and any impact poor water supply may have on occupants.

This category also assesses health risks from potential contaminants, including viruses, bacteria, parasites, and chemical pollutants.

Risks include dehydration, headaches, bladder infections, fatigue, and Legionnaires' disease.



19. Falls associated with baths

Any falls that are linked to baths, showers, or similar. Injuries can include lacerations, bruising, and fractures.



20. Falls on level surfaces

Any falls that are associated with a level surface, such as paths, yards, and floors. These can be internal or external.

This category does include trip steps, thresholds and ramps, where the level change is less than 300mm.

Injuries can include fractures, spinal, head, and brain injuries.



21. Falls on stairs etc

Falls linked to stairs, steps, and ramps, (internally or externally) where the level change exceeds 300mm. This category also includes fire escape means, step guarding, and access to shared facilities.

Spinal, brain, and head injuries are just some of the potential injuries caused by falls of this nature.



22. Falls between levels

Falls from one level to another inside or outside the home, but excluding falls linked to stairs, steps, or ramps. This can be inside or outside a home. The level change exceeds 300mm.

Falls from balconies, landings, or out of windows are just some of the falls in this category. Injuries can include spinal, brain, and head injuries, as well as fractures and death.



23. Electrical hazards

Faulty electrical equipment or exposed wiring can be extremely dangerous, and exposure to electricity can cause shocks, burns, lightning strikes, and death.



24. Fire

Uncontrolled fire and the smoke it produces present various hazards, including burns, smoke inhalation, and death.



25. Flames, hot surfaces etc

Fire, hot liquids or objects, vapours, and hot non-water based liquids can result in burns, scalds, permanent scarring and death.



26. Collision and entrapment

Colliding with parts of the house such as doors, walls, windows, and low ceilings, or trapping body parts in doors and windows or other architectural features can cause numerous physical injuries.



27. Explosions

Threats from an explosion, including partial/total collapse of a building, any debris created, and physical harm.

Injuries from explosions include spinal and head injuries, fractures, crushing, and death.



28. Position and operability of amenities etc

Risks of physical strain and injury from functional space, location of amenities, layout, and other features at the home.

These can include sprains and strains.



29. Structural collapse and falling elements

The risk of any part of the home collapsing (internally or externally), being displaced, or falling due to disrepair, inadequate repairs, or adverse weather.

These pose serious risks to health, including death.



Addressing Hazards

The Housing Act 2004 requires the council to act where houses are in such disrepair that they pose significant risks to occupants and visitors.

When Category 1 and Category 2 hazards are found, there are a number of actions the council can take:

Hazard Awareness Notices

Hazard Awareness Notices are usually one of the first actions taken for problems that require improvement or repair, depending on the severity of the hazards.

Improvement Notices

An improvement notice outlines what hazards must be addressed, and gives a certain time frame in which repair works must be carried out. If repairs are not made within the given period, this becomes an offence.

The council may choose to carry out these repairs and recover the cost to the landlord if the notice is not complied with. An improvement notice can be suspended until a time or the occurrence of an event.

Prohibition Orders

A prohibition order can forbid use of some or all of the dwelling for one or all purposes, depending on the severity and nature of the hazard(s).

Demolition Orders And Clearance Areas

Demolition orders and clearance areas are reserved for the most significant of health risks stemming from major disrepair of a property.

Emergency Remedial Action

Emergency remedial action is taken when hazards pose an imminent risk of serious harm. The council does not have to give notice to the owner of the property before taking steps to remove the immediate risk.

Emergency Prohibition Order

An emergency prohibition order forbids the use of parts or all of the property, but unlike a normal Prohibition Order, this is effective immediately and is put into place when there is an imminent risk of serious harm.

Lodging An Appeal

We encourage you to work with us and reach out when there is an issue.

However, you can appeal against certain action taken to the First Tier Tribunal (FTT), within the Property Chamber – Residential Property. Information on how to appeal will be included on the notice that you receive, if it is applicable.

Supplementary Regulations

Alongside HHSRS, there are other regulations that closely link to the hazard scoring system. These include:

- The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Electrical Safety Standards In The Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020
- The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 (MEES)
- The Housing and Planning Act 2016

It's a good idea to keep up with proposed legislation changes to see how they may affect your properties.

Could You Be Eligible For A Grant?

Another way we aim to improve homes in our area is through central government grants. We offer several schemes to make homes warmer and more efficient. This includes insulation, solar panels, and heat pumps.

To find out more and see if you're eligible for a grant, visit the website or contact the Green Homes team using the details below

Contact: Housing retrofit team



better.homes@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk



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www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/housing/housing-energy-efficiency-grants-and-advice



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Contact The Team

If you have any questions about HHSRS, an inspection, or you would like some advice, please don't hesitate to contact the team.



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