

HMO Licensing Newsletter

February 2023

Damp and mould issues

This winter we are receiving more complaints about damp and mould in properties than we did in previous years. The main reason for condensation damp is that often tenants do not heat the rooms adequately and do not ventilate their properties. We would strongly recommend that licence holders and managers speak to HMO occupants explaining the need to keep the properties warm and ventilated to reduce the risk of damp and mould. To avoid damp and mould problems, as well as keeping repairs and maintenance to prevent penetrating damp, it is important to be able to heat homes in a manner which is affordable and have adequate provision for background and purge ventilation to prevent condensation damp. Please ensure that all heating and means of ventilation are provided and in good working order. Our advice sheet and questionnaire can be found [here](#).

Portable heaters – fire safety

It is also important that your tenants are not causing fire risk by using portable electric heaters. During your periodic inspections, pay attention to portable heaters in properties and follow the advice from Avon Fire and Rescue. If plug-in heaters are used, they should be in good working order, have 'feet' attached to lift the base off the floor, and they should be serviced regularly. Heaters should always be kept well away from furniture, curtains, clothes, plants or anything else that could catch fire. When using electrical appliances, it's very important to make sure that the electric sockets are not overloaded.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 came into force on 1 October 2022

The amendment regulations mean:

- Both social and private landlords are required to provide carbon monoxide alarms in any room of their properties used wholly or partly as living accommodation where a fixed combustion appliance is present (excluding gas cookers; however if your property is a licensed HMO, the licensing condition requires CO alarm to be installed in the room with gas cookers).
- Social landlords are required to provide a smoke alarm on every storey of their properties where there is a room used wholly or partly as living accommodation.
- There is a new obligation on all landlords to repair or replace any alarm (smoke and carbon monoxide) which is found to be faulty during the period of a tenancy as soon as reasonably practicable.

HMO licensing standards

We would like to remind landlords of the [HMO licensing standards](#) as well as the [HMO documents for programmed inspections](#) that we request prior to our visits. If you are planning to make any changes to your properties, please check the standards and if you have any doubts, contact our duty officer on housing@bathnes.gov.uk or by calling 01225 396444.

Management declaration

Before our officers inspect a licensed HMO, they ask for the above documents to be sent prior to their visit. However, some agents requested that they are not asked for copies of tenancy agreements as all managing agents would have them. We have listened to this feedback and

decided to ask for a management declaration to be signed once a year, confirming that the tenants of their licensed HMO have tenancy agreements. In addition, confirming landlords and managers will comply with the [Undertaking of Good Practice](#) and that tenants have received and signed a copy. If you wish to sign this declaration and not be asked for these two documents, request it from HMO_licensing@bathnes.gov.uk. Please be aware that despite completing the declaration, we may carry out periodic checks.

Our Website

The best way to find information on Houses in Multiple Occupation and licensing is to visit our website at www.bathnes.gov.uk/hmos

Maintenance of properties

It is becoming apparent that routine inspections of properties by the licence holder or manager are not being carried out to identify maintenance issues. Licence holders and managers should not be waiting for programmed inspections by Housing Services to identify problems that need resolving.

Common issues include over grown gardens, damp & mould growth, no management information on display, fire doors not closing, items stored on means of escape. Routine inspections should ideally be carried out quarterly and this [HMO Checklist](#) can help you identify issues.

Energy at Home

Visit [our website](#) to check latest grants and loans offers to improve the properties' energy efficiency. You will find information about insulating properties, providing good background ventilation, providing PV panels to reduce electricity cost. These measures will help improve affordable warmth and could reduce damp and mould problems.

To find out the EPC rating, visit [this website](#) and check the report to also find out, what measures are recommended for your property.