

Everyone is entitled to a home that is healthy, safe and secure. When offering a property for rent **landlords** have a **Duty of Care** to ensure that it is suitable and safe for occupation.

There are many pieces of legislation that give detailed requirements about housing standards and landlord responsibilities. This document gives an outline of areas that most commonly give rise to problems, but is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities.

Of course once **tenants** take up occupation they also have responsibilities to keep the property reasonably clean, treat it with respect and report problems promptly so that they can be rectified before significant damage is caused.

If you want more detailed guidance please contact the **Private Rented Team** on 01752 307075 or private.rent@plymouth.gov.uk.

A Healthy Home will:

- Be **wind and weather tight** and in **good general condition** including roofs, chimneys, windows, brickwork, render, boundary walls and pathways, guttering and downpipes and underground drainage. All fittings and property elements will operate as intended.
- Be free from infestation by **rodents** and **insects**. *Tenants have a responsibility to keep the property clean and store refuse appropriately so that vermin are not attracted.*
- Be free from **accumulations of rubbish** and have **adequate refuse storage**. *Tenants have a responsibility to use the facilities provided and place refuse for collection as required by the Local Authority.*
- Have an affordable controllable **heating system** that heats the whole of the dwelling, together with adequate **insulation and draught proofing** to prevent excessive heat loss. The system should be capable of maintaining a **healthy temperature at an affordable cost**. Gas fired central heating is the preferred system but alternatives may be acceptable if the property has a high level of thermal insulation.
- Have adequate provision for controllable and secure **ventilation** of the dwelling including mechanical ventilation where there is inadequate natural ventilation; typically this can arise in internal bathrooms and kitchen areas.
- Be free from **damp and mould** including excessive levels of **condensation** due to inadequate provision of heating, ventilation or insulation. *Tenants have a responsibility to use the heating and ventilation in order to properly manage the indoor environment.*
- Not present increased risks of **trips or falls** due to:
 - Unguarded (or poorly guarded) stairs, landings, balconies, raised garden areas or flat roofs.
 - Uneven, badly designed and/or poorly lit steps, stairs or pathways.
 - Lack of appropriate handrails
 - Windows through which a child might fall should be provided with suitable restrictors. These may include tilt and turn windows, windows with low cills and those where climbable fittings are placed below (or would be placed below to make proper use of the room)
 - Windows adjacent to stairs and landings – appropriate guarding should be provided.
 - Slippery surfaces and/or poor layout in bath or shower rooms.

- Have **gas appliances** that are safe and in good working order. They must be properly maintained and inspected at intervals not exceeding 12 months in accordance with the **Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998**.
- Carbon monoxide detectors should be provided where gas, LPG or wood burning appliances are not 'room sealed' and where open fires are used and from October 2015 **must** be provided where solid fuel appliances are provided.
- Have appropriately installed **electrical installations and appliances** that are maintained in a safe condition. There must be adequate socket outlets to prevent overloading of electrical connections or the excessive use of trailing extension leads. It is recommended that installations and appliances are checked by a competent person before a new tenant moves in and at regular intervals thereafter. Where a house falls within the definition of **house in multiple occupation** the installation **MUST** be inspected at least every 5 years.
- Have an appropriate level of **fire protection**. In a small family home two 10 year sealed battery detectors and a fire blanket in the kitchen will normally be sufficient. If you do provide any firefighting equipment you must make sure that your tenants know how to use it safely. Where a house is in **multiple occupation** or contains a number of **flats**, a risk assessment needs to be completed in accordance with the **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** and appropriate steps taken to reduce the risk. This will normally mean a full fire alarm system has to be installed along with other work to resist the spread of fire and you will need specialist advice. From October 2015 working smoke detectors **must** be provided on each floor of a dwelling at the time the tenant takes up occupation.
- Have a reasonable level of **security** – this will normally include locks to doors and accessible windows but you should also consider whether an alarm is appropriate or whether extra external lighting and cutting back of shrubs would also reduce the risk of unlawful entry, especially where there is a higher crime level.
- Have adequate natural and artificial **lighting** for a healthy and safe living environment and windows that allow a reasonable outlook from the property.
- Not present risks due to poor **layout** or rooms that are **too small** for the proposed use. As a general guide bedrooms should not be smaller than 6.5m² for one person and not smaller than 9.5m² for two people. Areas of a room where the ceiling height is less than 1.5m, or that are 'dead space' (eg the space needed for a door to open), should not be counted. Ensure there is adequate space to safely use kitchen facilities and that the kitchen is safely arranged
- Have a **kitchen** that is in good order and readily cleansable and which contains adequate facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food, including a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water which should be of drinking water quality. Additional guidance should be sought when the property is in **multiple occupation** and the kitchen is **shared**.
- Contain an adequate number of suitably located WCs, baths and/or showers and washbasins in rooms that are in good order and readily cleansable, including a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water. Additional guidance should be sought when the property is **in multiple occupation** and the facilities are **shared**.
- Where the property is a furnished let ensure that **furnishings and furniture** provided are in a satisfactory condition at the commencement of the tenancy and comply as appropriate with the **Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988**.