



Housing, Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The Housing Act 2004 came into effect on the 6th April 2006 and introduced with it a new way of assessing dwellings called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which replaces the old 'fitness standard' under the Housing Act 1985.

The HHSRS aims to provide a method which enables risks from hazards to health and safety dwellings to be removed or minimized. The principle behind the system is that a dwelling, any associated outbuildings and outdoor amenity space should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and any visitors to the dwelling. The dwelling should be free from hazards or when they are unavoidable, they should be made as safe as is reasonable practicable. The HHSRS applies to both single dwellings and Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The HHSRS assess 29 categories of housing hazards including those which were not covered or were inadequately covered by the old housing 'fitness standard'.

Physiological	Infection
1. Damp & Mould Growth	15. Domestic Hygiene etc
2. Excess Cold	16. Food Safety
3. Excess Heat	17. Personal Hygiene etc
4. Asbestos (& MMF)	18. Water Supply Biocides
5. Carbon Monoxides etc	
6. Lead	Safety
7. Radiation	19. Falls in bath etc.
8. Uncombusted Fuel Gas	20. Falls on level etc
9. Volatile Organic Compound	21. Falls on stairs or steps
	22. Falls between levels
	23. Electrical Hazard
Psychological	24. Fire
10. Crowding & Space	25. Hot Surfaces
11. Entry by Intruder	26. Collision/Entrapment
12. Lighting	27. Explosions
13. Noise	28. Position and Operability of a Amenities
	29. Structural Collapse

The property is inspected and any defects and deficiencies which may pose a hazard are noted. A score for each hazard is then calculated. The score depends on the severity of the hazard and its potential to cause injury to a person who is most vulnerable to that hazard. For example, stairs constitute a greater risk to the elderly, so when assessing the hazard relating to stairs, the elderly are considered to the vulnerable group. Likewise the elderly and very young are at greater risk from cold so they are the vulnerable group for the hazard excess cold. The greater the likelihood of harm occurring or the more severe the outcome, then the higher the score for the hazard will be.

The scores are divided into 10 hazard bands, A to J, Band A is the most serious and Band J the least serious. A hazard which falls into Bands A to C is termed as a 'category 1' hazard which the Council has a statutory duty to take enforcement action to deal with these hazards. A hazard in bands D to F is a 'Category 2' hazard which the Council has the power to take enforcement action to deal with if it is deemed appropriate.

The decision on which type of action can be taken is based on several factors, the severity of the hazard score, whether the Council has a duty of just a power to act and a judgment about the best means of dealing with the hazard.

The courses of action available to the Council are:

1. **Improvement Notice** to carry out remedial work to remove or reduce Category 1 or 2 hazards within a property within a specified time period.
2. **Prohibition Order** to prohibit use of part or all of the dwelling where Category 1 and 2 hazards exist, it can also be used to prohibit use of the dwelling for certain purposes or certain groups of people.
3. **Hazard Awareness Notice** for remote and minor Category 1 and 2 hazards where remedial action is desirable.
4. **Demolition Order** to deal with dwellings where Category 1 and 2 hazards are present and demolition is deemed to be the most satisfactory course of action.
5. **Emergency Remedial Action** to take action to remove Category 1 hazards which present an imminent risk of serious harm to the occupiers or other persons. The action can be taken by the Council at any time with a Notice served within 7 days.
6. **Emergency Prohibition Order** to immediately prohibit the use of all or part of the dwelling where a Category 1 hazard presents an imminent risk of serious harm to the occupiers or other persons.
7. **Declaration of a Clearance Area** to deal with dwellings where Category 1 and 2 hazards are present and clearance is deemed to be the most satisfactory course of action.

The Council is able to act in default and prosecute for lack of compliance with Notices and Orders. It is also able to charge and recover costs associated with taking enforcement action. Appeals against Notices and Orders are now made by applying to the Residential Property Tribunal.