

HMO Standards

For self-contained flats and studios within Houses in Multiple Occupation



Housing Act 2004

Effective 8 December 2020 (last amended March 2021)



These are the standards that the London Borough of Camden will apply to self-contained flats¹ and studios² within a house in multiple occupation (HMO) whether defined by sections 254 or 257 of the Housing Act 2004.

All such flats in Camden should comply with these standards although each property will be assessed on a case by case basis. These standards do NOT apply to any flat occupied by a group of three or more tenants (who are not part of the same household³) commonly referred to as a flat in multiple occupation. There are separate standards for this type of HMO.

A section 257 HMO is a building converted entirely into self-contained flats where the standard of conversion does not meet the 1991 building regulation standard and less than two-thirds of the self-contained flats are owner occupied. LB Camden licenses those section 257 HMOs where less than 50% of the flats are owner occupied.

A section 254 HMO is a house or flat occupied by three or more people who are not all part of the same household where any kitchen and bathroom facilities are shared, or where one or more flats/studios are not fully self-contained.

In section 257 HMOs these standards apply to areas of the HMO under the control of the licence holder i.e. they will always apply to common parts and will apply to any unit(s) of accommodation let by the licence holder.

Planning policy: The council is committed to the preservation of HMOs within the borough. The self-containment of shared accommodation may need planning permission and therefore you should always contact the Council's planning department if you propose to install kitchen or bathroom facilities within bedrooms or bedsits of HMOs.

- 1 Self-contained flat – a unit of accommodation behind the flat entrance door consisting of two or more habitable rooms plus kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- 2 Self-contained studio – a self-contained unit of accommodation behind the studio entrance door consisting of one habitable room only used for sleeping/living plus kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- 3 Household – a household could be a single person or members of the same family who live together. This includes people who are married or living together, people in same-sex relationships, any member of a family (including aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandparents and grandchildren and their partners; step children and foster children)



Fitness For Human Habitation

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 has clarified the responsibilities of landlords to ensure that their property, including any common parts of the building, is fit for human habitation at the beginning of the tenancy and throughout. The Council will therefore expect all HMOs to be fit for human habitation – the definition of fitness is contained in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. A property may be unfit if:

- the building has been neglected and is in a bad condition
- the building is unstable
- there is a serious problem with damp
- it has an unsafe layout
- there is not enough natural light
- there is not enough ventilation
- there is a problem with the supply of hot and cold water
- there are problems with the drainage or the lavatories
- it is difficult to prepare and cook food or wash up

Note: Some of these issues are already addressed by the minimum standards detailed below. Others may be better addressed by the housing, health and safety rating system (HHSRS) in which case a referral may be made to the private sector housing enforcement team to take action under part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.

Room sizes – studio flats

The minimum floor areas below apply to the habitable room in studio flats:

Minimum floor area where kitchen is provided in a separate room		Minimum floor area where kitchen facilities are located within the room	
Single	Double (one household)	Single	Double (one household)
9m ²	11m ²	12m ²	14m ²

The above room sizes do not include bathrooms, which will require additional space (see personal hygiene facilities section p6).

Regardless of its size, no more than two persons forming a single household may occupy a double room in a studio flat.

Room sizes – self-contained flats occupied by two persons comprising two households

Rooms used as sleeping accommodation shall meet the standards set out below (these being the equivalent standards as applicable to section 254 HMOs).

Minimum floor area for room where kitchen (shared or exclusive use) is provided in a separate room	Minimum floor area for room where kitchen facilities are located within the room	Minimum floor area for room with shared kitchen and shared living room (of at least 10m ²) and cohesive living arrangements
9m ²	12m ²	7.1m ²

No more than one household shall occupy any room used for sleeping accommodation.

In all circumstances, even where rooms are above the standards set out in the sections above, maximum occupation may still be subject to assessment under part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.

Room sizes – self-contained flats occupied by a single household

Rooms used as sleeping accommodation will be subject to national minimum prescribed standards details of which are set out in the 'Room sizes – general' section below.



Room sizes – general

The Government has set national minimum room sizes in The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018 as follow:

- The floor area of any room in the HMO used as sleeping accommodation by one person aged over 10 years is not less than 6.51m²
- The floor area of any room in the HMO used as sleeping accommodation by two persons aged over 10 years is not less than 10.22m²
- The floor area of any room in the HMO used as sleeping accommodation by one person aged under 10 years is not less than 4.64m²
- Any room in the HMO with a floor area of less than 4.64m² is not used as sleeping accommodation.

Through guidance, the Government has made it clear these are a 'statutory minimum' and are not intended to be the optimal room size. They stated "local housing authorities will continue to have discretion to require higher standards within licence conditions, but must not set lower standards".

The minimum room sizes in the sections above are those the council has deemed appropriate to apply to HMOs in Camden subject to the following considerations:

- Where the ceiling height is less than 1.5m the floor area beneath is not counted.
- If any personal washing facilities are included within the room, the area required for any facility as detailed in personal hygiene facilities section must be excluded when calculating the overall room sizes.
- Floor area that cannot be used because of its shape or location must not be included when calculating room sizes.
- A child will be treated as a separate person/occupant.

Fire safety

- The HMO design, construction and condition should limit the spread of fire and smoke. In addition, there should be adequate fire protection to the means of escape and between each unit of accommodation. The HMO should also be provided with appropriate detection and alarm systems and, as appropriate, emergency lighting and firefighting equipment. All works to be carried out in accordance with LACORS national guidance on fire safety and the latest edition of BS5839: Part 6 (these provide more detailed information on how to assess and control risks in various types of HMO).

This note is not part of the standard but it is a legal requirement:

The common areas of blocks of flats, maisonettes and HMOs are subject to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and must have a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out by a responsible person. In practice the responsible person will usually be the licence holder, but could be the manager or managing agent.

Carbon monoxide

A BS EN 50291 kitemarked carbon monoxide alarm (mains or battery powered) should be fitted in any room where any fuel burning appliance is fitted, including those that burn gas, oil, coal and wood. This includes any room that has a flue running through it. If there is an enclosed boiler, it should be fitted just outside the enclosure. Alarms should be fitted in accordance with the British standard.



Kitchen facilities

The following kitchen facilities must be provided to each flat or studio:

Minimum floor area	
One person	Two or more persons
4m ²	4.5m ²

- Kitchen facilities must be in a properly designed room or area, laid out so as to allow for the safe and hygienic preparation and cooking of food.
- kitchen facilities will include the following:
 - kitchen sink
 - cooking facilities
 - kitchen worktop
 - food storage (dry goods cupboards and fridge)
 - kitchen cupboards
 - power sockets
 - refuse storage
- A fire blanket (to comply with the current British Standard) must be provided to the kitchen of each flat. Fire blankets should be suitably located in a conspicuous position and generally nearer to the kitchen door than to the cooker.

Kitchen sink

- Integral sink and drainer of a suitable and practical size on a base unit, properly connected to the drainage system, and provided with an adequate and constant supply of drinking water and an adequate and constant supply of hot water, without fluctuation in temperature.

Cooking facilities

- Any cooker must be located remote from exit doors and away from windows.
- A minimum of two rings, conventional oven and grill. If a ‘portable’ cooker is provided it must be installed so that the cooking rings are level with the adjacent work surfaces and properly secured, and have the

capability to operate all rings and oven simultaneously.

- A standard microwave is not acceptable as a replacement for a conventional oven. However, a combination oven/grill/microwave is acceptable as long as an additional worktop area/secure shelf at eye level is provided to accommodate the appliance.

Kitchen worktop

- A usable, properly secured, readily cleansable work surface must be provided in a suitable position adjacent to the cooker in every kitchen or kitchen area. Worktop to be at the same height as the cooker rings. Minimum dimensions 600mm deep x 800mm wide.

Food storage - dry goods

- A cupboard for the storage of dry goods with a minimum storage capacity of 0.08 cubic metres. The recommended minimum dimensions to meet this requirement are:

Width: 30cm	Depth: 38cm	Height: 70cm
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- The cupboard space in the unit below the sink is not suitable for dry goods storage.

Refrigerated food storage

- A refrigerator with a minimum capacity of 140 litres.

Kitchen cupboards

- Sufficient cupboards for the storage of kitchen utensils and crockery must be provided.

Power sockets

- Three double electrical sockets or equivalent. Two of these double sockets are to be suitably located above worktop level.
- In all cases, electrical sockets must be located at least 300mm horizontally from a sink, draining board or hob.



Refuse storage

- Provide impervious refuse storage containers within the kitchen with suitable close fitting lids.

Kitchen ventilation

- Mechanical extraction capable of extracting to the external air at a rate of not less than 60 litres/second must be provided. Or if a cooker hood is fitted, the extraction rate to the external air can be reduced to 30 litres/second. This should be operable by the tenant and the controls suitably located.

Kitchen lighting

- Kitchens must have adequate artificial lighting. Artificial lighting must be positioned to provide sufficient light to enable domestic and recreational activities to be carried out without eyestrain.
- Kitchen-diners must have sufficient natural lighting and adequate artificial lighting to enable domestic and recreational activities to be carried out without eyestrain.
- Windows must be of adequate size and of appropriate shape and position to allow for reasonable daylight penetration into rooms.

Kitchen floors

- Suitable non-slip, impervious and readily cleansable floor covering must be provided to kitchen areas.

Kitchen walls/ceilings

- Walls and ceilings to be readily cleansable and those directly adjacent to cookers, sinks and food preparation areas must be provided with impervious and readily cleansable splash backs.

Household waste

Adequate provision for refuse storage and recycling should be provided in accordance with Camden's collection service requirements.

Personal hygiene facilities

Minimum floor areas for sanitary facilities

Sanitary facilities in appropriate room	Minimum floor area*
Bath only	2.3m ²
Bath & WHB	2.5m ²
Bath, WC & WHB	2.8m ²
Shower only	1.7m ²
Shower & WHB	2.0m ²
Shower & WC & WHB	2.2m ²
WC & WHB	1.2m ²

* The minimum floor areas include the required drying and activity space.

Bathrooms

- Facilities must include a bath and/or shower, WC and wash hand basin (WHB).
- Baths, WHBs and showers are to be provided with a constant supply of cold and hot water.
- Any WHB provided in a bath/shower room must be of an appropriate size
- Facilities should be provided within an enclosed private space.
- Mechanical ventilation must be provided to bath/shower rooms which, operating together with any passive ventilation (openable window, air brick or flue), is capable of extracting to the external air at a rate of not less than four air changes per hour. The fan must be connected to the light switch and have a minimum 15 minute overrun.



WC compartments

- Each WC compartment must be provided with a reasonably sized WHB (with a constant supply of cold and hot water).
- WC compartments must be provided with either an openable window or mechanical extraction capable of extracting to the external air at a rate of not less than four air changes per hour.

General

- The arrangements and layout of all rooms and facilities must be fit for purpose; in particular the arrangement must allow unobstructed entry and exit into the room and ease of use of the facilities within.
- Floor and wall surfaces must be in good repair, impervious and readily cleansable. Floor surfaces or coverings must be slip resistant when wet. Walls directly adjacent to WHBs, baths and showers must have impervious splash backs.
- Adequate natural and/or artificial lighting must be provided to the room/ compartment to enable the facilities to be used in a safe manner.

Heating

- Fixed space heating to be provided in every bedroom, living room, bathroom and kitchen diner. Space heating must be capable of maintaining a constant temperature of at least 21°C in sleeping rooms and bathrooms and at least 18°C in all other rooms.
- All heating sources must be provided with adequate controls to allow the occupants to programme and regulate the temperature within their unit of accommodation (e.g. provision of thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs), thermostat to electric heaters). As from 1st January 2018, all new heating sources must be Lot 20 compliant.
- Where there is a centralised heating system, heating should be available to individual tenants at all times.

Power sockets

- At least four (4) suitably located double sockets (or equivalent) must be provided to each sleeping room. Where there is a separate living room at least three (3) suitably located double sockets (or equivalent) must be provided to each room (sleeping and living rooms). This is in addition to those sockets provided in kitchen areas (where kitchen facilities are provided within a studio). Conventional electric sockets with additional but USB ports are acceptable but generally will not reduce the number of sockets required.