Community Connections
HMO Standards 2026 Briefing Note

PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

HMO Standards 2026 (Community Connections - Housing Standards)
This briefing note sets out the changes and amendments made to the HMO standards.

Overview
The current HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) Standards have been in effect since October 2020. In recent months, several queries have been raised regarding specific sections of the Standards by landlords, license holders, and internal officers.
A comprehensive review of the Standards was always scheduled for 2025. In light of the feedback received, these queries have been carefully considered as part of the formal review process.
While the majority of the Standards remain unchanged, revisions have been made to improve clarity and usability. These include minor amendments to wording within existing paragraphs, as well as the introduction of new tables to enhance the structure and accessibility of the document.

Changes and proposed changes

As part of the scheduled 2025 review of the House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Standards, a number of updates have been made to improve clarity, reflect statutory guidance, and address recurring queries raised by landlords, licence holders, and officers.

The key changes are outlined below:

General Wording and Formatting Updates
- Minor amendments have been made throughout the document to align terminology with statutory instruments under the Housing Act 2004.
- Sentences have been refined to more clearly articulate the requirements of each standard.
- The outdated PCC contact number has been replaced with the current Council-wide contact number.

Bedroom Standards
- A new sentence has been added to the minimum bedroom size table, advising that an HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System) assessment may be conducted at the discretion of the inspecting officer.
- A note on minimum ceiling height has been added to this section to clarify its impact on usable floor space, particularly in rooms located within roof spaces with sloping walls.

Lounge Space

- Although there is no statutory minimum size for lounges, a recommended minimum of 6m² has been introduced. This aims to discourage the practice of reducing lounge space to allow for smaller bedrooms.

Sanitary Facilities

- A new requirement has been added stipulating that all WCs must be fitted with a suitable seat and lid.

Kitchen Facilities

- The most significant revision concerns kitchen provision. Previously, for households of 6–9 people, a cooker and microwave could be provided instead of two cookers. This led to ambiguity regarding when two cookers were mandatory.
- To resolve this, a new table has been introduced specifying the expected kitchen facilities for different occupancy levels (e.g., 1–5, 6–7, 8–10 persons), offering clearer guidance for compliance.
- There is a requirement for Landlords to provide a sufficient amount of waste bins, internally & externally. This includes ensuring that there is enough food caddies provided, in line with Plymouth City Council implementing a new food waste collection service.

Fire Safety Enhancements

- Strengthened requirements have been introduced to protect the main escape route from the kitchen, identified as the highest-risk room in the event of fire.
- Fire doors must now offer 30-minute fire resistance, be fitted with a self-closer, and be installed following consultation with a competent professional.
- These measures are designed to ensure safe evacuation for occupants in the event of a fire.

Contact Information

- Three outdated telephone numbers previously listed for advice and guidance have been removed.
- These have been replaced with the Council's central contact number and website address to streamline communication.

Financial implications

There are no foreseen financial implications to the Local Authority.

Time scale

It is proposed to introduce these changes as soon as possible.

The future

The policy will be reviewed next in 2028.

The next upcoming change is the Renters Rights Bill. As part of that, there will be the introduction of the Decent Homes Standard into the Private Rented Sector as well as for Social Housing. It is envisaged that when this is fully implemented, there will be additional requirements for the upkeep of HMO properties as well as all other Private Rented Sector

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properties.