

# Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

Incorporating private sector housing fees and charges, civil penalty notice charges and licensable HMO amenity standards.

Date: Version 15

Housing Service

## **Summary**

This policy sets out the enforcement principles for the Private Sector Housing Team within the Housing Service.

This policy provides guidance for inspectors, businesses and members of the public, and is intended to clearly set out the aims, standards and values that will be applied in enforcement situations.

### **Distribution - who needs to be aware of this policy**

Private Sector Housing staff, landlords, landlords associations, lettings agents, and the public. The Policy will be published on Cornwall Councils website.

## **Context**

### **Background - why this policy is needed**

The Housing Service within Cornwall Council was formed in April 2017 which coincided with new legislation introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 which is designed to assist local authorities to tackle 'Rogue Landlords'. The Government has also been consulting on widening out Mandatory House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing and it is anticipated that changes will be implemented in October 2017 or April 2018.

These changes are significant and have forced a review of our existing enforcement policy. The changes also provide an opportunity to build on the success of our existing enforcement approach whilst ensuring that the Private Sector Housing Team is working efficiently and sustainably, and accordance with the overall aims of the Housing Service.

The Councils Private Sector Housing Team is recognised locally and nationally as being effective, highly capable and professional. The team has bucked regional and national trends in respect of successful enforcement outcomes, and this policy provides the framework to allow the team to enhance our role as an excellent housing enforcement authority.

### **Objectives - what the policy aims to achieve**

We aim to create the right balance between advice, assistance and enforcement to effectively influence quality and safety standards in the Private Rented Sector in Cornwall.

We aim for our enforcement activity to be a strong deterrent to committing housing related crimes, and we aim to protect the public from the unscrupulous activities of rogue landlords.

This policy sets out the enforcement principles which the Housing Service subscribes to.

### **Scope - what the policy covers**

This policy covers the main regulatory activity of the Private Sector Housing Team.

## **1. Our Enforcement Objectives**

Our core aims and objectives for this enforcement policy are as follows:

- To empower people to resolve issues through advice and information.
- To combine skills of different disciplines across all Council services to make places better, serving the needs of all of the people of Cornwall.
- To work together to remedy the undesirable effects of unsatisfactory housing conditions where it causes, or has the potential to cause genuine harm.
- To help find the best possible solutions to secure thriving and resilient communities.
- To influence the standard of the existing housing stock so it meets the needs of the population.
- To minimise poor quality or unaffordable housing being pathways to homelessness.
- To safeguard against, and reduce the risk of poor housing impacting on people's health and wellbeing.
- To be both pro-active and reactive in the investigation of breaches of Housing law.
- To work with other agencies and organisations, both internally and externally.
- To adhere stringently to the Councils policies for the safeguarding of adults, children and vulnerable people.

## **2. Combining Resources to achieve better outcomes**

There are certain areas of our work where we know that by working together across our multi-skilled and multi-disciplinary teams, and with our external partners we achieve enhanced outcomes. Our priority areas of work are:

- Empty properties.
- Licensable HMOs operating without a property licence.
- HMOs operating without planning permission.
- HMOs that fall within the Housing Act 2004, Section 257 definition (poorly converted flats) or flats converted prior to the 1991 Building Regulations.
- Licensable HMOs linked to persistent anti-social behaviour.
- Undertaking works in default of statutory notices.
- Preventing retaliatory evictions and dealing with illegal evictions.
- Untidy sites and properties that are causing an eyesore.
- Dealing with repeat offenders.
- Working with Devon and Cornwall Police to deal with other criminality or antisocial behaviour in the Private Rented Sector that is adversely impacting on the community.
- Working with Cornwall Fire and Rescue service to regulate high risk properties such as HMOs linked to commercial premises.

### **3. Enforcement Principles**

The service believes that enforcement should be proportionate to risk, and when action is taken it must be expedient and efficient.

Our activities will be targeted and based on risk of harm occurring and will be in accordance with the Enforcement Concordat and the statutory requirements of the Regulators Compliance Code.

We believe in open, transparent enforcement. We will be clear about how we operate and provide clear information to manage expectations against those being enforced against.

Through the Cornwall Responsible Landlords Scheme we are committed to support emerging, improving and good business through provision of advice and guidance.

When appropriate we will distinguish advice and best practice from statutory requirements.

We will take robust action against the people who place others at risk of serious harm.

We will be cost efficient and recover our enforcement costs whenever possible to do so.

#### PROPORTIONALITY

We believe in applying the law proportionately. We will not take action when the level of risk to the environment, and/or public is low and likely to remain so, but when action is required we will be expedient and robust in our actions to secure compliance.

Our inspections and interventions will be based on risk assessment methodologies and we will only intervene when there is a clear case for protection. Inspections will take place when there is a sound reason for doing so.

The service will endeavour to minimise the cost of compliance for business by ensuring that any action taken is proportionate to the risk or breach.

#### CONSISTENCY

The service will carry out its duties in a fair, equitable and consistent manner. Consistency of approach does not mean uniformity, it means taking a similar approach in similar circumstances to achieve similar goals. Our officers will exercise their professional judgment to deal effectively with specific matters but, where possible, we will adhere to standards and guidance to promote consistency.

#### STANDARDS

We will support good business by encouraging 'self-regulation' through the Cornwall Responsible Landlords Scheme.

Where appropriate we will set standards, such as the Cornwall Rental Standard, and provide helpful guidance that will encourage improvement and growth, but

where standards are ignored, or ignorance is pleaded and the environment or people are left at risk, swift action will be taken to secure compliance.

We will focus our support and advice activities where we have intelligence to suggest that high risk hazards are: a) prevalent, b) where failure to comply poses a serious risk of harm; and c) there is a high likelihood of non-compliance.

### OPENNESS

The service will provide information and advice on standards that it applies and will distribute this as widely as possible.

We will clearly communicate our fees, charges and methods of cost recovery when taking enforcement action.

### HELPFULNESS

The Housing Service is of the opinion that 'prevention is better than cure' and that its role therefore actively involves working with business, especially small and medium sized businesses, to advise and assist with compliance.

The Cornwall Responsible Landlords Scheme and Rental Standard has been created to help support good and improving landlords. The scheme offers guidance and advice, and clear way of communicating with the Council.

We will provide a courteous and efficient service and our staff will identify themselves by name.

We will provide contact points and telephone numbers for further communication with staff, and we will encourage business to seek advice/information.

We will provide helpful advice upon request after taking enforcement action.

### FAIRNESS

The service will treat all people equally and fairly.

### TRANSPARENCY

We will provide suitable advice and guidance to those we enforce against to ensure they fully understand the enforcement process, what they need to do, and what they can expect to happen if they do not comply.

We will distinguish between statutory requirements and advice or guidance about what is desirable, but not compulsory to meet the legislation.

We will enforce and apply penalties in a transparent manner and when we successfully prosecute a person or business and if it is within the interests of the public to do so we will issue a press release.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

The service is accountable to the public for its actions.

We will ensure that our inspectors are able to interpret and apply relevant legal requirements and we will require them to apply this policy in a fair, helpful and consistent manner.

We will always inform people who we enforce against about any rights of appeal.

## COMPLAINTS

Cornwall Council has in place a complaints/compliments and comments procedure. All complaints will be investigated in full in accordance with the procedure. Further details can be found on the Council website [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

### **4. Statutory Duties**

The Private Sector Housing Team has a statutory responsibility to operate its enforcement activities in accordance with the Housing Act 2004, The Housing and Planning Act 2016, other public health legislation and associated Regulations. This includes a duty to:

- Keep housing conditions under review and consider appropriate methods of regulating the housing stock.
- Inspect residential premises when it is deemed appropriate to do so.
- Take the appropriate action where 'Category 1 Hazard(s)' are identified.
- Consider appropriate action in relation to a 'Category 2 hazard(s)'
- Inspect, regulate and licence (where appropriate) Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Respond to complaints or intelligence that suggests a statutory nuisance maybe present, or breach of other public health legislation.
- Consider applying for a Rent Repayment Order when it is substantiated that a relevant housing offence has been committed.

The Private Sector Housing team will use all available statutory provisions in exercising its powers and duties. The will involve using provisions under the following Acts of Parliament and delegated legislation made thereunder.

(NB. This is not a comprehensive list)

- Housing Act 2004
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Protection from Eviction Act 1977
- Deregulation Act 2015
- The Energy Act 2011
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
- Building Act 1984

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Housing Act 1985
- Law of Property Act 1925
- Land Charges Act 1975
- Equalities Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

## **5. Enforcement Decisions**

The Private Sector Housing Team will consider the following factors in all enforcement decisions:

- The severity of a matter.
- Extent, severity and location of a hazard.
- The culpability and track record of the offender.
- The harm, or potential for harm caused to the occupier (or any other person).
- Whether enforcement action is appropriate and proportionate.
- Whether enforcement will act as a deterrent for the recipient and other people.
- The vulnerability of the occupiers.
- Financial gain of actions – we aim to ensure that it is not cheaper to operate illegally for financial gain than operate professionally.
- Whether there is a realistic prospect of compliance.
- The cost and practicability of remedial works.
- Likelihood of occupancy changing.
- The views of the current occupiers.
- Whether action is in the public interest.
- The views of the property owners, managers or persons in control of the dwelling.
- The compliance history of the responsible person to which the notice may be served.
- Guidance given to local authorities as well as appropriate standards and research.

- Non-statutory guidance/ standards/ research.
- Conservation and listed building status and whether a building situated in an area with any other local restrictions.

## **6. How we handle requests for service**

We actively encourage and support tenants who contact the Council with concerns about their housing conditions to try and resolve the matter with the responsible landlord or agent prior to agreeing to an inspection. An inspection service will only be offered if:

- The complainant has attempted to resolve the matter with the responsible landlord or agent and those attempts have failed. Support will be given to tenants if required and evidence of this action will be requested.
- The Council will triage the request for service to determine whether the defect to which the complaint originates is likely to be a Category 1 or Band D, Category 2 hazard (as defined by the Housing Act 2004 and relevant guidance). If this is likely and it considered appropriate to do so inspection of the dwelling will be arranged with the complainant.

Exemptions to this include situations when:

- There is a history of persistent or serious non-compliance;
- There is likely to be a hazard present in the home that has the potential to cause imminent risk of serious harm to occupiers (typically fire, gas, electrical and structural collapse hazards).
- There is evidence to suggest the landlord or agent is aggressive or is harassing the tenant.
- The tenant is vulnerable for some other reason that would make informal resolution unsuitable.

## **7. How we will fulfil our statutory duties**

The Council has a statutory duty to act when Category 1 hazards are found and a discretionary power to act in respect of Category 2 hazards. Where hazards are found at a dwelling the Council may take one or more of the following courses of action:-

- Serve an Improvement Notice requiring remedial works to be undertaken.
- Make a Prohibition Order, which closes the whole or part of a dwelling or restricts the number or type of permitted occupants.
- Serve a 'Suspended Improvement Notice' or 'Prohibition Order'.
- Serve a 'Hazard Awareness Notice'.
- Take 'Emergency Remedial Action'\*.
- Undertake works in default of a statutory notice.
- Serve an 'Emergency Prohibition Order'\*.



- Make a 'Demolition Order'.
- Declare a 'clearance area'.

*\*Only in respect of Category 1 hazards.*

### Category 2 Hazards

Category 2 hazards are those that are within the HHSRS hazard bands D to J. Hazard band D, category 2 hazards are the highest risk category 2 hazard and hazard band J hazards are the lowest risk category 2 hazard.

The Council has a power conferred upon it to take enforcement action in relation to Category 2 hazards, but no specific duty is imposed upon it to do so. It is therefore important that the use of discretionary powers is proportionate to risk and is consistently applied.

To provide a consistency of approach with our enforcement activity, (having regard to the Regulators Compliance Code), and to ensure that enforcement responses are proportionate to the risk identified, the Private Sector Housing Team will only take action against Category 2 hazards when the following criteria applies:

- a) Where a Band D, Category 2 Hazard exists the Council will normally take enforcement action to remedy (or reduce) the hazard. Action would not be taken if for a valid reason enforcement is not deemed the most appropriate course of action.
- b) Where a number of lower risk Category 2 Hazards are present in combination, and due to their association present a greater cumulative risk of harm occurring to the occupier, a Senior Officer may authorise that enforcement action is the most appropriate course of action to be taken.

### **8. Enforcement across different tenures**

The Private Sector Housing Team will have regard to the ownership and extent of control that an owner has over works required to the dwelling. In normal circumstances, this will mean requiring a landlord to carry out works under an appropriate course of action outlined in this policy.

Owner-occupiers will not normally be required to carry out works to their own home unless there is an imminent risk to the occupiers' health, safety or wellbeing or deficiencies at the property are adversely affecting another property, or any other person. Due to the rarity of PSH involvement and the wide range of circumstances found in owner occupied properties, each decision to intervene will be considered on a case by case basis.

Complainants who reside in social housing will initially be advised to follow the relevant social housing provider's complaints procedure and if appropriate will also be signposted to follow the housing ombudsmen's complaints procedure before the Private Sector Housing Team will consider an inspection. The Private Sector Housing Team will undertake an inspection if there is an imminent risk of serious harm to an occupier and/or there is evidence to suggest that the landlord has not taken appropriate action within a reasonable timescale to address the issue.

## **9. Dealing with overcrowding**

The Council recognises that in a stressed housing market overcrowding can occur without blame to the landlord. Furthermore the psychological risk of harm to those living in an overcrowded household is often a long term exposure risk.

As a result our enforcement responses will be proportionate, as follows:

- The Council will take action against overcrowding cases that constitute a Category 1 hazard only.
- The Council will serve Hazard Awareness Notice routinely when a Category 1, HHSRS Band C hazard is identified in the private rented sector which is likely to be a reasonable response to a less serious crowding issue.
- Appropriate enforcement interventions will be considered for serious overcrowding.
- The Council will deal with unintentional (no fault of the landlord) overcrowding cases in Registered Provider (RP) housing strategically and will work with the providers with the assistance of Cornwall Housing Ltd to resolve the tenants housing situation.
- The Council will serve a Hazard Awareness Notice on the RP as a discharge of legal duty to act and the enforcement charges will be waived in lieu of our strategic/ co-ordinated approach.
- If there is evidence that a RP has knowingly caused an overcrowding situation then alternative formal enforcement action will be considered.
- If informal negotiations with RP's fail then the Council will consider use of appropriate enforcement action.
- Overcrowding in HMOs will be dealt with either through a HMO property licence (if applicable to the HMO), or by serving an overcrowding notice under section 139 of the Housing Act 2004.

## **10. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

The Council will proactively seek out, investigate and regulate HMOs that require a mandatory licence but are operating without one.

For a licence application to be validated the following items are required:

- A signed and fully completed application form
- Designated licence fee
- Periodic certificates in relation to the gas and electrical installations.
- Accurate floor plans (including dimensions) of the property

Invalid licence applications.

When an application is invalid the applicant will be sent a letter outlining what they need to do to make the application valid. The applicant will need to submit the require information within a 14 day period.

The licence fee is non-returnable.

An inspection will be scheduled to determine the premises licensable status where the above attempts fail, enforcement action will be taken as detailed in this policy.

#### Failure to licence a mandatory licensable HMO:

Where it is believed that a HMO meeting the mandatory licensing definition is operating without a licence and an application has not been submitted, the Private Sector Housing Team will gather all available information and investigate.

Where there is evidence that a licensable House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is operating without a licence and the management and/or property conditions are poor, placing the health and safety of the occupiers at risk; the Private Sector Housing Team will give legal instruction to instigate formal proceedings for the offence of operating a licensable HMO without a licence or will use a Civil Penalty Notice as an alternative to prosecution\*.

Where there is evidence that a licensable HMO premises is operating without a mandatory licence but the health safety and welfare of the tenants are being protected as both the condition of the property and management of the premises are good, the owner will be invited to make a valid application to the Council within a 14 day period and be required to pay the tracing activity licence application fee. Failure to do so will result in the Private Sector Housing Team issuing a Civil Penalty Notice or it will prosecute\*

*\*Refer to Annex B for the Private Sector Housing Civil Penalty Charging Structure*

#### Maintaining a good standard in licenced HMOs

It is important that licenced HMOs in Cornwall operate to a good standard. The PSH team will respond to complaints from occupiers of licensed HMOs and proactively test the quality of these properties. The following areas will be assessed as part of this process:

- Compliance with licence conditions.
- Management arrangements.
- Compliance with the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 2006.
- Correct safety certification in place.
- No serious hazards present in the HMO.

Any HMO licence holder who is committing a serious breach will be advised of the following actions:

1. That the HMO licence will be revoked.
2. That they will be invited to re-apply for a 1 year licence to enable closer supervision and monitoring of the property by the PSH team (Note where the

licence is already within its last year the licence will be revoked and the Licence holder will have to apply for a new licence where new licence conditions will be set to help to maintain the appropriate standards in the property).

3. If standards within the HMO are not improved or maintained following this procedure then further action will be taken in accordance with the powers contained within the Housing Act 2004.
4. The Council will consider other enforcement measures if appropriate.

#### Determining suitability for a HMO to be licenced

The Council has a duty to determine if an HMO is suitable for the proposed maximum number of occupiers or households. To make this determination the Private Sector Housing Team must have regard to the Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument No.373: 2006) and has created an amenity standard to assist with compliance and enforcement of these regulations. The Amenity Standard can be found at Annex C to this policy.

#### HMO Licence Fees

For over 11 years the HMO licence fee has been heavily subsidised by the Council and has been set at a level that is well below the national average. The per annum licence cost has been set at a rate that is less than the cost of a household TV licence (£98 per annum for the first application and £73 per annum for a renewal application). It is considered that the impact of the fee on the HMO sector is low in comparison to the potential income generated from operating a good quality/ successful HMO. The highest density of HMOs in Cornwall is in the Falmouth area where the rentable value of a 5 bed licensable HMO is in the region of £24,000 per annum (approx. £400 per room per month). In Camborne the annual rentable value is approximately £19,500 (£75 per room per week).

The PSH team strives to provide an effective, proactive HMO licensing service, and not a just a service that regulates landlords who engage with the Council. The team actively seeks out landlords who seek to avoid HMO licensing and takes robust action against those who fail to engage. Due to increased demand on our services, a wider scope of enforcement powers, the proposed widening out of mandatory HMO licensing, unprecedented expansion of the private rented sector and reduced Council budgets it is no longer sustainable for the Council to heavily subsidise the costs of the HMO licensing function, and new fees are being introduced with this policy allow the Authority to recover the costs incurred carrying out an efficient and sustainable HMO licensing function for the Council.

Annex A to this policy sets out our new HMO licence fee structure which commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and will apply to all licence applications submitted on or after this date.

## **11. Enforcing HMO licence conditions**

The Council will enforce the conditions and terms of a HMO licence in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of tenants.

Where a licence holder fails to comply with the conditions of the HMO licence the Private Sector Housing Team will take an appropriate course of action in accordance with the guiding principles of this policy.

### **12. Revocation of a HMO licence where the licence holder is no longer fit to hold a licence.**

Where anyone involved in the running of the HMO is found to no longer be fit and proper the HMO licence will be revoked and the owner will be required to reapply for a licence providing alternative arrangements to ensure that the management arrangements at the HMO are suitable, and that anyone involved in the operation of the HMO are fit and proper persons as determined by section 66 of the Housing Act 2004.

### **13. HMO Management Orders**

The Council will make application to the Residential Property Tribunal for an Interim Management Order where required by statute and where necessary a Final Management Order where a licence is still unable to be granted on expiry of the Interim Order.

Where a property is a licensable HMO the Council will make an application for an Interim Management Order either where there is no realistic prospect of the property being licensed in the near future or where the health and safety condition is satisfied in order to protect the occupiers.

Where after the expiry of the Interim Management Order the Council are still unable to grant a HMO licence and there is risk to occupiers a Final Management Order will be sought.

### **14. Enforcement of the HMO Management Regulations**

Where breaches of these requirements are identified in premises the "person managing" will be notified in writing of the breaches of the regulations identified and will be required to carry out prescribed works within specified timescales to remove breaches. Failure to remove these breaches as instructed may result in a civil penalty being issued or a case file being prepared for formal legal proceedings for the summary offence of failing to comply with the requirements of the HMO Management Regulations.

In circumstances where the breaches of the Management Regulations are either so severe, numerous and/or having a significant, detrimental effect on the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers, a civil penalty will be issued or a case file for formal legal proceedings will be submitted for the summary offences of failing to comply with the requirements of the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 ('the management regulations').

### **15. Enforcement of the HMO Management Regulations in sub-standard self-contained flats.**

The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Additional Provisions) (England) Regulations 2007 will be enforced in HMOs as defined by section 257 of the Housing Act 2004.

Where breaches of the management regulations are identified in these premises the "person managing" will be notified in writing and will be required to carry out prescribed works within specified timescales to remove the breaches. Failure to remove these breaches as instructed may result in a case file being prepared for formal legal proceedings.

In circumstances where the breaches of the Management Regulations are either so severe, numerous and/or having a significant, detrimental effect on the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers the Private Sector Housing Team will prepare a case file for formal legal proceedings for the offence of failing to comply with the requirements of the Regulations.

Where it is disputed that a property meets the definition of a section 257 HMO the Council will accept the submission of evidence from the property owner that the conversion works making the dwellings self-contained comply with the 1991 Building Regulations. Evidence must have been provided by a competent person who is approved to validate works under the requirements of the Building Regulations.

The Private Sector Housing Team will liaise with the Planning Enforcement and Building Control teams when undertaking enforcement activity in HMOs that meet the section 257 definition.

## **16. Applying the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) in HMOs**

The HHSRS will be used to deal with identified hazards posing serious or imminent harm, to assess licensed HMOs for hazards within the licence period, and to tackle poor housing conditions that are not able to be addressed through the HMO Management Regulations.

## **17. What happens if it is unclear that a property is a HMO?**

Where the Council needs to affirm that a dwelling is a HMO in accordance with section 254 of the Housing Act 2004 it will do so through the service of a 'HMO Declaration Notice'.

A HMO declaration under section 255 of the Housing Act 2004 will be served in such circumstances where the Council are satisfied that the HMO definition is met allowing the owner of the premises; should they wish to do so to appeal to the Residential Property Tribunal regarding the declaration.

## **18. Inspections of HMOs**

Risk assessment methodology will be used in the prioritisation for inspection and taking of action in all HMOs.

## **19. Enforcement decisions**

To ensure consistency and appropriateness all enforcement action will be checked and 'signed off' by a senior member of the Private Sector Housing Team (Principal Officer or Team Manager) before it is taken.

The senior officer will check that the action is consistent with the principles contained in this enforcement policy. Complex enforcement cases will be referred to the Private Sector Housing Management Team or PSH Manager for review.

## **20. Cost recovery**

In accordance with Sections 49 and 50 of the Housing Act 2004, the Council will normally exercise the power to charge and recover its reasonable costs incurred when:

- serving an improvement notice;
- serving a hazard awareness notice;
- making a prohibition order;
- a suspended improvement notice or suspended prohibition order;
- taking emergency remedial action and preparing the relevant notices;
- making an emergency prohibition order; and
- making a demolition order.

The charge will be calculated using the criteria laid down in Chapter 5 of the Housing Act 2004.

Costs will only be waived in exceptional circumstances such as deficiencies caused by tenant neglect and owner occupied premises, and only at the discretion of a senior officer, principal officer or team manager.

From the time that a 'demand for payment' becomes operative the sum will be recorded as a legal charge against the property which is a local land charge. The charge will remain on the property until the sum is repaid in full.

By virtue of section 50 of the Housing Act 2004 the Council will have for the purposes of enforcing the charge the same powers and remedies under the Law of Property Act 1925 and otherwise as if it were a mortgage by deed, having powers of sale in the lease or accepting surrender of a lease and appointing a receiver. The Council would normally exercise these rights if its enforcement costs exceeded £500.

When enforcement costs do not exceed £500, the Council will normally seek to recover those costs through the County Court. The Council will seek to recover its costs of the proceedings and the interest and use such remedies such as use of a court bailiff if an order is not paid.

The Council will make a charge to cover the cost of carrying out a review of Suspended Improvement Notices or Suspended Prohibition Orders, and for serving a

copy of the Councils decision on a review and that charge will also be registered as a charge against the property.

Enforcement costs will be based upon the criteria contained within section 49 of the Housing Act 2004, and will be charged at an hourly rate or part of an hour. The hourly rate will be based on the actual cost incurred to the Council for performing the chargeable activity.

## **21. Works in default of a statutory notice**

The Council will consider Undertaking Works in Default of a statutory notice, either with or without agreement, subject to conditions:

The conditions are as follows:

- a) The person responsible for undertaking the improvement work has been issued with a Civil Penalty Notice or has been successfully prosecuted for the offence (or accepted a simple caution) of not complying with the enforcement notice to which the improvement works relate; and
- b) A 'Category 1 Hazard' or 'Band D Category 2 hazard' relating to the notices remains in the property; and
- c) The Council will register a charge against the premises for the costs incurred in undertaking the works.
- d) There is a realistic prospect of recovering the cost of the work undertaken in a reasonable timescale.

In the majority of cases the council will seek to recover the costs incurred in undertaking works through formal action.

## **22. Charges for works undertaken in default of a notice.**

In accordance with Schedule 3 (10) of the Housing Act 2004; expenses incurred by the Council by undertaking works in default of a statutory notice will carry a simple interest rate charge of 4.5% APR. The interest rate charge will commence from the date that the demand for payment notice becomes operative and will remain until payment of all sums due.

## **23. Non-mandatory inspection charges**

The Private Sector Housing team will charge for inspections that are non-statutory. These include inspections relating to fitness of dwellings for the purposes of immigration requests. Our fees and charges can be found in Annex A to this policy.

## **24. Empty properties**

Officers will endeavour to communicate and engage with owners of long term empty properties to encourage, assist and enable them to bring their properties back into habitable use through voluntary cooperation. However, should cooperation not be forthcoming, and the owner does not demonstrate a reasonable plan and timescale



for remedial action, the Council will, where appropriate, intervene and use relevant enforcement powers to ensure a satisfactory resolution, e.g. improvement in the condition and re-use of the property. Such powers will be used fairly, proportionately, and consistently in accordance with other relevant strategies, policies and procedures - principally Empty Property Strategy (including Enforcement Policy).

## **25. Letting Agents Redress Scheme**

On 1 October 2014 legislation came into force making it a requirement for all lettings agents and property managers in England to belong to a Government approved redress scheme. These schemes provide a mechanism for complaints to be investigated and determined by an independent person.

In considering our policy approach in this area we have had regard to two sources of guidance and information. The first being Annex C of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) "Improving the Private Rented Sector and Tackling Bad Practice – A Guide for Local Authorities". Secondly to an industry standard brought together by the National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS) that encompasses partnership working with a number of key Local Authorities across England.

For the purposes of the legislation the government has approved three redress schemes. They are:

- Ombudsman Services Property
- Property Redress Scheme
- The Property Ombudsman

### **Failure to join a redress scheme**

Any agent or property manager who is found not to be a member of one of the recognised scheme will face the sanction of a financial penalty the level of which (up to a maximum of £5000) will be determined by the Council.

### **The process**

The process followed by the council will involve the service of a 'notice of intent' followed if necessary by a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). A reasonable length of time (at least 28 days) is provided for the agent or property manager to join one of the recognised schemes.

### **The level of fine**

DCLG guidance (referred to above) directs that £5000 should be considered the normal level of fine to be imposed with consideration to a lower fine only to be considered if it is confident that extenuating circumstances exist. As such the level of fine imposed will be £5000.

(NB - If any extenuating circumstances are submitted to the Council, due to their varying nature, they will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **Right of Appeal**

Anyone served with a PCN has the right of appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal.

In the event of an appeal, the PCN is suspended until the appeal has been determined or withdrawn. The Tribunal has the power to quash, confirm or vary the Final Notice.

### **Recovery of financial penalty**

If there is no appeal, or the notice is upheld on appeal and the agent fails to pay the penalty in full, the Council will take all necessary steps to recover the penalty. If circumstances dictate, this will be carried out on the order of a court as if payable under a court order.

## **26. The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide (England) Regulations 2015.**

Private sector landlords are required from 1 October 2015 to have at least one smoke alarm installed on every storey of their properties and a carbon monoxide alarm in any room containing a solid fuel burning appliance (e.g. a coal fire, wood burning stove). The legislation does not apply to licenced HMOs.

The landlord must make sure the alarms are in working order at the start of each new tenancy. The Council will ask for proof of this check being undertaken.

Where a landlord is found to be non-compliant with the regulations then they will be served with a remedial notice. If the notice is not complied with then the improvement works will be undertaken by the Council in default of the notice.

The Council will levy a Civil Penalty Charge of £5000 on a landlord who is found, following non-compliance with a remedial notice, to be non-compliant with these regulations. This charge has been set in consultation with professional landlord and agent associations in Cornwall in accordance with the following guiding principles:

- a. That the charge covers the full cost to the Authority of enforcing the regulations.
- b. That the penalty charge is a reasonable and proportionate response to serious issue following non-compliance and ignorance to the statutory requirements. The reason this was considered reasonable was the prescribed process within the Regulations (i.e. remedial notice served giving 1 month for compliance).
- c. It is reasonable to assume only a small proportion of PSH interventions will result in non-compliance and a fine being levied. Therefore the cost of all intervention must be covered by the fines associated with a limited number of cases.
- d. That the enforcement of the Regulations will form part of the everyday work of the PSH team.
- e. That the level of fine is a significant deterrent.

## **27. Energy Efficiency Regulations**

On or after the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 a landlord of a 'sub-standard' property with an EPC rating of F or G must not grant a new tenancy or let the property on such an existing tenancy that has been extended or renewed, unless it is exempt from the regulations by Regulation 25 or one or more of the exemptions in Chapter 4 of the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 this provision will apply to all existing tenancies.

## Enforcement authority

The enforcement authority for the purposes of Regulation 34 of the 2015 Regulations is the Council. Officers of the Private Sector Housing Team are authorised to enforce on the Council's behalf.

## Level of fines

The levels of fines set in the table below are set on the penalty maximum for each breach of the 2015 Regulations. The reason for this is that the Authority believes that offenders must bear the full cost of the enforcement of the regulations, minimising the cost to the Council tax payer for providing this service.

Regulation	Conditions	Level of fine
23 – Prohibition on letting a substandard property	Tenant has been in occupation less than 3 months	The penalty maximum of £2000 and the publication penalty.
23	Tenant has been in occupation for more than 3 months	The penalty maximum of £4000 and the publication penalty.
36(2) –the landlord has registered false or misleading information.	None	The penalty maximum of £1000 and the publication penalty.
37(4)(a) where a landlord failed to comply with a compliance notice.		The penalty maximum of £2000 and the publication penalty.
Note: Regulation 40(6) states that where the Council enforces penalty notices in respect of regulation 23, and under one or both regulations 36 and 37 the total financial penalty imposed must be no more than £5000.		

## Reviews, waiving and modification of penalties

Where a landlord serves a notice on the local authority requesting a review of its decision to serve a penalty notice, an authorised senior officer within the PSH team will review the application in accordance with Regulation 42.

## Appeals

Regulation 43 sets out the process for appeals.

## Recovery of financial penalty

The amount of an unpaid financial penalty will be recovered as a debt owed to the Council. This means that the Council will enter into legal proceedings to recover outstanding penalties.

## 28. Preventing illegal evictions

The Private Sector Housing Team strongly opposes all criminal activity in the Private Rented Sector. Illegal eviction and harassment are not only criminal acts but are also a cause of homelessness. The following is an agreed protocol between the PSH team and Cornwall Housing Limited regarding the division of responsibility for dealing with illegal eviction and harassment complaints:

### PSH illegal eviction and harassment complaint handling

<b>Description of eviction</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>PSH Response</b>
Tenant still in occupation, but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threat of eviction</li> <li>• Verbal threats no notice served</li> <li>• S.21 notice served requiring possession</li> </ul>	CHLTD	Refer to CHLTD
Illegal eviction No court order/ locks changed possessions either locked inside or deposited outside of the property.	CHLTD	Refer to CHLTD
Evictions that breach Section 39 of the Deregulation Act 2015 and the Assured Shorthold Tenancy Notices and Prescribed Requirements (England) Regulations 2015.	CHLTD	Refer to CHLTD
Harassment	CHLTD	Refer to CHLTD
Eviction that meets the criteria for retaliatory eviction under the De-Regulation Act 2015	PSH	Refer to PSH case officer

## 29. Securing Compliance

Private Sector Housing Team will explain the requirements of enforcement action clearly, and supporting advice and guidance will be issued where appropriate to encourage compliance with enforcement action.

## 30. Cautions and Prosecutions

### Simple or Conditional Cautions

In most cases a Civil Penalty Notice will be used in preference to cautions, however, under certain circumstances, a caution may be used as an alternative to a civil penalty or a prosecution. A caution is a serious matter and it may be used to influence any decision whether or not to issue a civil penalty or prosecute should the

individual, organisation or business offend again, and it may be referred to in any subsequent court proceedings. Cautions are intended to:-

- Deal quickly and simply with certain offences.
- Avoid unnecessary appearance in criminal courts.
- Reduce the chance of offenders re-offending.

Before issuing a caution the following conditions must be satisfied:-

- There must be evidence of guilt sufficient to give a realistic prospect of conviction.
- The offence will not be serious in nature and it must not be a continuing offence.
- The offender must understand the significance of the caution and accept a caution by admitting the offence.

Where an individual chooses not to accept a caution the Council will wither issue a Civil Penalty Notice or prosecute.

### **31. Prosecution**

If an offender fails to comply with the requirements of an enforcement notice or Order, fails to licence, fails to comply with a licence condition or a regulation, or other such contraventions, the Council will apply the full code test contained in the Code for Crown Prosecutors to establish if a matter is suitable for prosecution.

If a matter is deemed suitable for prosecution then the following sanctions are available:

- Taking a prosecution through the law courts.
- Civil Penalty Notices (available for certain housing offences).
- Simple or Conditional Cautions.
- Work in default of a statutory notice (where applicable).

Criminal offences not within the scope of Civil Penalty Notices will routinely be dealt with by prosecution through the law courts or where suitable and appropriate a caution will be offered. All cases will be investigated to the criminal standard, and will be subjected to the full code test. Authorisation to take legal proceedings or issue a civil penalty will be given by a relevant team manager and an authorised officer of the Councils legal team.

Prosecution proceedings will generally be instigated, against persons or companies who disregard the law, refuse to achieve basic minimum legal requirements or put the public at risk through their actions. Prosecution is likely in one of the following circumstances:

- A major contravention of the legislation has occurred.
- There is an adverse history of offences by the same person or organisation.
- There is a serious risk to the public.
- A conviction is likely to result in a significant sentence.

- There is evidence that the offence was premeditated.
- The offence was motivated by any form of discrimination against the victim's ethnic or national origin, sex, religious beliefs, political views or sexual orientation, or the suspect demonstrated hostility towards the victim based on any of those characteristics.
- There is any element of corruption.
- The defendant's previous convictions or cautions are relevant to the present offence.
- The applicant has been issued with a minimum of two civil penalties relating to two different time periods, within a two year time period and the penalty has not deterred the offender from re-offending.
- An occupier, or other person has suffered a serious injury or there has been a death as a result of the offence.
- Where the Council believes that the most appropriate course of action would be to secure a conviction for a banning order offence, and make an application for a banning order.

### **32. Civil Penalty Notices**

Section 126 and Schedule 9 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 ('The 2016 Act') amends the Housing Act 2004 ('The 2004 Act') to allow financial penalties to be imposed as an alternative to prosecution for certain offences. The offences are as follows:

- Failure to comply with an improvement notice - Section 30 of the 2004 Act.
- Licensing of HMOs - Section 72 of the 2004 Act.
- Licensing of houses under Part 3, Section 95 of the 2004 Act.
- Failure to comply with an overcrowding notice - Section 139(7) of the 2004 Act.
- Offences committed under The Management Regulations in respect of HMOs - Section 234 of the 2004 Act.

The Government has by regulations made it a requirement that a local housing authority may use any financial penalty recovered under section 249A of the 2004 Act to meet the costs and expenses (whether administrative or legal) incurred in, or associated with, carrying out any of its enforcement functions in relation to the private rented sector.

Criminal offences within the scope of Civil Penalty Notices will normally be dealt with by the Council by issuing an appropriate Civil Penalty as an alternative to prosecution. Where the Council believes that a civil Penalty Notice is not the most appropriate course of action to take, it will consider alternative legal disposals (as detailed in policy 31 above).

The 2016 Act states that the amount of a financial penalty imposed must be determined by the local housing authority, but must not be more than £30,000. It is therefore left to the discretion of Cornwall Council to decide an appropriate level financial penalty to impose.

In April 2017 the Government issued statutory guidance 'Civil Penalties under the Housing and Planning Act 2016'. Cornwall Council has adhered to the principles of the statutory guidance document in setting the following penalty notice charges. The guidance can be found online on the following website:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/606653/Civil\\_Penalties\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/606653/Civil_Penalties_guidance.pdf)

Cornwall Council has adopted a scale of Civil Penalty charges that are designed to be a significant punishment according to the circumstances of a case. In determining an appropriate financial penalty for a relevant housing offence, the Council has given consideration to the following guiding principles:

1. That the penalty is designed to be a significant punishment in the circumstances, with a high enough economic impact on the offender taking into account the offenders assets and income (not just rental income).
2. The penalties are set at a high enough level to deter landlords and lettings agents from committing housing offences, and deter an offender from committing further offences or repeating the same offence.
3. That the penalties are designed to remove the financial benefit of letting a substandard dwelling, and ensure that it is not cheaper to offend and let out a substandard dwelling than comply with the law.
4. That the penalties reflect the severity of the offence, and the potential impact on the health and safety of occupiers (whether in residence or not).

Annex B to this policy sets out how the Private Sector Housing Team applies civil penalties.

### **33. Rent Repayment Orders**

The Council has a duty to consider a rent repayment order when a landlord has been convicted of a relevant offence. The Council may also assist a tenant to apply for a rent repayment order by helping them to make an application, by conducting proceedings or by giving advice to a tenant. The Private Sector Housing team will make a decision on a case by cases basis in respect of providing such assistance.

In addition the Local Authority or a tenant may make an application to the First Tier Property Tribunal for a rent repayment order if satisfied that one of the following relevant housing offences has been committed (whether or not convicted).

- Failure to comply with an improvement notice under s.30 of the Housing Act 2004.
- Failure to comply with a Prohibition Order under s.32 of the Housing Act 2004.
- Breach of a banning order made under s.21 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- Using violence to secure entry to a property under section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, and
- Illegal Eviction or Harassment of occupiers of a property under section 1 of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

The Private Sector Housing Team will consider a rent repayment order in all cases, and will make the decision whether or not to apply for an order based on the circumstances of each case, using the guiding principles contained within this enforcement policy.

Where a rent repayment order is granted, the Private Sector Housing Team will use all legal means available to recover the amount awarded.

The law permits the Council to use income received through rent repayment orders to support and further the Councils statutory functions in relation to enforcement activities covering the private rented sector.

### **34. Banning Orders**

The Private Sector Housing Team will consider applying for a banning order for all relevant banning order offences. The following will be considered before making an application:

- Regulations relating to banning orders.
- The seriousness of the offence.
- Any previous convictions that the person has for a banning order offence.
- Whether the person is or has at any time been included in the database of rogue landlords.
- The likely effect of the banning order on the person and anyone else that may be affected by the order.
- The objectives and principles contained within this enforcement policy.

### **35. Breach of a Banning Order**

A person who breaches a banning order commits an offence. Any person who is found guilty of breaching a banning order is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 51 weeks or to a fine or both.

A financial penalty can be imposed by the Council as an alternative to prosecuting for a banning order offence. Cornwall Council will consider the use of a financial penalty in all cases relating to a breach of a banning order. Where a financial penalty is determined it will be the penalty maximum of £30,000 unless there are extenuating circumstances that deem the penalty maximum to be inappropriate.

If a breach continues for more than 6 months then another financial penalty will be imposed. The penalty will be the 'penalty maximum' unless there are extenuating circumstances that deem the penalty maximum to be inappropriate.

Further financial penalties will be imposed for each additional 6 month period for whole or part of which the breach continues. The penalty will be the 'penalty maximum' unless there are extenuating circumstances that deem the penalty maximum to be inappropriate.

### **36. Database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents**

The authority has a duty to make an entry into the database where a banning order is made and power to make an entry where a person has been convicted of a banning order offence, but no banning order has been made.



In addition the authority has the power to make an entry into the database where a person has at least twice in a period of 12 months received a financial penalty in respect of a banning order offence committed at a time when the person was a residential landlord or agent.

The Private Sector Housing Team will have regard to criteria provided by statutory guidance when deciding whether to make an entry in the database.

### **37. Proceeds of Crime**

The service will consider the use of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, to recover the proceeds relating to a crime from a convicted individual where it can be proven that the defendant has financially benefitted from committing an offence.

### **38. Unreasonable Customer Behaviour**

The Council does not normally limit the contact people have with it, whether complaining, making requests for service, information or help and guidance. The Council is committed to dealing with these requests fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality of service to those who make them. It is keen to resolve any dispute and/or complaint as early as possible.

The Council understands that people sometimes feel frustrated, but the Council will not tolerate behaviour which is deemed unacceptable, threatening, abusive or unreasonably persistent towards members, officers or any other person.

Listening & Learning Policy, including Unreasonably Persistent and Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/listening-and-learning-compliments-comments-and-complaints/listening-and-learning-policy-summary/>

## **Management**

### **Policy management**

The Housing Service is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.

### **Breaches and non-compliance**

Non-compliance with this policy could lead to the Council not fulfilling its statutory duties, or being liable for malpractice or abuse of powers.

If the Council does not act when people are at imminent risk of serious harm risk then there is a possibility that real harm could occur to members of the public.

### **How the impact of the policy will be measured**

The policy will be measured through existing performance management methods and service performance indicators.

### **Evaluation and review**

The policy will be reviewed 12 months following implementation to establish whether the policy is effective and having the required impact. Adjustment to the policy may be necessary as a result.

## **Document information**

### **Contacts**

Policy prepared by Stuart Kenney, Principal Officer, Housing Service.

### **Further information**

Further information can be obtained from Joe Roberts, Private Sector Housing Team Manager – [joe.roberts@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:joe.roberts@cornwall.gov.uk)

### **Alternative formats**

If you would like this information in another format please contact:

**Cornwall Council, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY**

Telephone: **0300 1234 100** email: [enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk)

[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

Please consider the environment. Only print this document if it cannot be sent electronically.

## **Annex A – Private Sector Housing Fees and Charges**

These fees and charges commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. They do not apply to enforcement cases and HMO licence applications received before the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

### **1. HMO Licensing**

Table 1 below sets out the fee structure for HMO Licensing.

**Table 1**

<b>HMO Licence Application Type</b>	<b>Cost</b>
New Licence Application	£1150
Licence Renewal Application	£862.50
PSH located Licence – a property which is identified as licensable by the Council but is operating without a licence.	£1500

### **2. Other Fees and Charges**

Table 2 sets out the other fees and charges relating to Private Sector Housing work.

**Table 2**

<b>Fees &amp; Charges</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Enforcement charges	£50 per hour
Immigration (visa application) inspections (including administration costs)	£175.00 3.5 hours at £50 per hour
Other charges e.g. Works in Default, etc	Cost of the works undertaken plus administration costs charged at a rate of £50 per hour. Any legal costs incurred will also be recovered.

## **Annex B – Civil Penalty Notices**

Table 1 below sets out the criteria that the Private Sector Housing Team use to assess the appropriate level of civil penalty.

**Table 1 – Civil Penalty Charging Matrix.**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Level 1 Penalty - £500</b> per breach of the HMO Management Regulations	<b>Level 2 Penalty - £2500 to £5000</b> Level 2 penalties will be imposed if ALL of the following criteria applies:	<b>Level 3 Penalty – £7500 to £15,000</b> Level 3 penalties will be imposed if criteria 1 AND any other criteria applies:	<b>Level 4 Penalty – £15000 to £30,000</b> Level 4 penalties will be imposed if criteria 1 and ANY of the other criteria applies:
<b>1. Severity of offence</b>	Minor breaches of the HMO management regulations where occupiers were not placed at imminent risk of serious harm.	<p>The tenants were not placed in imminent risk of serious harm but at considerable risk of harm; or</p> <p>Major breaches of the HMO management regulations where contraventions places occupiers at significant risk of harm, but not imminent risk of serious harm.</p> <p>Non-compliance with a S.12 improvement notice where a member of the vulnerable group is not currently in occupation.</p>	<p>The tenant(s) were placed at risk of serious harm but not imminent risk of serious harm; or</p> <p>Offences that relate to the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Section 72 of the Housing Act 2004) where the tenants are not placed at imminent risk of serious harm; or</p> <p>Non-compliance with a S.12 improvement notice where a member of the vulnerable group <u>is</u> currently in occupation.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Non-compliance with a S.11 improvement notice where a</p>	<p>The tenant(s) were exposed to imminent risk of serious harm; or</p> <p>Offences that relate to the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Section 72 of the Housing Act 2004) where the occupiers are placed at imminent risk of serious harm.</p> <p>Offences that relate to the HMO management regulations were contraventions placed occupiers (or any other person) at imminent risk of serious harm.</p> <p>Non-compliance with a S.11 improvement notice where a member of the vulnerable group (relevant to the hazard) is in</p>

			<p>member of the vulnerable group <u>is not</u> currently in occupation.</p> <p>Contravention of an overcrowding notice (s.139)</p>	<p>occupation.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p> <p><b>Track record of offender</b></p>	<p>There is no adverse history of non-compliance and it is the defendant's first housing related offence in Cornwall.</p>	<p>There is no adverse history of non-compliance and it is the defendant's first housing related offence in Cornwall.</p>	<p>There is an adverse history of non-compliance, or the landlord is known to have been prosecuted, accepted a simple or conditional caution or received a civil penalty for one relevant housing offence within the last 5 years.</p>	<p>Where the lives of tenants (or any other person) are placed at imminent risk of serious harm, the track record of the offender is deemed to be of no relevance.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p> <p><b>Culpability</b></p>	<p>The defendant is believed to have been ignorant in their duties as a landlord as opposed to reckless or deliberate in their actions.</p>	<p>The defendant is believed to have been ignorant in their duties as a landlord as opposed to reckless or deliberate in their actions.</p>	<p>The defendant has been reckless in their duties and through negligence has placed a tenant (or any other person) at serious risk of harm, but not imminent risk of harm; or A lettings agent; or A landlord who is control of three or more dwellings.</p>	<p>The defendant has been reckless in their duties and through negligence has placed the health and safety of tenants(s), or other persons at imminent risk of serious harm;</p>
<p><b>4.</b></p> <p><b>Potential for harm</b></p>	<p>The tenant(s) were not exposed to imminent risk of serious harm caused by breach of the regulations.</p>	<p>The tenant(s) were not exposed to imminent risk of serious harm and the occupier is not vulnerable to the hazard (as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Operating Guidance).</p>	<p>a) The tenant(s) were exposed to serious hazards or defects, but not imminent risk of serious harm. b) One or more breaches of the HMO Management regulations that have placed an occupier of the HMO at serious risk of harm but not imminent or serious risk of harm.</p>	<p>The tenant(s), or other persons, were exposed to imminent risk of serious harm such as fire safety, gas or electrical defects from defects or substandard management practices.</p>

## Costs incurred to the Council

All costs incurred in investigating offences including case file preparation time will be added to the total value of the Civil Penalty.

## Penalty reductions

When the level of penalty has been determined the penalty amount will be the maximum of the scale. This amount will only be reduced if the following criteria are met:

**Table 2 – Penalty reductions**

HMO licence applications submitted within 14 days of the Council requesting an application; or	A maximum 25% Reduction of penalty level maximum
Relevant improvement works completed but out of the timescales specified on the relevant notice or not to the satisfaction of the Authority; or	
Admission of guilt received within 28 days of receiving the 'Notice of Intent' and the offender wishes to pay the penalty within 28 days.	
The offender provides the Council with evidence to enable an assessment of their assets and income (not just rental income) to be carried out and assets/ income are deemed insufficient.	25% Reduction of penalty level maximum

The maximum penalty reduction in any qualifying case will be no more than 50%.

## **Notice of Intent**

When Cornwall Council has made a determination as to the amount of financial penalty to impose the defendant will be issued with a 'Notice of Intent'. This notice will set out the amount of the penalty, the reasons for proposing to impose the penalty, and the information about the right of the landlord to make representations.


It is at this stage that the offender will be invited to make an admission of guilt, and provide evidence to enable an assessment of their means to pay the penalty.

**Annex C**

**Amenity Standards  
for Mandatory  
Licensable Houses in  
Multiple Occupation  
(HMOs)**

Date: 19/04/2017

Private Sector Housing Team





## **Background**

The Housing Act 2004 ('The Act') sets out the legal requirement for certain Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to be licensed.

Section 65 of the Act states that the Council cannot be satisfied that the house is reasonably suitable for a particular maximum number of households or persons for the purposes of licensing the house fails to meet prescribed standards.

Schedule 3 of 'The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)' prescribes standards for deciding the suitability for occupation of an HMO by a particular maximum number of households or persons.

Cornwall Council has produced this standard to clarify the legal requirements for licensable HMOs. This standard must be considered a guide, however it is limited to the scope of the above regulations and therefore has legal basis. The standard will be used to determine the suitability of a HMO for a maximum number of households or persons that may occupy it, and/or for enforcing an appropriate level of compliance through licence conditions.

### **1. Room measurements**

When measuring a room it is the usable space that is being calculated. The following areas should therefore not be included:

- any area taken up by bathroom facilities within the room
- the chimney breast and small alcoves
- the floor area where the ceiling height is less than 2.14m (7ft) in any room, or in attic rooms any floor area in the eaves of the room where the ceiling height is less than 1.53m (5ft)
- Space taken up by fitted/ built in furniture such as wardrobes.

### **2. Classes HMOs linked to amenity provision:**

To simplify this amenity standard HMOs types are classified into the following:

'CLASS A' HMO: A tenant rents a bedroom within a property and shares communal cooking facilities; and/or bathing facilities. There is a communal dining, or living room.

'CLASS B' HMO: A tenant rents a room containing cooking facilities within it. Shared bathing facilities between two or more households.

### 3. Minimum Room sizes:

Room type	Class A HMO	Class B HMO
Single bedroom with access to living/dining room	6.52m <sup>2</sup>	13m <sup>2</sup>
Single bedroom with no access to living/dining room	10m <sup>2</sup>	15m <sup>2</sup>
Double bedroom with access to living/dining room:	11m <sup>2</sup>	14m <sup>2</sup>
Double bedroom with no access to living/dining room	14m <sup>2</sup>	16.5m <sup>2</sup>
Livingroom sizes:		
1-5 people	11m <sup>2</sup>	NA
6-10 people	16.5m <sup>2</sup>	
11+ people	As a guide an additional 1m <sup>2</sup> should be provided per person	

All rooms must have an ergonomic and safe layout for the occupier(s).

#### 4. Kitchens

Kitchens must be designed for the safe and hygienic storage, preparation and cooking of food. Kitchens must be located within one floors distance of travel from the furthest bedroom. Where this is not the case there must be a dining room/living room in proximity to the kitchen or within it of appropriate size for use by occupiers as per the kitchen sizes below.

As a guide the following kitchen sizes should be used for communal kitchens:

Used by up to 5 persons	7m <sup>2</sup>
Used by 6 – 10 persons	10.5m <sup>2</sup>

**Note:** Kitchens used by more than 10 people will be accepted on a case by case basis subject to prior approval by the Private Sector Housing Team. Please submit plans illustrating the room size and layout of facilities to ensure all are adequate and safe for use.

**The following table is provided to determine the appropriate provision of kitchen facilities for the number of people occupying the HMO:**

	Exclusive use (cooking facilities within a bedroom)	Kitchens used by 5 persons or under	Kitchens used by 6 or 7 people	Kitchens used by 8 or 9 people	Kitchens used by 10 people
<b>Notes:</b>				The ideal is provision of two kitchens, but where this is not practicable the following will be accepted:	
<b>Sinks and drainers</b>	A single sink and drainer with hot and potable cold water supply and trapped waste.	A single sink and drainer with hot and potable cold water supply and trapped waste.	A double bowl sink and drainer with hot and potable cold water supply and trapped waste.	2 sink and drainers with hot and potable cold water supply and trapped waste <b>or</b> a sink and drainer with hot and potable cold water supply and trapped waste <b>and</b> a dishwasher.	2 complete sets of facilities as per the specification for kitchens used by 5 persons or under.
<b>2 course tile or equivalent impervious splash back of 0.45m in height across all worktops and sink, food</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	

<b>preparation and cooking areas.</b>					
<b>Cooking facilities</b>	Small oven with integrated 2 ring hobs and grill (must be installed on appropriate stand or integrated into worktop to ensure safe use)	An oven and 4 ring hob.	An oven and 4 ring hob and a combination microwave oven.	2 separate ovens and 8 ring hobs to be provided.	
<b>Fridge/ Freezer facilities</b>	A work top height fridge with freezer compartment	<b>Either</b> an under counter fridge and under counter freezer <b>or</b> an upright combination fridge freezer	<b>Either</b> 2 under counter fridges and under counter freezer <b>or</b> an upright combination fridge freezer <b>and</b> an under counter fridge	<b>Either</b> 2 under-counter fridges and 2 under counter freezers or 2 upright combination fridge freezers	
<b>Standard base or wall unit cupboards (not under sink)</b>	2 base or wall units	1 per occupier	1 per occupier	1 per occupier	
<b>A suitable size bin(s) for the number of occupiers</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	

<b>Worktop space for food preparation</b>	500mm x 500mm of impervious worktop	1000mm x 500mm of impervious worktop	1500mm of impervious worktop	2000mm x 500mm of impervious worktop	
<b>Electrical sockets</b>	2 double or 4 single power sockets in addition to those required for fixed appliances	2 double or 4 single power sockets in addition to those required for fixed appliances	3 double or 6 single power sockets in addition to those required for fixed appliances	4 double or 8 single power sockets in addition to those required for fixed appliances	
<b>Intermittent mechanical extract ventilation provided at a rate of 60 litres per second; or</b>  <b>A cooker hood that expels moisture laden air to the outside at a rate of 30 litres per second; or</b>  <b>For a hinges or pivot window that opens 30° or more or for parallel sliding windows (ie sash windows), the height X width of the opening part should be at least 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the floor area of the room.</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	

## 5. Bathrooms

1. A readily accessible bathroom or a shower room, being not more than one floor distant from any user, should be provided according to the following ratios:

1 – 4 persons	1 bathroom with a fixed bath or shower and a toilet with a wash hand basin.
5 persons	1 bathroom with a fixed bath or shower and at least 1 separate toilet and wash hand basin.
6 - 10 persons	2 bathrooms with a fixed bath or shower and with 2 separate W.C's with wash hand basins (but one of the W.C's can be contained within one of the bathrooms).
11 – 15 persons	3 bathrooms and 3 separate W.C's with wash hand basins (but two of the W.C's can be contained in two of the bathrooms).

2. Baths and showers shall not be provided in kitchens.
3. All baths, showers and wash hand basins must be equipped with taps providing a continuous supply of hot and cold water.
4. All bathrooms must be suitably and adequately heated.
5. All bathrooms containing a bath or shower should be provided with adequate means of ventilation to deal with moisture generated during bathing. Wherever practicable this should be by providing intermittent mechanical extract ventilation that has an extraction rate of at least 15 Litres per second.
6. Where mechanical extract ventilation is not practicable, bathrooms must be provided with windows that meet one of the following specifications:
  - A hinged or pivot window that opens 30° or more or for parallel sliding windows (i.e. sash windows), the height X width of the opening part should be at least 1/20th of the floor area of the room.
  - A hinged or pivot window that opens from 15° to 30° should have an openable area of at least 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the floor area of the room.

If a window opens less than 15° then it is not suitable for providing purge ventilation and other arrangements should be made.

7. All bathrooms and toilets must be of an adequate size and layout. The bath/shower room must be large enough to enable the user to undress within the compartment and to store their clothing without the risk of them getting wet.
8. All baths, toilets and wash hand basins must be fit for the purpose.

9. All shared bathrooms and toilets must be located within an acceptable distance (ideally within 1 floor distance) of the living accommodation and being accessible from communal areas.



Prepared by: The Private Sector Housing Team.

Email: [psh@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:psh@cornwall.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01209 615629.

If you would like this information  
in another format please contact:

**Cornwall Council  
County Hall  
Treyew Road  
Truro TR1 3AY**

Telephone: **0300 1234 100**

Email: [enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk)

**[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)**