



Private Sector Housing

Steven Hayes-Arter – Service Manager

A city of growth and opportunity, where everyone thrives



Private Sector Housing

Private rented sector accounts for approx. 28,000 properties spread across the city. Mixed tenure and property types. From bedsits to large HMOs.

The private rented sector provides an integral part of the housing market ensuring there is accommodation for the needs of the population.

As such accommodation standards vary.

My service areas predominantly deal with the standard & safety of the private rented accommodation in the city.

Our statutory powers under the Housing Act 2004 (& other regulations) require the LA to act as the enforcing authority.

Private Sector Housing

Our service tries to ensure that all properties meet the minimum standards, are safe and free from significant hazards.

This includes having sufficient fire detection and means of escape, the right amount of amenities, are not overcrowded, and meet minimum energy efficiency standards

Under the Housing Act our officers assess properties using the Housing, Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to determine what hazards are present and how significant they are.

There are 30 Hazards, ranging from excess cold to structural collapse.

Hazards are assessed as Category 1 or Category 2

Private Sector Housing

Where Category 1 hazards are identified the LA is duty bound under the Housing Act to enforce.

This will generally result in an Improvement notice, but could lead to prohibition of part or whole of a property.

Prosecution and or issuing of Civil penalty notices can then follow on the landlord and or owner.

Category 2 hazards lead to 'advisory' action. But can if left become more serious and ultimately lead to enforcement.

Private Sector Housing

The service receives around 500 service requests per year relating to disrepair

Issues include, damp and mould, excess cold, leaks and lack of fire detection

Service currently has 3.5FTE responding to these complaints and dealing with other private sector housing work, which currently includes dealing with high rise buildings (post Grenfell) in which we are currently working closely with Fire Authority and DLUHC on several buildings within the city.

Demand for service is very high & always increases during the colder months, generally due to heating related issues & damp & mould.

HMO licensing

- There are approximately 6000-7000 HMOs in the city.
- The majority of the HMOs are situated within the central wards of the city, predominantly in Bevois, Bargate & Portswood.
- As a city with two universities, we have a high proportion of students, many of which live in the private rented sector & in HMOs.
- Statutory duty to licence all HMOs with five or more persons in residence.
- In the city we have approx. 2500 of these Mandatory HMOs, which require licensing every five years.
- All Licensed HMOs must meet certain conditions concerning safety and amenities and be properly managed so as to ensure that they do not impact negatively on the local neighbourhood.

HMO Licensing

- Currently SCC has a HMO licensing team of 6.5FTE responsible for inspecting and enforcing conditions and standards within the licensed HMOs in the city.
- SCC have local conditions/standards relating to the room sizes, level of amenities and fire safety standards.
- Failure to licence & failure to comply with conditions are offences which can result in enforcement.
- Work closely with the PSH officers in relation to complaints about conditions in HMOs.

Additional HMO Licensing

- Southampton City Council has also operated additional HMO licensing in certain wards within the city.
- Additional licensing schemes allow SCC to licence smaller HMOs, and 'cluster flats within purpose-built student blocks not captured by the Mandatory scheme.
- Schemes have covered the four central wards of Bevois, Bargate, Portswood & Swaythling and also the western wards of Shirley, Freemantle, Bassett & Millbrook.
- The most recent scheme covering the central wards ended on September 30th.

Additional HMO Licensing update

- Previous additional licensing has captured another 2500 HMOs across the city.
- Licence conditions imposed are same for Mandatory & Additional HMOS within the city.
- Additional schemes can only run for five years & run on a 'cost recovery' basis.
- Schemes cannot be 'renewed'. If a further scheme is designated this will require public consultation & Cabinet approval.
- Plan for new scheme in Spring 2024

Partnership working

- SASHH – Southampton accreditation scheme for student housing
- SCC has helped develop standards
- Ensures properties let through the Universities to students meet certain standards
- iHowz, National Residential Landlords Association – SCC HMO team have developed strong links and good working relationship with these groups to improve standards in the sector.
- The Environment Centre (TEC) – Southampton Healthy Homes
- Manage contract/partnership to provide a warm home/fuel poverty advice and guidance service to residents
- Help to facilitate improvements and measures in private homes through national grants and SCC funding

Any questions?

Thank you. If you have any issues relating to HMOs please contact

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for other housing issues email

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