Standards for Supported Accommodation

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Standards for supported accommodation

Introduction

Bristol City Council is in the process of procuring a range of supported accommodation to help people recover from homelessness, and for care leavers. This accommodation needs to be of a high quality, to be well designed and built to high standards. To ensure that all accommodation meets this standard, BCC has developed these minimum standards, taking into account relevant legislation and government guidance.

Application and scope of the Standards

These standards set out the minimum standards required of the accommodation that BCC will purchase for this homelessness prevention. The standards will apply to Registered Providers, voluntary organisations, as well as private landlords / organisations. It is recognised that there may be exceptional situations when it will not be possible to meet these standards. A degree of flexibility will sometimes be possible if other compensating features are present or if there is a clear plan to meet these standards in a reasonable timeframe.

There may be additional requirements depending on the specific needs of the service being procured. For example, high support schemes will require office space from which support workers can be based.

Supported accommodation should comply with:

- The first criterion of the Decent Homes Standard, the HHSRS which replaces the Housing Fitness Standard with the implementation of Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004. The HHSRS is a risk assessment procedure and does not set a standard, but identifies a number of hazards which should trigger remedial action (see appendix 2 & 3)

- All the other criteria of the Decent Homes Standard: in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services and provide a reasonable degree of ‘thermal comfort’. This is because those people accessing supported housing are likely to come within the definition of vulnerable within guidance on implementation of the Decent Homes Standards and therefore fall within these (see appendix 2 & 3).

- The West of England Rental Scheme property standard

- Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) regulations, and Bristol’s Private Sector housing accreditation scheme.

- The additional standards detailed in this document in the next section, which complement the regulations. Taken together, these standards will ensure that the accommodation purchased for supported accommodation are good quality and will allow effective recovery from homelessness and the development of independence skills.

Compliance with these standards is a condition of support contracts. Accommodation will be inspected for the duration of the contract to ensure compliance with these standards is met.
Additional Standards

1.0 Living Environment and the community

Links to the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework

Supplementary Standard 3.3 The Living Environment

Responsive maintenance is efficient, effective, within agreed timescales and involves client consultation

- Buildings should be good quality, clean, tidy, safe and well managed
- The provider has arrangements in place to ensure that maintenance needs can be responded to rapidly to take account to vulnerability of clients with specific support or communication needs.
- There is a log of all maintenance requests by staff or clients together with response times.
- Response times for repairs are in line with reasonable targets set by the organisation

2.0 Facilities

2.1 Kitchens

These standards are for shared and exclusive/self contained kitchens

Layout

- All floor surfaces must be reasonably smooth and impervious and capable of being readily cleansed (corners and junctions should be sealed and covered to avoid unclean able areas)
- All wall surfaces must be smooth and capable of being readily cleaned

Lighting and ventilation

- All kitchen areas must be provided with adequate lighting particularly over the facilities and appropriate means of ventilation to the whole kitchen area and in particular the cooking area, this shall be either to the external air by a window or by a suitably sited mechanical ventilation system
Standards for supported accommodation

Storage

- The units should be in a good serviceable condition and have a realistic lifespan for the term of the lease/tenancy
- A dry goods storage cupboard should be provided. Note the space in any cupboard below a sink will not be considered acceptable for this purpose
- Where kitchens are shared, there should be provision of food storage facilities (either refrigerated or dry food storage) within the unit of accommodation

Electrical

- A refrigerator with an adequate freezer compartment (or where the freezer compartment is not adequate, adequate separate freezers), for every three persons there should be a standard domestic refrigerator of at least 100 litres capacity and a freezer compartment of at least 15 litres or a tall upright for every 5 persons

Refuse disposal

- Appropriate refuse storage disposal facilities should be provided including non food recycling disposal, food waste disposal (with instructions) in line with Bristol City Council Green city agenda

2.2 Toilet and personal washing facilities

Bathroom fittings and tiles

- Baths if provided should be free of chips, rust or staining and adequately supported
- Basins and baths must be well sealed to the tiled splash back with waterproof silicone sealant
- Tiled splash backs must be in good condition
- Toilet pans and seats must be clean, free of cracks or chips and should be well secured to the floor
- Soil pipes to the toilet, bath and basin should be free flowing and watertight

Showers

- Showers over baths must have full height tiles, and a good waterproof surround
- A safety rail must be fitted in units where a person with a mobility impairment is housed
- Shower cubicles and trays must be of good quality, with full height tiles well sealed to the tray and raised off the ground level on a plinth to allow access to the waste trap
- A shower and no bath may be acceptable in studio and 1bed units
2.3 Amenity space/gardens

Communal gardens

- Should be easily accessible to all occupants
- Should have a management and maintenance plan

2.4 Lighting

Natural lighting

- All habitable rooms shall be provided with an area of clear glazing situated in a window and/or door

Artificial lighting

- All rooms should have a lighting pendant or batten holder with bulb points with a simple on/off switch
- Fluorescent lighting is only acceptable in the kitchen
- External lighting should be provided where necessary for the safety and security of residents
- Artificial lighting to staircases, landings and passages shall be controlled from a sufficient number of appropriately placed switch outlets. If a time switch system is used the time period shall be reasonable and appropriate to the circumstances of the clients

2.5 Ventilation

- All habitable rooms shall be ventilated directly to external air by a window

2.6 Water supply

- A stop tap is to be provided in a conveniently accessible position

2.7 Laundry facilities

- Space for a washing machine (ideally in the kitchen) is required. Hot and cold feeds, a suitable electric socket and a waste pipe should be provided in this space
- Washing machines in bathrooms are not acceptable
- Laundry rooms should be provided where no facilities within the unit of accommodation exist
2.8 Security measures

**Locks**

- Front entrance doors, rear doors and individual self contained bed sits/flats should have locking doors with night latch and a where possible suited mortice deadlock openable from the inside without a key using a thumb turn release
- Individual rooms in shared houses should have a yale and deadlock with handle
- Properties/blocks with an intercom with electronic door release should not have a mortice lock
- External doors must be of a solid core timber or metal-framed UPVC construction or specialist laminated security doors in which all glazing is either wired or toughened laminated glass. They should be fitted with a five-lever mortise deadlock (if there is no intercom)
- Ground floor and upper storey windows accessible from ground floor level must be of sound construction and fitted with window locks
- Where key operated locks are fitted clients should be provided with keys
- Where a gate from a yard or a garden leads into a public footpath the gate must be fully secured

**Other security factors**

- Hedges around external doors and windows must be kept trimmed low wherever practical to avoid providing screening for burglars
- All fencing and walls must be properly maintained

2.9 Furnishing standards and storage space

- All furnishings and furniture must be clean and in a reasonable condition and comply as appropriate with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations
- All rooms in the property should be adequately furnished for the purpose intended and adequate storage space provided for the number of service users in the property
- Communal lounges should be domestic in style and have a TV (where requested by occupants and agreed with provider as part of service charges).
- There should be sufficient circulation space to allow access between habitable rooms.
- Facilities should be provided in individual rooms/bedsits/flats for TVs
- Any large or potentially dangerous mirrors should be removed
- Small bathroom mirrors can be retained but they must be well fixed and secure

3.0 Internal Finishes

3.1 Decoration

- All walls, woodwork and ceilings and metalwork should be clean and in good decorative order with a minimum of scuffs, marks or abrasions
- Wallpaper should be free from tears, marks or gaps
3.2 Wall and ceilings

- Any areas of live plaster, damp penetration, cracks, excessive condensation, mould growth or structural movement must be remedied and made good

3.3 Floors

- All floors should be level and even and free from trip hazards and dampness
- Floor finishes in kitchens, bathrooms and WCs should be good quality sheet vinyl ideally
- Floor finishes must be good quality and in good repair
- Carpets are preferred in the remainder of the dwelling, including any stairs

3.4 Stairs

- Stairs, banisters and handrails must be strong and well fixed
- Stairs must be clean and well painted where necessary
- Handrails must be provided

3.5 Sound insulation

- Effective sound insulation should be provided

4.0 External Components

4.1 Structure

- The building envelope and structure must be structurally stable, free from disrepair, completely weather tight and in good repair and condition

4.2 External walls and windows

- External decoration must be sound and in good repair
- Any defective joinery needs to be properly repaired or renewed and decorated
- Rendered surfaces and parapet walls must be in good condition with copings and flashings secure and complete
- All brickwork must be sound and vertical with continuous pointing
- Chimney stacks must be in good repair with chimney pots securely fixed
4.3 Roofs and rainwater goods

- Roofs and rainwater goods must be in a good and serviceable condition
- Any loose slates, tiles or aerials, which either presents a possible hazard or that may cause defects to the property, must be made safe
- Gutters and down pipes must be securely fitted, in good condition and clear of blockages

4.4 Soil Pipes and Drainage

- Soil and waste pipes must be in a good and serviceable condition and securely fixed to the structure
- There must be no evidence of leaks or damage to the soil or waste pipes and seals at ground level must be good

4.5 Doors

- Internal glass doors in houses must be glazed with safety glass
- Living rooms and bedrooms with patio or French doors must have an additional window that can be opened for ventilation
- For requirements in terms of security for doors see section 2.11 Security Measures

4.6 Windows

- Windows must provide adequate light and ventilation to the room
- Each habitable room must be provided with an area of clear glazing equivalent to at least one-tenth of its floor area
- Windows should be openable, undamaged, free from decay and well decorated
- Glazing should be securely fixed with sound putty and waterproof
- Curtain tracks are to be provided to all clear glazed window

4.7 Outbuildings

- Sheds and outbuildings must be structurally sound empty. They should have a lockable door that needs to close and be secure.
- Sheds, outbuildings, greenhouses, purpose built conservatories and lean-tos that are poorly constructed, in disrepair or that present a potential danger to the occupants or are unsafe must be removed
- External toilets that are functioning properly can be retained. Those not working should be removed and the services and wastes sealed and capped off.
4.8 Garages

- If the property has a garage it must form part of the letting. The garage will need to be in a good, safe condition and clear of any belongings or rubbish

4.9 Gardens (also see 2.3 amenity spaces)

- Gardens must be free of debris and reasonably well maintained
- Anything that presents a significant hazard must be removed
- Patios, paths and other concrete areas should be in good repair
- Ponds must be filled in
- Large trees and vegetation should be pruned or lopped (subject to any tree preservation orders)
- Any vertical and near vertical drops in the garden greater than 1 metre must be protected by secure fencing
- Consideration should be given to the use of the garden space for practical purposes such as growing produce
- Gardens should provide a place for relaxation

4.10 Boundary Walls

- All boundaries that enclose children’s play areas must be continuous with a minimum height of 1 metre. They must be sound and free from defects with any poorly secured panels or posts repaired and they cannot be topped with broken glass, spikes or barbed wire
- Side and rear access gates must be in good condition and fitted with a latching device and bolts at the top and bottom.
- If occupants request access from the outside combination padlocks can be fitted.
- Side and rear boundaries to railway tracks, roads or other potential dangers must have secure fencing 2 metres in height

4.11 Refuse Disposal

- In line with Bristol City Council’s waste disposal methods space needs to be made for the storage of refuse. It is likely to require a bin store/space outside the accommodation for either a wheelie bin or a dustbin.

5.0 Energy efficiency

All properties must be provided with, as a minimum, hot water tank and pipe lagging (where exposed) and adequate insulation to roof void areas

Any refurbishment of the property will include energy efficiency measures. These may include:

- Consideration should be given to the use of the garden space for practical purposes such as growing produce
- Gardens should provide a place for relaxation
• Double glazing where appropriate draught stripping to doors and windows, except windows in Kitchens and bathrooms
• Cavity wall insulation
• Low energy light bulbs
• 250mm loft insulation where possible and certainly for large roof area
• Thermostatic radiator valves (TRV’s) and room thermostat to central heating system
• Cylinder thermostat to any hot water cylinder
• Under floor insulation where cellar ceiling has been remove
• Any new developments should take account of ecological and environmental implications
• Energy efficient appliances – A or B rated appliances
• Thermal insulation board to attic ceiling slopes when replaced or to exposed walls
• Condensing boiler or fan flued combination boiler
Appendix 1

Legislation

The following legislation applies to the code of standards:

The Defective Premises Act 1972
Building Act 1984
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
Landlord and Tenant Act 1987
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Housing Act 1996
Housing Act 2004

Regulations

The following regulations apply to this code of standards

The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended
The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 2002 (As amended)
General Product Safety Regulations 1994
The Plugs and Sockets etc (Safety) Regulations 1994
Institution of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations
Unfair Terms and Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999
The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006
Health and Safety (safety signs and signals) Regulations 1996
Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
Appendix 2

Decent Homes Standards

For a dwelling to be considered ‘decent’ it must achieve the following four key components:

- Meet the statutory minimum standard for housing
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Have reasonably modern facilities
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

In order to meet the first criterion a dwelling should provide a safe and healthy living environment for both the occupants and visitors as defined in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which replaced the Fitness Standard in 2005. The HHSRS states that:

- A dwelling should be free from unnecessary and avoidable hazards; and where hazards are necessary or unavoidable, they should be made as safe as reasonably possible.

The key driver of the HHSRS is the identification and rating of hazards that arise from faults, which are defined as a “failure of an element to meet the ideal, whether that failure is inherent, such as a result of the original construction or manufacture, or a result of deterioration or a want of repair or maintenance”.

The extent of any potential harm is weighted to provide a hazard score. The greater the hazard score, the more immediate and severe the action required by the Local Authority. The hazard assessment is based on a person/group deemed to be most vulnerable and not the current occupiers. Each hazard is scored on:

- Probability of hazard occurring within a 12 month period;
- The likely outcome in terms of harm if it did occur (Class I - IV with I most severe)
- Spread of outcomes (% weighting of all harm occurring) 10 bands of hazard scores ranging from A = 5000+ to J = 9 or less
- A hazard with a score of greater than 1000 (Band C), requires immediate intervention.

The second section of the Decent Homes Standard considers disrepair and requires that properties be in a reasonable state of repair. This is not mutually exclusive from fitness for habitation but considers the age and condition of key building components. These components are critical to a property’s ability to be wind, weather tight and warm. A property will be deemed to be in a state of disrepair if:

- One or more key building components are old and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair;
- Two or more other building components are old because of their condition, need replacing or major repair
The third criterion for a Decent Home is that it has reasonably modern facilities. A dwelling will fail this criterion if it lacks three or more of the following facilities:

- A kitchen which is 20 years old or less;
- A kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- A bathroom which is 30 years old or less;
- An appropriately located bathroom and WC;
- Adequate noise insulation; and Adequate size of common areas for blocks of flats.

The fourth section of the Decent Homes Standard deals with thermal comfort and therefore heating, insulation and ventilation parameters are the main issues here. The level of efficiency depends on the type of heating system installed and this results in the following guidelines:

- For dwellings with gas/oil programmable heating – cavity wall insulation or at least 50mm loft insulation is an effective package of insulation and
- For dwellings heated by electric storage heaters/ LPG/programmable solid fuel central heating – a higher specification of insulation is required – at least 200mm roof insulation and cavity wall insulation.
Housing health & safety rating system (HHSRS)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is the method used by local authorities to assess housing conditions. The Housing Act 2004 Part 1 establishes the HHSRS as the current statutory assessment criterion for housing and it is based on the principle that:

*Any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor.*

The system applies to all dwellings including owner occupied, privately rented and Council and Housing Association dwellings. Local authorities are required to keep housing conditions in privately owned property under review and also have a duty to inspect a property where they have reason to believe that this is appropriate to determine the presence of health and safety hazards.

The HHSRS is not a standard, which the property must meet, as was the case with the previous fitness standard, but it is a system to assess the likely risk of harm that could occur from any ‘deficiency' associated with a dwelling.

A deficiency is a variation from the ideal standard and may be due to an inherent design or manufacturing fault, or due to disrepair, deterioration or lack of maintenance. Unnecessary and avoidable hazards should not be present. It acknowledges, however, that some hazards may exist and provides a method of deciding whether or not the degree of risk is acceptable.

The use of a formula produces a numerical score, which allows comparison of all the hazards. This score is known as the Hazard Score and, irrespective of the type of hazard, the higher the score the greater the risk.

Environmental Health Officers undertake assessments and they must decide for each hazard what is:

- The likelihood, over the next twelve months, of an occurrence e.g. falling down stairs, electrocution etc. that could result in harm to a member of the vulnerable group; and
- The range of potential outcomes from such an occurrence e.g. death, severe injury etc.

When an assessment is made, the current occupiers are ignored and the assessment is based on the likely effect of the hazard on the relevant vulnerable age group (except for the ‘crowding and space' hazard where the actual occupants are taken into account). For some hazards there is no relevant group, but for many hazards it may be either the young or the elderly.

Hazards

A hazard is any risk of harm to the health or safety of an actual or potential occupier that arises from a deficiency.

The system is concerned with disease, infirmity, physical injury, and also includes mental disorder and distress. There are 29 hazards, which need to be considered, and these have been divided into 4 groupings: Physiological, Psychological, Protection against Infection and Protection against accidents.
Physiological requirements:

- Damp and mould growth
- Excess cold
- Excess heat
- Asbestos and manufactured mineral fibre
- Biocides
- Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products
- Lead
- Radiation
- Uncombusted fuel gas
- Volatile organic compounds

Psychological requirements:

- Crowding and space
- Entry by intruders
- Lighting
- Noise

Protection against infection:

- Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
- Food safety
- Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
- Water supply

Protection against accidents:

- Falls associated with baths etc.
- Falling on level surfaces etc.
- Falling on stairs etc.
- Falling between levels
- Electrical hazards
- Fire
- Flames and hot surfaces etc.
- Collision and entrapment
- Explosions
- Position and operability of amenities etc.
- Structural collapse and falling elements.

Landlords' responsibilities

As the HHSRS is not a standard there is no model guidance available to follow, although there is some guidance available for fire safety. Each property will have its own hazards depending upon its location, age, construction, design, state of repair etc. but landlords must take steps to make sure that the dwelling provides both a safe and healthy environment.
For enforcement purposes and subject to the terms of established Management Agreements between Service Provider and Landlord:

The landlord is responsible for the provision, state and proper working order of:

The exterior and structural elements of the dwelling
- This includes all elements essential to the dwelling including access, amenity spaces, the common parts within the landlord’s control, associated outbuildings, garden, yard walls etc.

The installations within and associated with the dwelling for:
- The supply and use of water, gas and electricity
- Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
- Food safety
- Ventilation
- Space heating; and Heating water

It includes fixtures and fittings, but excludes moveable appliances unless provided by the landlord.

In multi-occupied buildings the owner, or manager, is responsible for stair coverings, e.g. carpets.

**HHSRS Enforcement**

If a hazard presents a severe threat to health or safety it is known as a Category 1 Hazard (hazard bands A to C). If a local housing authority considers that a category 1 hazard exists on any residential premises, they must take the appropriate enforcement action in relation to the hazard.

Less significant threats to health and safety are known as Category 2 Hazards (hazard bands D to J) and a local authority may take appropriate enforcement action to reduce the hazard to an acceptable level.

Although statutory action is mandatory for Category 1 hazards and discretionary for Category 2 hazards, the actual choice of the appropriate course of action is also up to the council to decide and again will depend on our enforcement policy and the particular circumstances of the case.

Bristol City Council’s enforcement policies state that action will be taken on band A – C hazards (category one). However, the policies also go on to say that action will normally be taken on band D hazards (category 2) unless there is a specific reason not to take action. We may still take action on Hazards of Band E or below in certain circumstances.

We must however take into account the statutory enforcement guidance and the options available include:

- Serving a hazard awareness notice, which merely advises that a hazard exists, but does not demand works are carried out
- Serving an improvement notice requiring remedial works
- Making a prohibition order, which closes the whole or part of a dwelling or restricts the number of permitted occupants
- Suspending these types of notice for a period of time
- Taking emergency action themselves
- Demolition
- Designating a clearance area.

More information on certain hazards

The hazards most likely to exist in all types of dwellings are:

- Damp and mould growth
- Excess cold
- Crowding and space
- Entry by intruders
- Falling on level surfaces etc.
- Falling on stairs etc.
- Fire

However this will vary depending on, amongst other things, the location, the type, the state of maintenance and age of the property.

The following outline of certain hazards provides an insight into how the HHSRS operates and what factors are taken into account when an assessment is made by the local authority. The scoring system of the HHSRS allows all hazards to be rated against each other for importance within any dwelling. The inclusion or exclusion of any hazard in this section is not an indication of its relative importance. All 29 hazards have the potential to result in harm.

Fire

The most vulnerable age group is all persons aged 60 years or over.

There are approximately 70,000 fires each year reported to the fire authorities, but it is considered that only about 20 per cent of fires are reported. It has been estimated that fires occur in about 3 per cent of all dwellings per year. In 2005 there were 300 deaths with most deaths associated with being overcome by smoke and fumes. Over 80 per cent of accidental fires in dwellings result from occupier carelessness or misuse of equipment or appliances, etc.

Over 65 per cent of fires start in the kitchen, about 10 per cent start in bedrooms and bedsitting rooms, and 10 per cent start in living and dining rooms. Around 90 per cent of fires are confined to the rooms where they started.

There is a greater risk of a fire occurring in flats and bedsits than in houses, where there is also a higher risk of the fire resulting in harm. An adult living in either a self-contained flat or bed-sit accommodation in a three or more storey building is around 10 times more likely to die in a fire than an adult living in a two storey house.

Factors to consider include the design, layout and condition of the dwelling, which should be such to reduce the risk of fire starting carelessly, the spread of any fire and allow effective means of escape in the case of fire. The correct design, installation and maintenance of equipment and appliances,
especially those provided for cooking and heating; the maintenance and presence of adequate and sufficient electrical outlets; and the use of residual electric current devices (circuit breakers).

The presence or absence of a fire detection and alarm system affects the level of harm suffered. The death rate from dwellings with alarms is less than half of that for non-alarmed dwellings.

The HHSRS Operating Guidance (DCLG) states that properly working alarms, connected to smoke or heat detectors are probably most effective at saving lives in the event of a fire. They provide early warning to the occupants, allowing them to escape before they are overcome by fumes or burned.

For any form of multi-occupied buildings, there should be adequate fire protection to the means of escape and between each unit of accommodation, appropriate fire detection and alarm system(s), and, as appropriate, emergency lighting, sprinkler systems or other fire fighting equipment.

For specific advice on fire safety requirements in your rented properties please contact the Private Housing Service. National guidance on fire safety has been produced and can be found at www.privatehousinginformation.co.uk.

Excess Cold

The most vulnerable group is all persons aged 65 years and over.

This is by far the most likely hazard to affect a dwelling. For example, the hazard score for a pre-1946 property will on average mean that a category 1 hazard exists and action by local authorities is mandatory.

There are 40,000 excess winter deaths in the UK each year associated with the effects of cold. It is not hypothermia, but respiratory and circulatory diseases in the elderly, which is responsible for most of these deaths. ‘The increase in deaths from heart attacks occurs about two days following the onset of a cold spell, the delay is about five days for deaths from stroke, and about 12 days for respiratory deaths.’

Lack of heating also causes increased illness, increased risk of falls, as well as distress and discomfort. Inadequate heating is directly linked to ill health when the internal temperatures start falling below 19°C. It is essential that occupiers be provided with adequate and controllable (preferably central) heating within their accommodation.

British Standards state that a minimum standard of heating is a fixed space-heating appliance to each occupied room. It should be capable of efficiently maintaining the room at a minimum temperature of 18°C, in sleeping rooms, and 21°C in living rooms, when the temperature outside is minus 1°C and it should be available at all times. The adequacy of loft insulation and cavity wall insulation is important and would be considered as part of any HHSRS assessment, as would significant draughts.

Falling on Stairs etc.

The most vulnerable group is all persons aged 60 years or over and men are more likely to die as an outcome of this hazard than women. Although physical injury is the most likely outcome overall, death may occur several weeks or months after the initial fall injury, due to cardio-respiratory illness, including heart attack, stroke and pneumonia.
Several factors can influence the likelihood of an accident including the following:

- Accidents are nearly twice as likely on stairs consisting of straight steps with no winders or intermediate landings
- Accidents are more likely where the pitch of stairs is more than 42º, and the steeper the pitch, the worse the outcome
- An accident is three times more likely to occur on stairs without carpet covering
- The lack of any handrail doubles the likelihood of a fall, even if there is a wall to both sides of the stairs.

**Damp and Mould Growth**

The most vulnerable group is all persons aged 14 years or under. One in eight children suffer with asthma in the UK.

The hazard covers the health effects from house dust mites and mould or fungal growths resulting from dampness and/or high humidity. It includes threats to mental health and social well-being.

The waste from house dust mites and mould spores are both potent airborne allergens and exposure to these over a prolonged period will cause sensitisation of susceptible individuals. Deaths from all forms of asthma in the UK are around 1,500 a year, of which around 60 per cent has been attributed to dust mite allergy.

Ventilation to any room helps prevent condensation by dispersing water vapour generated by normal household activities. It helps to remove pollutants from within the accommodation and helps to control internal temperatures. Dwellings should be warm and dry with good ventilation. The dwelling should be free from rising and penetrating dampness.

Good ventilation is normally achieved by opening windows. As a rough guide, the minimum level of natural ventilation would be a window with an open area equivalent to not less than one-twentieth of the floor area.

Current building requirements for new buildings require that in rooms such as kitchens and bathrooms, mechanical ventilation should be provided by ducting to the external air. In existing bathrooms or toilets, which do not have windows, mechanical ventilation must be provided. Mechanical ventilation in bathrooms/WCs should achieve a minimum of 6 litres per second. The system is often linked to the light switch and should incorporate a minimum 15-minute over-run.

The use of mechanical heat recovery ventilation (MHRV) can provide increased ventilation without the associated heat loss. Their use is recommended, as occupiers are more likely to use MHRV to control condensation as they do not result in cooling of the accommodation and they are energy efficient.
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