

Press release: New housing rental rules to protect thousands of tenants

New rules which will help protect at least 850,000 more people in privately rented homes from poor living conditions and overcrowding have come into force this month.

All landlords who let out a property to 5 or more people – from 2 or more separate households that share facilities – must get a licence from their local housing authority.

Previously, the rules only applied to properties of 3 or more storeys – but now all properties will be covered.

The clampdown is one of a number of government measures to rebalance the relationship between landlords and tenants.

The vast majority of landlords provide decent accommodation, but these measures are about raising standards in private rented homes where landlords knowingly flout their responsibilities.

Under the new rules, all bedrooms must be at least 6.5 square metres and councils must ensure tenants have suitable space to store their rubbish outside homes.

Housing Minister Heather Wheeler MP said:

Everyone renting a home has the right to expect it is maintained to a decent standard.

Extending licensing to 170,000 more properties will ensure people benefit from better quality accommodation across the country.

There are currently around 60,000 licensable ‘houses in multiple occupation’ (HMOs) but from today a further 170,000 will require licences.

An estimated 4 million people live in private rented homes, and now at least 1.1 million who are in licensable HMOs will benefit from the protection provided by HMO licensing.

Under the existing rules, enforcement officers in Brent, north-west London, raided an unlicensed 3-bedroom HMO in September 2017, and found 35 men bedding down on mattresses in every room except the bathrooms.

The property was raided after neighbours complained about overcrowding, anti-social behaviour and fly tipping.

Before a landlord gets a HMO licence, they must prove to the council they are

a 'fit and proper' person and the property is of a suitable standard for the number of residents.

Councils can put in place conditions about how the HMO is managed.

See [advice on applying for a HMO licence](#).

All HMOs with any number of storeys that have 5 or more tenants, who aren't related, and who share facilities like kitchens or lavatories, will require a licence from today.

Landlords should speak to their council about getting a licence, or they could face enforcement action.

If the HMO already has a licence under a local authority 'additional or selective licensing' scheme, then the landlord will not need to apply for a new licence until it expires.

The rules came into force on 1 October 2018.