

Code of Good Practice for  
**RENTING ACCOMMODATION**



The Office of  
**Environmental  
Health and Pollution  
Regulation**

# CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR RENTING ACCOMMODATION

## Introduction

The private rented housing sector plays a vital role in meeting local housing needs. The Health and Social Services Department recognises the importance of private landlords in providing choices of, and affordable, accommodation and this guide is designed to give practical advice and information on recommended standards.

The World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing”. Residential accommodation should, therefore, not only offer physical shelter but also make provision for the privacy, dignity and comfort of the occupants.

By producing this code of good practice the Health and Social Services Department intends to encourage the provision of living conditions which promote the good health, welfare and safety of all residents occupying rented accommodation. Landlords owe a duty of care to tenants and their visitors in accommodation they own and rent to others.

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## Definitions used in this Code of Practice

This code refers to “habitable rooms” which is a term covering bedrooms, bed-sits, living rooms and dining rooms but excluding toilets, bathrooms, kitchens, utility rooms, halls and circulation areas.

The term “toilet” means a water closet (WC), i.e. a purpose built room containing a sanitary convenience flushed by water. A chemical toilet is not acceptable.

An “occupancy” means the part of a house which is assigned to a household. A “household” means a person or persons forming a single living unit. An occupancy can, therefore, be a bedsit, flat or a series of rooms depending on the layout of the household. A dwelling may contain more than one household, i.e. be in “multiple occupation”.

# 1. General conditions

## (a) General repair

All parts of a dwelling house should be in a reasonable state of repair and in good working order.

## (b) Structural Stability

The dwelling house should be free from any progressive structural movement which is likely to lead to the collapse or failure of any part of the building.

## (c) Freedom from Dampness

There should be no dampness in the house severe enough to cause ill health to the occupants.

## (d) Hazards

Hazards arise from faults or deficiencies in the dwelling that could cause harm. The dwelling should not contain any deficiency that might give rise to a hazard which interferes with, or puts at risk the health or safety, or even the life, of any occupier or visitor.

# 2. Lighting

## (a) Natural lighting

All habitable rooms should have a glazed window equivalent to at least one tenth of the floor area of the room.

Kitchens, bathrooms, and toilets and also staircases, landings and passages should have similarly sized windows where practicable. Otherwise adequate artificial lighting should be provided.

All bathrooms and toilets should have obscure glazing, blinds or other means to protect privacy and dignity.

## (b) Artificial lighting

All rooms, hallways, landings, stairs and external areas from the property curtilage to the primary entrance door should be adequately lit.

Time switches (including those controlled by movement detectors) should only be allowed to common landings, passages and staircases and should stay on for an adequate time to allow a person to walk through the common area and enter a room.

There should be sufficient switches to operate the lighting on each landing or passage and these should allow adequate lengths of the areas to be lit at the same time.

# 3. Ventilation

All habitable rooms, kitchens, bathrooms and toilets should have a minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.1 metres including underground and attic rooms. Attic rooms should have the minimum height of 2.1m over an area of floor equal to at least half the area of the room (measured on a plane 1.5m above the floor).

All habitable rooms should be ventilated directly to the open air by a window. This should be openable to a least one twentieth of the floor area of the room or where this is not possible, additional trickle ventilation via the window frame or a wall ventilator (air brick) should be provided. An openable door or a louvered opening in a door which gives access directly to the outside is not acceptable in the absence of other means of ventilation.

All kitchens, bathrooms and toilets should comply with the above where possible but if this is not practicable, mechanical ventilation is required. Current best practice indicates that, in intermittent operation, the following minimum extraction rates should apply.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Kitchens               | 30 l/s (litres per second) (adjacent to hob) 60 l/s (elsewhere) |
| Bathrooms              | 15 l/s  |
| Sanitary accommodation | 6 l/s   |

## 4. Personal Washing Facilities

Each separate occupancy should be provided with a wash hand basin with its own supplies of hot and cold water. In bedsit accommodation this will be in addition to any sink provided under Section 11.

Each separate occupancy should be provided with its own bath or shower, situated in a proper room, and with its own supplies of hot and cold water or water at a suitable controlled temperature. Where this is not practicable, an easily accessible bath or shower must be provided not more than one floor distant from any occupancy. In multiple occupied accommodation, at least one bath or shower should be provided for every five occupants (or part thereof).

The hot and cold water supplies should be available at all times.

Baths, showers and wash hand basins should be properly connected to the foul drainage system and fully comply with the Building Regulations in Guernsey.

## 5. Toilets and Drainage

All above and below ground drainage should comply with the requirements of the Building Control Regulations currently in force.

Guidance is contained in the Building Control Regulations and advice is available from the Environment Department, Building Control Section – see useful addresses.

A readily accessible toilet should be provided. In multiple occupied accommodation the toilet should not be more than one floor distant from any occupancy and provided at a ratio of at least one toilet for every 5 persons (or part thereof).

A wash hand basin should be provided in each separate toilet, together with its own supplies of hot and cold water and properly connected to the foul drainage system.

Each shared toilet should be in a separate room from any shared bath or shower.

Chemical and outside toilets are not acceptable.

## 6. Space Heating

Each room which is used as living accommodation should be provided with suitable fixed installations for space heating. These may be either full central heating systems, appropriate solid fuel installations or gas or electrical appliances. Such fixed appliances should be thermostatically controlled by the occupier and be capable of maintaining a room temperature of 18°C when the external air temperature is minus 1°C

However, solid fuel installations should normally only be permitted on the ground floor and only if there is adequate and readily accessible fuel storage space and no risk to safety from the removal of hot ashes.

Portable or removable heating appliances are **not** acceptable.

Provision of only a gas point or electric socket as a means of heating is not acceptable.

## 7. Refuse Storage and Disposal

Suitable and sufficient refuse storage arrangements, adequate for the needs of the occupants, should be provided and maintained.

All containers should be lidded and stored on hard standing, with adequate access for cleaning the area and removing waste.

All occupiers should be notified of the day(s) on which refuse collections are made by the parish refuse contractors.

## 8. Electricity Supply and Safety

The electrical installation, including power and lighting circuits and all switches and socket outlets

should be in safe working order and adequate for the reasonable needs of the occupier.

The installation should have been designed and installed in accordance with the provisions of the edition of the Institution of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations prevailing at the date of installation.

The occupier should be provided with reasonable access to the electricity meter responsible for recording consumption and the fusegear (or other protective devices) controlling power to the installation.

The installation should be periodically inspected by a qualified electrician. An inspection interval of 5 years is recommended.

## 9. Gas Safety

Gas fittings and flues should be maintained in a safe condition. Gas appliances should be serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If these are not available it is recommended that appliances are serviced annually unless advised otherwise by a GAS SAFE registered installer.

An annual safety check should be carried out on each gas appliance/flue. Before any new tenancy starts, it should be established that this check has been carried out within one year of the start of the new tenancy, unless the appliances in the property have been installed for less than 12 months, in which case they should be checked within 12 months of their installation date.

All installation, maintenance, and safety checks should be carried out by a GAS SAFE registered gas installer.

A record of each safety check should be kept for at least two years.

A copy of the latest safety check record should be issued to existing tenants within 28 days of the check being completed, or to any new tenant before they move in.

It should not be assumed that an annual service inspection meets the safety check requirement or that a safety check will, on its own, be sufficient to provide effective maintenance. Where necessary, ask the advice of a GAS SAFE registered gas installer.

For further advice on any aspect of gas safety, please contact Guernsey Gas Ltd (see useful contacts and addresses at Paragraph 16).

## 10. Water Supply

A supply of cold running water suitable for drinking should be provided in each kitchen. This supply must be directly off the rising main. Water supplied from a tank is not suitable for this purpose.

## 11. Private Water Supply

Private water supplies must have been sampled to ensure that the supply is safe for human consumption. It is likely that private water supplies will require treatment to ensure that the water supply remains fit for drinking and any treatment plant must be similarly maintained. It is recommended that private drinking water supplies are sampled at least annually.

The States Analyst's Laboratory can provide information about appropriate sampling parameters and are UKAS accredited to carry out these tests (contact details in section 17).

The Office of Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation can provide advice regarding appropriate water treatments, based upon sample results.

## 12. Kitchen Facilities and Food Storage

Each occupancy should have use of a kitchen separate from the bedroom and, if possible, on the same floor (but not more than one floor distant from any occupancy).

Dining facilities should be on the same floor as the kitchen or in the kitchen, i.e. kitchen/diner.

Each occupancy should be provided with a proper food store. In multiple occupied accommodation it should be lockable if it is located in the shared kitchen.

A suitable worktop should be provided.

In accommodation with multiple occupancy, the shared kitchen will be provided with a proper cooking appliance to the following standards:

- I. Two rings and a grill or two rings and an oven per person; or
- II. Three or four rings with grill and oven for three people; or
- III. In a house occupied by five or fewer people, a four ring cooker with grill and oven.
- IV. For houses occupied by six or more people, cooking appliance should be provided as in (i) per person sharing or as in (ii) per three people sharing.

Adequate electrical socket outlets for the reasonable needs of the occupiers must be provided.

The kitchen should be provided with a sink unit with hot and cold water. In multiple occupied accommodation a sink unit should be provided for five or fewer people or in the ratio of one sink (with hot and cold water) per three people.

Full facilities for food storage, preparation and cooking will not be necessary in accommodation for staff employed in the operation of premises registered under Section 13 of the Tourism Law 1948, providing that the following conditions are satisfied:

- I. That the employer contracts to provide full meals seven days a week at the place of work; and
- II. Adequate facilities exist at the staff accommodation for the preparation of refreshments (e.g. hot beverages) and snacks. A minimum of a sink, cold drinking water tap, a suitable worktop and a double electrical socket outlet needs to be provided.

## 13. Sound Insulation

Each separate occupancy should be adequately insulated against excessive noise.

## 14. Cleanliness and Maintenance of Common Areas

In multiple occupied accommodation all common areas should be kept clean and free from any obstruction.

## 15. Space Standards

The space standards in this code are those recommended by the Health and Social Services Department and are in line with UK and EU standards.

The standards in this code are based on a minimum ceiling height of at least 2.1 metres (7 feet) for most rooms. Space in attic rooms is measured to include any area with a ceiling height above 1.5 metres (5 feet) and in such rooms at least half of this area must have a ceiling height of 1.8 metres (6 feet) or more.

### (a) *One person unit of accommodation*

Single bedrooms – 6.5 m<sup>2</sup> (70 ft<sup>2</sup>) minimum floor area.

Single bedsits – 13 m<sup>2</sup> (140 ft<sup>2</sup>) minimum floor area or 10 m<sup>2</sup> (108 ft<sup>2</sup>) if kitchen facilities are provided elsewhere.

### (b) *Two person unit of accommodation*

Double bedrooms – 11 m<sup>2</sup> (118 ft<sup>2</sup>) equivalent to 5.5 m<sup>2</sup> (59 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person.

Double bedsits – 15 m<sup>2</sup> (162 ft<sup>2</sup>) minimum floor area or 12 m<sup>2</sup> (129 ft<sup>2</sup>) if kitchen facilities are provided elsewhere.

### (c) *Three (or more) person unit of accommodation*

Ideally no room should be occupied by more than two persons.

Adults should not normally share a bedroom with any child over the age of one year. However, if circumstances are such that a child over one year has to share a room with 2 adults in the same family, a minimum floor area of 6.2 m<sup>2</sup> (66 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person should be available.

If more than two children in the same family share a bedroom, a minimum floor area of 6.2 m<sup>2</sup> (66 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person should be available.

There are, however, situations where dormitory style accommodation is used, for example, for seasonal workers. Every effort should be made to provide single or double rooms but where this cannot be achieved, it is recommended that the following standard should apply;

3 or more persons occupying a single dormitory room: 6.5m<sup>2</sup> (70 ft<sup>2</sup>) per person minimum. Single beds (not bunk beds) should be provided.

It should be noted that the recommended minimum floor area per person for dormitory rooms is higher than that for a double bedroom. This is to compensate for the lack of privacy and dignity inherent when large numbers of unrelated people share rooms.

(d) *Common Rooms*

In multiple occupied accommodation the following facilities should be provided:

*Kitchens*

| Used by<br>Number of persons | Minimum floor area |                 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|                              | m <sub>2</sub>     | ft <sub>2</sub> |
| 1 to 5                       | 7                  | 75              |
| 6 to 10                      | 10                 | 107             |
| 11 to 15                     | 13.5               | 145             |
| 16 +                         | 16.5               | 178             |

A common room, which meets the space standard for living and dining rooms, should also be provided in addition to a kitchen.

*Kitchen/Diners*

| Used by<br>Number of persons | Minimum floor area |                 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|                              | m <sub>2</sub>     | ft <sub>2</sub> |
| 1 to 5                       | 11.5               | 124             |
| 6 to 10                      | 19.5               | 210             |
| 11 to 15                     | 24                 | 258             |
| 16 +                         | 29                 | 312             |

A common room, which meets the space standard for living and dining rooms, should also be provided in addition to a kitchen/diner.

*Living Rooms and Dining Rooms*

| Used by<br>Number of persons | Minimum floor area |                 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
|                              | m <sub>2</sub>     | ft <sub>2</sub> |
| 1 to 5                       | 11                 | 118             |
| 6 to 10                      | 16.5               | 178             |
| 11 to 15                     | 21.5               | 231             |
| 16 +                         | 25                 | 269             |

## 16 Fire Protection and Means of Escape from Fire

A house occupied by a group of unrelated individuals is more likely to be involved in a fire incident compared to one in single family occupancy. In order to ensure survival and escape in the event of fire, it is a legal requirement under the Fire Services (Guernsey) Law, 1989 (as amended), to have an appropriate fire protection scheme in place.

There are four parts to a fire protection scheme:

- I. An alarm system to detect and alert residents of the presence of a fire.

- II. A safe, un-obstructed and well lit escape route.
- III. Suitable fire fighting equipment to enable residents to tackle a small fire and stop it spreading (if it is safe to do so).
- IV. Suitable procedures for maintenance of the above and for instructing residents on what the evacuation procedures are.

The extent of fire protection work required depends on the size and layout of the property and also the number of occupants.

It is therefore essential to obtain guidance and advice from the Guernsey Fire and Rescue Service (see useful contacts and addresses).

## 17. Useful Contacts and Addresses

- a) States Analyst Laboratory, Longue Rue, St. Martins, GY4 6LD Telephone (01481) 707612
- b) Building Regulation advice  
Environment Department, Building Control Section, Sir Charles Frossard House, La Charroterie, St. Peter Port, GY1 1FH Telephone (01481) 717200
- c) Planning matters and change of use of premises  
Environment Department, Planning Section, Sir Charles Frossard House, La Charroterie, St. Peter Port, GY1 1FH Telephone (01481) 717200
- d) Fire Prevention and Fire Safety  
The Fire Safety Department, Guernsey Fire and Rescue Service, Fire Station, St. Peter Port, GY1 1UW Telephone (01481) 724491
- e) Mains water supplies  
Guernsey Water, Brickfield House, St Andrew, GY1 3AS Telephone (01481) 239500
- f) Housing Control Laws  
Housing Department, Sir Charles Frossard House, La Charroterie, St. Peter Port, GY1 1FH Telephone (01481) 717000
- g) Electricity supply and safety  
Guernsey Electricity Ltd, North Side, Vale, GY1 3AD Telephone (01481) 200700
- h) Gas supply and safety  
Guernsey Gas Ltd, The Energy Centre, Admiral Park, St. Peter Port, GY1 2BB Telephone (01481) 724811
- i) Rents and rent control  
Rent Officer, States Cadastre, The Old Tobacco Factory, La Ramee, St Peter Port, GY1 6BA, Telephone (01481) 721239
- j) Public health aspects of housing and environmental matters  
The Office of Environmental Health and Pollution Regulation, Longue Rue, St. Martins, GY4 6LD Telephone (01481) 711161
- k) Health and Safety Executive, Raymond Falla House, Longue Rue, St Martins GY1 6AF Telephone (01481) 234567

## 18. Appendix 1 - Assessing Housing Standards Using The Public Health Housing Rating System

In determining whether premises are safe for human habitation regard shall be had to their condition in respect of the following matters:

- Repair
- Stability
- Freedom from damp
- Natural lighting
- Ventilation
- Water supply
- Drainage and sanitary conveniences
- Facilities for preparation and cooking of food and for the disposal of waste water
- Heating
- Thermal insulation
- Electrical wiring installation
- Sound insulation
- External environment
- Protection from fire and means of escape
- Personal washing facilities (bath/shower, wash basin, hot and cold water)
- Deficiencies contributing to hazards, which are likely to have an adverse physical or mental effect on the health, safety and well-being of any occupiers (or visitors);

and further action will be taken if the risks associated with any of the defects are likely to cause harm. The level of action will be dependant upon the severity of defect, and we will always consider the tenant's interests when taking further action.

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