



HMO Licensing Rules

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What the Law Requires

A property becomes a **House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)** when it is occupied by **three or more people**, forming **two or more households**, who share basic amenities (kitchen, bathroom, or toilet).

Under the Housing Act 2004, certain HMOs require a licence to operate legally.

There are **two types of licensing**:

- Mandatory licensing (nationwide)
- Additional/selective licensing (local authority discretion)

Your Key Responsibilities

1. Determine whether a licence is required

A property needs a **mandatory HMO licence** if:

- 5 or more people
- 2 or more households
- Shared facilities
- Main residence

Some councils also require **3- or 4-person HMOs** to be licensed under **additional schemes**.

✓ Always check your local council's licensing rules.



2. Submit a full licence application

This includes:

- Application form
- Floor plans
- Fire safety assessment
- Gas safety certificate
- EICR (electrical)
- EPC
- Management details
- Fit and proper person declaration

A property operating without a required licence is **illegal**.

3. Meet HMO fire safety standards

You must ensure:

- Interlinked smoke alarms
- Fire doors with closers
- Fire-resistant escape routes
- Emergency lighting (in some cases)
- Fire blankets and extinguishers (if required)
- Annual fire safety checks

HMOs have stricter fire safety obligations than single lets.

4. Provide adequate facilities and room sizes

- Minimum bedroom sizes
- Adequate kitchen space
- Appropriate number of bathrooms
- Waste disposal arrangements
- Proper ventilation

Council inspectors will check this during the licensing visit.



5. Renew licences every 5 years

Most HMO licences last **5 years**, but some councils issue shorter terms.

You must:

- Renew before expiry
- Update if occupancy changes
- Notify the council of management changes

Practical Timeline

Action	When
Check if licence required	Before tenants move in
Submit application	Before operating
Fire safety test	Annually
Licence renewal	Every 5 years



Common Mistakes Landlords Make

- Assuming a property doesn't need a licence when it actually does.
- Not upgrading fire safety systems.
- Bedrooms too small for legal standards.
- Ignoring additional licensing zones.
- Letting the licence expire without renewal.
- Failing to notify the council of management changes.

Quick Compliance Checklist

- Licence required?
- Application submitted?
- Fire safety meets HMO standards
- Room sizes compliant
- Licence renewed on time
- Council notified of changes