

HMO Licensing Quick-Reference Guide

Jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction reference covering mandatory, additional, and selective HMO licensing (UK, 2026)

What Is an HMO?

A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a property rented out by at least **3 tenants** who form **more than 1 household** and share a kitchen, bathroom, or toilet. The definition and licensing requirements vary by jurisdiction and local authority.

England: Three Licensing Tiers

1. Mandatory HMO Licensing

Applies across all of England. No local authority discretion.

Criterion	Requirement
Occupants	5 or more persons forming 2 or more households
Storeys	No storey requirement (removed in 2018)
Licence duration	Up to 5 years
Typical fee	£500–£1,500 (varies by council)

2. Additional HMO Licensing

Declared by individual local authorities for smaller HMOs not caught by mandatory licensing.

Criterion	Requirement
Occupants	3–4 persons forming 2+ households (varies by scheme)
Area	Specific wards or the entire borough — check with your local authority
Licence duration	Up to 5 years
Typical fee	£400–£1,200

3. Selective Licensing

Applies to all privately rented properties in a designated area, not just HMOs.

Criterion	Requirement
Scope	All private rented properties in the designated area
Grounds for designation	Low demand, anti-social behaviour, poor conditions, high migration, high deprivation, or high crime
Licence duration	Up to 5 years
Typical fee	£300–£900

Minimum Room Size Standards (England)

Room use	Minimum floor area
Single bedroom (1 person, 10+)	6.51 m ²
Double bedroom (2 persons, 10+)	10.22 m ²
Single bedroom (child under 10)	4.64 m ²

Kitchen (shared, up to 5 persons)	7 m ² (guidance)
Kitchen (shared, 6–10 persons)	10 m ² (guidance)

Floor area is measured within the room. Any area with a ceiling height below 1.5m is excluded from the calculation.

Fire Safety Requirements

- **Fire doors:** FD30S self-closing fire doors on all habitable rooms in HMOs of 3+ storeys or with 5+ occupants
- **Fire alarm:** Interlinked Grade A LD2 system for licensable HMOs (mains-powered with battery backup)
- **Emergency lighting:** Required in common parts of HMOs of 3+ storeys
- **Fire blankets:** One per kitchen in a shared kitchen
- **Fire extinguishers:** Required on each floor in some council schemes
- **Escape routes:** Protected escape route from each bedroom to the final exit

Management Regulations 2006

The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 impose duties on the manager of any HMO (whether licensed or not):

- Provide and maintain means of escape from fire and fire-fighting equipment
- Maintain water supply, drainage, gas and electricity
- Maintain common parts, fixtures, fittings, and appliances
- Maintain living accommodation in good repair
- Provide waste disposal facilities
- Display the manager's name, address, and contact number in a prominent position

Scotland

Item	Detail
Definition	3+ persons from 2+ families sharing facilities
Licensing	All HMOs require a licence — no mandatory/additional split
Duration	1–3 years
Fees	£300–£2,000+ depending on size
Fire safety	LD2 system required; fire risk assessment mandatory

Wales

Item	Detail
Definition	Same as England (3+ persons, 2+ households, shared facilities)
Mandatory licensing	5+ persons, 2+ households (mirrors England)
Additional licensing	Local authority discretion
Landlord registration	All landlords must register with Rent Smart Wales and complete training

Northern Ireland

Item	Detail
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Definition	3+ persons from 2+ families
Registration	All HMOs must register with the local council
Licensing	Belfast: HMO licensing managed by Belfast City Council
Fire safety	Fire risk assessment required; NI Fire and Rescue Service guidance applies
Landlord registration	All landlords must register with the Landlord Registration Scheme NI

Penalties: Operating an unlicensed HMO is a criminal offence. Fines of up to £30,000 per offence (unlimited on indictment). Tenants may also apply for a Rent Repayment Order to recover up to 12 months' rent.