



## Private Sector Housing Hazard Fact Sheet

### CROWDING & SPACE



#### Who we are and what we do:

Private Sector Housing are responsible for making sure that properties both owner occupied and privately rented comply with Housing law and standards to protect customers from hazards of poor housing.

To achieve this we will assess dwellings under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to evaluate any potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies found. The more common hazards that we come across in dwellings are damp and mould growth; excess cold; **crowding and space**; entry by intruders; personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage; falling on the level; falling on stairs; falling between levels; fire; and structural collapse and falling elements. If significant hazards are identified in privately rented properties which are attributable to the condition of the property, then we may require remedial action by landlords to reduce or eliminate the risk from these hazards.

The intention of our fact sheets is to help you understand what we are looking for, and where possible, to identify areas where landlords and tenants may be able to help minimise or reduce risk.

#### Health Effects

This fact sheet covers hazards associated with lack of space within the dwelling for living, sleeping and normal family/household life.

Lack of space and overcrowded conditions have been linked to a number of health outcomes, including psychological distress and mental disorders, especially those associated with a lack of privacy and childhood development. Crowding can result in an increased heart rate, increased perspiration, reduction of tolerance, and a reduction of the ability to concentrate. Crowded conditions are also linked with increased hygiene risks, an increased risk of accidents, and spread of contagious disease.

Deficiencies with space and crowding can increase the risks associated with a number of other hazards. The risk of domestic accidents is greater where there is insufficient space for the occupants. Small kitchens also increase the risk of accidents. Where people and their belongings and furniture are crowded together, it may not be possible to keep circulation space or functional space around appliances clear.

Space and crowding deficiencies can result in beds being placed too close to fixed heating appliances. Crowded conditions can result in a moisture burden above that which the dwelling is designed to safely deal with, and this can be a cause of condensation and high humidities, giving rise to associated health risk.

In multi-occupied accommodation, most of these issues may be compounded by sharing of some spaces. In terms of privacy, a higher standard may be expected where facilities are shared with other households. For example, whereas a partially glazed door may be acceptable to a single household bathroom, it would be unacceptable to a shared bathroom.

#### Preventative measures and the ideal

Within a dwelling there should be sufficient space for the separation of different household activities, either by physical separation or by a clearly defined space within a larger space. The degree of separation is partly dependent on the number of people who can be expected to share the space, and whether or not they are expected to be part of the same household.

Open-plan arrangements may be acceptable for dwellings for a single person or for a couple, but not for dwellings intended for larger households.

For larger households, physical separation of living, cooking, dining and even sleeping areas is more necessary. For such households, bedrooms should lead off a circulation space, and should be large enough to be useable for sleeping and for study or relaxing away from the other members of the household.

There should be sufficient provision for sleeping having regard to the numbers likely to be accommodated in the dwelling. As a guide, and depending on the sex of household members and their relationship, and the size of rooms, a dwelling containing one bedroom is suitable for up to two persons, irrespective of age. A dwelling containing two bedrooms is suitable for up to four persons. One containing three bedrooms is suitable for up to six persons, and one containing four bedrooms is suitable for up to seven persons.

Although the Housing Act 2004 is the principal piece of legislation, as the Housing Act 1985 has not been repealed, the Local Authority has to have regard to both pieces of legislation.

The minimum sizes for bedrooms is set out in Chapter 68 Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 under the room standard

#### **Room size and occupancy (basic guide)**

<b>Bedroom Size</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>Details of persons</b>
10.22m <sup>2</sup> +	2	A couple or two children of the same sex
8.36m <sup>2</sup> +	1½	A child over the age of 10 years and one under 10 years of age of the same sex
6.50m <sup>2</sup> +	1	An adult or child over the age of 10 years
4.65m <sup>2</sup> +	½	A child under 10 years of age but over 12 months

As well as sufficient sleeping space, there should be a living area of sufficient size for the household. Indoor and outdoor play and recreation space is necessary in accommodation housing children. Outdoor play space should be readily visible from within the dwelling and safely separated from public and neighbouring areas.

To provide for adequate privacy for the user, each bath or shower should be sited in a bathroom and each sanitary closet should be sited in a bathroom or separate compartment provided with a lockable door.

#### **Other useful contacts and sources:**

Website: <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/privatesectorhousing> - Private Sector Housing pages for Homeowners, Landlords and tenants

## **Private Sector Housing**

### **Colchester Borough Council**

Rowan House, 33 Sheepen Road, Colchester CO3 3WG

Telephone: Customer Service Centre on 01206 282581 and select Option 6

Fax: 01206 282598

Email: [housing.private@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:housing.private@colchester.gov.uk)