



Private Sector Housing Hazard Fact Sheet

ENTRY BY INTRUDERS



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 the threats to the protection and security of your property and occupants. There is no one age group more vulnerable than another, but generally, economically disadvantaged households are at higher risk and certain property types are more vulnerable than others.

There tends to be elevated risks of burglary associated with multiply occupied buildings. Not only is security of the building important (i.e. restricting unauthorised entry into the building), but security within the building is also an issue, both in terms of entry by intruders, and security of individual householders' belongings from other residents of the same building.

The majority of health effects associated with burglary are related to the stress and anguish following a burglary and the fear of possible recurrence. Injuries caused to the occupants by burglars are very rare.

Failure to consider the security of your property may also result in:

- Additional damage to the property through repeated entry by intruders.
- Loss of rental income.
- Inability to insure the property following repeated damage.
- Detrimental effect on the adjacent properties and neighbourhood.

Contributory factors to entry by intruders

Poorly fitting doors and windows will present an easier opportunity for intruders to gain access to a property.

If locks and catches are poorly maintained or faulty, this will also make unauthorised access easier.

Having areas of the property that are hidden from view by either the occupants or neighbours helps to conceal potential intruders.

Insecure gardens and yards will also assist intruders to gain access. High walls, hedges, and unseen areas of the garden will help an intruder work uninterrupted.



What preventative measures can landlords and home owners take?

Ensure your property has suitable 5 lever mortice locks on external doors, and suitable window locks and catches on ground floor and vulnerable windows. Designated fire exits will need a lock that can be opened from the inside without the use of a key. Older properties may require more work in providing additional locks, chains and door bolts.

Ensure doors fit properly into their frame and are free from damage.

At the change of tenancy, ensure that all the keys for the property are handed in. If in doubt, it is wise to change the locks.

An optional, but highly recommended addition is security lighting to cover vulnerable areas around the property. This can either be on permanently, or controlled by passive detectors.

A simple but effective security measure is to ensure hedges and bushes are trimmed regularly to ensure any intruders have difficulty in concealing themselves from occupants of adjacent properties.

Alarm systems are a worthwhile investment in the protection of your property. Studies reveal that it is far less likely that you will become the victim of a burglary if you have a correctly fitted and well maintained burglar alarm.

However, creating fortress-like dwellings may have a negative effect on the health of occupiers. In addition, there is a balance to be made between security features and any associated risks from other hazards. For example, security measures can hamper or obstruct means of escape in the event of a fire, and may result in windows not being readily openable interfering with ventilation.

What preventative measures can tenants and owner occupiers take?

Do not leave your car keys or ID documents near doors, letterbox or windows and keep your valuables out of sight.

Always check who's at the door and don't open it if you feel anxious.

Close and lock all your doors and windows and side gates even if you are only going out for a few minutes.

Leave some lights on if it will be dark before you get home.

Always keep sheds and outbuildings locked.

Do not leave ladders out, allowing access to otherwise inaccessible windows or garden tools that will assist intruders to force entry.

Keep hedges trimmed to allow for natural surveillance

Useful contacts and sources:

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

Website: www.essex.police.uk – Be Safe

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