

Houses in Multiple Occupation: assistance

Purpose

To encourage owners of houses in multiple occupation to undertake voluntarily works to improve their property to the minimum standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). It is a condition that the property is occupied or available for residential occupation at the completion of the works. The occupier should have no family connection to the landlord.

The council needs a supply of good quality, privately rented accommodation suitable for the needs of its citizens. To achieve this aim, the authority needs and values its good landlords. We have a common objective which is a prosperous private rented sector that provides the right housing in the right areas at the right price.

What work qualifies for assistance?

- Work that improves the property to the minimum in HMO standards.
- Work required that makes the property suitable for people to live in following a preliminary notice .
- Work needed to meet the conditions of a license following an application by the landlord.
- Improvements to the energy performance of the property.

Grants are limited to works for the provision of:

- fire precaution and safety measures for occupant safety to meet minimum HMO standards
- new, fixed amenities such as kitchens and bathrooms, but not repair or replacement of existing amenities, to meet minimum HMO standards
- Work to improve the energy efficiency of the property

No grant assistance will be available where formal enforcement action under the Housing Acts has been commenced, which requires work to be undertaken. The maximum eligible expense is £5,000 per letting, up to £30,000 per property. If a property is to be let at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level, the grant is for 100% of eligible works, otherwise for 50% of the works. There can be no further grant of this type awarded for a property within five years of completion of works. However, landlords or their tenants may apply for assistance from other schemes within this policy.

Findings from HMO survey carried out in west Wiltshire in July 2008:

- One in six of those premises in the survey did not meet the former statutory standard for housing.
- Over one half (54.8%) of those premises included in the survey did not have fully satisfactory fire precautions.
- 64.4% of those premises surveyed met the decent homes standard; the majority of failures under the decent homes standard are attributable to category 1 hazards related to fire safety and excessive cold.

Who can apply?

The applicant must have an owner's interest in the premises, which must be a House in Multiple Occupation as defined in the Housing Act 2004. Where the owner's interest is leasehold, the lease must have at least five years remaining at approval.

At completion of works, the property will comply with the standard detailed in Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.

Where the premises are liable for licensing under Part 2 or Part 3 of the Housing Act 2004, the premises must be licensed before the grant can be paid.

The landlord must provide a certificate of future occupation, at the grant approval stage, stating that throughout the five year grant condition period the house will be residentially occupied, or available for residential occupation, under tenancies or licenses by persons who, for the time being, are not related to the owner of the house.

The council must have nomination rights for the five year period.

At completion of the works the landlord may be required to belong to the Wiltshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme (WLAS).

Are there any conditions attached to the assistance?

The purpose of this type of assistance is to help landlords improve homes occupied by tenants. Therefore, it is important to us that homes we have invested in remain in the private rented sector and help contribute to a thriving sector. There are a number of conditions attached to any assistance; these are to protect the property and ensure it remains available for letting during the grant condition period.

Are there any other forms of assistance available?

Yes there are. There are a number of organisations offering assistance with heating and thermal insulation aimed at helping vulnerable tenants. We also have other forms of assistance available. We would be happy to talk to you about these.

Contact details

Contact Wiltshire Council Customer Services on **0300 456 0100** and ask for Private Sector Housing.

