**HOUSING PROJECT CHECK LIST?**

**The following list is a general guide designed to help you consider what is required to set up a house for the shared accommodation of unrelated individuals and also to help assess the suitability of any particular house you have been offered or are considering?**

**Introduction**

Not every house will be right for you? Things to consider include:

* Its size including number of rooms and particularly bedrooms.
* What will the cost of any upgrades be and particularly those required to meet HMO standards/fire regulations?
* What are the likely running costs be including staff/management costs?
* Are there any location / community cohesion issues?
* How it fits with your strategic plan? Do you want to house just NRPF (No Recourse to public funding) or Refugees who can pay rent and therefore cross subsidy NRPF beds?

**Standards? There are various standards that have to be adhered to when renovating a building.**

* You may need to apply for Building Control depending on the scope of the improvements that you need to make.
* Planning i.e. for major alterations / extensions or for change of use, listed building or conservation area consents may also apply?

**HMO Licensing and Landlord licensing**. There are different schemes & rules around the UK so check. From **1st Oct 2018 Compulsory HMO licensing came in where a house is occupied by 5 or more people forming two or more households** (A single unrelated person counts as a household).

* It is really important to check what the local requirements are particularly with regards to fire safety and special room size requirements etc.
* **Fire Risk Assessment**. It is important that these are done by landlord (this might mean the charity running a project) or letting agent and that they help determine the improvements made. See the following guide for general fire safety guidelines.
* <http://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyAtWorkandotherplaces/Adviceforlandlordsandlettingagents/documents/Firesafetyadvicetolandlords.pdf#page=4>
* <https://www.rla.org.uk/docs/LACORSFSguideApril62009.PDF>
* **A Gas Safety certificate** is required before tenants move in and must be renewed annually. It is recommended to have the boiler and plumbing checked before other refurbishment works take place as this will determine the scope of any works required, reduce costs and abortive works.
* **A 5 year electrical safety certificate** and annual check of wired smoke alarms is required in HMO’s and shared accommodation. Make sure you have an electrician carry out a general condition survey before starting other refurbishment works as this will determine the scope of electrical works required reduce costs and avoid abortive work <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/media/1607/landlords-guides-england_wales-2016.pdf>
* **Smoke Alarms.** An LD1 standard smoke alarm system is recommended in a shared accommodation/HMO house. See the following link: <https://www.fireangel.co.uk/blog/your-guide-for-smoke-alarm-positioning-to-meet-building-regulations>

**Specifications & check List for preparing a building for shared accommodation/HMO standards**

* **Fire doors to all bedrooms**, kitchen, living room and means of escape. Ensure that new frames are fitted if existing are not square and cannot be altered to allow the wider thickness of a fire door to be inserted. Ensure a 2.5/3mm max gap all round and that the door is not cut to short. Fit carpets or other flooring and a threshold before trimming the base of the door to fit. Remember that self-closers are essential and need to work to kitchen and living room doors. Ensure that proper fire spec hinges are used (3 per door) and intumescent strips are fitted to door or frame (after painting) including intumescent pads under the hinges. Employ a good joiner who knows what they are doing as **getting the joinery right is essential for fire safety.**
* **Firebreak walls** along corridors and means of escape may also be required following completion of a fire risk assessment. This might involve over boarding of walls and under stairs with fireproof plasterboard before reskimming and redecorating.
* **Integrated wired smoke alarms** to all bedrooms, living rooms, hall landing and stairs.
* **Integrated heat detector** to the kitchen that is wired into the smoke alarm system.
* **Windows and means of escape**. This should ideally be bottom or side openers. A change of windows may not be required following fire risk assessment as fire doors and wired smoke alarms may be enough. But is important to aim for the highest level of safety.
* **Door ironmongery**. Locks should ideally be Euro locks with thumb screw to front and rear exit doors and to bedrooms. Yale 82 Deadbolts are an alternative lock for use on bedroom doors. The important thing with these locks is a key is not needed to exit but is needed to lock the door. This means someone cannot lock themselves out or lock themselves in (allowing access in an emergency situation). It is recommended to avoid push pad coded locks as these are complicated to alter when someone moves out where as a euro lock involves just one screw bolt to change. Fire doors will also need to be fitted with self-closers.
* **Decoration**, keep it clean and simply. White satin paint to doors/frames etc. and magnolia to walls. Use a good kitchen and bathroom spec paint in these rooms.
* **Wiring/rewiring** best down at the start if needed. Get inspected before other works commence. You will need a 5-year inspection certificate (see above).
* **Boiler.** Is it fit for purpose? Get inspected at start in case new pipework and radiators are required. The boiler needs annual an annual gas safety cert. Fit boiler in a locked cupboard so it cannot be tampered with. Fit fuse spurs in bedrooms so that electric fires and fan heaters cannot be used. Electric fires are dangerous and very costly.
* **Fixtures and fittings** need to be robust and hard wearing.
* **Kitchens & bathrooms** (generally 1 per 4/5 occupiers). If possible have a separate toilet and sink from shower room and sink. A walk-in shower is preferable to a bath. Ensure a good extractor is fitted and use large towel rails rather than a radiator. Use large sheet panelling or large tiles with minimum grouting. Raise the shower for easy access to pipework and waste trap. Fit electric shower rather than a shower that uses water heated by the boiler as this ensures tenants can get clean even when there is a fault with the boiler.
* **Bedrooms must meet size requirements for compulsory HMO licensing**. This is 6.51 square metres for someone over 10 years old in single occupancy. Any area of a bedroom with a ceiling height of below 1.5 metres (usually sloping rooves) cannot be used in bedroom minimum space calculations.
* Furniture should ideally be new from good supplier such as Ikea or quality second hand that meets fire regulations.
* **White goods and kitchen equipment** (pots, pans etc). 1 cooker per 4/5 occupiers 2 fridge freezers or one large fridge and a fridge freezer
* **Carpets and floor coverings**. What works best in communal areas? Aim for balance between longevity and comfort. Carpet bedroom landing and stairs but consider a hard surface to kitchen, hall, and living room.

**Other Stuff that may or may not be required depending on the project and partners you may be working with?**

* Future property management/maintenance
* Staff team – Hosing manager/inspection and maintenance/ client support
* Project management of upgrades/refurbishment. Getting the house fit for purpose?
* Tenancy/License and occupancy agreements (IF NRPT they do not have right to rent so can only be given an occupancy agreement- NACCOM has examples of both)
* What type of documentation? Warning notices? Notice boards? House induction/house rules & briefing notes
* Notices in other languages
* Preparing clients (men) for living communally
  + Cleaning
  + Respect and tolerance
  + Visitors
  + Smoking, alcohol and drugs
  + Emergency’s and call out
  + Heating and lighting
  + Security and safeguarding

Insurance

* Buildings & contents
* Public liability