

# **Fire Safety Standards for Non Licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) In Sheffield**



## Introduction

This fire standard is based on fire safety guidance. “Housing – Fire safety” published in 2008 by the Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS). It is approved by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service as providing an acceptable level of fire safety.

This document covers the general principles about fire safety and shows the standards for three storey and two storey shared houses. The guide covers houses both with and without direct means of escape. Direct means of escape means:

*Being able to leave the property by way of staircase and hallways and corridors, without passing through a room of any sort.*

There are other floor layouts, so if you are unsure about whether your property type is covered by this document or any of the requirements, please contact us for advice and help.

### **What does Non - Licensable HMO mean?**

The Housing Act 2004 made it mandatory for higher risk Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), to be licensed with the local authority. HMOs falling into this high risk category are those occupied by five or more unrelated people and occupied on 3 or more storeys.

This guide, therefore, only applies to privately rented shared properties that do not satisfy both of the above criteria. If you are unclear whether or not your property is licensable, please contact us for advice and help.

In general, privately rented houses occupied by no more than three or four unrelated persons sharing amenities form non-licensable HMOs

## Very Important

The specifications that follow represent the minimum measures required to comply with these standards. It may be the case that you decide to exceed the requirements of the standard. Similarly, if you are considering alternative ways of achieving the minimum standards please call us for advice and help.

This document deals with the most common property layouts in Sheffield. If you are applying these standards to a layout not covered in this document please contact us for advice.

## General Principles

Our overall aim is to improve the standard of private rented properties in Sheffield, which includes making sure they are safe for the occupiers and that they have appropriate standards of fire protection. There are some general principles that apply to all house types including:

- Polystyrene ceiling and wall tiles are not permitted
- A Fire Blanket is required to kitchen
- Where provided, locks to all doors are to be of a thumb turn type, allowing exit without the use of a key.
- Depending on the type of escape route in the house, substantial doors can be acceptable to some rooms / locations. Substantial doors should be in sound condition, well-constructed, undamaged and close fitting. Hollow core or 'egg-box' type doors are not acceptable. If you need further advice, please contact us.
- When required, all self-closing devices must be of a British Standard & CE Approved type. Overhead hydraulic, "Perko" type and self-closing hinges are acceptable. Gibraltar type closers are not acceptable

- Bathrooms containing significant fire risks, such as a hot water cylinder with an immersion heater or a central heating boiler require a self-closing 30 minute fire door, or a substantial door with a self-closer.

### Cellar Ceilings

Existing lath and plaster cellar ceilings are acceptable, where in good condition, but if the ceiling is damaged or missing; 30 minute fire resisting separation is required below the escape route.

- a)** Remove all plaster and laths to the area to be upgraded and denail joists as necessary. Supply and fit mineral fibre insulation between the joists and ensure the entire area to be upgraded is tightly filled between the joists and adequately supported on metal “chicken wire” netting. This method has been approved by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- b)** Remove all plaster and laths to the area to be upgraded and denail joists as necessary. Supply and fix suitable proprietary fire resistant board to the area to be upgraded. Any joints between boards should be properly sealed in accordance with the instructions from the manufacturer of the board.
- c)** Remove all plaster and laths to the area to be upgraded and denail joists as necessary. Provide and securely fit 12.5mm plasterboard and finish with a plaster skim. It is recommended that ventilation be incorporated into the floor area and the area be cross battened with 50mm x 50mm timbers to allow this.

In all cases any holes, where cables or pipework passes throughout the ceiling and gaps at the ceiling wall junction should be properly sealed with plaster, intumescent mastic or foam. Where the joists in the cellar run from an unprotected area of the cellar the ceiling will need to be fire stopped below the joists where the ceiling is to be upgraded.

## Three storey shared house without a direct means of escape (Sometimes referred to as either/or houses)

This typically applies to terraced property that includes a staircase at ground floor discharging via doors into a front room and a rear living kitchen

### Doors

#### Ground floor front room

- Thirty minute fire door with combined cold / intumescent seal and self-closer.

*Very important* – If this door is fitted with a lock then it must be of a type that can be over ridden from the ground floor lobby in the event of an emergency. E.g. an Erebus - type lock

This is because this room forms part of the means of escape

#### Ground floor rear living room

- *With off shot kitchen* – Thirty minute fire door with combined intumescent / cold smoke seals, self-closer and vision panel. A fire locator switch fitted in the ground floor lobby is an alternative to the vision panel.
- *Without off shot kitchen* – the room is therefore a dining kitchen – Thirty minute fire door with intumescent seal only and self-closer and vision panel. A fire locator switch fitted in the ground floor lobby is an alternative to the vision panel.

#### Cellar- head

- Thirty minute fire door with combined intumescent cold smoke seal and self-closer

#### First and second floor bedrooms

- Robust, well-fitting doors of sound construction are acceptable if they are in good condition. Self-closers are required. Seals are not required

#### Locks

- External entrance doors should have locks that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.

- Internal doors where provided with locks should be of a sort that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.

### **Detection (interlinked mains powered with battery back-up)**

Cellar	Smoke
Cellar head	If there is a fridge/freezer or similar electrical goods then smoke detection.
Ground floor front bedroom	Smoke
Ground floor rear living room	Heat if there is no off shot kitchen Smoke if there is an off shot kitchen
Means of escape (ground floor hallways, landings and stairs):	Smoke

### **Structural Separation (apart from doors)**

#### Walls and ceilings

To be half hour fire-resistant.

Solid masonry is satisfactory.

Plasterboard partitions in good condition are acceptable

Original lath and plaster partitions and ceilings are acceptable, if in sound condition.

#### Cellar ceiling

Existing lath and plaster in good condition is acceptable, otherwise replace in accordance with the specifications given under “general principles”.

As the ground floor front room forms part of the means of escape, the entire cellar ceiling should meet this specification.

### **Emergency Lighting**

To be a risk assessment of whether there is sufficient borrowed light from street lamps and other external lighting on to the means of escape.

If in the event of electrical failure there is insufficient illumination to the means of escape to allow safe evacuation then some form of emergency lighting will be required. If needed, luminaires can be fitted, or luminescent tape type products can be fixed to the stairway and means of escape.

## **Fire Extinguishers and Fire blankets**

Extinguishers – not required.

A fire blanket is required to the kitchen, in a position such that it is readily accessible in the event of a fire. It should not be positioned above the cooker



## Three Storey Shared House with a direct means of escape

### Doors

#### Ground floor front bedroom

- Thirty minute fire door with intumescent seal and self-closer.

#### Ground floor rear living room

- Thirty minute fire door with combined intumescent /cold smoke seals and self-closer.

#### Cellar

- Thirty minute fire door with combined intumescent cold smoke seal and self-closer.

#### First and second floor bedrooms

- Robust well-fitting doors of sound construction are acceptable, if they are in good condition. Self-closers are required. Seals are not required

#### Locks

- External entrance doors should have locks that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.
- Internal doors where provided with locks should be of a sort that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.

### **Detection (interlinked mains powered with battery back-up)**

Cellar:	Smoke
Cellar head:	Smoke (if there is a fridge or fridge freezer or other electrical goods in use)
Ground floor front bedroom:	Not needed
Ground floor rear living room:	Smoke
Kitchen	Heat
Means of escape (ground floor hallways, landings and stairs):	Smoke

### **Structural Separation (apart from doors)**

#### Walls and ceilings



- To be half hour fire resistant.
- Solid masonry is satisfactory.
- Plasterboard partitions in good condition are acceptable.
- Original lath and plaster partitions and ceilings are acceptable if in sound condition.

### Cellar ceiling

- Existing lath and plaster in good condition is acceptable, otherwise replace in accordance with the specifications given under general principals.

Note only that section of ceiling under the means of escape (usually the ground floor hallway as above) needs to be half hour fire resistant

### **Emergency Lighting**

To be a risk assessment of whether there is sufficient borrowed light from street lamps and other external lighting on to the means of escape.

If in the event of electrical failure there is insufficient illumination to the means of escape to allow safe evacuation then some form of emergency lighting will be required. If needed, luminaires can be fitted, or luminescent tape type products can be fixed to the stairway and means of escape.

### **Fire extinguishers and Fire blankets**

Extinguishers – not required

A fire blanket is required to the kitchen, in a position such that it is readily accessible in the event of a fire. It should not be positioned above the cooker

## Two Storey Shared House without a direct means of escape

### Doors

#### Ground floor front bedroom

- Thirty minute fire door with intumescent seal only and self –closer

#### Ground floor rear living room

- *With off shot kitchen.* Thirty minute fire door with combined seals and self - closer and vision panel. A fire locator switch fitted in the ground floor lobby is an alternative to the vision panel.
- *Without off shot kitchen (the room is therefore a dining kitchen):* Thirty minute fire door with intumescent seal only and self-closer and vision panel. A fire locator switch fitted in the ground floor lobby is an alternative to the vision panel.

*Very important* – If this door is fitted with a lock then it must be of a type that can be over ridden from the ground floor lobby in the event of an emergency. This is because this room forms part of the means of escape

#### Cellar head

- Robust well-fitting door of sound construction with self - closer

#### First floor bedrooms

- Substantial doors in good condition are acceptable. Self-closers are not required.

#### Locks

- External entrance doors should have locks that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.
- Internal doors where provided with locks should be of a sort that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.

### **Detection (interlinked mains powered with battery back-up)**

Cellar:

Smoke

Cellar head:	Smoke (if there is a fridge or fridge freezer or other electrical goods in use)
Ground floor rear living room (with off shot kitchen)	Smoke
Ground floor rear dining kitchen: (i.e. with no off shot)	Heat
Means of escape (ground floor hallways, landings and stairs)	Smoke

## **Structural Separation (apart from doors)**

### Walls and ceilings

- To be half hour fire resistant.
- Solid masonry is satisfactory
- Plasterboard partitions in good condition are acceptable
- Original lath and plaster partitions and ceilings are acceptable if in sound condition.

### Cellar ceiling

Existing lath and plaster in good condition is acceptable, otherwise replace in accordance with the specifications given under general principals.

As the ground floor front room forms part of the means of escape the entire cellar ceiling needs to be half hour fire resistant.

## **Fire extinguishers and Fire blankets**

Extinguishers – not required

A fire blanket is required to the kitchen, in a position such that it is readily accessible in the event of a fire. It should not be positioned above the cooker

## Two Storey Shared House with a direct means of escape

### Doors

#### Ground Floor

- All doors (including cellar) that open directly on to the hallway – substantial doors in good condition with a self-closer are acceptable. Seals are not required

#### First floor

- Substantial well-fitting doors in good condition are acceptable – self-closers are not required. Seals are not required

#### Locks

- External entrance doors should have locks that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.
- Internal doors where provided with locks should be of a sort that can be opened without the use of a key from the inside.

### **Detection (interlinked mains powered with battery back-up)**

Cellar:	Smoke
Cellar head (if there is a fridge or fridge freezer or other electrical goods in use):	Smoke
Ground floor rear living room (with off shot kitchen):	Smoke
Ground floor rear dining kitchen (i.e. with no off shot):	Heat
Means of escape (ground floor hallways, landings and stairs)	Smoke

### **Structural Separation (apart from doors)**

#### Walls and ceilings

To be half hour fire resistant:

- Solid masonry is satisfactory
- Plasterboard partitions in good condition are acceptable
- Original lath and plaster partitions and ceilings are acceptable if in sound condition.

### Cellar ceiling

Existing lath and plaster in good condition is acceptable, otherwise replace in accordance with the specifications given under general principals.

Note: only that section of ceiling under the means of escape (usually the ground floor hallway as above) needs to be half hour fire resistant

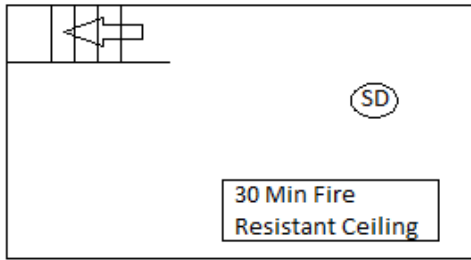
### **Fire extinguishers and Fire blankets**

Extinguishers – not required

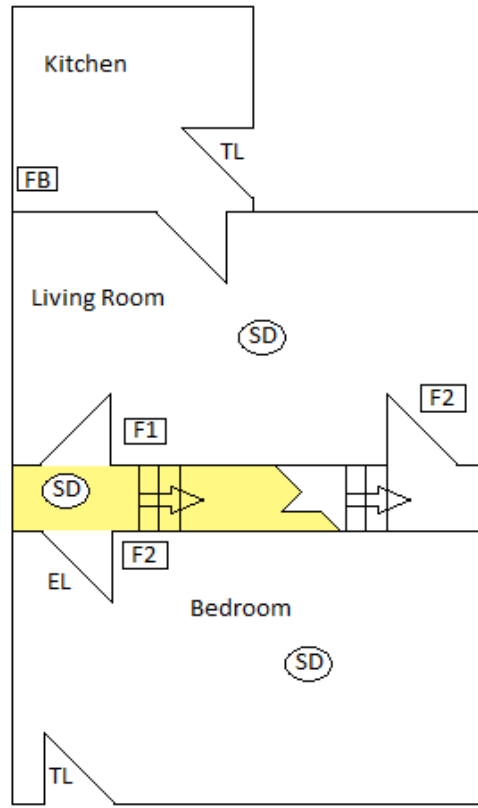
A fire blanket is required to the kitchen, in a position such that it is readily accessible in the event of a fire. It should not be positioned above the cooker

# Plans

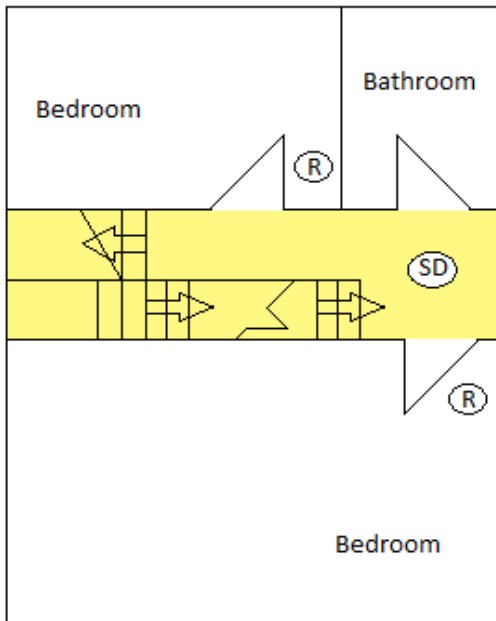
## Three storey house without a direct means of escape



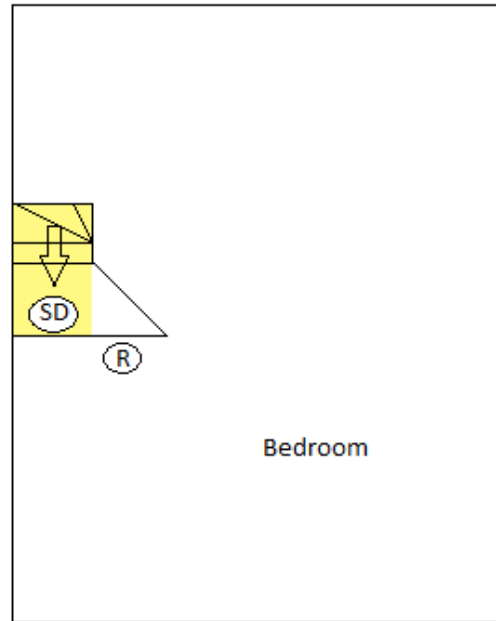
Cellar



Ground Floor

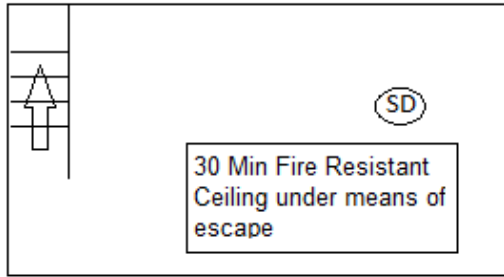


First Floor

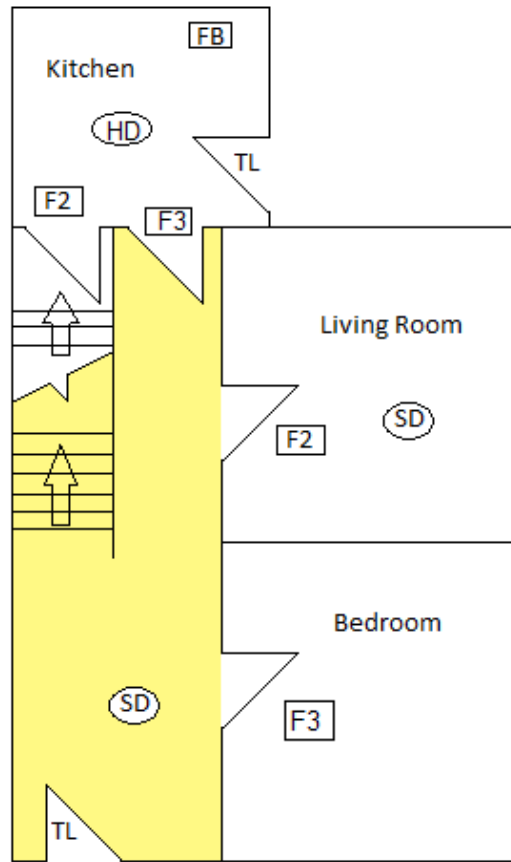


Second Floor

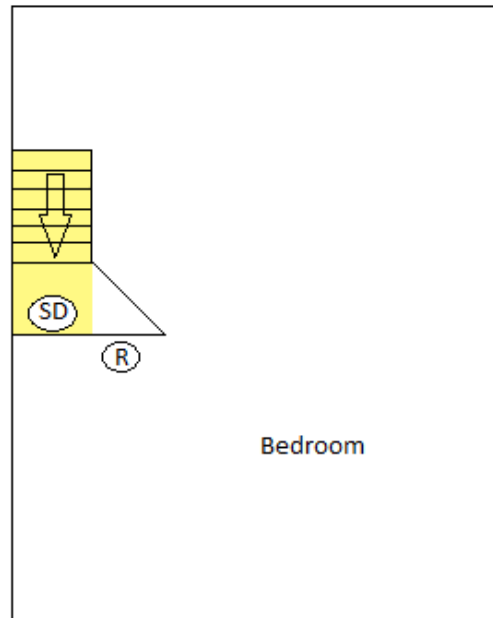
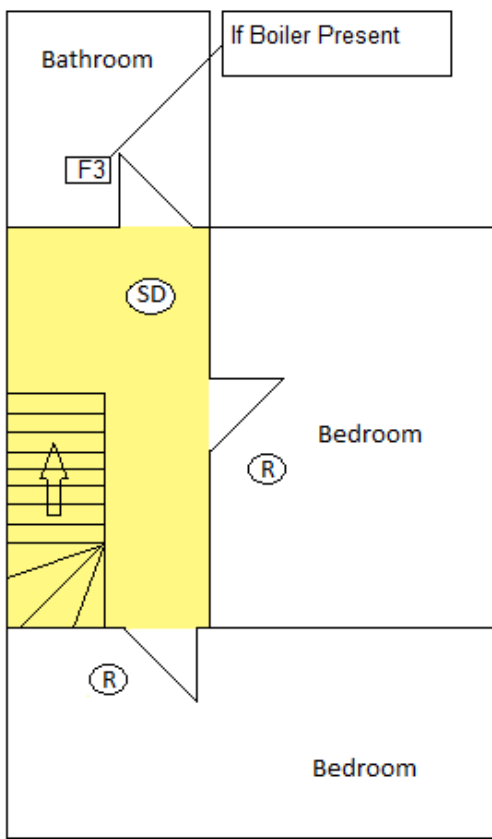
Three storey house with a direct means of escape



Cellar

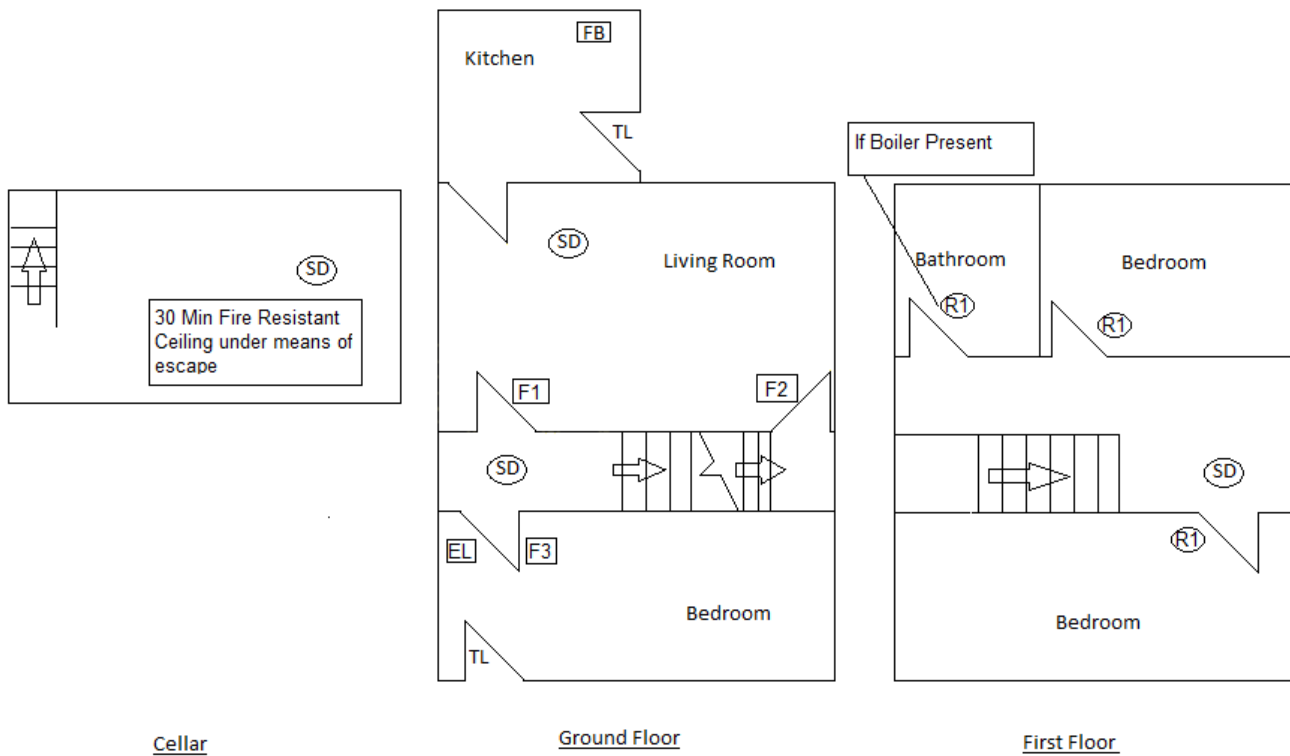


Ground Floor

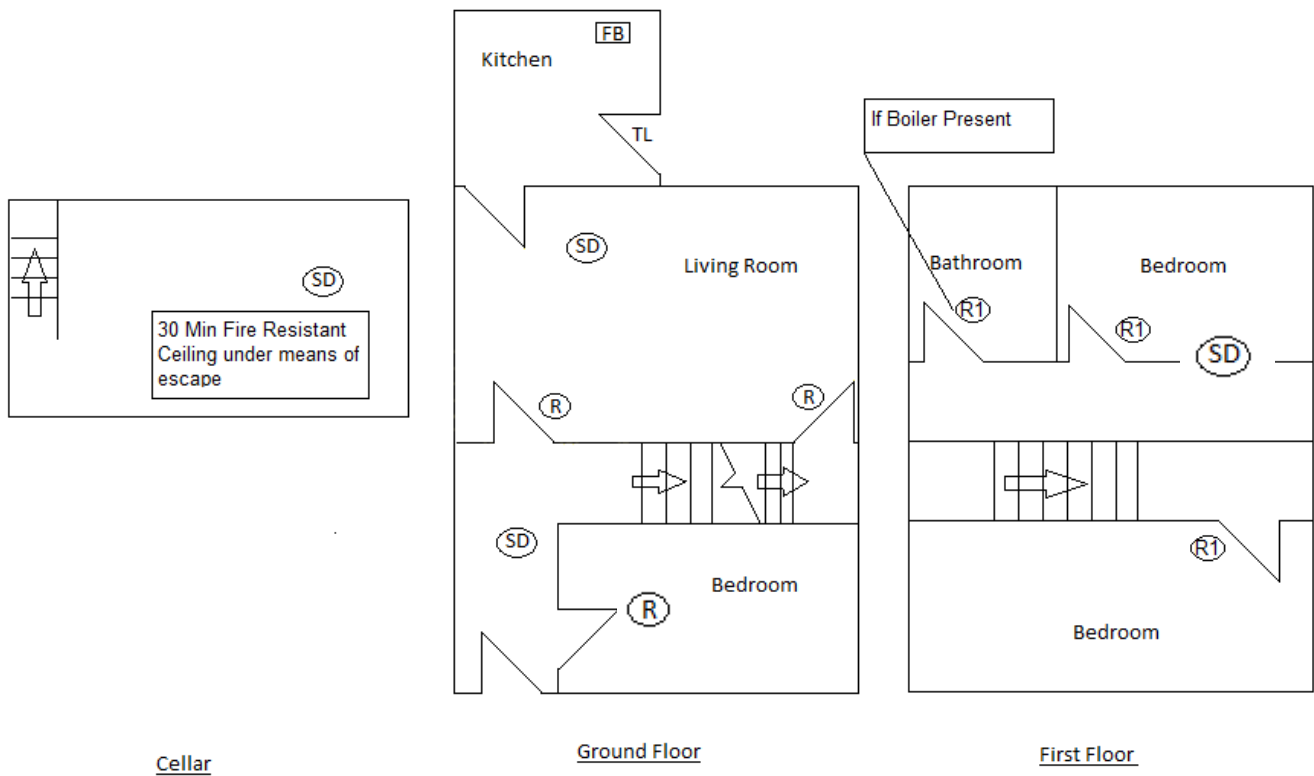











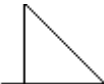



## Two storey house without a direct means of escape



## Two storey house with a direct means of escape



<b>Key for Plans</b>	
	Emergency Lighting or equivalent (If Required)
	Smoke Detector – Needs to be fitted close to meters
	Heat Detector
	Fire Blanket
	Fire door (30 Min) with self-closer combine cold and intumescent seal and Vision Panel Important: As an alternative to the vision panel a fire locator switch can be installed to the ground floor lobby.
	Fire door (30 Min) with self-closer combine cold and intumescent seal
	Fire door (30 Min) with self-closer and intumescent seal
	Robust well-constructed well-fitting door with self-closer
	Robust well-constructed well-fitting door self-closer not required
EL	Escape Lock: This lock should be of a type that can be overridden from the ground floor lobby.
	Door
	Door with Thumb Turn Lock

## Further Information

This document has been produced by Gerard Myers and Gary Wakefield, officers from Sheffield Council's private Housing Standards Team.

Thanks are also extended to South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service for their comments and contributions.

By way of background the following publications and references may also be of interest.

- "Housing – Fire safety" published in 2008 by the Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS).
- BS 5839 Part 6 (2004) relating to the provision and installation of fire alarm systems
- BS 5266 (Parts 1 and 7 1999) relating to the installation and provision of emergency lighting
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System – Operating Guidance (published February 2006 with particular reference to the assessment of fire safety (hazard 24))

Information is also available on the Council's website at [www.sheffield.gov.uk/hmo](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/hmo)

**By e-mail to:** [hmo@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:hmo@sheffield.gov.uk)

**By Letter to:** Private Housing Standards  
Moorfoot Building  
Sheffield  
S1 4PL

**By telephone to:** 0114 273 4680 – Private Housing Standards advice line  
– staffed Monday - Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm –  
Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm

