

CHOOSING DOOR LOCKS FOR HMOs

The selection of the correct door locks for use in rented property is very important to maintain both security and fire safety.

The use of the wrong door locks can lead to tenants being trapped in a building during a fire, so this leaflet is designed to help you select the correct door locks for your House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

Keeping your tenants safe

Regulations for door locks in HMOs attempt to balance the need of security for the tenant, coupled with adequate means of escaping their accommodation in case of a fire. Main points to consider are:

- Landlords are responsible for both the safety and security of tenants.
- An internal door lock is a reasonable expectation for a tenant, giving them peace of mind that their accommodation and belongings are safe.
- Internal door locks should **not** require the use of a key in order to comply with fire safety requirements.
- Landlords should fit appropriate internal locks rather than tenants resorting to carrying out a DIY installation that can damage doors.



DASH Services offers landlord members a reliable signposting service to help navigate their way around an ever changing market place. Can we help you?



For more advice,
visit our website at
dashservices.org.uk

Your responsibility as a landlord

We have tried to address the most common scenarios in HMOs but you should always consult your own fire risk assessment to determine the requirement for your property. Your local Housing Standards or Environmental Health Department are also happy to offer advice.

As the landlord, you are ultimately responsible for the safety and security of your tenants, so whether the door locks were fitted by you or were already present, they require assessment to ensure they are correct and meet appropriate safety standards. In addition to safety and security, the selection of the correct door locks can save time and money on HMO management and tenant damage.

Do I need internal door locks?

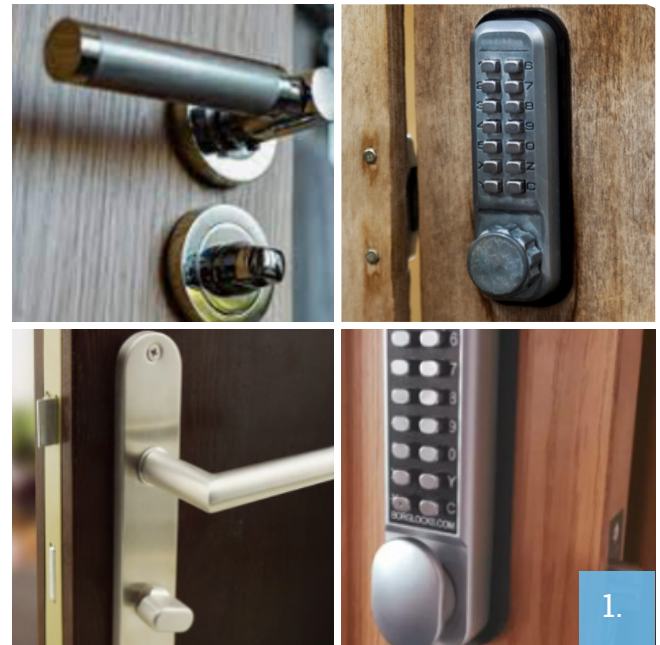
Tenants sharing facilities in HMOs will often want to lock their bedroom doors at night or when they are out. It is a reasonable expectation for their privacy and personal security.

There is an outdated myth that installing locks on internal doors in HMOs would change the status of an HMO property. This is not the case – HMOs instead have a precise definition based on occupation. It is also preferable for a landlord to install internal locks correctly rather than the tenant installing their own which could cause damage to your property and impede an escape in case of fire.

What type of internal door lock is normally acceptable?

The selection of an internal door lock that does **not** require the use of a key for exiting the room is essential to meet fire safety requirements. This is because in a fire, tenants can panic and fail to find their keys, quickly becoming overcome by smoke before they manage to exit.

Examples of appropriate locks for HMO internal doors



These locks allow keyless exit and avoid lockouts.

DASH recommends the use of door locks as pictured for HMO bedrooms. Both euro-style thumb-turn locks or keypad locks are acceptable as they provide keyless exit and prevent accidental lockouts.

While there are several other door lock types that meet the same requirement as those shown, we advise you select a lock type that is only lockable from the inside of the room with a thumb-turn knob **and** is only lockable on the outside of the door with the insertion of a key.

What type of internal door locks are not acceptable?

Hasp Locks



Hasp locks can damage fire doors but can also potentially lock tenants inside a room.

Hasp locks are often used by tenants to secure a room where a lock is not provided by the landlord. As well as looking unsightly and possibly damaging the door they can be potentially dangerous, as, being externally mounted, other tenants can lock the room occupier in.

Similarly, key operated mortice and euro style locks which require the insertion of a key on both sides of the door are not acceptable.

There are an increasing amount of battery and electrically powered door locks entering the market, some even using Wi-Fi and smartphone applications for operation. Any lock reliant on a power source or electro-magnets would need to have a fail-safe (i.e., open) if power were lost, to maintain fire escape.

Key Locks



Locks that need a key for exit can prevent quick and easy escape in the event of a fire.

Which doors require keyless escape locks?

In HMOs, any door that has a lock on it must provide keyless escape if it forms part of the primary or secondary fire escape route. In practice, this is any door you might need to pass through to get from anywhere you are in the building to a place of safety outside the house (usually the street). So, most commonly, it will be the bedroom door, and any further internal doors (such as internal porch doors), and the final exit door to the street.

Does the final exit external door lock need to provide keyless escape?

Yes. It is vital that having provided keyless escape locks to the internal doors of the HMO, tenants are not then trapped by a locked door when they reach the final exit door.

This is particularly important, as a tenant fleeing a fire is unlikely to remember their front door key when leaving their bedroom and may not be able to return to their room to retrieve a key if smoke and flames are blocking their way.

Also, if the final exit door does not provide keyless escape, a tenant leaving the property might accidentally lock another tenant or visitor inside the HMO leaving them with no escape.

The choice of lock for the final exit door needs careful consideration with regards to overall security. Unlike internal doors where the goal is to fit a lock that will not result in accidental lockouts, the final external exit door to an HMO provides better security if it **does** self-latch upon closing.

DASH therefore recommends final exit exterior doors be fitted with thumb-turn locks that self-latch. The external lock can therefore be of a night latch design. Please fit locks that meet BS 3621, which meets the British Standards Institute (BSI) requirements for thief-resistant locks. Some insurance companies require door locks are fitted to this standard so it is worth checking with your insurance company before purchase.

Night latches



A night latch would be unsuitable for an internal door but would be acceptable for use on a final exit external door.

Do keyless exit locks compromise security?

Keyless exit locks don't make a property any easier to break into. Indeed, an intruder is unlikely to know in advance what type of locks are present internally from the outside.

Additional thought may however need to be paid to ensure any internal 'thumb-turn' lock mechanisms are not visible through windows in the door itself or via other external windows.

Also, some external doors may not require keyless escape, so a rear exit not forming part of a primary or secondary fire escape route could have a standard lock fitted where there is a significant risk of burglary. You will need to seek professional advice if you are unsure as to whether a particular door requires keyless escape or not.

Further resources

DASH Services is a Private Rented Sector service for Local Authorities, Landlords & Tenants and is hosted by Derby City Council on behalf of a number of different Councils across England.

We will always try to ensure that all material on the site is as accurate and valid as we can make it. However, you should note that content is for general information only and we cannot guarantee that the information and advice given will always apply to a specific situation, or that the documents and forms provided will always be the most suitable for your particular situation.

The use you make of the information and services provided on site is your responsibility and we cannot accept liability for any problems resulting from your use of the DASH Services site.

Fire Safety Regulations

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing safety standards and carry out inspections. Authorities are bound by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to ensure properties and their tenants are safe.

The LACORS Fire Safety guidance provides valuable advice on all aspects of provisions for fire safety in rented properties. You can download the booklet here:

<https://www.dashservices.org.uk/Resources/Fire-Safety/document-2>

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