

High-rise living

Making changes to your high-rise home



The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. BSR helps make sure residents in high-rise buildings in England are safe and feel safe in their homes.

What residents, tenants or leaseholders need to know before they start

The person or organisation responsible for your high-rise building's safety is known as the 'principal accountable person' (PAP) or 'accountable persons' (APs). If you have a concern about building safety, you should raise it with your PAP or APs first. They should have a clear process in place for you to do this.

So, before you pick up the tools (or hire someone), check and take these three steps:

1. Look at your lease or tenancy agreement

- most agreements require written permission before altering anything structural or changing the outside of the building
- even small changes inside your flat (like switching carpet to wood flooring) may need permission due to noise or fire safety risks
- often, you need a formal "licence to alter" from the landlord or owner for smaller work

2. Speak to your landlord, managing agent or Principal Accountable Person (PAP)

- every HRB must have a Principal Accountable Person (PAP) who manages building safety
- the PAP must know about any work that might affect the building's fire or structural safety. In this guide, we call them your "PAP"
- if you don't know your PAP, ask your caretaker or concierge. They may also contact the PAP for you
- get written consent from your PAP for any smaller work before starting
- always get their advice on any work, especially if it involves any of the improvements listed below. Potential issues at a later date can be avoided by checking to see if you need building control approval first

3. Check if your works need building control approval

Building Regulations are laws that cover building work and the standards that must be applied for matters such as structure, fire safety, ventilation and energy efficiency.

Since October 2023, BSR is the building control authority for all HRBs in England. Local councils or private companies can no longer oversee this work.

You must get building control approval from BSR before carrying out building work (as defined in Building Regulations) unless the work is 'exempt', an 'emergency repair' or is carried out under a Competent Person Scheme (CPS)

Checklist

- ✓ always get written permission for smaller work from your PAP
- ✓ contact BSR early if you're unsure whether the work needs building control approval
- ✓ use qualified people for the work
- ✓ keep all approvals, in case you sell your home later
- ✓ when in doubt - ask before you act

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government recently consulted on [improving proportionality in building control](#) to re-classify works inside individual flats from Category A to Category B. This would be to reduce the administrative burdens on routine modifications.

Until legislation is amended and introduced, existing rules remain in place. All modifications affecting structural or fire-safety elements in HRBs continue to require BSR approval.

Typical home improvement examples: Who needs to approve the work

Type of work	Needs Landlord/PAP consent?	Needs BSR Building Control approval?
Knocking down or moving walls	✓	✓
Installing air conditioning	✓	✓
Changing boilers or electrics connected to communal systems	✓	✓
Flooring changes (carpet to wood or tiles)	✓ (usually)	✓
Redecorating, tiling, kitchen units	Check your lease first. You may need to return the property to its original condition when you leave.	✗

How to apply for building control approval from the Building Safety Regulator

You must provide detailed information showing that your work follows all relevant Building Regulations.

You also need to show how the work will be managed.

- the easiest way to provide this information is by using the documents required for larger work
- guidance on how to submit and manage an online building control application to BSR is available at Managing building control approval applications for higher-risk buildings
- please read this guidance thoroughly before applying to avoid common errors
- if you are unsure whether the work needs approval, always ask first: Contact your PAP, BSR or a specialist property solicitor

What if you don't get approval?

- if you start work before BSR has told you that you can, it is an offence
- you may have to undo the work at your own expense
- this could be a breach of your lease, tenancy and/or Building Regulations. Breaches of building regulations can lead to legal action
- your insurance may not cover you if something goes wrong
- most importantly, you could put yourself and your neighbours at risk

Costs and timings

- BSR's building control charges a fee. This fee depends on how long it takes to assess, approve, or reject the size and type of work
- BSR calculates charges using a set application charge, plus added hourly rates for staff (currently £156 per hour). They also charge fixed rates for standard activities
- costs can also cover expenses for relevant authorities (like local authorities and fire and rescue authorities) and third-party experts hired by BSR
- your landlord or managing agent may also charge a fee to issue consent
- remember to budget for time and cost for professional drawings, reports and inspections that BSR and/or landlords might request.

Essential safety reminders

- remember, if you live in an HRB with a PAP, extra rules apply under the Building Safety Act
- always consider including anything that compromises the integrity of the compartmentation of the apartment or building e.g. pipes through walls
- you MUST NOT interfere with fire doors, alarms, smoke vents, or anything else that keeps the building safe
- always tell your PAP if your works might affect fire or structural safety. Get advice to check if BSR approval is also needed



For more information, visit our website using the QR code, or search 'Your Home, Your Safety' online.