



letcare

tailored support for short term lets

Short Term Let Compliance Guide (Scotland)

Letcare Property Services Ltd

03300432976

info@let-care.co.uk

www.let-care.co.uk

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Resource V.1
STL Compliance

Operating a short term let in Scotland requires compliance with a number of legal, safety and licensing requirements. These regulations are designed to protect guests, neighbours and communities while ensuring accommodation meets basic safety standards.

This guide provides a simple overview of the key compliance requirements for short term lets in Scotland, how to obtain them, and practical advice to help navigate common challenges.

This guide has been prepared by LetCare, specialists in operational support, maintenance and compliance for short term let properties.



Contents

This guide provides an overview of the key compliance requirements for operating a short term let property in Scotland. The sections below outline the main regulatory areas hosts must understand when preparing or operating a licensed property.

Introduction

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Short Term Let Licence

Explanation of licensing requirements, licence types and how to apply through your local authority.

Fire Safety Requirements

Essential fire safety measures including smoke alarms, fire risk assessments and escape route requirements.

Electrical Safety

Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR), portable appliance testing (PAT) and general electrical safety responsibilities.

Gas Safety

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Short Term Let Licence

All short term let properties in Scotland must hold a valid licence issued by the relevant local authority before operating.

Licensing schemes are administered by local councils. For example, properties operating in Edinburgh must apply through the scheme managed by the City of Edinburgh Council.

When a Licence is Required

A licence is required if a property is used for short term stays, including:

- Holiday accommodation
- Airbnb or similar booking platforms
- Short term business accommodation
- Serviced accommodation

Licence Types

The licence required depends on how the property is used.

Secondary Letting

The entire property is rented to guests and is not the host's primary residence.

Home Letting

The host rents their primary residence while temporarily absent.

Home Sharing

Guests rent rooms within the host's primary residence while the host remains in the property.

How to Apply

Complete the short term let licence application form through your local council

Submit the required documentation and safety certificates

Pay the application fee

Await approval from the local authority

Typical Documents Required

Applications usually require supporting documentation such as:

- Electrical safety certificate (EICR)
- Gas safety certificate (where applicable)
- Fire safety measures and alarms
- Legionella risk assessment
- Property floor plan and occupancy details
- Proof of insurance

Tips

- Submit a complete application with all certificates included to avoid delays
- Check if planning permission is required before applying
- Ensure floor plans and occupancy limits are clearly stated
- Keep copies of all documentation submitted to the council.

Fire Safety Requirements

Fire safety is one of the most important compliance areas for short term let properties. Properties must have appropriate fire detection, safety equipment and safe escape routes to protect guests in the event of a fire.

Typical Requirements

Most short term lets must include:

- Interlinked smoke alarms throughout the property
- Heat alarm in the kitchen
- Carbon monoxide detectors where gas or solid fuel appliances are present
- Fire blanket in the kitchen
- A fire risk assessment
- Clear and unobstructed escape routes

Depending on the property type, layout or local authority requirements, additional measures may also be required.

Additional Measures (Where Applicable)

Some properties may require:

- Emergency lighting
- Fire doors in certain buildings or multi-storey properties
- Fire safety signage

Requirements can vary depending on the property type, building layout and local authority guidance.

Installation and Assessment

Fire alarm systems and safety equipment should be installed by qualified electricians or fire safety contractors.

A fire risk assessment should be carried out by a competent person to identify potential fire hazards and ensure appropriate safety measures are in place.

Practical Tips

- Install interlinked alarms early, as missing alarms are a common reason for licence delays
- Test alarms regularly and replace batteries where required
- Ensure escape routes are always clear and accessible
- Keep records of fire safety checks and inspections.

Electrical Safety

Electrical safety certification is required to ensure that a short term let property is safe for guests and meets licensing requirements.

What Is Required

Short term let properties must typically have:

- An Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) covering the fixed electrical system
- Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) for portable electrical items provided for guest use

Portable appliances may include items such as kettles, microwaves, lamps, televisions and other electrical equipment supplied within the property.

Typical Testing Frequency

- EICR: Every five years
- PAT Testing: Recommended annually

These inspections confirm that electrical systems and appliances are safe and in good working condition.

How to Obtain Certification

Electrical inspections must be carried out by a qualified electrician or competent electrical contractor.

Once completed, certificates should be retained as evidence of compliance and made available if requested by the local authority during the licensing process or inspections.

Energy Performance

- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- Required when marketing most self-contained short term lets
- Valid for 10 years
- Must be produced by an accredited energy assessor.

Practical Tips

- Arrange EICR and PAT testing during the same visit to reduce costs
- Remove or replace damaged or faulty appliances before testing
- Keep copies of certificates and inspection records
- Regularly check appliances between guest stays for visible damage or faults.

Gas Safety

If a short term let property contains gas appliances, a valid Gas Safety Certificate is required to confirm that the system is safe for guest use.

What Is Required

Properties with gas appliances must have:

- An annual gas safety inspection
- A Gas Safety Certificate issued by a Gas Safe registered engineer

Gas appliances may include boilers, gas hobs, gas ovens or other gas-powered equipment installed within the property.

How to Obtain Certification

A Gas Safe registered engineer must inspect all gas appliances and associated pipework within the property.

Following the inspection, a Gas Safety Certificate will be issued confirming that the appliances are safe and operating correctly.

Practical Tips

- Schedule annual inspections well before licence renewal or peak booking periods
- Keep digital copies of gas safety certificates for compliance records
- Address any faults or recommendations identified during inspections promptly

Water Safety (Legionella)

Hosts must assess and manage the risk of Legionella bacteria within water systems. Legionella can develop in stagnant or poorly maintained water systems and may pose a health risk if inhaled through water droplets.

What Is Required

Short term let operators should ensure:

- A Legionella risk assessment is carried out
- Ongoing water safety management is maintained
- Water systems are kept clean and regularly used

Properties with hot tubs, spa pools or similar water features require additional management to ensure water quality and hygiene standards are maintained.

How to Obtain a Risk Assessment

A Legionella risk assessment can be carried out by:

- A competent contractor or specialist water safety company, or
- The property owner, provided they follow recognised guidance and understand the risks within the system

More complex systems or properties with hot tubs are often assessed by professional contractors.

Practical Tips

- Flush taps and showers regularly, particularly if they are rarely used
- Maintain hot water temperatures above 60°C where possible
- Ensure hot tubs are properly treated, cleaned and monitored between guest stays
- Keep records of water safety checks and maintenance

Proper water management helps reduce health risks and demonstrates compliance during licence inspections.

Insurance

Appropriate insurance cover is required to protect both the property owner and guests when operating a short term let.

Standard residential insurance policies often do not cover short term letting, so suitable specialist cover should be arranged.

What Is Required

Short term let operators should ensure they have:

- Buildings insurance suitable for short term letting
- Public liability insurance to cover injury or damage involving guests

Some local authorities may specify minimum levels of public liability cover as part of the licensing process.

How to Obtain Cover

Specialist insurers offer policies specifically designed for holiday lets, serviced accommodation and short term rentals.

These policies typically cover property damage, guest-related incidents and periods when the property is occupied by paying guests.

Practical Tips

- Confirm your policy explicitly allows short term letting
- Ensure public liability cover is sufficient for guest accommodation
- Keep copies of insurance certificates and policy documents for licensing records.

Planning Permission

In some areas, planning permission may be required before a property can operate as a short term let.

Planning requirements vary depending on the location of the property and how it is used.

When It May Be Required

Planning permission is most commonly required for:

- Secondary letting where the entire property is used for short term accommodation
- Properties located within short term let control areas
- Situations where the use of the property changes from residential to commercial accommodation

Major cities may introduce control areas where planning permission is required before operating a short term let.

How to Apply

Planning applications must be submitted through the local authority planning department responsible for the area where the property is located.

The local authority will review the proposed use of the property and determine whether permission can be granted.

Practical Tips

- Check planning requirements before purchasing or converting a property for short term letting
- Confirm whether the property is located within a short term let control area
- Allow time for planning decisions, as approval can take several months

Occupancy Limits

Local authorities set maximum occupancy levels for short term let properties to ensure guest safety and prevent overcrowding. Occupancy limits are typically determined based on the size, layout and facilities available within the property.

These limits form part of the licensing process and must be clearly defined within the licence application.

What Is Required

Applicants are usually required to provide:

- Accurate floor plans showing the layout of the property
- The number and size of bedrooms
- Details of sleeping arrangements such as beds or sofa beds
- A proposed maximum number of guests

Councils will assess whether the proposed occupancy level is appropriate based on the available space, access routes and general safety considerations.

Factors Considered

Local authorities may consider several factors when determining occupancy limits, including:

- The number of bedrooms and usable sleeping areas
- Room sizes and overall floor area
- Fire safety and evacuation routes
- Bathroom and kitchen facilities
- The suitability of sleeping arrangements

Practical Tips

- Avoid overestimating occupancy, as unrealistic numbers may delay licence approval
- Ensure sleeping arrangements are safe and clearly documented
- Provide clear and accurate floor plans when submitting applications
- Ensure the maximum occupancy stated in listings matches the licensed limit

Safety Equipment

Short term let properties should be equipped with appropriate safety equipment to help protect guests and support compliance with licensing requirements.

Safety equipment should be clearly accessible within the property and maintained in good working order.

Typical Safety Equipment

Most short term let properties should include:

- Interlinked smoke alarms installed throughout the property
- Heat alarm in the kitchen
- Carbon monoxide detectors where gas or solid fuel appliances are present
- Fire blanket located in the kitchen
- First aid kit accessible to guests
- Emergency contact information for the host or property manager

Depending on the property layout or fire risk assessment, additional safety measures may be required.

Practical Tips

- Ensure safety equipment is clearly visible and easily accessible
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms regularly
- Replace batteries where required
- Provide guests with clear emergency contact information

Maintaining appropriate safety equipment helps protect guests and supports safe operation of the property.

Record Keeping

Maintaining organised records is an important part of short term let compliance. Local authorities may request documentation during licence applications, inspections or reviews.

Keeping accurate records also helps property owners monitor maintenance and safety requirements.

Recommended Records

Hosts should retain records such as:

- Short term let licence documentation
- Safety certificates (EICR, Gas Safety, etc.)
- Fire risk assessments
- Legionella risk assessments
- Maintenance records and repair logs
- Inspection and testing records

Practical Tips

- Keep digital copies of all compliance documents
- Ensure certificates remain valid and up to date
- Maintain a simple inspection and maintenance log
- Store documents so they can be easily accessed if requested by the council

Clear record keeping helps demonstrate compliance and reduces the risk of delays during inspections or licence renewals..

Common Compliance Challenges

Many short term let hosts experience delays or complications during the licensing process. These issues are often avoidable with proper preparation and understanding of the requirements.

Licensing Delays

Local authorities often receive a large number of licence applications, which can result in longer processing times.

Applications may also be delayed if additional information is required or if documentation is incomplete.

Practical Tips

- Submit applications well in advance of intended operation
- Ensure all required documentation is complete and accurate
- Respond promptly to any requests for additional information from the council

Missing or Incomplete Certificates

One of the most common reasons for delays is missing or incomplete safety documentation.

If required certificates are not included with the application, the council may request additional information before the application can proceed.

Practical Tips

- Arrange required inspections before submitting the licence application
- Ensure certificates such as EICR, gas safety and Legionella assessments are available
- Maintain a clear checklist of required documents

Fire Safety Upgrades

Older properties may not meet current fire safety standards and may require upgrades before approval can be granted.

This can include improvements to alarm systems, escape routes or other safety measures.

Practical Tips

- Arrange a fire risk assessment early in the process
- Allow time to install interlinked smoke alarms or other required safety systems
- Budget for potential upgrades identified during inspections

Understanding these common challenges helps property owners prepare their properties more effectively and avoid unnecessary delays during the licensing process.

Operational Best Practice

Meeting licensing requirements is essential, but ongoing management of the property is equally important. Local authorities expect short term let properties to be operated safely, responsibly and in accordance with licence conditions.

Good operational practices help ensure properties remain compliant and reduce the risk of safety issues or complaints.

Ongoing Compliance

Once a licence is granted, operators must ensure the property continues to meet all licensing conditions. This includes maintaining valid safety certificates, ensuring safety equipment remains operational and keeping the property in safe condition.

Occupancy limits and approved sleeping arrangements should always match those stated within the licence.

Regular Safety Checks

Routine checks should be carried out to ensure safety measures remain effective. These may include testing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, checking fire safety equipment and ensuring escape routes remain clear.

Guest Information

Guests should be provided with clear instructions for the safe use of the property, including appliance guidance and emergency contact details.

Providing clear information helps prevent misuse of equipment and supports safe operation.

Maintaining good operational practices helps ensure continued compliance with licensing requirements and supports safe management of short term let properties..

About letcare

Letcare provides practical operational support and management services for short term let properties. Our focus is on helping hosts keep properties compliant, safe and running smoothly, while delivering a high-quality guest experience.

Operating a short term let property involves far more than simply managing bookings. Licensing requirements, safety checks, maintenance, guest communication and day-to-day operations all require ongoing attention. As regulations evolve and guest expectations increase, many hosts find it difficult to manage these responsibilities alongside their reservations.

Letcare helps bridge this gap by supporting hosts across the key operational areas involved in running a successful short term let. Our work focuses on licensing and compliance support, property safety and preventative maintenance, guest and reservation management, and ongoing operational oversight.

By providing structured support around both property operations and guest management, LetCare helps hosts operate more professionally while protecting their property, their licence and their guest reviews.

Whether you are preparing a property for licensing, managing an existing short term let, or simply looking to ensure your property continues to meet regulatory requirements, professional operational support can help reduce risk and improve reliability.

If you would like guidance or support with your short term let property, Letcare would be happy to assist.

Contact letcare

Website

www.letcare.co.uk

Phone

0330 043 2976

Email

info@letcare.co.uk

Service Area

Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling, Fife, East Lothian (+1hour)