

# Fire Safety in Buildings Policy

## 2019 – 2021

### Document control

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<b>Responsible Executive Director</b>	Executive Director – Property
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Version	Date	Author(s)	Notes on Revisions
1	October 19	Manager – Assets	Amalgamation of the Fire Safety in Communal Areas Policy, Mobility Scooter and Motorised Wheelchair Policy as well as the sterile environment approach we have adopted.

## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines how we will meet our statutory obligation and commitment to fire safety. It provides guidance and procedures which define how the commitments given within the Fire Safety Management Policy will be delivered. This policy will also provide guidance on our approach to a sterile environment within all communal areas that form protected escape routes within communal blocks.

## 2. Policy Statement

Where there is a duty to manage the risk associated with fire, we will ensure:

- a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) is undertaken for every building we are responsible for that has common areas. These FRAs will be completed by a trained, experienced and competent person.
- that management actions and remedial works arising from FRA are actioned and tracked to completion, including evidence of completion, photographs and relevant certification.
- the effective management of buildings
- fire safety systems and fire safety equipment, where fitted, are maintained to the recommended standards through programmes of cyclical maintenance.
- that all communal areas are kept free of any items that pose a risk from a fire safety perspective. This is to provide a sterile environment that may be used as a protected escape route in the event of a fire.
- that our staff with a fire safety responsibility have the correct skills, knowledge, training and experience to fulfil their duties.

## 3. Regulatory Standards and Legal Obligations

We will comply with all current and relevant legislation and specifically as detailed in the following:

- the Building Regulations
- the Housing Act 2004 and
- the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRFSO) 2005

We also acknowledge our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

As a Registered Provider, we must meet the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing's Home Standard.

It is essential to ensure customers, residents, contractors, employees and visitors remain safe in our premises (both individual homes and offices). Failure to properly discharge our legal responsibilities may result in:

- Prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Prosecution under Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007
- Regulator of Social Housing’s serious detriment judgement
- Reputational damage
- Loss of confidence by stakeholders in the organisation

#### 4. Policy Detail

Full detail on how we plan to fulfil our duty to manage risks associated with fire can be found in the Fire Safety Management Plan. In summary, there are six key areas that we have considered when planning how best to mitigate risks relating to fire:

##### 4.1. Fire Risk Assessment

All properties subject to the RRFSO will initially be assessed using a type 1 FRA. This is buildings that are either a workplace or consist of common/shared parts which members of the public or occupants can use.

The inspection of the building is non-destructive but considers all aspects of fire safety within buildings. The review period for FRAs is building dependant. The review schedule for each building type is as follows:

**Fig. 4.1.1 Schedule of Fire Risk Assessment**

<b>Type 1 (Annual Review)</b>	<b>Type 2 (2 yearly review)</b>	<b>Type 3 (3 yearly review)</b>
High rise blocks (6 or more storeys), complex buildings, offices and Extra Care schemes	Mid-rise buildings (3-5 storeys), properties with vulnerable occupants (med/low dependancy)	Low-rise buildings (1-2 storeys) with General Needs occupants

We will undertake new FRAs following any of the events below:

- the introduction of new work practices;
- any works affecting the means of escape or alarm systems;
- structural or material changes to the building or its use;
- widespread changes in the type of residents occupying the building; and
- a significant change in legislation or guidance.

In the event of a fire, near miss or threat of arson, the FRA for the building affected will be reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose. If necessary, a new FRA will be undertaken.

Outside the circumstances outlined above, FRAs will be renewed on or before the date recommended by the schedule outlined in Fig. 4.1.1. as a minimum, or in line with the Fire Risk assessors recommendations.

#### 4.2. Management and Remedial Actions

Both management and remedial actions detailed in FRAs will be completed in a risk based priority order. The different action types can be defined as follows:

*Management Actions:* actions to be taken in relation to the management of the building where further confirmation is required or further site checks needed.

*Remedial Actions:* works which generally involve the need for contractors to complete. Examples of remedial actions are replacement or repair of fire doors, compartmentation improvements, automatic fire detection, alarm works etc.

All actions will be allocated a target timescale in line with the risk matrix set out below:

**Fig. 4.2.1 – FRA Action Risk Matrix**

	FRA Actions	Premises Risk Rating		
		Risk Type 1	Risk Type 2	Risk Type 3
Remedial Actions	U (Urgent)	1 day	1 day	1 day
	A (High)	3 months	3 months	3 months
	B (Medium)	12 months	12 months	12 months
	C (Low)	12 months	12 months	12 months
	R (Recommendation)	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Management Actions	Man 1 (Urgent Management Action)	1 month	1 month	1 month
	Man2 (Management Action)	3 months	3 months	12 months

There are circumstances where it is appropriate to review and potentially extend the timeframes attached to actions. However, it is essential that any changes are appropriate, risk based and the process is controlled and visible. Action timeframes will only be changed if the fire risk assessor agrees in writing that it is appropriate to do so. Evidence of the same will be held. Changes to timeframes will be signed off by the Executive Director of Property and shall be clearly explained.

In the event that a timescale cannot be met, mitigating measures will be considered to ensure risk is managed.

#### **4.3. Management of Buildings**

We will manage our buildings in a way that mitigates fire risk where possible. The following measures will be in place:

- We will ensure each building has an evacuation strategy stated clearly in the FRA and this evacuation will be clearly displayed in each communal area or relevant property. The FRA will record the current and recommended evacuation strategy. Any exceptions, i.e. where the current and recommended strategy differ will be reported and referred to the Fire Safety Management Group.
- All planned and responsive works should be done so in line with current legislation and British Standards. All internal practises outlined in the Fire Safety Management Plan should be followed for any work type.
- All residential properties in blocks will be fitted with mains operated smoke alarms by April 2024, all of our residential stock will continue to be fitted with mains operated smoke alarm during empty homes works as they become vacant. All residents are responsible for their own fire safety within their homes, including carrying out regular tests of their individual fire detection system.
- In all residential properties where furniture and furnishings are provided, whether in common areas or as part of a furnished tenancy, all will be in compliance with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended). Furniture and furnishings will be checked for condition every 2 years and replaced as necessary.
- All properties subject to the RRFSSO will receive regular inspection of communal areas. The frequency of inspections will be determined by the individual risk within each building.

#### **4.4. Sterile Approach to Communal Areas**

Communal areas are those areas of a house or a block of flats in which individuals live and have a right to use in common with other occupants and for which we are responsible for. To ensure that all common areas are safe and free of hazards, we implement the following:

- The storage of possessions, waste or unwanted items in communal areas is strictly prohibited.
- Shared areas such as stairways, landings and hallways must be kept completely clear of all items such as prams, pushchairs, bicycles, children's toys, plant stands, furniture, door mats and rubbish or other such obstacles that may prevent clear access.
- We will immediately remove any prohibited items it finds in any communal areas and communicate with tenants reiterating the importance of fire safety within communal areas.
- Where a designated mobility scooter store is not available, scooters must be stored in the flat or house. Storage and charging of mobility scooters or motorised

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wheelchairs in communal areas creates a significant fire hazard and is not permitted in any of our communal areas.

- Mobility scooters or motorised wheelchairs are the owner's responsibility. Any charging equipment should be subject to a portable appliance test (PAT); this will also be the tenant's responsibility.

Any items placed, stored or left in a shared communal area are a hazard that can prevent Fire Services entering the building as well as people leaving safely in the event of a fire. These items may also pose a source of ignition for a fire themselves.

We adopt a zero tolerance approach to any breach of this policy that may cause a risk or hazard in any part of our buildings

#### **4.5. Fire Safety Systems and Equipment**

The testing of fire detection systems will be undertaken by competent engineers. Systems to be included in the fire safety equipment maintenance programme will include:

- Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) and alarm systems (and associated equipment such as hold open devices, door release mechanisms, fire curtains etc.)
- Smoke control systems (such as automatically opening smoke vents AOVs)
- Emergency lighting systems
- Portable firefighting equipment
- Rising (dry and wet) mains
- Fire fighting lifts
- Fire suppression systems such as sprinklers / mist systems
- Lightning protection systems

#### **4.6. Training**

We maintain a skills/training matrix to ensure that all colleagues undertaking key roles within the scope of this management plan have appropriate training.

We will also ensure that fire risk assessors undertaking assessments on it's buildings are competent to do so. Fire risk assessors should be able to demonstrate competency individually via registration on a recognised national scheme such as the Institution of Fire Engineers Register of Fire Risk Assessors or similar.

Contractors undertaking work on our behalf are competent and have the appropriate skills, knowledge, training and experience to undertake any fire related work.

### **5. Implementation**

A framework of documents have been set up to outline how this policy will be implemented. They are as follows:

- Fire Safety Management Plan
- Fire Safety Compliance Process

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- Fire Manual

There is also a suite of key performance measures that outline the clear expectations of the group and what is expected of the people responsible for delivering Fire Safety Compliance.

## **6. Equality & Diversity**

In order to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and for us to fulfil our duty in the Public Sector Duty, an Equality Analysis (EA) has been completed as part of the Policy review. Upon completing the EA it was found that the implementation of the Policy would support and encourage the aims of the Public Sector Duty, as well as ensure the safety of our tenants with regards to fire safety.

The EA was completed and approved November 2019.

## **7. Responsibility**

The implementation of this policy will be a Group wide responsibility due to the nature and potential severity of the risks associated with fire.

The Director of Assets is responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Day to day operational delivery will be the responsibility of every employee of the Group

## **8. Consultation**

Internal consultation has been carried out with the relevant departments in order to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

We will monitor the effectiveness of the policy on each inspection of communal areas and the policy will be reviewed annually alongside all relevant Fire Risk Assessments and Health & Safety Audits.