

Fire safety in housing



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Foreword

Each year there are over 50,000 fires in dwellings in the UK. These result in around three hundred fatalities and several thousand serious injuries. Many of these fires are preventable. The fatal fire in the high rise block Lakanal House, Camberwell, London in July 2009 served to emphasise the importance for all agencies involved in housing to work together to ensure the safety of residents.

Following the fire in Lakanal House, a working group comprising housing professionals, government and the Fire and Rescue Service began work to coordinate and develop information and guidance for the housing sector to raise fire safety awareness among housing providers and tenants.

Since formation, the group has promoted fire safety in housing across the UK through a series of industry focused seminars, sponsored by Sprue Safety Products. It became clear that more could be done to raise awareness generally and it was to that end that this practice brief has been produced.

This practice brief, produced by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is designed to complement the forthcoming Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) Guidance. This practice brief explores fire safety issues for people living and working in social housing, in the Fire and Rescue Services and within communities.

This practice brief is not technical guidance. Technical guides are clearly referenced throughout. However, it does show how the housing sector is developing practical approaches to fire safety.

This practice brief intends to raise overall understanding of fire issues and how housing authorities enforce the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 supported by the Fire and Rescue Services.

Whether you are in the Fire and Rescue Service or the housing sector, our aim is to work together for Safer homes, Safer tenants, Safer fire fighters – A Safer Community.

Martin Clark

Chair, National Prevention Committee

Chief Fire Officers Association

*Deputy Chief Fire Officer for West Midlands
Fire Service*

1. Why is fire safety an issue for housing?

Hundreds of preventable fire deaths and injuries occur every year, in places where people should feel safe, their own homes. Landlords, tenants, residents and communities have a key role to play in ensuring homes are constructed, used and maintained in a way which maximises fire safety for the occupants.

In this section we will answer the following questions:

- A. Why is fire safety an issue for housing?
- B. What are the challenges facing housing organisations concerning fire safety?

A. Why is fire safety an issue for housing?

Fire safety at home is improving across the UK. This practice brief will illustrate how practical partnerships between social landlords, tenants and residents and Fire and Rescue Services can continue to improve fire safety in homes and communities.

In addition, readers should be aware that Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) Group are leading work to develop important new sector-led guidance on fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats.

This new guidance is expected to be published in summer 2011 and housing professionals are advised to make use of this guidance when planning for fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats.

For further information please refer to www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=1

Lakanal House fire in Camberwell, London 2009



In July 2009, six people died after a fire swept through a high rise tower block at Lakanal House in Camberwell, London. There were a number of people

injured. Fire crews rescued over 40 residents and many more self evacuated. Some 90 families had to vacate their homes as a result of the fire.

UK fire statistics

- in 2008, three quarters of fire-related fatalities occurred in dwelling fires
- smoke alarms were absent from the fire area in 38 per cent of dwelling fires (18,600 fires)
- the proportion of households with a working smoke alarm increased from 8 per cent in 1988 to 91 per cent in 2008
- more than half (54 per cent) of accidental fires in homes arose from cooking
- other common sources of ignition were: electrical appliances (13 per cent), smokers' materials (7 per cent), electrical distribution (7 per cent) and space heating appliances (4 per cent).

Scotland Together report 2009

This report noted that although there had been sustained reductions in fire deaths in Scotland since 1990, Scotland's rate of fire deaths was still double the UK average, per million population. The Scotland Together report highlights specific findings from the Scottish Community Fire Safety Study Fatal Fire Survey 2009. The survey shows:

- the most common causes were smokers' materials (54 per cent) and cooking appliances (28 per cent)
- alcohol was a contributory factor in 81 of the 131 domestic dwelling cases
- 47 per cent of dwelling fire death victims were aged 60 or over
- 53 per cent of dwelling fire death victims lived alone and were more likely to live in the poorest parts of Scotland.

www.strathclydefire.org/

Fire statistics in Wales

The latest figures show the number of fires in Wales, as well as casualties and fatalities from fires fell between 2007 and 2008. Key figures include:

- in 38 per cent of the 2,300 fires in dwellings in Wales, no smoke alarm was installed
- in 2008 most accidental fires were caused by misuse of equipment or faulty fuel supplies.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics>

Fire statistics in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has published its key performance indicators. It found that in 2009/10:

- there were 7 accidental fire deaths
- 124 civilians were seriously injured in dwelling fires
- there were 812 dwelling fires
- there were 99 per cent of working smoke alarms in private dwellings.

www.nifrs.org/statistics.php

Report to the Secretary of State by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser on the emerging issues arising from the fire at Lakanal House

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned a report for the Secretary of State which was undertaken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser on issues arising from the fatal fire at Lakanal House, Camberwell on 3 July 2009.

Emerging issues included:

- landlords need to be confident that the design and construction of high rise buildings will enable the occupants next to the immediate fire area to make their way to a place of safety. This must be established by a rigorous **risk assessment**
- once this first principle is established other occupants of the building can remain safely within their homes until advised to take action by a relevant authority (a **stay put policy**)
- these principles require that a rigorous risk assessment has established that the building can sustain a stay put policy, that a satisfactory level of **passive** and **active fire safety systems** are installed and maintained and that occupants understand evacuation procedures
- there is a need for more effective ways of ensuring tenants are aware of fire safety precautions in social housing. Tenants and residents should be clearly aware of key fire safety issues such as fire-resisting doors, self-closing devices, escape routes and ensure that common areas are maintained and kept clear
- fire protection incorporated into the design and fabric of the building is the fundamental basis for reducing the spread of fire and loss of life
- there is evidence of the effectiveness of **fire suppression systems** in controlling fire and fire spread in buildings. It has been a requirement since 2006 that all new residential buildings over 30m in height must be fitted with a fire suppression system, therefore if a building such as Lakanal House were built against today's standards a fire suppression system would be required
- it is not considered practical or economically viable to make a requirement for the retrospective fitting of fire suppression systems to all current high-rise residential buildings; it is a matter for individual landlords to decide if **automatic fire suppression** are required as part of their fire safety strategy based on their fire risk assessment.



The report recommended that landlords should consider reviewing the weighting that fire safety is given under the **Decent Homes Standard** to include fire safety issues such as:

- the installation of hard wired smoke detectors in flats
- providing a link between individual dwellings and an alarm receiving centre
- maintaining the inherent passive fire safety principles of the building, for example: fire resisting doors, fire stopping provision and smoke ventilation.

Finding out more



You can download a full copy of Sir Ken Knight's report on the emerging issues arising from the fire at Lakanal House by visiting: www.communities.gov.uk/

Advice on health and safety issues: fire, lifts and gas in Scotland

Following a tragic fire at Lakanal House that revealed a feature in the building that could undermine the fire protection of the common escape corridors, the Scottish Housing Regulator has issued guidance on important health and safety matters relevant to social landlords in Scotland. The advice aims to raise issues in the context of fire safety of buildings that social landlords may own or manage. It provides advice on fire, lifts and gas safety.

You can download this guidance from: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

B. What are the challenges facing housing organisations concerning fire safety?

In 2009, as part of their *Safe as Houses* campaign, Inside Housing conducted a survey of fire safety across the UK.

Some of the problems they identified included:

- doors left, or wedged open meaning they were ineffective in preventing fire from spreading
- doors without **intumescent** strips where these are necessary
- doors found to be in poor condition due to age, and in some cases the front doors to flats opening onto common parts changed to non fire resistant doors
- older tower-blocks with permanent vents which could allow fire to spread vertically in the building
- alterations and home improvements made by occupiers of properties compromising fire safety: e.g. installing additional electrical sockets, rewiring, and the installation of satellite of cable television
- inadequate fire risk assessments undertaken.

CIH working with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS)

Throughout 2009 and 2010, CIH working in partnership with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) held a series of seminars across England that addressed fire safety issues in housing. The seminars looked at the role of Fire and Rescue Services, the legal framework governing fire safety, risk assessment, tackling fire related anti-social behaviour; and Fire and Rescue Service engagement and support.

At these seminars, individual housing professionals identified the following areas of concern in relation to fire safety:

Risk assessments

- I have done a risk assessment but how do I know if it is adequate or sufficient?
- I have appointed a risk assessor, but how do I know if she or he has conducted an adequate risk assessment?
- I am not sure if my organisation should have an evacuation or a 'stay put' policy in certain buildings.

Tenants

- I am not confident that my tenants know what to do in the event of a fire?
- I do not know who lives in all of my properties or have an complete or up-to-date resident profile
- fire safety has never been an issue of high importance for tenants and residents
- the local Fire and Rescue Service has little opportunity to engage with tenants and residents.

Tenant's homes

- I do not know what kind of alterations have been made inside the homes of tenants and residents
- where residents have exercised the right-to-buy I am not sure if they have sub-let their property or if they have made alterations to the property which has compromised the fire safety of the building.

Common areas

- on a day to day basis residents park mobility scooters, or store paper boxes, and bikes, etc. in halls, corridors and fire escape routes: this is difficult to manage but is clearly a fire safety risk
- tenants and residents in flats have made environmental improvements such as placing potted plants and doormats outside their front-doors, but these potentially constitute an obstruction to fire escape routes and a fire safety risk
- tenants and residents have placed metal security gates over their front-doors because they want to feel safe in their homes, but these can form an obstruction to fire escape routes and could obstruct firefighters.

Working with Fire and Rescue Services

- my housing organisation has limited or no links with a local Fire and Rescue Service
- different Fire and Rescue Services give different advice to landlords in relation to fire safety which relates to different contexts and this can be confusing for landlords.

Key guidance for fire safety in housing which responds to these questions is referenced in section H of Chapter 2. Readers are strongly advised to refer to these guides when planning for fire safety.



Practice checklist: Fire safety for housing organisations

- ✓ nominate a competent person or competent persons to carry out a risk assessment
- ✓ a comprehensive risk assessment should identify fire hazards, identify people at risk, remove, reduce and protect from risk, provide information to plan and train to minimise risk and should be continuously reviewed
- ✓ prioritise action in response to your risk assessment
- ✓ devise a schedule which prioritises remedial work which needs to be done in response to fire risk assessments and set time-scales for improvements to be made
- ✓ the way in which buildings are used and adapted can affect the way in which they are affected by fire: do not assume over the course of its lifetime that a building can withstand fire
- ✓ place fire safety information into all tenancy handbooks or tenancy start-up packs
- ✓ provide fire safety information for leaseholders
- ✓ liaise with your local Fire and Rescue Service to raise awareness of fire safety in the communities with which you work and to offer free home fire safety checks to tenants and residents
- ✓ work in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services to support tenants who want to have a home fire safety check where this is possible
- ✓ in blocks of flats or maisonettes make sure all residents are aware of appropriate action to be taken in the event of fire
- ✓ take particular care to make sure residents whose first language is not English have access to clear and understandable fire safety information
- ✓ take account of the needs of vulnerable residents in relation to fire safety
- ✓ install working smoke alarms in all properties
- ✓ consider installing domestic sprinklers into homes.

2. Fire safety in housing: the legal framework and key guidance for housing providers

In England and Wales, there are two principal pieces of legislation which cover fire safety in housing. These are the Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System); and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

In Scotland, the key pieces of legislation relating to fire safety in housing are the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

In addition, there are a number of key items of additional legislation which landlords need to be aware of and key protocols and sources of guidance which will assist in developing an informed and comprehensive approach to fire safety.

In this section we will explore:

- A. Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System) (for England and Wales)
- B. Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 (for Scotland)
- C. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- D. Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- E. Fire safety legislation in Northern Ireland
- F. Other relevant legislation which relates to fire safety for landlords
 - I. Building Regulations: Part B: Fire Safety
 - II. Building (Scotland) Act 2003, the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and the Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010
 - III. Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
 - IV. Electrical Equipment (Safety and Use) Regulations 1994
 - V. Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998
- G. Decent Homes Standard (Welsh Housing Quality Standard and Scottish Housing Quality Standard)
- H. Key guidance for fire safety in housing (England and Wales)
- I. Key guidance for fire safety in housing (Scotland)



A. Housing Act 2004: Housing Health and Safety Rating System

In England and Wales, the primary piece of legislation for housing in relation to fire safety is the Housing Act 2004. The Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This identifies 29 categories of potential hazards, one of which is fire. The Housing Act 2004 applies to a wide range of dwelling types, including individual flats within a block and common parts also. Under the HHSRS, a residential property should provide a safe and healthy environment. It should be designed, constructed and maintained with non-hazardous materials and should be free from unnecessary and avoidable hazards.

The HHSRS Operating Guidance explains how to make an assessment of the fire hazard in a residential dwelling. The HHSRS introduced a risk assessment approach. The principal aim of individual risk assessment is to reduce or eliminate hazards to health and safety in domestic accommodation.

The risk assessment calculates hazards bands which are then ranked as category 1 or 2 hazards. Category 1 hazards trigger action by the local authority and can result in enforcement action being taken, depending on the nature of the hazard and the works required. Fire safety is assessed according to certain risk factors as follows:

- number of storeys
- layout of house
- distance to travel from farthest point in the house to the final exit

- number of occupiers in the dwelling
- type of occupation
- structural fire precautions already in place in the dwelling
- fire detection and alarm systems provided.

If a local authority discovers serious category 1 hazards in a home, it has a duty to take the most appropriate action. Local authorities are advised to try to deal with problems informally initially, but if this is unsuccessful, they could require a landlord to carry out improvements to the property. Local authorities also have powers to prohibit the use of the whole or part of a dwelling or restrict the number of permitted occupants. Where an occupier is at immediate risk, the authority can take emergency remedial action.

Finding out more

You can download the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) risk based evaluation tool from:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/hhsrsoperatingguidance



B. Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

In Scotland, Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 local authorities are given new powers to designate housing renewal areas where they identified a significant number of sub-standard houses.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 also amends the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to ensure that local housing strategies have as part of their purpose improving the standard of housing in the local authority's area. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 also introduced a repairing standard that private rented houses must meet which includes fire detection.

It is the responsibility of the landlord to ensure that the standard is met. Before a tenancy starts the landlord must inspect the property and notify the new tenant of any works required and must give the tenant information on the repairing standard.

The Act established a private rented housing panel. Tenants who believe their landlord has failed to comply with the repairing standard may apply to the panel for a determination. The panel can refer the case to a private rented housing committee. If the committee decides the landlord has failed to comply with the standard it can issue the landlord with a repairing standard enforcement order.

The private rented housing committee is also the body which decides if an enforcement order has been complied with. If a landlord has failed to comply or cannot comply, the committee will serve a failure notice on the local authority and decide whether to make a rent relief order.

Finding out more

To find out more about the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 visit:

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/1



C. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

In England and Wales, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, replaces two major pieces of fire safety legislation, the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 as amended. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 consolidates the fire safety provisions of other legislation under one simplified set of goal based requirements. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into effect in 2006 for England and Wales (and 2008 for Northern Ireland). It applies to the common parts of multi-occupied residential dwellings. It introduced the need for landlords and building owners as **the responsible person** to comply with the following duties:

- carry out a fire-risk assessment identifying any possible dangers and risks
- consider who may be especially at risk from fire
- get rid of or reduce the risk from fire as far as is reasonably possible and provide general fire precautions to deal with any possible risk left
- take other measures to make sure there is protection if flammable or explosive materials are used or stored
- create a plan to deal with any emergency and, in most cases, keep a record of findings
- review findings when necessary.

In addition, employers should nominate a competent person, or competent persons, to carry out a risk assessment. They should also carry out actions in response to the risk assessment and remedy defects identified.

All non-domestic premises, including the common or shared parts of blocks of flats or houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are covered by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and may be inspected by their local Fire and Rescue Service. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Fire and Rescue Services have a statutory duty to ensure compliance and enforce the requirements where necessary.¹

The responsible person

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 aligned fire safety with health and safety legislation. The fundamental requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is that the **responsible person** must carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment to identify and provide adequate fire precautions and procedures to ensure the safety of all relevant persons (those who are legally on the premises).

As in health and safety legislation, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 has moved away from a prescriptive approach to an approach where ownership of risk sits with the responsible person and those in control of premises.

Protocol between local housing authorities and fire and rescue authorities to improve fire safety

For England and Wales, the protocol between local housing authorities and fire and rescue authorities to improve fire safety sets out the relationship between the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The protocol outlines joint working arrangements which could be undertaken between local housing authorities and Fire and Rescue Services to deliver the objective of improved fire safety. It is a framework which provides the basis for collaboration at a local and regional level.

Fire and Rescue Services have a legal duty to enforce the Fire Safety Order in the common areas of all residential accommodation not forming a single private dwelling. Local housing authorities are responsible for utilising the HHSRS to identify and if necessary act upon, significant hazards found within housing.

Finding out more

You can download a copy of the National Fire Safety Protocol from:
www.lacors.gov.uk



¹ www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/

D. Fire (Scotland) Act 2005

General fire safety is within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament. Under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, employers, property owners, landlords and other duty holders are required to assess fire risks in the workplace and implement appropriate fire safety precautions including raising the alarm and evacuating the premises.

The Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006

The Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 make provision in connection with carrying out risk assessments to identify risks in respect of harm caused by fire, and the review of those assessments. They also make provision about fire safety in relevant premises (as defined in section 78 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (asp 5).

Finding out more

To find out more about the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 visit:

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005

To find out more about the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 visit:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2006



E. Fire safety legislation in Northern Ireland

Part 3 of The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 came into effect on 15 November 2010. As an appropriate person with control over non-domestic, industrial, commercial, leisure, educational or healthcare premises, this legislation requires that the appropriate person takes responsibility for ensuring premises reach the required fire safety standard.

The legislation applies to shared areas of properties common to several households in relation to firefighting facilities and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) as defined by Article 75 Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. The main requirements of the legislation include:

- carry out a fire risk assessment for the premises over which you have control
- identify the fire hazards and risks associated with the premises, materials/substances, activities
- identify the people, or groups of people at risk and anyone who may be especially at risk
- remove and reduce the risks as far as reasonably possible
- have in place general fire precautions to deal with any remaining risks
- implement additional preventative and protective measures if flammable or explosive
- ensure that dangerous substances are stored and handled safely
- develop and implement appropriate emergency procedures in the event of fire
- review the risk assessment periodically or after significant changes in the workplace.



Finding out more

To find out more about fire safety in Northern Ireland, visit:

www.nifrs.org/firesafe/requirements.php

The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010

www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2010

The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2006

F. Other relevant legislation which relates to fire safety for landlords

In addition, there are other key pieces of legislation which landlords need to be aware of.

I. Building Regulations: Part B: Fire Safety

Since 1991, there have been revisions to the Building Regulations. Before the Building Regulations came into effect, the existing stock of high rise accommodation across the country was covered by varying standards and design codes.

The Building Regulations 2010 relate to builders but as the owner of a building, a landlord can be served with an enforcement notice if building work does not comply with the regulations. As defined in Regulation 3 of the Building Regulations, building work constitutes:

- the erection or extension of a building
- the installation or extension of a service or

fitting which is controlled under the regulations

- an alteration project involving work which will temporarily or permanently affect the ongoing compliance of the building, service or fitting with the requirements relating to structure, fire, or access to and use of buildings
- the insertion of insulation into a cavity wall
- the underpinning of the foundations of a building.

Part B of the Building Regulations relates to fire safety in the construction of buildings. It covers:

- **B1 Means of warning and escape:** that sufficient provisions are made in design of the building so that in the event of fire the occupants can escape to a place of safety by their own efforts. This includes incorporating a suitable fire alarm system to give early warning of fire to the occupants and users of a building
- **B2 Internal fire spread (linings):** that the internal linings of a building do not support a rapid spread of fire
- **B3 Internal fire spread (structure):** that the structure of the building should not collapse prematurely and should slow the spread of fire through the building and in unseen cavities and voids by providing fire resisting walls and partitions where necessary
- **B4 External fire spread:** that the spread of fire between buildings be discouraged by spacing them apart sufficiently and controlling the number and size of openings on boundaries

- **B5 Access and facilities for the fire service:** that the building (and the site layout and access roads) are designed in such a way as to aid Fire and Rescue Services to fight fire and rescue persons caught in a fire.

Finding out more

To find out more about Part B of the Building Regulations 2010 visit:

www.planningportal.gov.uk

II. Building (Scotland) Act 2003

In Scotland, the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 gives the Scottish Government the power to make building regulations to:

- secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in and about buildings and others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings
- further the conservation of fuel and power
- further the achievement of sustainable development.

The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and the Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010

The Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004, as defined by the Building (Scotland) Act 2003, aimed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of people and to promote sustainable development. They focus on the design, construction and conversion of buildings and the provision of services, fittings and equipment.

The Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 came into force on October 1, 2010 and has resulted in changes to mandatory standards and associated guidance, and the publication of new documents. New codes of guidance relating to fire safety for buildings in Scotland include:

- greater choice of active and passive fire safety measures within the dwelling of fire origin
- guidance on fire detection and fire alarm systems in dwellings to better reflect risk
- guidance and greater choice on the escape strategy and fire safety measures serving flats and maisonettes including high rise domestic buildings
- reference to fire service amended to fire and rescue service throughout
- new guidance on facilities to assist the fire and rescue service including the performance of fire mains
- updated guidance on fire suppression systems including water supplies and component parts.



Finding out more



To find out more about the Building (Scotland) Act 2003, visit:

www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/8/contents

You can download the new mandatory standards and associated guidance for the Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 from:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards

III. Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 relate to the installation, maintenance and use of gas appliances, fittings and flues in domestic and certain commercial premises. They place duties on certain landlords to ensure that gas appliances, fittings and flues provided for tenants' use are safe. Landlords are required to:

- ensure gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition
- ensure gas appliances are serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions; and if these are not available, it is recommended that they are serviced annually unless advised otherwise by a Gas Safe registered engineer

- ensure an annual safety check is carried out on each gas appliance/flu
- before any new lease starts, ensure that gas safety checks have been carried out within one year before the start of the lease date, unless the appliances in the property have been installed for less than 12 months, in which case they should be checked within 12 months of their installation date
- ensure all installation, maintenance and safety checks are carried out by a **Gas Safe registered engineer**
- ensure records are kept of each safety check for at least two years
- issue a copy of the latest safety check record is provided to existing tenants within 28 days of the check being completed, or to any new tenant before they move in (and in certain cases there is an option to display the record).

Finding out more



To find out more about Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 visit:

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg285.pdf

IV. Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994

The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 place an obligation on landlords to ensure that electrical systems and electrical appliances supplied are safe.

All electrical equipment supplied after 9 January 1995 must be marked with an appropriate **CE symbol** and appliance instruction booklets should be supplied. Failure to comply with the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 and the Consumer Protection Act 1987 is a criminal offence and may result in a fine, up to six month's imprisonment or possible manslaughter charges in the event of deaths. These regulations are enforced by the **Health and Safety Executive**.

Landlords should:

- carry out safety checks on all electrical appliances in rented homes and remove unsafe appliances. Electrical appliances should be checked by a qualified electrical engineer
- keep records of the checks carried out for all electrical appliances supplied in rented homes

- make sure instruction booklets are available in rented homes for all electrical appliances and that necessary safety warnings are given to tenants.

In addition, landlords should note that under various statutory regulations including the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, Housing Act 2004 and the Plugs and Sockets etc. (Safety) Regulations 1994, both of which come under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, there is an obligation to ensure that all electrical equipment is safe.

Finding out more

To find out more about the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 visit:

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1994

V. The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998

Furniture and furnishings provided by a landlord must meet levels of fire resistance set out within the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998. These regulations do not apply to carpets, curtains or duvets.

Finding out more

To find out more about the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998 visit:

www.bis.gov.uk/files/file24685.pdf



G. Decent Homes (Welsh Housing Quality Standard and Scottish Housing Quality Standard)

The government set out a target in 2000 that it would 'ensure that all social housing meets set standards of decency by 2010'.² A decent home is one which is wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. A decent home meets the following four criteria:

- it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing

- it is in a reasonable state of repair
- it has reasonably modern facilities and services
- it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

The Decent Homes Standard makes clear that all dwellings should be free from category one hazards as assessed under the HHSRS. Category 1 hazards include the most significant risks that can result in death or major injury and health issues. This would include risk of fire.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2002

The Standard will ensure that dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of the occupants including existing and future residents:

1. The dwelling must be structurally stable, free from damp and from disrepair
2. The dwelling must be safe and secure: with relation to fire safety, a dwelling must:
 - have an external fire escape (Secondary)³
 - have adequate fire alarms and equipment (Primary)
 - have an escape route from the rooms used for sleeping to an external door which does not pass through another room (Secondary)
 - have a suitably located, mains powered, smoke alarm (with a back up secondary power source such as a sealed lithium battery) on each floor (Primary)
 - not have windows fitted with locks with an automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping. (Secondary)
3. All dwellings must be capable of being adequately heated at an affordable cost to the residents
4. All dwellings must have reasonably modern facilities, services and amenities
5. Housing should be fairly, efficiently and well managed to address the needs of tenants as individuals and as part of a community
6. All dwellings should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live
7. The accommodation provided within the dwelling should, as far as possible, suit the needs of the household.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2010/>

² <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/decenthomes/whatis/>

³ A Primary element is one that impacts on the safety of the residents. A Secondary element is more focussed around the comfort of the residents



The Scottish Housing Quality Standard 2004

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard is a set of criteria which local authorities and registered social landlords must ensure they meet by 2015. To meet the standard the house must be:

- compliant with the tolerable standard
- free from serious disrepair
- energy efficient
- provided with modern facilities and services
- healthy, safe and secure.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/16342/shqs

Note: The Scottish Government is proposing to introduce a new social housing standard in 2012, requiring higher levels of energy efficiency by 2020. You can read more about this by downloading *Homes Fit for the 21st Century: The Scottish Government's Strategy and Action Plan for Housing in the Next Decade: 2011-2020*.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

H. Key guidance for fire safety in housing

There are key pieces of guidance on fire safety in housing which landlords need to be aware of.

They are:

1. Housing – Fire Safety

Developed by LACORS,⁴ the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)

- this guidance applies to existing residential accommodation including single family houses, bedsits, shared houses and flats
- it offers practical advice on fire risk assessment to Fire and Rescue Services and social landlords
- the LACORS guidance applies to:
 - single household properties
 - shared houses
 - bedsit house in multiple occupation⁵

⁴ Local Government Regulation is the new name for LACORS. It is the local government central body responsible for overseeing local authority regulatory services

⁵ A house in multiple occupation (HMO) refers to a building, or part of a building (e.g. a flat) which is occupied by more than one household who share an amenity

- (or the building lacks an amenity) such as a bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities; or
- which comprises of converted self contained flats and the standards of conversion does not meet the 1991 Building Regulations and at least one third of the flats are occupied under short tenancies; or, a combination of these.

And is 'occupied' by more than one household as their only or main residence, or:

- as a refuge by persons escaping domestic violence, or
- during term time by students, or
- for some other purpose that is prescribed in regulations.

And the households comprise:

- families (including single persons and co-habiting couples (whether or not of the opposite sex), or
- any other relationship that may be prescribed by regulations, such as domestic staff, or fostering, or carer arrangements.

- purpose-built flats and buildings converted into self-contained flats to a standard not in compliance with the Building Regulations 1991
- sheltered accommodation in which personal care is not provided
- small hostels to which the HM Government Sleeping Accommodation Guide is inappropriate
- it *does not* apply to:
 - new housing that is built to modern building regulations
 - student halls of residence
 - sheltered accommodation where personal care is provided
 - residential care homes
 - purpose-built blocks of flats

Finding out more

You can download the LACORS guidance from:

www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/

2. Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Sleeping Accommodation

This guide is for all employers, managers and owners of premises providing sleeping accommodation, including the following types of accommodation:

- the common areas of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- the common areas of flats and maisonettes
- student halls of residence and areas of sleeping accommodation in other training institutions

- refuges, e.g. family accommodation centres, halfway houses
- hostels, e.g. YMCA, YWCA, youth hostels, bail hostels or homeless persons' accommodation
- the common areas of sheltered accommodation, where care is not provided.

Finding out more

You can download the Sleeping Accommodation guidance from:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyrisk4

3. New fire safety guidance for purpose-built flats

Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) is currently developing new fire safety guidance for purpose-built flats in England to help landlords, fire risk assessors and enforcement bodies meet their responsibilities.

The new guidance aims to:

- comprise a single document accessible to regulators, providers of accommodation and fire risk assessors
- cover purpose-built flats of any height (high rise and low rise)
- outline the legislative position, including the applications of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the HHSRS under the Housing Act 2004.

Finding out more

This new guidance will clarify a number of complex issues, particularly in relation to risk assessment and fire safety management, and to ensure that the residents get appropriate advice from their landlords on what to do in the event of a fire. This new guidance is expected in summer 2011. You should keep a look out on the Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) website:

www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=1



- this also includes HMOs subject to licensing and may also include buildings or premises put to a variety of uses, such as small hostel accommodation.

Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Medium and Large Premises Providing Sleeping Accommodation (Revised: Feb 2008)

Applies to premises which comprise of:

- any single storey area over 200m sq
- 3 storeys in height with a single storey area over 100m sq
- more than 3 storeys in height
- this includes HMOs subject to licensing (including a complex, such as a block of flats, consisting entirely of licensable, flatted houses in multiple occupation) and may also include buildings or premises used as hostels or refuges.

I. Key guidance for fire safety in housing (Scotland)

The following guides apply to premises which fall within the scope of Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended. The Fire (Scotland) Act (2005) does not apply to domestic dwellings, other than the common areas of residential flats or multi-storey flats.

Practical fire safety guidance for Small Premises Providing Sleeping Accommodation (Revised: June 2010)

Applies to premises which comprise of:

- up to 2 storeys in height with a maximum single storey area of 200m sq
- 3 storeys in height with a maximum single storey area of 100m sq
- individual flats or maisonettes, regardless of storey height, with a maximum single storey area of 200m sq

Finding out more

You can download copies of this guidance from:

www.firelawscotland.org/





Practice checklist: **The legal framework and following key guidance**

- ✓ refer to relevant codes of guidance referenced in this section to make sure your organisation is in compliance with the statutory requirements outlined in the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (or relevant legislation for Scotland outlined in section 2 above)
- ✓ identify a person (persons) in your organisation with responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and for assessing fire risk (or relevant legislation for Scotland outlined in section 2 above)
- ✓ all building work including extensions, provision of services, alterations and insulation, should be fully compliant with the Building Regulations 2010 (see relevant legislation for Scotland in section 2)
- ✓ where gas services are supplied, ensure that your organisation acts in full compliance with Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998: that gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition; and that gas appliances are serviced and subject to an annual safety check
- ✓ make sure that all electrical equipment supplied to tenants is safe and all electrical appliances are supplied and maintained according to the Electrical Equipment (Safety) regulations 1994
- ✓ where furniture and furnishings are provided, make sure they are fully compliant with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998
- ✓ ensure that your organisation is following the correct fire safety guidance for the correct building type.

3. Carrying out a risk assessment

Carrying out a comprehensive risk assessment is at the heart of a modern approach to fire safety.

There are a number of considerations which should be made when carrying out a risk assessment. These will include checking:

- relevant persons within the building
- ignition sources
- flammable materials
- smoke detection
- fire-fighting equipment
- fire and smoke resisting construction including fire doors, enclosures and partitions
- escape routes
- maintenance of fire protection measures
- evacuation procedures.

Finding out more



Please note: this section is not exhaustive. It is intended to help you identify the principal stages of a risk assessment.

To find out more about conducting a comprehensive risk assessment, download the following guidance:

www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/News/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=19844

Also, watch out for new fire safety guidance for purpose-built flats to help landlords, fire risk assessors and enforcement bodies meet their responsibilities which is expected in summer 2011:

www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=1



**In summary:
The 5 stages of a risk assessment**

Step 1 Identify fire hazards
Sources of ignition
Sources of fuel Sources of oxygen

Step 2 Identify people at risk

Step 3 Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk

Preventative measures
Evaluate the risk of a fire occurring
Evaluate the risk to people from fire
Remove or reduce fire hazards
Remove or reduce the risks to people

Protective measures
Detection and warning
Fire fighting
Escape routes
Lighting
Signs and notices
Maintenance

Step 4 Record, plan, instruct, inform and train
Record significant findings and action taken
Prepare an emergency plan
Inform relevant people, provide instruction,
and co-operate and co-ordinate with others
Provide training

Step 5 Review
Keep assessment under review
Revise where necessary

When carrying out a risk assessment, assessors should be prepared to review the assumptions under which the buildings were originally constructed. The buildings may have been subject to changes over a number of years. For example, many tower blocks were designed using individual flats to provide fire separation between them and the adjoining unit, whether at the side or above and below. In the intervening years the fire resistance may have been compromised as a result of holes being drilled for central heating, satellite cables, etc.; and not being subsequently replaced. Fire resisting glazing may have been replaced by ordinary glass and bypass exits (whereby occupants can escape from fire in their flat by exiting their balcony, crossing the balcony and into the next flat) may have become blocked off by tenants protecting their privacy. Very often, tenants or owners will replace their standard fire resisting front doors with non fire resisting front doors, thus compromising escape routes.

The relationship between the tenant and the responsible person (Landlord)

The responsible person has to provide for all safety measures identified through the risk assessment. But tenants and residents also have a role to play in making sure the buildings they live in are safe. This requires positive engagement between landlords and tenants.

If fire protection measures are provided (e.g. smoke detectors, sprinklers, fire doors), these should not be obstructed, damaged or removed. All these matters should be explicit in tenancy agreements and further reflected in all related policies and procedures. This applies to the inside of the property as well as all communal areas. We will look in more detail at examples of working in partnership with tenants, residents and communities in section 5.

Once a fire risk assessment has been produced, there is a requirement to inform all relevant persons, including tenants, of the steps to be taken should a fire occur. Every effort should be made to overcome potential problems in communicating this essential information to tenants. Information needs to be personalised to take account of language, literacy and understanding, culture and health. Housing officers, carers and family members may need to be involved where tenants require additional support.





TSA guidance on fire safety following the Lakanal House incident

Following the Lakanal House fire, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) issued further guidance on risk assessments and fire precautions in high rise buildings. In summary the guidance emphasises that the following issues should be addressed to ensure that any fire safety risk assessment is adequate:

- fire risk assessments must consider the structure of the premises including fire resistance and fire stopping between common parts and residential accommodation
- confirmation and monitoring of appropriate compartmentation to prevent fire spread should be undertaken through ongoing review
- fire resisting construction must ensure that relevant persons can make a safe escape via common internal and/or external escape routes
- effective management controls must be in place to ensure the means of escape are not obstructed or used for the storage of combustible materials
- the means of escape must also be sufficiently obvious and illuminated, particularly at night
- attention must be given to the potential surface spread of flame and the fire resistance of wall and ceiling linings and structures in the means of escape
- consideration should be given to the ability of fire to enter or develop in voids such as ducting, risers and false ceilings
- residents in blocks of flats should be made aware of the appropriate action to take in case of fire, as determined by the fire risk assessment, and the means of escape available to them
- fire action notices or other means of passing fire safety information should be provided for residents, maintenance staff and visitors
- following the risk assessment, the responsible person must take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances of the case to ensure that the premises are safe.

The Fire and Rescue Service and the local housing authority have powers to inspect premises, to serve a notice requiring alterations, to serve an enforcement notice requiring specific steps to be taken to remedy a breach of the regulations and, in extreme circumstances, to service a prohibition notice preventing the use of a specific property until steps have been taken to make them safe from fire.

www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.19299



Practice checklist: Carrying out a risk assessment

- ✓ landlords have responsibility for carrying out a fire safety risk assessment
- ✓ ensure that all relevant persons in your organisation at all levels and tenants and residents understand and co-operate with the fire risk assessment process and its implementation and review
- ✓ a risk assessment is a dynamic process and it should be regularly reviewed
- ✓ landlords should nominate a competent person or persons to carry out a risk assessment
- ✓ risk assessments should consider that a building may have been subject to alteration and changes over the course of its life which can have an impact on its ability to withstand fire
- ✓ to help you complete a risk assessment, consider using an approved proforma (see proforma contained in the 'Sleeping Accommodation Guidance' for an example)
- ✓ ensure actions are carried out in response to the risk assessment and that defects are remedied.

4. Working in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services

Fire safety in housing is primarily the responsibility of local housing authorities. However, Fire and Rescue Services across the UK play a key role in supporting fire safety activities and interventions through:

Fire safety advice: helping prevent fires by supporting residents, in all types of housing, with home fire safety checks; through visits, education and information. Outcomes from such checks could include:

- assessment to determine appropriate level of active fire protection required
- checking suitability and location of existing alarms
- providing specialist alarms to meet individual circumstances, such as hearing impairment
- signposting other vulnerabilities to partner agencies
- helping devise a suitable escape plan where appropriate
- offering a specialised service to those who may be at particular risk e.g. some people with some disabilities
- providing education, advice and support on fire safety matters to children at school and groups in the community.

The enforcement powers of Fire and Rescue Services

Fire and Rescue Services will always seek to use enforcement action that is proportionate primarily to the circumstances of the offence and the risk to life, but in so doing will also consider other factors such as the size of the business or undertaking and the nature of its activities.

Choices of enforcement approach available to the Fire and Rescue Services are:

- educate and inform
- non statutory notice/letter
- statutory notice identifying the nature of the corrective action needed
- prohibition/restriction of use
- simple caution
- prosecution.

The principles of enforcement

Fire and Rescue Services believe in firm but fair enforcement of fire safety law. This should be informed by the principles of:

- proportionality in applying the law and securing compliance
- consistency of approach
- targeting of enforcement action
- transparency about how the regulator operates and what those regulated may expect
- accountability for the regulator's actions.

Fire and Rescue Services will always try and work with housing providers to avoid enforcement action where possible.



Note on local authority enforcement action

In England and Wales, under the Housing Act 2004, there is a duty placed on local housing authorities to take appropriate enforcement action where serious hazards are identified in residential properties and a power to take action to deal with any less serious hazards. For more information, go to section 2 or you can review the Housing Act 2004 at:

www.legislation.gov.uk

Landlords working in co-operation with Fire and Rescue Services



Practice example

Metropolitan Housing Partnership and London Fire Brigade: memorandum of understanding

Metropolitan Housing Partnership (MHP) are currently working on drafting a memorandum of understanding with London Fire Brigade which sets out MHP's fire safety strategy. The housing association also meets up regularly with London Fire Brigade to monitor progress. The memorandum of understanding aims to establish a consistent approach to fire safety in the many boroughs where MHP has properties.

Contact: Mark Varley
Mark.varley@mht.co.uk



Practice example

Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council (BCC) employ staff as part of their repairs partnership scheme who have full time duties relating to the delivery of annual fire risk assessments on the council's 224 high rise and 1,800 low rise blocks which fall under the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005. As part of an ongoing partnership with West Midlands Fire Service, BCC employs the services of their commercial team to carry out bi-annual practical fire risk assessment training courses for council staff involved with fire safety. This offers a good platform for updates from the Fire Service and the sharing of information between surveyors. It also re-enforces Birmingham's commitment to fire safety.

Contact: Daniel Camp
Daniel.camp@birmingham.gov



Practice checklist: Working in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services

- ✓ establish a relationship with your local Fire and Rescue Service
- ✓ with your local Fire and Rescue Service consider developing information sharing protocols
- ✓ help build relationships between your local Fire and Rescue Service with tenants and residents so they can offer, where appropriate, individual home fire safety support e.g. home fire safety checks; and community support such as education and advice.

5. Working in partnership with tenants, residents and communities

To make sure that homes and communities are safe from fire, working in partnership with tenants, residents and communities is vital. For social landlords there are additional challenges. The social housing sector provides accommodation to some of the most vulnerable people in society: 70 per cent of social tenants have incomes within the poorest two fifths; social tenants have high rates of disability, are more likely to be lone parents, single people or aged over 60.

Given the diversity of people living in social housing, landlords should know who their customers are, how best to communicate with them about fire safety; and what measures to put in place to ensure they are safe in their homes and communities.

In developing customer insight, landlords should adhere to the principles outlined in the Data Protection Act 2008. You can find out more at www.ico.gov.uk

Given the profile of social housing tenants, it is particularly important that landlords understand who their tenants and residents are so they can minimise risk to them; by communicating and engaging with tenants and residents in appropriate ways. This section will explore four different aspects of working in partnership with tenants, residents and landlords:

- A. Developing customer insight and how to use this to ensure fire safety
- B. Communicating and engaging with tenants and residents for fire safety
- C. Developing a fire safe approach to the use of mobility scooters
- D. Working with private sector landlords to ensure fire safety.

Finding out more

DCLG has produced specific guidance on fire safety risk assessment: providing a means of escape for disabled people (Supplementary Guide). You can download this from:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/firesafetyassessmentmeans



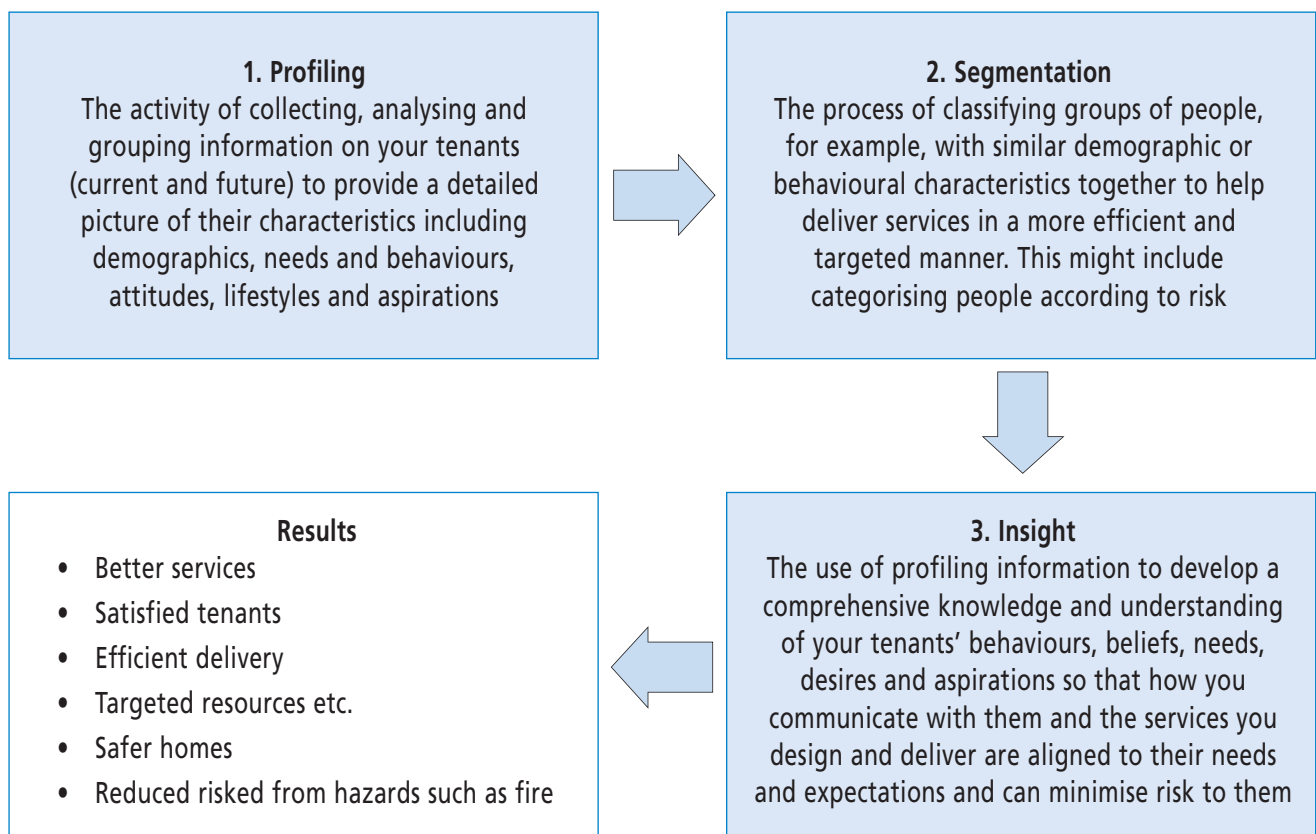
A. Developing customer insight and how to use this to ensure fire safety

Housing providers are increasingly keen to understand who their customers are and to use this information to inform service delivery. Customer insight information can additionally be used to gather key information which can help organisations undertake and review fire risk assessments. The following types of information can be generated:

- who lives in the housing organisation's properties?
- are there vulnerability issues: age, frailty, disability, ill-health?
- are tenants and residents particularly at risk from harassment which could include fire hazards?

- have there been fires in the property before, what type and how did they start?
- have alterations been made to the property e.g. secondary works such as new central heating, new electrical or gas appliances, satellite dishes or cable, new windows or doors which may have compromised the containment of the dwelling?
- are there language or communication issues which might prevent occupants responding appropriately in the event of a fire?
- are there disability or mobility issues which might prevent occupants responding appropriately in the event of a fire?

There are three key steps to developing customer insight. These are illustrated below:⁶



⁶ CIH (2010) *Tenant Insight: a toolkit*, London, CIH and TSA



Finding out more

CIH has recently published a toolkit for tenant Insight which can be downloaded from the TSA website:

www.tenantservicesauthority.org/server/show/ConWebDoc.20719



Practice example

Partnership between West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and West North West Homes Leeds

West North West Homes Leeds has entered into a joint partnership with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Senior managers from both organisations agreed that an intensive fire safety in the home awareness training package should be provided to nominated front line staff from West North West Homes Leeds. West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service also agreed with the housing organisation that they would provide 10 year battery smoke detectors in their properties that were not included in a rewiring programme so would therefore not benefit from the installation of hard wired detectors. The battery detectors were fitted during gas safety inspections.

Housing staff who have received fire safety in the home training now carry out fire risk assessments when they visit tenants in their homes. If a tenant meets any of the high risk criteria, they advise the tenant to have a free home fire safety check which is carried out by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. A dedicated referral system is in place, that will allow housing staff to refer vulnerable and at risk tenants to the local fire service prevention team via a dedicated email address.

The partnership is a great success and already over sixty of the most at risk and vulnerable tenants have benefited from a home fire safety check. Several tenants have received additional support from the fire service's specialist high risk team, including interventions such as fire retardant bedding and throws, deaf alarm systems, or the installation of telecare monitoring services.

Contact: Kevin Bradbury and Frank Perrins
Kevin.bradbury@wnwhl.org.uk
Frank.perrins@wnwhl.org.uk





Practice example

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service home fire safety check in conjunction with South Tyneside Homes

In order to achieve the service mission statement of 'creating the safest community' a priority has been identified to protect and to educate householders so they can prevent fires in their own homes. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service offer home fire safety checks to reduce the number of deaths and injuries resulting from accidental dwelling fires. To complete these checks, the following form is used.

1 Address Information

Family Name

House Number Street

Post Code District

Phone Number Town/City

2 Reason for home fire safety check

3 Ethnic background

White Mixed Black or Black British Not Not Stated

Chinese or Other Ethnicity Asian

4 Number of Smoke Alarms

Existing Battery Mains

Not Working Incorrectly Sited

5 Occupancy factors

Private	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rented	<input type="checkbox"/>
Under 5	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 – 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 – 39 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
40 – 59 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
40 – 59 years living alone only	<input type="checkbox"/>
60 – 64 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
65+	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lone parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled/impaired	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication/language issues	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 Hazard factors questions

Previous fires	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smokers in house	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smokes in bed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chip pan in use	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candle misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medication issues	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 Hazard factors observations

Electrical issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	
High fire load	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Structural issues	Open plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Open loft	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Doors missing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Substance issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	

8 Control measures

Fire safety education given	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refer to Fire Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
No. of smoke alarms fitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

9 Details of person completing home fire safety check

Name	<input type="text"/>	Role	<input type="text"/>
		Section	<input type="text"/>
Date	<input type="text"/>	Time taken	<input type="text"/> mins

Comments

If a person is judged to be in serious and imminent danger, then refer to the Fire Service prevention and education team as soon as possible.



Practice example

Hillingdon Borough Council: Fire safety awareness strategy

In August 2009 the Hillingdon Homes Board of directors formally signed-off a fire safety strategy and management plan. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the risk to people in the buildings and dwellings we own, lease and manage by achieving appropriate levels of fire safety. This plan can be seen below.

Theme	Priorities	Measures	Lead Officers
<p>To ensure residents have appropriate levels of fire safety awareness including prevention and what to do in the event of fire occurring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure basic fire safety awareness delivered during new tenant visits and tenancy verification visits • Ensure basic fire safety information is received as an integral part of the new tenant sign-up process and lease assignments • Ensure basic fire safety information is received as an integral part of the mutual exchange/ assignment process • Ensure basic fire safety information is received as an integral part of processing key tenancy changes including succession • Make available fire safety information in all area housing offices • Publicise all accidental and deliberate fire incidents involving council housing and shared areas and promote relevant fire safety prevention and awareness messages • Make effective use of all stock-wide and local mail-outs involving at least all residents of a block to promote awareness and prevention 	<p>Reduction in the number of primary [or serious] fires</p> <p>Reduction in fires in the home</p> <p>Reduction in the number of deaths arising from primary fires</p> <p>Reduction in the number of rubbish fires</p> <p>Reduction in the number of vehicle fires</p> <p>Publicity opportunities used to promote fire safety/Streets Ahead event Calendar</p> <p>Residents are aware of all basic home fire safety risks</p> <p>Residents are aware of the acceptable standard for escape routes and comply</p> <p>Residents are clear about the fire evacuation policy for their home/building</p>	<p>Community Housing Team Leaders</p> <p>Allocations and Void Control Team Leader</p>



Theme	Priorities	Measures	Lead Officers
<p>To ensure residents have appropriate levels of fire safety awareness – contd.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make effective use of the Hillingdon Homes website to facilitate access to fire prevention services and the promotion of fire safety information and messages • Make effective use of 'Smile' and 'Hillingdon' the magazine for leaseholders to maintain awareness of fire safety issues and promote fire safety messages 	<p>Reduction in the number of primary [or serious] fires</p>	
<p>To ensure residents who belong to higher risk groups and/or live in higher risk premises have an appropriate level of fire safety awareness including prevention and what to do in the event of fire occurring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure tenants understand individual fire safety management procedures for the block as an integral part of new tenant and tenancy verification • Ensure tailored fire safety information is received as an integral part of the new tenant sign-up process and lease assignments • Ensure tailored fire safety information is received as an integral part of the new tenant sign-up process and lease assignments • Initial Assessment of all tenants/occupiers in the private rented sector who are not offered support by the Independent Living Support Service to be referred to the London Fire Brigade for a home fire safety checks • Risk Assessment and needs led assessment to include fire safety awareness within the 'staying safe' element of Support Plans for all Independent Living Support Service clients 	<p>Reduction in fires in the home</p> <p>Increase in the number of home fire safety visits completed by the London Fire Brigade</p> <p>Reduction in the number of deaths arising from primary fires</p> <p>Number of personal fire safety plans completed</p> <p>Streets Ahead event calendar</p> <p>Residents are fully aware of all basic home fire safety risks</p> <p>Residents are fully aware of the acceptable standard for escape routes</p> <p>Residents are clear about the fire evacuation policy for their home/building</p>	<p>Community Housing Team Leaders</p> <p>Allocations and Voids Control Team Leader</p> <p>Housing Manager [Home Ownership]</p> <p>Team Leaders Independent Living Support Service</p> <p>Team leader ASB</p> <p style="text-align: right;">→</p>

Theme	Priorities	Measures	Lead Officers
<p>To ensure residents who belong to higher risk groups and/or live in higher risk premises have an appropriate level of fire safety awareness – contd.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure tailored fire safety information is received as an integral part of processing key tenancy changes including succession • Ensure all households placed in temporary accommodation outside the permanent stock receive basic information regarding the fire safety management plan for the building • Deliver joint initiatives with the local fire service on estates identified via use of London Fire Brigade profiling data/incident risk analysis toolkit • Ensure all material information which signifies an increase in levels of vulnerability within the household is responded to by completion of a mobility questionnaire and appropriate follow up action • Ensure all vulnerable residents and those with profound mobility and sensory issues living in tower blocks and low rise blocks covered by a fire risk assessment have a personal fire safety plan in place • Ensure that systems are in place to produce personal fire safety plans where necessary for residents where there are material changes in personal circumstances or tenancy changes • Promote the value of personal fire safety plans to vulnerable residents and residents with profound mobility and sensory issues 		



Theme	Priorities	Measures	Lead Officers
<p>To raise appropriate levels of fire safety awareness with relevant staff groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate 'smart' objectives within personal performance plans which contribute towards raising staff awareness of fire safety. Ensure every member of staff is aware of their contribution/team contribution towards the delivery of the fire safety implementation plan 	<p>Performance targets set</p> <p>Internal publicity opportunities used to promote fire safety awareness and staff roles</p> <p>Staff are clear about the acceptable standard for escape routes</p> <p>Staff are clear about basic home fire safety risks and can identify them</p> <p>Staff are fully aware of the fire evacuation policy for all property types</p> <p>Relevant staff can identify the need for and jointly develop and agree a personal fire safety plan with a resident</p> <p>Outcomes shared from estate inspection</p> <p>Performance targets and competency reviews</p> <p>Staff induction plans</p> <p>Staff training logs</p> <p>Meeting minutes</p>	<p>Leadership forum</p>

Contact: Rod Smith
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B. Communication and engaging with tenants and residents for fire safety

The following case studies provide innovative examples illustrating how Fire and Rescue Services are working in partnership with landlords and tenants and residents to promote fire safety in the home.

Free fire safety leaflets for tenants and residents



The Directgov website

www.direct.gov.uk provides free leaflets which can be downloaded and sent to tenants and residents to help them stay safe in their homes.

These include:

Fire safety in the home

FS069 © Crown Copyright 2007, DCLG 2010

Fire Safety in shared or rented accommodation

FS073 © Crown Copyright 2008, DCLG 2008

Fire safety for people with sight, hearing and mobility difficulties

FS075 © Crown Copyright 2008, DCLG 2008

Make your home safe

Easy-read leaflet available for people with learning difficulties or difficulties with reading



Celebrate Safely

Information for tenants and residents about home fire safety in Wales.

<http://wales.gov.uk>

Don't give fire a home

...is the national domestic fire safety campaign for Scotland and it provides information about fire safety, emergency planning and provides links to Fire and Rescue Services for householders living in Scotland.

www.dontgivefireahome.com





Practice example

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Trent & Dove Housing Association

In 2008/2009 East Staffordshire Area Command attended a series of Crime and Prevention Roadshows organised by Trent & Dove Housing Association in six wards within East Staffordshire. At each of the Roadshows staff from East Staffordshire Area Command gave a short presentation on home fire safety. The Roadshows proved to be extremely successful and 185 home fire safety check requests were made.

Contact: Keith Spackman
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Practice example

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service working in Partnership with Stafford & Rural Homes

The Fire Service and Stafford & Rural Homes have worked together to offer every new resident a home fire safety check upon occupying one of Stafford and Rural's properties. In addition at the time of induction each resident is issued with a *fire safety in the home* leaflet. Stafford & Rural have modified their induction forms to include a section offering the home fire safety check. If the resident accepts the offer their details are passed by Stafford & Rural to our central referral team (0800 Team) who make contact with the tenant and arrange a suitable appointment time for either a technician or a crew to attend.

Contact: Kathryn Bradbury
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Practice example

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service working with Worcester Community Housing

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has negotiated with Worcester Community Housing to include a requirement for all existing and new tenants to agree to have a free home fire safety check as part of their tenancy agreement. The clause in the tenancy agreement states: 'you must allow the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service into your home to carry out a free home fire safety check.' Worcester Community Housing owns and manages over 4,700 homes in Worcester, so the effect of the clause was to enable the Service to gain practically instant access to this important sector of the housing market, many of whom are older people living in supported housing. Progress is also being made with other local housing associations to adopt similar approaches.

Contact: Mark Cooper
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Practice example

Stockport Homes

Stockport Homes have local agreements in place with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service which includes:

- a regime of monthly health and safety inspections to the multi-storey blocks and 3 monthly inspections of low rise blocks
- the housing association has agreed a 'red box' scheme with secure information in the high-rise blocks and sheltered properties with lists of vulnerable people where Stockport Homes have a stay put policy if there is a fire. Stockport Homes updates this list regularly and shares information with the Fire and Rescue Service
- the housing association has agreed a referral system whereby they refer vulnerable people identified at sign up to the Fire and Rescue Service for them to visit and carry out a fire risk assessment, provide advice and undertake work such as the installation of fire alarms etc..

www.stockporthomes.org

C. Fire safety and mobility scooters

In recent years, the use of mobility scooters by tenants and residents in social housing has increased dramatically. This is likely to reflect a long term trend. As with other developed countries people are living longer. The number of people aged 65 years and over is expected to rise by 43 per cent.

Mobility scooters present particular challenges in relation to fire safety:

- tenants and residents may leave them in corridors and communal areas where they become an obstruction hazard. This is often because mobility scooters can take up a lot of space in an individual dwelling
- users may attempt to charge mobility scooter batteries in common areas which is also a fire risk
- there have been many examples of anti-social behaviour in which mobility scooters have been set on fire.





Practice example

West Yorkshire Fire Safety: Public advice: storage of mobility scooters

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service adheres to the policy that protected corridors and staircases, as well as common areas in flats and sheltered housing are to be maintained and clear of obstruction at all times. These areas should not contain any flammable items or materials, any items or substances that may act as an ignition source or objects that could pose as trip hazards.

Mobility scooters are often stored and left to charge in the sterile areas outside of an occupier's residence. The practice of storing mobility scooters in sterile areas places an unacceptable risk to other occupiers and must be discouraged.

Mobility scooters offer an increased **fire loading** and potential source of ignition. If involved in a fire they can release large amounts of highly toxic smoke and gases. If stored in protected corridors, staircases or common areas (sterile areas) a fire in a mobility scooter could affect the means of escape and place an unacceptable risk to all occupiers within the building. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 would expect such risks to be mitigated.

Fire risk assessment

- where residents require immediate access to mobility scooters, consideration should be given to making alternative arrangements for the storage of the equipment, e.g. widening the access door into the flat entrance to allow the mobility scooter to be stored and re-charged within the owners own accommodation
- where alternative arrangements are proposed, these should be fully risk assessed
- fire risk assessments must consider the

structure of the premises including fire resistance and fire stopping between common parts and residential accommodation. Although premises may have been constructed with appropriate compartmentation to prevent fire spread (including that provided by flat doors fitted with effective self-closing devices), fire stopping and fire resistance, the ongoing presence of effective provision needs to be reasonably confirmed and monitored through on-going review

- any defects not identified at the construction stage or arising from wear and tear, vandalism or works during the lifetime of the building (e.g. introduction or renewal of services, decoration, repairs and refurbishment – should be managed to avoid compromising fire safety – and changes made by residents) can then be identified and addressed
- effective management controls must be in place to ensure means of escape are not used for storage of combustible materials or items that block or impede use of the means of escape and that the means of escape is sufficiently obvious and illuminated, particularly at night
- residents in blocks of flats should be made aware of the appropriate action to take in case of fire, as determined by the fire risk assessment and the means of escape available to them
- fire action notices or other means of passing fire safety information should be provided for residents, maintenance staff and visitors.

www.westyorkshire.gov.uk/fireSafety/pans/FS-PAN033-MobilityScooters.pdf

The following example is of a mobility scooter policy devised by a social landlord to address some of the challenges the use of mobility scooters by tenants and residents presents:



Practice example

Stockport Homes: storage of electric mobility scooters

Stockport Homes takes the health and safety of customers extremely seriously. There have recently been reports in the national press where an electric mobility scooter was deliberately set alight leading to the death of two people. Stockport Homes recognises that some customers may have mobility issues which require them to use electric mobility scooters. However scooters can be expensive and prone to threat of damage. They can also pose a fire or trip hazard if they are not stored correctly.

To ensure the wellbeing and safety of everyone, the following guidance has been provided:

- do not store mobility scooters in communal areas. Please store within your property where ever possible or out of sight of the general public
- do not store the scooter in a place which would prevent you getting safely out of your property in the case of a fire. Ensure you always have clear access and exit
- if you live in sheltered accommodation, your Scheme Manager will be able to advise you on the best place to store your scooter if it will not fit into your property
- do not charge any scooter battery in a communal area

- ensure the scooter is serviced and maintained regularly
- if the scooter is stored outside, place an adequate cover over the scooter
- if the scooter is to be stored for any length of time the battery should be removed.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service offer a free home fire risk assessment service. If you have any concerns regarding fire safety within your home please contact them. Alternatively, please contact your area housing office. Customers contact their scheme manager or area housing office prior to purchasing a scooter.

www.stockporthomes.org



Practice example

Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service and Glasgow Housing Association

Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and Strathclyde Fire & Rescue (SF&R) are working together to improve the safety of the 63,000 tenants in GHA housing stock across the City. A number of fire safety initiatives are in place:

1. Partnership working

A Partnership working group has been established which meets regularly to drive forward ideas raised at regular meetings with GHA and SF&R Senior Officers. A Focus Group also meets regularly to take forward ideas that will improve fire safety for tenants, with a main focus on the effective targeting and delivery of home fire safety visits. A member of GHA has also been seconded to SF&R Headquarters Partnership Unit to work on strategic housing issues across the region covered by SF&R.

2. Fire safety visits

In addition, SF&R have implemented a series of fire safety visits to tenants in multi-storey blocks. This has been co-ordinated at a local level by local officers, with concierge actively involved. These visits have been successful in raising awareness of fire safety issues and providing customers with relevant information. To supplement this, it is proposed to introduce an evaluation process within the GHA Programmed House Visit process which will result in referral of 'at risk' tenants to SF&R for a home fire safety visit.

3. Fire awareness training

SF&R have also delivered a programme of fire awareness training, co-ordinated by GHA, for housing officers since February 2010.

4. Fire safety information

A strong focus on the home fire safety information/promotion for all GHAs 63,000 tenants and 28,000 owner occupiers has been developed and made available through:

- a designated fire safety internet page on the GHA web site: www.gha.org.uk
- the distribution of a fire safety leaflet in GHA high rise flats

- the provision of a general home fire safety leaflet to all new tenants
- the inclusion of a fire safety related feature in every bi-monthly newsletter: 'The Key' (for tenants) and 'Your Place' (for owner occupiers)
- fire safety related information for both tenant and owner occupier handbooks are being developed.

5. Common area inspections in multi-storey flats

The adoption of a new monitoring method that aims to eliminate and correct as early as possible any potentially hazardous deficiencies, which may arise within GHA's high rise flats, has been developed. This process adopts a citywide consistent approach to fire-safety compliance, which includes concierge daily fire safety checks within the common areas of multi-storey flats.

6. Safety signage

A guide to fire safety signs and notices for multi-storey flats has been developed. This guidance will assist GHA and other HAs in assessing the number and distribution of appropriate fire safety signage within the common areas of high rise flats.

7. Multi-storey flats floor plans

SF&R and GHA are improving operational intelligence by developing floor plans for multi-storey flats. These will be located within a secure area (to be determined) in each multi-storey building. The floor plans will complement existing SF&R information plates and improve the operational information available to fire crews.

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D. Working with the private rented sector to ensure fire safety

The private sector already plays a key role in meeting the temporary accommodation needs for authorities in connection with their homelessness duties. The sector currently houses almost 57,000 households, over 70 per cent of the total needs in England with private sector leasing (PSL) providing the bulk of this total. However, new government proposals for England contained in *Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing* issued by DCLG in November 2010 are calling for local authorities to be able to discharge their main statutory homelessness duty to the private rented sector.

The 2008 Rugg Review of the private rented sector in England identified a number of concerns about the overall quality of some private sector landlord management. While many private sector landlords operate professionally, some are part-time or accidental landlords with very little experience of tenancy management or support; and a small proportion act illegally. There is no regulation of the private rented sector: the principal statutory authority resting with local authority environmental health officers.⁹

With this in mind, ensuring that private sector landlords provide safe accommodation for their tenants will be of heightened importance. Under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) (Housing Act 2004), a local authority can inspect private rented property for health and safety hazards. If it finds serious problems, the landlord will have to remedy them.

The private rented sector in Scotland

Under the Repairing Standard, in Scotland, all rented properties must now have a battery operated smoke alarm installed on each floor. An alarm installed before 3 September 2007 can be mains powered or battery powered. A smoke alarm installed or modified after 3 September 2007 must be mains powered and this will include replacement alarms. Landlords are under a common law duty to ensure that the property they provide is safe. Additionally in Scotland landlords must recognise their legal responsibilities under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 in relation to the Repairing Standard. All residential properties in England and Wales should comply with building regulations on aspects such as:

- fire alarms and fire extinguishers
- fire doors and emergency exits, passages and escape routes
- means of emergency escape, particularly where sleeping accommodation is provided on 2nd and 3rd floors.

To find out more, visit:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing

⁹ Rugg J and Rhodes D (2008) *The Private rented sector: its contribution and potential*, CHP, York



Practice checklist:

Working in partnerships with tenants, residents and communities

- ✓ develop customer insight information to supplement and enhance your fire risk assessment process
- ✓ positively engage with tenants, residents and communities in relation to fire safety
- ✓ liaise with your local Fire and Rescue Service to raise awareness of fire safety in the communities with which you work
- ✓ place fire safety information into all tenancy handbooks or tenancy start-up packs
- ✓ in blocks of flats or maisonettes make sure all residents are aware of appropriate action to be taken in the event of fire
- ✓ take particular care to make sure residents whose first language is not English have access to clear and understandable fire safety information
- ✓ consider the needs of vulnerable residents in relation to fire safety
- ✓ in conversation with your tenants and residents, develop a clear and comprehensive policy on mobility scooters and make sure that tenants, residents and visitors adhere to it
- ✓ consider providing safe and secure storage areas for mobility scooters
- ✓ install smoke alarms in all properties
- ✓ consider installing domestic and residential sprinklers into homes
- ✓ develop strategies for working in partnership with private sector landlords to ensure fire safety.



6. Tackling fire related anti-social behaviour

In addition to providing housing, social landlords are community anchors and they play a key role in ensuring safety and wellbeing in the communities in which they work.

Fire related anti-social behaviour can cause major disruption, damage and deaths in communities. Social landlords can take a number of measures to protect individuals and communities from fire related anti-social behaviour.

Deliberate fires in Wales

Statistics on deliberate fire incidents include data for Wales for the period 2000 to 2008. The key points from the latest release are:

- the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services attended a little under 3,100 deliberate primary fires in 2008, a decrease of 58 per cent from the highest which was in 2001
- between 2000 and 2008, 65 per cent of deliberate fires were in South Wales, 23 per cent in Mid and West Wales, and 12 per cent were in North Wales
- furniture and furnishings were the materials first ignited in 43 per cent of deliberate primary fires between 2000 and 2008.

www.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines

This section explores a range of approaches adopted by social landlords to tackle fire related anti-social behaviour and to engage creatively with would-be perpetrators.



Practice example

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service: Sunderland Phoenix project⁷

The Sunderland Phoenix Project is a partnership run between Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and the Sunderland and Newcastle Youth Offending Services and is part funded through the Youth Justice Board.

The project is committed to improving the life chances of every young person it works with by introducing them to life skills.

The course works with young people who are known to be offending and those at risk of offending, between the ages of 11 and 17. Most of the participants volunteer to go on the course, which seeks to foster the benefits of working within a disciplined uniformed team:

- enable young people to experience being part of a team
- increase awareness of impacts of offending/anti-social behaviour
- enhanced employment opportunities
- development of personal and social confidence
- reduction in offending and anti-social behaviour

www.twfire.gov.uk/community/phoenix/

⁷ The Sunderland Phoenix Project is run and funded entirely separately from the Newcastle Phoenix Project, the Sunderland project was the first of its kind in the country.



Practice example

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service tackling arson campaign

Dwelling fire campaigns were launched with the slogans 'Don't Drink and Fry' and 'Going Out? Put it out'. These campaigns included fitting smoke alarms and were supported by presentations to young people at 'Crucial Crew' events.

Tailored advice was provided to schools who also received guidance prior to school holidays from the Arson Reduction Unit. Other activities included the setting up of a school Fire Watch scheme, summer youth diversion activities and various initiatives aimed at reducing vehicle crime.

www.southwales-fire.gov.uk



Practice example

Liverpool Mutual Homes: partnership working

Liverpool Mutual Homes works closely with partners including the Fire Service. Which include:

1. Provision of vibrating and flashing smoke alarms or detectors for deaf customers
2. Provision of Firebag and target hardening (PolyCarb windows etc.) for anti-social behaviour, hate crime and domestic violence cases where appropriate measures are needed or potential for fire related anti-social behaviour or arson exists

3. Bonfire/Mischief Night partnership working: a co-ordinated approach with the fire service to tackle potential fire related anti-social behaviour or arson issues around key times in this period
4. Respect weeks of action co-ordinated by Liverpool City Council: input from all partners and fire service in removing fly-tipping etc. and reducing risks of fire related anti-social behaviour or arson.

Contact: Gerry Brennan

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Practice example

Bolton Homes: BSafe partnership

Bolton at Home is an arms length management organisation which works very closely with the Fire Service. They are part of the BSafe Partnership. Bolton at Home funded the supply of CCTV cameras for all fire engines across the Bolton Borough. The Fire and Rescue Service fitted them, maintain them, and insure them. They are deployed every time a fire engine is sent to an incident. If they film any incidents of ASB while out on a call, they can inform Bolton at Home and the BSafe partnership with the details. The footage can be studied to try to identify the offenders.

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www.boltonbsafe.org.uk



Practice example

Broxtowe Borough Council and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Broxtowe Borough Council has regular meetings with the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and these meetings have resulted in a number of initiatives being introduced:

- **Home Safety Checks – Decent Homes projects:** the Council emails the Fire and Rescue Service its weekly programme where construction partners are working on Decent Homes projects. The Fire and Rescue Service are then able to gain access to properties to conduct a home safety check when the tenant is at home
- **Home Safety Checks – New Tenants:** the details of re-let properties is emailed to the Fire and Rescue Service to enable them to conduct a home safety check with the incoming tenants
- **Updates on Safety Equipment:** on a quarterly basis a list of properties fitted with the Life Line service as well as properties that have smoke detectors with flashing beacons and vibrating pillow mats is emailed to the Fire and Rescue Service
- **Displays at Open Days:** as part of the Decent Homes programme tenants are invited to open days to view a demonstration property of the proposed works. At these open days the Fire Service man a display stand with information about safety and the services they provide
- **Replacement Programme:** all smoke detectors are cleaned and where necessary defective ones replaced during the yearly gas service.

Talks are currently underway to develop a wheelie bin collection calendar which incorporates information on wheelie bin fires.

Contact: David Wadsley, Broxtowe BC
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Practice example

South Staffordshire Housing Association

South Staffordshire Housing Association have referred young people at risk of becoming involved in ASB to a 'Young Fire-fighters' course run by Staffordshire Fire Service. The 12-week programme is aimed at 9 – 13 year olds and teaches them about the dangers of fire, how to stay safe etc.. The young people receive a certificate upon completion of the course.

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Practice example

Dale and Valley Homes: Bonfire Strategy

Dale and Valley Homes is a partner in a Bonfire Strategy operated by Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue and Durham County Council. During October and November 2010, the south west of County Durham experienced serious problems with fires around Bonfire Night. A strategy was developed which had outcomes including fire safety presentations to local schools, leaflets and posters publicising safety messages; and a budget made available by Durham County Council to recover accumulations of fuel before they were set on fire.

In addition Dale and Valley Homes obtained authorisation under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 to carry out covert directed surveillance between 1 – 5 November 2010 in an area that suffered very high levels of fire related anti-social behaviour in early November 2009. The outcome of this work was a very large decrease in secondary fires and fire related anti-social behaviour during November 2010.

Contact: Chris Walton
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Practice example

Stockport Homes: Firefly Project

Stockport Homes makes referrals to the Greater Manchester Fire service Firefly Project. The Firefly Project is an accredited five day course based at a working fire station and is run by fire-fighters. It aims to educate young people aged 11 – 17 (who are disengaged at school, offending or at risk of offending or causing anti-social behaviour) about fire safety in their homes and communities and reducing anti-social behaviour. It offers young people an energetic physical challenge and the chance to learn skills in fire fighting, home safety awareness, first aid, team building, communication and personal development. On completion of the course, attendees participate in a passing out parade and receive a portfolio of achievement which includes accreditations, photographic evidence, and certificates of attendance and life skills.

For more information on the project visit:
www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/community_work/firefly.aspx



Practice example

Erimus Housing working in partnership with Cleveland Fire brigade

- Erimus Housing and Cleveland Fire Brigade have set up a single point of contact, to deal promptly with hazards, such as the build-up of rubbish, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles, all of which might provide the fuel for deliberate fires. An Erimus Housing enforcement officer recently coordinated an action plan to deal with November bonfire nuisance including the dismantling of potential bonfires by grounds maintenance teams. Cleveland Fire Brigade reported a significant decrease this year in the number of bonfires
- following a series of wheelie bin fires, locks were funded by Erimus Area Housing Forums and supplied to tenants throughout the areas to secure bins to line posts etc. to prevent wheelie bins from being moved and set on fire. There has been a significant decrease in the number of wheelie bin fires across the area



- housing representatives and Fire Brigade officers attend problem solving groups including arson reduction forum groups and repeat victims groups where good data analysis leads to swift action to improve fire safety in communities
- local area meetings are held between Fire Brigade officers and Erimus Housing to jointly tackle local issues of arson
- Cleveland Fire Brigade's drug and alcohol advocate works alongside Erimus officers in helping to find positive solutions for tenants who cause a fire risk due to substance misuse
- Erimus Housing helps in promoting the anti-arson message to tenants by referring them at sign up to Cleveland Fire Brigade for fire safety home visits. Erimus Housing also facilitates fire events especially in multi-storey blocks where chip pans can be swapped for deep fat fryers, for example. The Erimus Area Housing Forums contribute to Cleveland Fire Brigade funds to help purchase these items. Chip pan fires have greatly reduced in the multi-storey blocks
- Fire Brigade officers are invited to Erimus Housing pre tenancy courses where they give fire safety talks to 16-25 year olds hoping to hold down their own tenancies. This preventative work is paramount in safeguarding lives and raising fire awareness
- Erimus Housing enforcement officers promote the anti-arson message in schools and it forms part of the Fabrick Group's 'Community Kid's' presentations. Enforcement officers and Fire Brigade officers work together to provide diversionary activities for young people. An enforcement budget set up to help reduce anti-social behaviour has recently helped to provide a football kit for Middlesbrough Fire Brigade youth teams. This initiative also meets the aim of the Fire Fit campaign
- Erimus Housing has been part of Cleveland Fire Brigade's programme designed to increase fire safety, home security and in particular reduce the potential risk of children having access to medicine by providing secure medication cabinets. Cleveland Fire Brigade discussed fire safety, fitted smoke alarms, and other specialist equipment such as flame retardant bedding or throws and Erimus building services have fitted secure medicine cabinets where needed. 100 vulnerable households have been reached across Middlesbrough and across all tenures.

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Practice checklist: Tackling fire related anti-social behaviour

- ✓ engage with schools and young people in communities to identify the risks of fire related anti-social behaviour and to identify positive alternatives
- ✓ ensure a zero-tolerance approach to fire related anti-social behaviour is communicated to tenants and residents
- ✓ provide smoke alarms to households
- ✓ facilitate or take part in community events in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services around key dates such as Bonfire Night to raise awareness in neighbourhoods of fire safety
- ✓ ensure that within neighbourhoods there are no environmental fire risks such as fly-tipping or un-collected refuse
- ✓ liaise with relevant statutory and voluntary partners in the community such as mental health teams, older person's teams or drug and alcohol teams to identify people who may be at risk of perpetrating or being the victim of fire related anti-social behaviour.

7. The use of domestic sprinklers

Sprinklers in homes

With 'sustainability' at the fore, the installation of active fire suppression systems (sprinklers) can significantly reduce the physical, psychological and financial impact of fires on the environment and the community. There is a legal requirement for sprinklers to be installed in all blocks of flats over 30 metres already. There are a few wide scale installation programmes for domestic sprinklers in the UK and Europe.

Domestic and residential sprinklers have an established track record in reducing death, injury, fire and business continuity losses. According to the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association, losses from fires in buildings protected with sprinklers are estimated to be 1/10 of those in unprotected buildings. In buildings fully protected by sprinklers:

- 99 per cent of fires were controlled by sprinklers alone
- 60 per cent of fires were controlled by the spray from no more than 4 sprinklers.

Extending the use of domestic sprinklers in new social housing can enable the wider use of new building technologies and provide higher quality and more user friendly accommodation. This can meet the aspirations of tenants, especially in sheltered and supported schemes, for open plan living and indeed increasing rentable floor space to the benefit of landlords while improving life safety and enhancing protection from fire losses for each different stakeholder.

For owners of properties the benefits of fitting sprinklers are:

- less likelihood that anyone will be killed or seriously injured due to fire
- enhanced property protection
- enhanced business continuity protection
- enhanced environmental clean-up protection.

(British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Network)

Where are sprinklers currently in use in the UK?

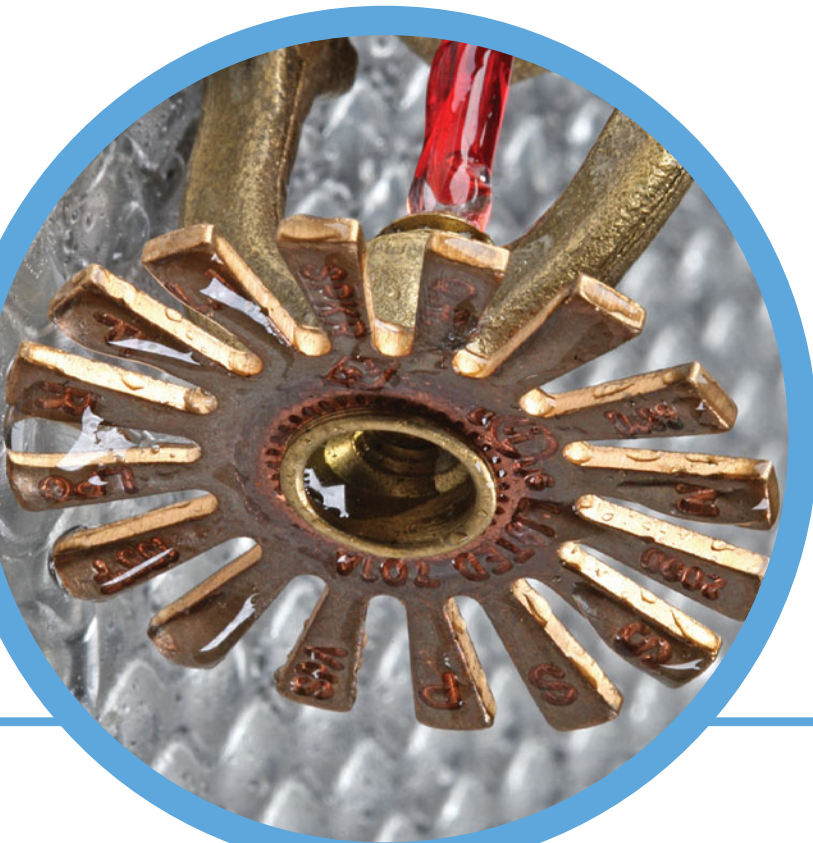
Studley Green in Wiltshire actively encourage the use of sprinklers in homes.



Practice example

Domestic Sprinklers in use at Studley Green, Wiltshire

On 6th January 2011 there was successful activation when a fire occurred in a bedroom on the Studley Green Housing development in Wiltshire. All the occupants escaped unharmed and the fire was contained to a small area of the bedroom. After clearing up operations the house was fit for occupation on the following day which would never have been the case had sprinklers not been fitted and the fire taken hold inside the property.



This resulted in the costs which could have attributed to the fire being greatly reduced and the family, instead of having to be re-homed for an extended period, could continue to enjoy the benefits of their own home after only a short break.

Barry Hughes, Chief Executive of Selwood Housing, which owns and manages the Studley Green estate, said: *“Although it is always distressing for the residents involved in a fire, thankfully the sprinklers reduced the damage to the home and the family were able to move back after just one night in temporary accommodation.”*

Contact:
workingtogether@selwoodhousing.com

In the UK, domestic and residential sprinkler systems are installed to BS 9251. Any sprinkler system is designed, installed and maintained to this standard. There are numerous qualified installers around the country but, it is important to make sure they belong to a sprinkler trade association and is third party accredited.

Automatic fire suppression systems (domestic sprinklers) in Wales

Welsh Assembly member, Ann Jones introduced a legislative competency order with the intention that from 2012 all new homes in Wales will be built with **automatic fire suppression systems** (domestic sprinklers) included. This measure was passed by the Welsh Assembly Government and is now waiting for Royal Assent. Subject to Royal Assent, this measure will apply to all building work in Wales which comprises or includes:

- constructing a building for use as a residence
- converting a building to use as a residence
- subdividing a residence to create a number of residences
- combining existing residences to create a new or new residences.



Finding out more

You can find out more about the Domestic Fire Safety (Wales) Measure by visiting:

www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-legislation/bus-leg-measures/business-legislation-measures-domfiresafety.htm

Finding out more about domestic sprinklers

Other sources of information can be found at:

Chief Fire Officers Association
www.cfoa.org.uk

National Fire Sprinkler Network
www.nfsn.co.uk

British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association
www.bafsa.org.uk

Fire Sprinkler Association
www.firesprinklers.org.uk

8. Questions and answers from the CFOA, WMFS and CIH seminars

This section contains a compilation of some of the questions asked by delegates at the CFOA, WMFS and CIH seminars on fire safety in housing which were held throughout England in 2009 and 2010. It has not been possible to include all questions and responses here.

These responses have been provided on a good faith basis and apply to an English context. Nothing in these responses constitutes advice or professional advice by any of the participants. In relation to any particular matter or circumstance advice from a suitably qualified professional should always be sought.⁸

1. What is the panel's view on evacuation policies and stay put policies?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: Any policy dealing with evacuation needs to be supported by a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. This will identify the fire safety features designed into a building and their current state i.e. integrity of fire resisting structure). Only then can a suitable evacuation policy be implemented.

Environmental Health Officer Response: We would only advise on a stay put policy in purpose-built dwellings, which have adequate fire separation/compartments coupled with an early warning fire detection system which may or may not have auto-dial to the local Fire and Rescue Service. It is essential that passive fire protection is maintained to a suitable standard. If a building is fitted with a sprinkler system then a stay put policy may be considered subject to a full fire safety risk assessment. In all other cases, we would recommend, evacuation of the residents.

2. What is the panel's view on mobility scooters and what advice would they give about their storage?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: Concerns about mobility scooters and fire safety have been frequently raised by delegates. Mobility scooters are a source of ignition and should not be stored, or charged in escape corridors and circulation spaces. Wherever possible, they should be kept within the dwelling unit of the owner, and we would remind designers and operators of such facilities to remember this when designing buildings or when refurbishments take place. Other than this, we would recommend a separate storage area. The fire risk assessment should examine all relevant issues and develop a solution that is appropriate for the premises on a case by case basis.

Environmental Health Officer Response: Like any other objects, such as bikes or old furniture, if mobility scooters are kept or stored in communal areas, the means of escape could be hindered in an emergency. Similarly a mobility scooter could provide a source of fuel within an escape route which could aid the spread of fire.

3. What role can insurance companies play in relation to fire safety?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: It is the requirement of the responsible person to ensure that an organisation complies with legislation relating to fire safety. It has been suggested that insurance companies could require that they see evidence of compliance before they insure a premises or insert a clause in

⁸ Please refer to the disclaimer at the start of this practice brief.

insurance policies that any claim for fire will only be paid if fire safety measures were in place and had undergone a maintenance regime.

Environmental Health Officer Response: Insurance companies could require the landlords of rented properties to carry out adequate fire safety risk assessment prior to letting. Also the insurance premiums could reflect the fire safety measures in place, thus providing incentives for landlords to ensure their properties have the requisite fire precautions in place.

4. When might corporate manslaughter apply to a landlord in the event of a fatal fire?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 states that an organisation is guilty of an offence if the way in which its activities are managed or organised causes the death of a person, and amounts to a gross breach of a relevant duty of care owed by the organisation. It only applies if the way in which the organisation's activities were managed or organised by its senior management contributed a substantial element in the breach of that duty. Where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies, there will be clear duties with which the responsible person must ensure compliance. If they were grossly negligent in failing to comply with these duties, then a case of corporate manslaughter could be brought, if the failure to comply with those duties resulted in a fatality. The key phrase is 'grossly negligent' and it would need to be proven that the breach of that duty fell below what could reasonably be expected of the organisation in the circumstances.

Environmental Health Officer Response: The Crown Prosecution Service would determine whether the charge of corporate manslaughter should be brought against the management of an organisation.

5. How does a landlord ensure that the activities of tenants and residents inside their own flats do not compromise the fire safety of a building?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: Article 17(2) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 makes provision for the responsible person to enter into arrangements with the occupier of such premises (i.e. flats) to carry out maintenance. Article 17(4) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires the occupier of those other premises (flats) to co-operate with the responsible person so that maintenance is indeed able to be carried out as required. Where dwellings are occupied by leaseholders, it would be expected that the landlord would ensure that leasehold agreements included clauses requiring access for essential maintenance, for example gas safety checks, etc. agreements.

Environmental Health Officer Response: The Housing Act 2004 enables local housing authorities to assess the effect that deficiencies in the home can have on the health and safety of occupants and visitors by using a risk assessment approach called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). While individual dwellings do not fall under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. However, there are cases (such as the provision of integrated fire alarm systems) which, by their nature of coverage, will be partly located in tenants' and residents' flats. In circumstances

where common area fire alarm systems extend into individual dwellings, the responsible person has a duty to ensure that the whole system is subjected to adequate levels of maintenance and testing.

6. Where a risk assessment identifies concerns regarding the vulnerability of tenants, how far should a housing provider go to meet those identified needs in times of financial constraint?

Environmental Health Officer Response: Housing providers have responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 not to place any residents with a disability under any unfair disadvantage, particularly in relation to access to and from the property. Where vulnerabilities are identified, then special consideration should be given to remedial measures such as an allocations policy which matches suitable accommodation with particular needs or specific fire detection and warning systems which reflect particular needs.

7. In some instances, leaseholders have changed their fire resistant front doors for non fire resistant varieties. What can landlords do if this happens?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: The front door of a dwelling which opens onto a corridor which forms a means of fire escape falls under the scope of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Therefore if a front door which opens onto a corridor which forms a means of fire escape, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to it. Hence, the leaseholder would be eligible for service of an enforcement notice by Fire and Rescue Services under Article 30 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

in order to get the door restored to an acceptable level of fire resistance.

Environmental Health Officer Response: Communication with leaseholders is essential. A fire safety strategy should ensure that all residents, including leaseholders, are made aware of the importance of fire resistant doors. In addition, engage the help of your local Fire and Rescue Service. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, they could take action against the leaseholder, if the communal fire escape route was adversely affected by the removal of a fire resistant door. Alternatively you could contact the local housing authority, who could take action under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), if the removal of a fire resistant door was assessed as a significant hazard. Check to see whether the leaseholder is in breach of their lease agreement by materially altering the property which would adversely impact on the safety of the other residents in the building.

8. What is the cost of fitting domestic sprinklers?

Environmental Health Officer Response: Costs vary, but it is estimated that the cost of retrofitting domestic sprinklers in a typical three bedroom semi-detached property would be around £3000. The cost of incorporating a sprinkler system in a new build property is expected to be significantly lower.

9. Does the fire risk assessment need to be reviewed every time occupancy changes in a dwelling?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires the fire risk assessment to be

amended whenever there is a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid. The responsible person should make a judgement if changes to the occupancy profile require a fire risk assessment review to take place. It is essential that the responsible person engages with new tenants so that lifestyle, health and other factors can be ascertained.

Environmental Health Officer Response: There is no specific requirement under the HHSRS for landlords to undertake fire risk assessments. However the landlords should nevertheless consider the occupancy and any specific requirements of their tenants when deciding to implement appropriate fire safety measures. It is good practice for these measures to be reviewed by the landlord on a periodic basis.

10. Is there any legislation concerning communal area coatings (paint, carpets etc.)

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: Article 14(2)(b) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires the responsible person to ensure that in the event of a fire all relevant persons can use the means of escape as quickly and as safely as possible. Therefore, the responsible person needs to demonstrate they have taken sufficient and suitable steps to ensure that a fire cannot spread through the means of escape and threaten its availability. This is where the effective control of surface finishes and coatings can aid compliance with this duty. Article 8 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires adequate measures to be taken to prevent the spread of fire within the premises. Once again, the effective control of surface finishes and coatings can aid compliance with this duty.

Environmental Health Officer Response: In the LACORS guidance, there is guidance provided on suitable classes of surface finish in certain locations of HMOs. The use of combustible material should be avoided particularly on communal escape routes. Although the LACORS recommendations are not legal requirements, in certain circumstances these could be enforced by the use of powers available under the HHSRS. There needs to be a balance struck between aesthetics and fire safety. Other compensatory measures such as sprinklers could also be considered.

11. What is the testing system for sprinklers? Is it similar to the BS5389?

The British Standard for sprinkler system is BS 9251 (2005).

12. How do I identify a competent risk assessor?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: In securing the services of a fire risk assessor, the responsible person should ensure that the person has the necessary competencies to produce a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. However, there is nothing directly in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which removes responsibility from the responsible person and transfers that duty to an appointed risk assessor.

13. Why can't Fire and Rescue Services undertake the risk assessments to ensure they are done properly?

Fire and Rescue Service Representative Response: Under previous fire safety legislation the main thrust was towards prescriptive standards set by

the Fire and Rescue Services who had an enforcing role under disparate pieces of legislation. Changes to fire legislation were precipitated by a European Directive, which required the UK to move towards a self compliant method of securing fire safety standards. This precipitated the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which is the most current fire safety legislation in England and Wales. Under this self compliant framework it is not possible for the enforcers to undertake a risk assessment for you.

However, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Fire and Rescue Services must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area; and must in particular (to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so) make provision for fire safety information; and provide advice on how to prevent and restrict the spread of fires in buildings and the means of escape from buildings in the event of a fire.

9. Glossary of key terms

Active fire protection

This refers to fire protection measures aimed at alerting attention to a fire or suppressing a fire in a building, either manually or automatically. Active fire protection measures include:

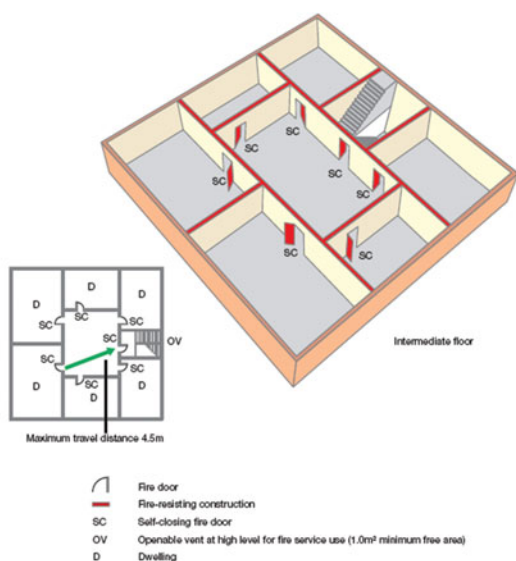
- **detection** including smoke alarms and fire alarms
- **manual fire suppression systems** such as a fire extinguisher
- **automatic fire suppression systems** such as a sprinkler system.

Automatic fire suppression system

This is the name given to a system which controls and extinguish fires without human intervention, such as a domestic sprinkler.

Compartmentation

This is a key element of passive fire protection and is based on the principle of subdividing a building into fire resistant compartments which can contain or limit the spread of fire, smoke and dangerous gases, from the compartment for a period of time.



CE symbol

The CE symbol certifies that a product has met EU consumer safety, health or environmental requirements. It looks like this:



Decent Homes Standard

A decent home meets the following four criteria:

- it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- it is in a reasonable state of repair
- it has reasonably modern facilities and services
- it provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

(See also *Welsh Housing Quality Standard and Scottish Housing Quality Standard outlined in section 2*)

Fire loading

The amount of flammable contents or finishes within a building.

Fire resistance rating

This refers to the duration for which a passive fire protection system can withstand a standard fire resistance test.

Fire suppression systems

A system designed to respond to smoke, heat, or fire with water or a chemical fire retardant.

Gas Safe engineer

Gas Safe registered engineer has been checked to make sure they are competent and qualified to work safely and legally with gas. On 1 April 2009, Gas Safe Register replaced CORGI as the gas registration body in Great Britain and Isle of Man.

Intumescent

This is a substance which expands when exposed to heat, acting as a fire retardant. Intumescent are typically used in passive fire protection. Examples include intumescent strips which can be fitted around doors to block the spread of fire.

Passive fire protection

This refers to fire protection measures which related to how a building is designed and the materials with which it is constructed. Passive Fire Protection measures are intended to contain a fire in the fire compartment of origin and to limit the spread of fire and smoke for a limited period of time. Passive fire protection measures can include compartmentation through the use of fire-resistance rated walls and floors or the organisation of the building into fire resistant compartments.

Responsible person

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 the responsible person is someone who has control, or a degree of control, over premises or fire-prevention systems within premises (refer to relevant legislation for Scotland and Northern Ireland outlined in section 2).

Risk assessment

A requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 that the 'responsible person' should carry out a fire risk assessment which includes identifying and providing adequate fire precautions and procedures to ensure the safety of all relevant persons.

Stay put policy

In certain buildings where the evacuation of the residents may pose a high risk during a fire, the risk assessment process may allow for these resident to 'stay put' in their homes temporarily until they are directed to leave the building by the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chartered Institute of Housing

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the professional body for people involved in housing and communities.

We are a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. We have a diverse and growing membership of over 22,000 people – both in the public and private sectors – living and working in over 20 countries on five continents across the world.

We exist to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the wellbeing of communities. Our vision is to be the first point of contact for – and the credible voice of – anyone involved or interested in housing.

The Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA)

CFOA is the professional voice of the UK fire and rescue service, supporting its members to fulfil their leadership role in protecting our local communities and making life safer through improved service delivery. CFOA provides professional advice to inform government policy and is committed to developing both strategic and technical guidance and sharing notable practice within the wider fire and rescue service. Membership of the Association comprises almost all the senior management of fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom. CFOA is the driving force in managing change and implementing reforms in the service. CFOA Publications Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of CFOA.





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The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) publish a range of UK-wide publications, researched and written by experts and leading authors.

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