

# firesafety policy

Implementation date: January 2012

We aspire for our all our estates to be places where people want to live both now and in the future. We recognise that people being and feeling safe in their home is important to how they feel about where they live. Fire represents a risk to resident's safety and this policy aims to mitigate the likelihood of fire occurring and the consequences on individuals where it does occur in our flatted estates.

In drafting this policy we have been mindful that the way we manage our flatted estates and in particular any common and shared areas will also impact on how residents feel about the place that they live. This policy attempts to strike a balance between mitigating the risks of fire whilst also providing common and shared areas in our flatted estates that meet residents needs. Particular consideration has been given to vulnerable residents in this respect.

## Policy

### Housing services will mitigate the risk of fire in our flatted estates by:

- Carrying out periodic risk assessments (at intervals of a maximum of four years) as directed by the assistant director for housing services. Where capital investment is required to provide additional mitigation to any identified hazards from these risk assessments allocation of resources will be given priority for this work, where it is reasonably practicable to do so, during the annual review of investment priorities.
- Carrying out fire safety checks across all flatted estates at intervals determined by the fire risk assessments to ensure any hazards are identified and mitigated at the earliest opportunity.
- Having a 'managed' rather than 'zero tolerance' approach to managing the use of communal areas that is proportionate to the risk associated with fire.
- In general terms items which are combustible and/or could be a hazard to anyone escaping a fire or a hazard to the emergency services when responding to a fire will not be permitted to be kept or stored in the common and shared areas without the permission of housing services.
- Residents will be asked to remove items which are considered to be a hazard and if they do not co-operate the items will be removed by housing services or appropriate legal action will be taken to enforce their removal by its owner.
- Items of high value will be stored for a short period of time so the owner can recover them on payment of the storage and removal costs. Residents will be charged for the removal of items in line with the tenant's charges policy where it is fair and equitable to do so.
- Where the removal of items from communal areas will affect the sustainability of tenancies, for example the removal of mobility scooters that a resident depends upon for their mobility, removal of floor coverings put down by residents to reduce risks of slipping on wet floors or the removal of curtains from communal windows which affect security and privacy, housing services will consider the provision of safe alternative options. It will not be possible to do

this on every occasion because of budget or other constraints but every effort will be made to mitigate the impact of this policy on individuals.

- Having a fire champions group consisting of housing officers, health and safety officers and residents from high and low rise flatted estates that will meet regularly to review policy, procedure and performance. A representative from the fire and rescue service will be invited to attend this group as a critical friend. The purpose of this group will be to identify areas for further improvement in fire safety and make any recommendations for change for consideration by the assistant director of housing services.
- Working in partnership with the fire and rescue service to promote their home fire safety checks to residents of our flatted estates.
- Ensuring smoke alarms are installed and tested annually in all council-owned flats.
- Ensuring the annual gas service and periodic electricity tests are carried out to all council-owned flats.
- Having an emergency plan that is published and promoted to occupants of flatted estates that advises what to do in the event of a fire.
- Proactively marketing and communicating our policy and procedures on fire safety to residents of flatted estates through all available media channels.

## Legislation

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 imposes requirements and duties on the 'responsible person' (person having control of the premises). These requirements apply to common and shared areas but do not extend to individual flats. Failure to provide adequate fire safety measures is an offence if the failure places one or more person at risk of death or serious injury in case of fire. Each such offence is punishable by fine (currently up to £5,000) in the Magistrates Court, or by an unlimited fine and / or two years imprisonment in the Crown Court.

## Brief description of the procedure

This policy should be read in conjunction with the fire safety procedure for flatted estates.

## Performance monitoring

The following management information will be recorded and reported on:

- The number and location of fires across our flatted estates
- The number of fire safety checks completed inside and outside the published schedule
- The number of fire risk assessments completed and outstanding
- The number of hazards identified and resolved
- The number of hazards identified and outstanding.

## Resources

Budget provision will be made from within existing resources to implement this policy and to take appropriate action where necessary to mitigate any uncontrolled fire risks identified from the fire risk assessments or fire safety checks.

## Consultation

The five area housing panels have been consulted on the approaches housing services intend to take in the development of this policy.

## Impact assessments

An equality impact assessment has been completed and has informed the development of this policy. A full copy of the equality impact assessment is attached.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed as the need arises or no later than three years from its implementation date.

**Policy owner :** Nigel Collumbell

**Date of approval :** January 2012