

Local Authority Housing - Fire Safety Policy

Summary

This policy outlines our approach to the management of fire safety of residents living in our blocks of flats.

Ensuring we meet out statutory and legislative obligations.

Effective date

1 October 2024

Review

We will review this Policy every 3 years or when there has been an update to legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational changes.

Version

Version 1.2

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1. Scope

This policy covers:

- all council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings including the common parts, individual doors opening onto common parts of the building and external structure (including doors, windows, cladding and balconies) of blocks of flats, sheltered schemes and houses in multiple occupation.
- It also includes all other HRA assets as appropriate such as offices.

Any reference in this policy to 'we', 'our' or 'us' refers to Portsmouth City Council, Local Authority Housing.

Any reference in this policy to 'tenant', 'customer' or 'resident' refers to a Portsmouth City Council, Local Authority Housing secure tenant, leaseholder or shared owner.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Outline our approach to the management of fire safety of residents living in our blocks of flats.
- Ensuring we meet our statutory and legislative obligations.

3. Fire Risk Assessment

The council will undertake Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) to all relevant properties under the [Fire Safety Act 2021](#) and [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#) implementing appropriate fire measures to all blocks of flats to minimise the risk of injury or loss of life in the event of a fire.

For the purpose of FRA's, the Responsible Person will be the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services.

A Type 1 non-destructive survey to the non-dwellings using the [PAS 79-1:2020](#) Code of Practice for all FRAs undertaken.

A new FRA assessment will be undertaken when the building has a change of use, there has been a material change to the building design or there has been a fire.

A review of an FRA will be undertaken whenever a significant change has occurred to a block of flats or asset but will not exceed 3 years from the original FRA. A more frequent review will be carried out if deemed appropriate by the fire risk assessor undertaking the original FRA.

No more than two reviews will be undertaken of an original FRA before undertaking a new FRA.

FRAs for higher risk assets such as blocks of flats that are seven storeys and above, sheltered blocks, houses in multiple occupation or offices, will be undertaken by appropriately competent third-party registered fire risk assessors.

FRAs for lower risk assets such as blocks of flats that are six storeys and below, will be undertaken by in-house building surveyors who have completed appropriate training and regular assessment to demonstrate their competence.

Residents in sheltered or supported housing or individual residents identified in general needs housing who are at a higher risk of fire in their own accommodation, a person-centred fire risk assessment will be undertaken that relates to the safety of the individual residents.

4. Stay put policy

All blocks have a stay put policy unless specifically identified as part of the fire risk assessment that it is not appropriate.

If a fire starts within residents flat, the occupants should alert others within the flat, make their way out of the building and contact the fire and rescue service.

If a fire starts in the common parts, anyone in these areas should make their way out of the building and contact the fire and rescue service.

All other residents within a block of flats not directly affected by the fire are expected to 'stay put' and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.

5. Means of escape routes

Fire separation and compartmentation between the common parts and individual properties (horizontally and vertically) will be maintained and actions undertaken as appropriate.

In all circumstances a minimum 800mm walkway must be maintained at all times or the width defined in Part B of the fire safety building regulations, whichever is greater.

Mobility scooters should not be stored or charged in the internal communal area unless an area has already been specifically designed and set aside for this purpose.

Emergency lighting will be installed to all means of escape routes as appropriate and will be regularly tested. A standard test will be undertaken monthly, and a discharge test will be undertaken annually.

Decorated surfaces will be to class 'O' standard to prevent the spread of flame.

6. Fire Doors

Where property entrance doors open directly onto a communal escape route then a minimum of a 'notional fire door' should be installed for low rise blocks (up to two storeys). An 'upgraded fire door' should be installed for medium rise blocks (three to five storeys) and 'replacement FD30s' for high rise blocks (six storeys and above).

All property entrance doors to properties that open directly onto a single communal escape route will be inspected annually to check that there is no visible damage to the door and that it closes correctly, any repairs identified will be raised as soon as possible.

Within blocks of flats that are 11m or higher and sheltered blocks of flats, the communal fire doors in the means of escape routes will be inspected every 3 months to check that there is no visible damage to the door and that it closes correctly, any repairs identified will be raised as soon as possible.

7. Firefighting equipment

Dry risers will be installed in all blocks of flats seven storeys and above unless no installation is agreed with Hampshire Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS). Dry risers will be serviced annually.

Firefighting equipment will be inspected monthly to visually confirm that it has not been damaged.

Where any fault is identified the council will take steps to rectify the fault. Where a fault cannot be rectified within a 24-hour period, beginning with the time the fault is identified, as soon as reasonably practicable the council will report the fault to the local fire and rescue authority by electronic means and then report the rectification of the fault.

8. Smoke Detectors

All council dwellings will be fitted with at least one mains operated smoke detector with a battery back-up on each dwelling floor level as appropriate which will be replaced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions by the expiry date. If on inspection the smoke detector is within one year of the manufacturer's expiry date it will be replaced.

We will regularly test smoke detectors installed within our council dwellings annually. Leaseholders will be responsible for testing and maintaining smoke detectors within their own dwelling.

Within blocks of flats that are ten storeys or more high, the communal areas will have smoke detectors that are linked to Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs) as appropriate, these shall be tested every six months.

9. Management of Communal Areas

Communal areas where the common walkways or stairwells form the means of escape routes, a 'zero tolerance' approach will be enforced with regard to resident's possessions to ensure that the common parts are 'sterile' and free of combustible material, ignition sources and obstructions. No resident's items will be permitted within these common areas.

The exception is the management of communal areas and residents' possessions within the common parts of the block of flats that are sheltered block Cat 2 or Cat 2.5 will be a 'managed use' approach.

The 'managed use' permits residents to have the following items within the common areas providing they do not cause obstruction to the means of escape and have been approved by the Scheme Manager

- place pot plants and door mats outside their front doors
- have framed pictures and notice boards on walls
- Small non-combustible (e.g., Ceramic) ornaments
- basic furniture and not upholstered seating

10. Private Balconies

The use of any barbeques, fire pits or patio heaters on any private balcony is prohibited. Any items stored or fixed to the private balcony must be non-combustible.

11. Fire Safety Information

Fire Safety Logbooks will be located in any buildings where staff are located in offices, to assist site management teams so that they can record fire safety training, maintenance inspections and fire incidents. The logbooks will be retained on site for three years.

Premises Information boxes providing information regarding the building, active fire protection systems and vulnerable residents unable to self-evacuate as per the NFCC code of practice, will be accessible to Hampshire Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) when attending a fire incident in all blocks of flats seven storeys and above and sheltered blocks (Cat 1, Cat 2 and Cat 2.5). The information will also be provided electronically.

The premises information boxes will be inspected monthly to ensure they are not damaged and validate the information is correct.

12. Assisted Evacuation

Any residents that have been identified that are unable to self-evacuate their property in the event of a fire a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEPs) will be prepared by the housing officer or sheltered housing manager.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) will be informed that an assisted evacuation is required in the event of a fire and appropriate information will be recorded in the premises information box.

13. Gas Bottles

If you live in a building of more than 3 floors, then you must not use gas cylinders or bottles in your home. In any Large Panel System (LPS) building seven storeys and above, we will write to the residents to inform them annually that gas bottles are not permitted to be stored and posters will also be displayed within the communal areas.

14. Mobility Scooters and Charging Batteries

Residents must not store or charge mobility scooters, e-scooters, e-bikes or batteries in any escape routes, either within individual properties or shared communal parts of buildings that are the means of escape routes. Residents must ensure charging in properties follows guidance provided.

In any Large Panel System (LPS) building lithium batteries are not permitted.

The Mobility Scooter Storage Policy for Local Authority Housing Stock provides specific guidance on the use and storage of mobility scooters to promote responsible scooter ownership.

15. Fire Safety Panel

The panel will be chaired by the Head of Compliance and include appropriate Heads of Service from Buildings, Neighbourhoods and Housing together with appropriate representation from other directorates. The panel will meet quarterly.

The panel will coordinate and communicate fire safety across all Housing, Neighbourhood and Building teams to ensure risks are managed consistently and are appropriately resourced, complying with all legislation and providing appropriate information to residents, staff and contractors.

The panel will have oversight of the process, changes to the legislation and effectiveness of the fire policy, updating and implementing changes as appropriate. The panel will review the following key areas and implement changes required to processes, policies or communication to residents as appropriate:

- Fire risk assessments compliance including recommendations and feedback from fire inspections and fire audits
- Training provided to staff and information provided to residents
- Advice from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service (HIWFRS) and co-ordinate training exercises and joint inspections
- Record all fire incidents and review any learning
- Changes to legislation, best practice, guidance or recommendations from reviews such as the Grenfell Enquiry.

16. Your responsibility

Make sure you and all residents are aware of the fire safety policy advice and what to do in the event of a fire for your specific building including all fire escape routes.

If you are not able to self-evacuate you must make your housing officer or sheltered scheme manager aware so that they can undertake a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEPs).

You must immediately report any evidence of faulty equipment such as smoke detectors or fire doors and must not tamper or damage any firefighting equipment.

You must allow access for inspections and for the carrying out all remedial works and servicing of appliances. (gas boilers, electrical systems, smoke detectors and fire doors)

Tenants can help reduce the risk of fire by:

Fire Doors

- Fire doors should be kept shut when not in use. Please don't tamper with self-closing devices; a closed door prevents the fire spreading and further damage to a property.
- Check fire doors in your home are not damaged and close firmly onto the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame.
- Don't carry out any repairs or alter or drill into your fire door or paint over any seals.

Smoke Detectors

- Check and test your smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector regularly, report any faults immediately.

Communal Areas

- Don't store your belongings and keep any shared communal parts of buildings that are the means of escape routes, such as stairways, corridors, balconies, lifts clear of belongings and rubbish.
- Don't store or charge mobility scooters in any shared communal parts of buildings that are the means of escape routes.

Private Balconies

- Don't use of any barbeques, fire pits or patio heaters on any private balcony is prohibited.
- Any items stored or fixed to the private balcony must be non-combustible

Charging and storage of batteries

- When charging any mobility scooters, e-scooters or e-bikes follow manufacturer's instructions using a manufacturer approved charger and charge whilst you are awake.
- Do not charge batteries or store products near combustible or flammable materials or overcharge your battery or overload sockets.
- Always use the charger that came with your product as poor quality chargers can damage batteries and increase the risk of fire.
- Unplug when the charge is complete and never leave a charger plugged in overnight or unattended.
- Only choose branded, genuine products from a reputable retailer.
- Avoid storing, using, or charging batteries at very high or low temperatures.
- Do not overload your sockets and ensure you regularly check batteries for signs of damage.
- If a battery is not holding charge, gets hot, bulges or you hear hissing noises when charging, unplug immediately.
- Always charge mobility scooters/e-bikes/e-scooters clear of exits and your escape routes so you can easily escape in the event of a fire.
- Never cover chargers or battery packs as this could lead to overheating or a fire.
- Ensure working smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the areas where you store or charging your mobility scooter/e-bike/e-scooter.

Gas

- If you live in a building of more than 3 floors, then you must not use gas cylinders or bottles in your home.

17. Your voice

We provide tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to engage, influence and scrutinise the Landlord Strategies, policies and services.

If you would like to be included in future resident engagement focus groups and would like to know how to get involved, please contact us for more information:

You can contact our team by:

- Email: housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- Phone: 02392 834835
- Website: visit the [Resident engagement and community resources on our website](#)

18. What have we done to make sure this Policy is fair?

We completed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to consider the positive and negative impacts this Policy may have on people with protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This Policy should have direct and positive equality and diversity impacts.

19. Regulation and legislation

We recognise the variety of legislation, and we will continue to monitor relevant legal guidance. The list below reflects some of the existing legal framework and relevant publications:

- [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#)
- [Housing Act 2004](#)
- [Fire Safety Act 2021](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#)

20. Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Local Authority Housing Landlord Policies, Strategies and Reports - [Housing policies, strategies and privacy notices](#)
- Tenancy Agreement / Leasehold Agreement

21. How to feedback

If you have any questions around the policy or would like to know more about its application, please contact the relevant service in the first instance.

You can get this policy in large print, braille, audio or in another language by contacting your Housing Office. More information is available [translation, interpreting and audio information](#).

Compliments:

To help us provide the best service we can. We would like to hear customer views on the services that they use. If the customer is pleased with a member of staff or service, please let us know.

- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Complaints:

If a customer is unhappy, they can refer to our LAH (Local Authority Housing) Landlord Complaints Policy.

- Online complaint form at [Make a housing complaint](#)
- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- [Landlord Complaints Policy](#)

Housing Ombudsman Service

If a customer is unhappy, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice and guidance at any time.

- Online complaint form on [the Housing Ombudsman Service website](#)
- Telephone 0300 111 3000
- [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#)