

Fire Safety Policy

Summary

This policy explains how we keep residents safe from fire in our blocks of flats, sheltered housing schemes and houses in multiple occupation.

It sets out how we identify, manage and reduce fire risks, what you can expect from us, and what we ask you to do to help keep your home and neighbours safe.

We regularly review our fire safety approach to make sure it remains effective, compliant and focused on keeping residents safe.

Effective date

1 October 2024

Review

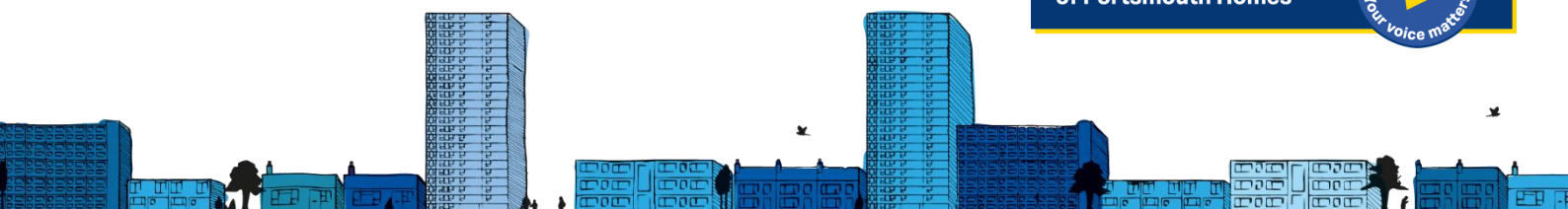
Latest Review Date: July 2026

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 1.5

This policy was written
with the help of residents
of Portsmouth Homes



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Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to all Portsmouth Homes properties, including:

- Blocks of flats
- Sheltered and supported housing schemes
- Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- All communal areas, including corridors, stairwells and escape routes
- External walls, balconies and shared structural parts of buildings
- Flat entrance doors that open onto shared corridors, external walkways or stairwells

For the purposes of this policy, a 'block of flats' means a building containing two or more self-contained homes (such as flats or maisonettes) that share communal areas, that may include entrances, corridors, stairwells or escape route both internally in the building and externally.

Any reference in this policy to 'we', 'our' or 'us' refers to Portsmouth Homes.

Any reference in this policy to 'tenant', 'customer' or 'resident' refers to a Portsmouth Homes tenant, leaseholder or shared owner.

Why We Have a Fire Safety Policy

The purpose of this policy is to explain how we manage fire safety and meet our legal responsibilities to keep you safe in your home.

It sets out how we:

- Identify, assess and reduce fire risks in our buildings
- Design, maintain and manage buildings to support fire safety
- Meet our legal responsibilities and fire safety standards
- Make sure residents understand what to expect from us and how they can help keep their home and neighbours safe

We take a proactive approach to managing fire safety so residents can be confident their homes are safe and well managed.

We meet our legal duties as the 'Responsible Person' under fire safety legislation.



Definitions

Term	Meaning
FRA (Fire Risk Assessment)	A fire safety check that looks for anything that could cause a fire or make it worse and sets out what needs to be done to keep the building safe.
FRAEW (Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls)	A specialist fire safety check of a building's external walls, balconies and cladding to make sure they are safe in a fire.
AOV (Automatic Opening Vent)	Some buildings have smoke ventilation systems to help keep escape routes clear during a fire.
PEEP (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan)	An individual plan for a resident who may need extra support to stay safe or leave the building in the event of a fire.
PCFRA (Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment)	An assessment that looks at a resident's individual needs, such as mobility, health or support requirements, to identify any extra fire safety measures that may be needed.
HRB (Higher Risk Building)	A tall residential building that is subject to additional safety requirements under the Building Safety Act.
Responsible Person	The person legally responsible for managing fire safety in a building. For Portsmouth Homes, this is the Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services .
Stay Put (remain safely in your own home)	A fire safety approach where residents stay inside their home with the door closed unless fire or smoke is affecting them, or the fire and rescue service tells them to leave.



Fire Risk Assessment (FRAs)

Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) help us understand fire risks in your building and what we need to do to keep people safe.

We carry out FRAs where required by law and review them regularly. Each FRA identifies potential fire risks and the actions needed to reduce them.

Our Responsible Person for fire safety is the **Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services**.

Each FRA includes:

- An overall assessment of the fire risk in the building
- Any fire safety issues that need to be put right
- A clear action plan showing what we will do and when

How We Assess Fire Safety in Our Buildings

We assess fire risks in our buildings using nationally recognised fire safety methods, to BS 9792: Fire Risk Assessment - Housing. This looks at:

- How each building is designed and constructed
- How it is used day to day
- The needs of the people living there

Most fire risk assessments focus on communal areas such as corridors, stairwells and entrances.

Where there is a higher risk or specific concern, we may carry out more detailed checks.

For buildings that only have shared external escape routes with no shared internal areas then a reduced Fire Risk Assessment will be undertaken.

Who Carries Out the FRAs?

To make sure assessments are accurate, reliable and carried out safely by the right, qualified people:

- High risk buildings (such as taller blocks, sheltered schemes and HMOs) are assessed by third-party accredited fire safety specialists.
- Lower risk buildings may be assessed by our trained and qualified in-house surveyors, who hold a minimum level 3 qualification in Fire Risk Assessments.

Fire risk assessments are carried out by trained and competent professionals.

What the Assessment Covers:

Each FRA checks for a wide range of fire risks, including but not limited to:

- Electrical safety



- Fire doors and how well different parts of the building are protected from smoke and fire
- Smoking related risks
- Battery powered mobility scooter, e-scooters and e-bikes
- Hoarding or clutter that could increase fire risk
- Waste build-up and combustible materials
- Hot works, such as repairs that create heat or sparks
- Anything else that could allow fire or smoke to spread

Additional Checks for External Walls and Resident Needs

We also assess the external walls, cladding and balconies of our buildings. If there is a concern that materials or design could increase fire risk, we arrange a specialist fire safety check of the external walls.

If needed, we may put temporary safety measures in place while further checks or improvement work are carried out.

For residents who may be at greater risk, including people living in sheltered or supported housing, we offer a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA). This helps us understand whether anyone may need additional support or safety measures.

Managing Fire Safety Risks - Our Commitment to Residents

We are committed to keeping residents safe in their homes. Where a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) identifies a risk, we will take action as quickly as possible to reduce it.

If longer-term work is needed, we will put in safety measures /mitigation in place to keep residents safe in the meantime.

We will keep these measures under review and let you know where they may affect you.

When We Carry Out or Review FRAs

We carry out Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) regularly, and when there are changes that may affect fire safety.

We will carry out a new FRA:

- At regular intervals, based on the building and level of risk (annual for higher risk buildings including high-rise, sheltered accommodation and supported accommodation and every two years for lower-risk buildings)
- When a building changes how it is used
- When major works have been undertaken
- Following a fire

We may review an existing FRA:

- Between full assessments, based on the level of risk in the building



- When there is a significant change to the building or the people living there
- Following new fire safety information or enforcement action
- Where we believe the existing FRA may no longer be accurate

Reviews are planned based on the level of risk and each FRA sets out when the next review is due. In some cases, we may carry out reviews before completing a new full assessment.

Accessing the FRA for Your Building

You can ask to see the most recent FRA for your building by contacting the Customer Repairs Team:

Email: **BuildingSafety@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

Phone: **023 9284 1311**

Means of Escape and Building Safety Features

Means of Escape Routes

Your building has designated escape routes to help people get out safely if there is a fire. These include corridors, stairwells, lobbies and external paths.

Escape routes are available in all buildings and must be kept clear so residents can leave safely if needed, including where a 'stay put' approach applies.

To keep escape routes safe:

- Escape routes must always remain clear so people can get out quickly if needed
- Fire resistant walls, floors and ceilings that separate homes from communal areas must be kept in good condition to help prevent smoke and fire from spreading
- Emergency lighting is installed where needed and is tested every month, with a full test once a year to ensure it works during a power cut

If you notice damage, blockages, obstruction or anything unusual in an escape route, please report it to us straight away by contacting the Customer Repairs Team.

Fire Doors and Frames

In most blocks of flats, your front entrance door is a fire door consisting of a door and frame and forms part of the building's fire safety protection.

Fire doors are an important safety feature. They slow the spread of fire and smoke, protect escape routes and give both residents and the fire and rescue service more time to respond.

To make sure your fire door works properly, it must be kept in good condition. This means you must not attach or hang anything on the door, place items against it, or alter, damage or



adjust it in any way unless this is done by a competent contractor. Please refer to our fire door leaflet for further guidance.

We regularly check fire doors to make sure they work properly:

- Communal fire doors in buildings over 11 metres high are checked every three months
- Flat entrance doors that open onto a shared corridor or stairwell are checked once a year in buildings over 11 metres high
- We check that doors close properly, are not damaged, and provide the level of fire resistance they were designed to offer

If you notice your front door not closing properly, looking damaged, or missing its self-closer, please let the Customer Repairs Team know as soon as possible.

Smoke Detectors (Communal and Inside Homes)

Every Portsmouth Homes property has at least one mains-powered smoke detector installed (and on each floor where needed). These include a battery backup.

We test smoke detectors as part of your EICR to make sure they are working properly. It may be checked at other times.

We replace smoke detectors when they reach the end of their working life or if they become faulty.

You should also test your smoke detector regularly and report any faults straight away.

Leaseholders are responsible for maintaining smoke detectors inside their own homes unless otherwise agreed.

In some taller buildings, smoke detectors are linked to smoke control systems and are tested more frequently.

If you think your detector is not working properly, please report it. It is usually quick to fix and could save lives.

Firefighting Equipment

Some buildings have firefighting equipment to help the fire and rescue service in an emergency. Where fire equipment is present this is serviced regularly.

We also carry out monthly checks of communal firefighting equipment to make sure it is not damaged or blocked. Any are repaired as soon as possible.

If equipment used by the fire and rescue service cannot be repaired within 24 hours, we notify the fire and rescue service and keep them updated until the issue is resolved.



Private Balconies

We recognise that private balconies form an important part of your home and provide valuable outdoor space. You are encouraged to enjoy and make reasonable use of your balconies; however, your use must not create a fire risk, contribute to fire spread, compromise building safety, or place others at risk.

To reduce fire risks:

- Barbecues, fire pits, patio heaters and any appliance or equipment involving an open flame must not be used on balconies.
- Electrical appliances, solar panels, battery storage systems and similar equipment must not be installed, used, stored or charged on balconies.
- Materials, substances or items that are explosive or act as an accelerant must not be stored, used or kept on balconies.
- Balconies must not be enclosed, and installations that alter the open nature of the balcony are not permitted.
- You must not store, use or attach items to balconies that are excessive in size, scale or quantity, or which could create a significant fire hazard or significantly increase the fire load of the balcony.

Where a Fire Risk Assessment identifies fire loading, combustible storage, or other fire safety concerns relating to a balcony, you will be required to take appropriate action to address the risk within the timescale specified by us.

Balconies must be maintained in accordance with our guidance and kept free from conditions that could contribute to the ignition, development or spread of fire. We will publish separate visual guidance to assist you and staff in understanding what is acceptable balcony use.

Even relatively small amounts of combustible materials can contribute to fire growth and spread. Keeping balconies free from excessive fire loading helps protect you, visitors and neighbouring properties. Where we identify a significant fire hazard or excessive fire loading on a balcony, you may be required to remove the items concerned.

Battery Safety

Mobility scooters, e-bikes, e-scooters and other battery powered mobility devices must not be stored or charged in communal areas. These devices contain lithium-ion batteries, which can catch fire suddenly and burn very intensely.

Unless specific building restrictions apply, these devices may be stored or charged inside your home if you follow safety guidance. Any additional restrictions will be clearly explained to you.

If you charge these devices inside your home, please refer to the Battery safety leaflet and follow these safety tips:



- Use the charger supplied by the manufacturer, with CE / UKCA markings
- Keep batteries away from heat sources
- Never leave batteries charging overnight or unattended
- Stop using any battery that becomes hot, swollen, leaking or damaged

Some buildings have designated storage or charging rooms, these can only be used where they have been approved by a fire risk assessment.

Stay Put Procedure

Most of our blocks of flats follow a 'stay put' approach. If your block does not have a stay put policy this will be communicated directly with you. This works because flats are designed to stop fire and smoke spreading between homes and the communal area, helping to keep you safe while the fire and rescue service deals with the incident.

This means that if there is a fire somewhere else in the building, you are usually safer staying inside your flat with the door closed, unless fire or smoke is affecting you.

- We will only use a different evacuation plan if the Fire Risk Assessment shows it is safer to do so
- If your block does not operate a stay put approach, we will explain this clearly in writing and display signs in communal areas, so you know exactly what to do if there is a fire

If a fire starts in a communal area, anyone in that area should leave the building immediately and call the fire and rescue service.

All other residents who are not directly affected by fire or smoke are able to stay in their flat unless the fire and rescue service tells them to leave.

Your Responsibilities

Fire safety is a shared responsibility. While we work to keep your building safe, residents play an important role in preventing fires and keeping escape routes clear.

Communal areas

Communal areas must be kept clear of anything that could block an escape route or increase fire risk.

- **General needs** blocks: We operate a zero-tolerance approach. No personal belongings can be left in corridors, stairwells, entrance lobbies, landings or any other shared spaces. This includes items such as decorations, furniture, mats, bikes, plants, shoes, toys and waste.
- **Sheltered** schemes: We use a managed use approach. A small number of low-risk items may be allowed, but only if they have been approved by the Manager, are non-combustible, easy to move, and do not block or narrow escape routes. Permission is



subject to the Fire Risk Assessment confirming the items can be safely accommodated.

The communal-facing side of your front entrance door is treated as part of the communal area. However, both sides of the door and frame are important fire safety features and must be kept in good condition.

You must not attach or hang anything on the door, place items against it, or alter, damage or adjust it unless this is carried out by a competent contractor. These actions can affect how the fire door works and reduces the safety of escape routes. Please refer to our fire door leaflet for further guidance.

Additional responsibilities

- Report fire doors that do not close properly, damaged smoke detectors, blocked escape routes, or damage to communal areas or fire safety equipment as soon as you notice it
- Allow us access to carry out fire safety checks, as these are required by law and help to keep everyone safe
- Avoid overloading sockets or using damaged electrical appliances. If something looks unsafe, unplug it and report it if it relates to the building's electrical systems
- If you would find it difficult to leave the building in a fire, please let us know. We will assess your needs through a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA) and consider additional measures. Where appropriate, and with your agreement, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) may be put in place
- If you use gas bottles or oxygen equipment, you must tell us so we can assess any risks. Further guidance is set out in the Gas Bottles & Oxygen Equipment section

Private gardens

You are responsible for keeping private gardens safe and well managed to reduce fire risk.

- Gardens must not contain excessive belongings or materials that could present a fire risk
- Permission must be obtained before installing any structures (such as sheds, fencing or other additions) where the building is subject to a Fire Risk Assessment, so we can ensure they can be safely accommodated

Please follow our fire safety guidance, signage in communal areas, relevant safety leaflets and the requirements of this policy. Every action helps keep you and your neighbours safe.

Gas Bottles & Oxygen Equipment

Gas bottles can create serious fire risks in some buildings. To keep everyone safe, we strongly advise residents not to use or store gas bottles in their homes.



- Gas Bottles - If you live in a building with more than three floors, you must not store or use gas bottles at all, due to the increased fire risk. Ideally should be stored in external sheds
- Oxygen Equipment - If you use oxygen cylinders or portable oxygen equipment, please tell us so we can assess any associated risks and make sure the right safety measures are in place

These steps help protect you, your neighbours and the building as a whole.

Fire Safety Panel & Governance

We have arrangements in place to ensure fire safety risks are identified, managed and monitored so residents can be confident their safety is taken seriously.

We have a dedicated Fire Safety Panel that brings together staff from across Portsmouth Homes to make sure fire safety is managed consistently and effectively.

The panel meets every three months and is chaired by the Head of Compliance.

The Fire Safety panel is responsible for:

- Reviewing Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) compliance and tracking actions
- Making sure staff receive appropriate fire safety training and that residents are given clear, accessible fire safety information
- Working closely with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service, including carrying out joint training and inspections and acting on their advice
- Recording all fire related incidents, reviewing what happened and identifying lessons learned
- Keeping up to date with changes in fire safety laws, guidance and recommendations, including those from the Grenfell Inquiry
- Escalating significant fire safety risks or concerns to senior management so they can be addressed promptly

The Fire Safety Panel helps ensure our approach to fire safety is proactive, well managed and focused on keeping residents safe.

We maintain accurate and up-to-date fire safety records to support safe building management and meet regulatory requirements.

We also have a Building Safety Panel that brings together staff from across Portsmouth Homes to focus on fire and structural safety specially for our high-rise buildings. It meets at least every 3 months and is chaired by the Head of Compliance.



Contractor Competence & Mandatory Occurrence Reporting

We only use contractors and suppliers who can show that they have the right skills, experience and accreditation to work safely in our buildings.

All contractors must:

- Meet our competence standards
- Follow relevant fire safety legislation and guidance
- Report any fire safety concerns to us straight away

We monitor contractor performance carefully. Contractors who do not meet our safety requirements may be removed from our approved contractor list.

For Higher-Risk Buildings (HRBs), usually buildings that are 18 metres or more in height or have 7 or more storeys, we must follow Mandatory Occurrence Reporting requirements under the Building Safety Act 2022.

This means we must:

- Report certain serious or potential fire and building safety incidents, defects or system failures to the Building Safety Regulator as soon as they are identified
- Record these incidents, review what happened and take any necessary actions

Any significant issues are escalated through the Building Safety Panel for oversight and ongoing monitoring.

Your voice

We provide residents a wide range of meaningful opportunities to engage, influence and scrutinise the Landlord Strategies, policies and services, to include participation in regular resident meetings and give feedback on services and policies.

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](#)
- Email: customerrepairsteam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- Phone: 023 9284 1311



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.

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](#)
- [Building Safety Act 2022](#)
- [The Fire Safety \(Residential Evacuation Plans\) \(England\) Regulations 2025](#)

Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- [Portsmouth Homes Policies, strategies and reports](#)
- Tenancy Agreement / Leasehold Agreement

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.

- Find the online complaint information at '[make a housing complaint](#)'
- Call **023 9260 6383**
- Email HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

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**
- Our Landlord Complaints Policy was written in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, for more information visit [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#)

