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Fire Safety Policy

Last reviewed: April 2019

Important

Policies and procedures must be coordinated through the Research and Policy Team for compliance, auditing and control purposes. Please send all new and completed policies to NH.Policy@networkhg.org.uk

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Owner: Director of Compliance and Planned Works	Last reviewed: April 2019	Date of next review: November 2020

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Version Control

Guidance: When a document has undergone **major changes** requiring approval, the version number must change – e.g. from V1.0 to V2.0. When a document has undergone **minor changes**, not requiring approval, only the number after the decimal point must change – e.g. from V1.1 to V1.2. When a document is reviewed but no changes are made, the number after the decimal point must still change.

Date	Author/Reviewers/Contributors	version	Reason for change
April 2019	Director of Compliance and planned works	V3.5	Updates/changes
October 2018	Director of Compliance and planned works	v.3.4	Updates/changes
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Nov 2016	Head of H&S	v.1.0	3 year review
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We believe high quality housing should be widely accessible. We build new homes and provide a range of housing options and support services to create sustainable neighbourhoods that meet the aspirations and improve the lives of the communities in which we operate.
- 1.2 This policy applies to the entire Network Homes, including all companies within the organisation, all building types and tenures managed.
- 1.3 In this policy and procedure, 'Network Homes ('we, us') refers to all Network Homes Registered Providers.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 As owners and managers of homes, we have a duty of care to ensure that customers and visitors can use the relevant buildings and facilities safely. This extends to mitigating the risks associated with fire in all of our properties.
- 2.2 Keeping customers safe from harm is paramount. There is legislation and regulation relevant to this area which we will comply with to help keep customers safe. *Our organisational commitment to health and safety is set out in Network Homes' Health and Safety policy.*

3. Background

- 3.1 The effects of a fire can be devastating in terms of lives lost, injuries, damage to properties and reputational damage. Most fires are preventable and can be avoided by taking responsibility for and adopting fire safety procedures.
- 3.2 Network Homes takes all reasonably practicable steps to prevent and control the risk from fire in the properties that we own or manage on behalf of a third party.
- 3.3 If premises have been designed and built in line with modern building regulations and are being used in line with those regulations, structural fire precautions should be acceptable. However, a fire risk assessment must still be carried out and all fire precautions and maintenance routines continued, as set out in this policy and procedure.

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4. Responsibility for Fire Safety

4.1 Role of Boards

4.1.2 It is the role of Network Home's Board to proactively seek robust assurance that all health and safety legislation relating to fire is being complied with, that the risks associated with fire are identified and managed, with proper controls and assurance reporting in place. The Board is responsible for ensuring their business complies with the Regulator's Home Standard and all consumer protection duties. The Board will receive regular reports on compliance with all fire safety requirements.

4.2 Responsible Person

4.2.1 Under legislation, the employer (if a workplace), or if no employer, the legal person who has control of the premises (either the occupier or owner of the premises) for the purpose of a business or undertaking is ultimately responsible for fire safety. In law, they are known as the 'Responsible Person'.

4.2.2 The 'Responsible Person within Network Homes is the NH Chief Executive and the NH Board who have ultimate responsibility and control for fire safety within NH.

4.3 Delegation of 'Responsible Person' Duties

4.3.1 Network Home's Executive Director of Asset Management is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, meeting statutory requirements and delivering our fire safety commitments.

4.4 Non managed / owned properties

4.4.1 Where we own properties that are not managed within Network Homes, the Registered Provider who owns that property remains the 'Responsible Person' for fire safety, unless specified otherwise in the lease or management agreement.

4.4.2 Where we manage properties which are not owned by Network Homes, the 'Responsible Person' is set out in the terms of the management agreement or lease. If we are not the 'Responsible Person', we still have responsibility to ensure that the 'Responsible Person' for that property is meeting all legislative requirements.

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4.5 Leased Properties

4.5.1 Network Homes will ensure that written agreements are in place for leased properties that clearly define responsibility for fire safety.

4.5.2 Network Homes maintains responsibility to ensure that the lessee is meeting all legislative requirements.

5. Our Commitments

5.1 Network Homes will ensure that:

- We are compliant with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This includes ensuring that fire risk assessments are completed for all relevant accommodation we own, manage or occupy, to identify the risks to which customers are exposed and take appropriate measures to minimise the risk to life and property from fire.
- We have engaged in a Primary Authority Arrangement with the London Fire Brigade and have positive working relationships with local fire authorities and local housing authorities. We work closely with them to comply with any orders they issue in writing and seek advice on the risks identified. Members of the Asset Management Team meet with fire authority representatives from their headquarters and local branches regularly and whenever requested.
- We ensure that fire safety is a paramount consideration whenever we build or acquire new homes. We employ specialists to ensure that all passive and active fire protection is in place along with the appropriate fire strategy. We ensure that the data to evidence this is transferred to the correct parties at the right intervals to ensure a consistent approach to fire safety.
- Stock condition surveys are carried out to approximately 75% of our properties including a Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment of fire risks. Action is taken to rectify any identified hazards.
- So far as it is within our control, we give effect to appropriate arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of fire prevention and protective measures, including (where appropriate) property specific evacuation plans, taking account of the particular needs of customers including those with disabilities.

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- We have accurate recording-keeping which we will share with the local fire authority, as required.
- All staff will receive training appropriate to their duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and those with delegated responsibility for fire safety receive training on their roles and responsibilities.

5.2 Staff Responsibilities

5.2.1 All staff should look out for danger signs and fire hazards. Any fire safety concerns must be reported immediately to the Fire Safety Team.

5.3 Customer Responsibilities

5.3.1 The responsibility for fire safety in all individual private domestic properties that are not sheltered or supported housing lies with the individual, rather than on Network Homes, including carrying out regular tests of their individual fire detection system. However we support our residents where ever we can and publicise the importance of fire safety to all customers, regardless of tenure.

5.4 Network Homes responsibilities

5.4.1 We are responsible for fire safety in supported and sheltered housing properties, and for communal areas in all tenures. This includes communal areas shared by a mix of tenures.

5.5 Oxygen Storage

5.5.1 The actions of customers may affect the fire safety of a building. Some customers will have stored oxygen in their properties for medical reasons. Oxygen aids combustion, therefore sources of heat or open flames in the vicinity should be minimised. It is the responsibility of the customer to inform us of the presence of oxygen equipment in their residence.

5.5.2 Where we are aware that oxygen is stored at the property and where a customer has not already done so, we will notify the relevant fire authority of the presence of stored oxygen. Where appropriate, signs posting a warning against smoking or other high-risk activities in the area will be used.

5.6 Items in communal areas

5.6.1 Customer's items left in communal areas can be a source of ignition and support combustion, as well as potentially blocking escape routes. For this reason, Network Homes has a zero tolerance policy in buildings where there is no on site presence and storage of items in these communal areas is not allowed without our express prior permission.

5.6.2 We will take action to remove any items that are left without permission.

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5.7 Barbeques

5.7.1 Barbeques are considered to be 'open fires' and, in accordance with Fire Authority advice, are not permitted within any of our buildings including any balcony areas, which are considered extensions of buildings.

5.7.2 Barbeques pose an unacceptable fire risk when used on balconies because they can easily burn out of control and cause combustible materials in the area to ignite, which can spread inside the property. Using a barbeque on a balcony can also pose a high risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

5.8 Security Grilles

5.8.1 Customers (including leaseholders) should not fit metal security gates to their homes without obtaining prior permission from us first. As gates of this type can often hinder entry to and exit from the premises for purposes of evacuation and fire fighting, permission will rarely be given for these to be fitted.

5.8.2 Where customers have already fitted metal security gates and these have been identified as an unacceptable fire risk in the fire risk assessment, we will request for them to be removed. If necessary, we will take action in line with the tenancy agreement to ensure they are removed and will recharge residents the cost of the work where necessary.

5.9 Exceptions

5.9.1 We will not permit exceptions to the application of the above policies.

6. Audit, Compliance and Review

6.1 Fire Safety Audit

6.1.2 Because this is such a high-risk area, Network Homes will commission an external audit of the NH's approach to fire safety every two years as a minimum. We will also continually monitor and test compliance with procedures.

6.2 Records Keeping

6.2.1 We will manage compliance and keep accurate records, which are stored and updated by the Fire Safety Team.

6.3 Contractors

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- 6.3.1 Network Home's *Head of Health and Safety* has responsibility to ensure that contractors are compliant with all relevant health and safety legislation in their region.
- 6.3.2 Annual reviews of contractor health and safety procedures as well as regular review of contractor compliance and performance will be carried out.
- 6.4 Policy Reviews
 - 6.4.1 This policy is reviewed annually and updated whenever legislation or regulation changes.
- 6.5 Fire Risk Assessments
 - 6.5.1 We will retain written records of the risk assessment for at least five years or until one year after a new assessment has been completed and any fire precautions put in place to address the risks identified

7. General Precautions

- 7.1 Fire Detection in Properties.
 - 7.1.2 All dwellings owned and/or managed by Network Homes (excluding leasehold and shared ownership) will have battery operated fire detection systems installed on each floor as a minimum standard. An on going programme of installing hard wired smoke/heat detection is undertaken as part of a planned programme of domestic electrical testing, void improvement works and cyclical works contracts.
- 7.2 Fire Detection in Communal Areas
 - 7.2.1 Where it is deemed appropriate in the recommendations of site-specific Fire Risk Assessments, communal areas will also be fitted with mains operated fire detection systems, these will be link within dwellings where appropriate.
- 7.3 Fire Detection Maintenance
 - 7.3.1 Maintenance of such systems will be carried out accordance with manufacturers' instructions. Where works are refused by the customer, we will treat the situation sensitively but will be clear that the work must be completed to ensure the health and safety and others in the property.
- 7.4 Extra Fire Detection
 - 7.4.1 We will respond appropriately to meet the needs of customers who inform us they have a disability such as a hearing impairment, and install appropriate equipment to ensure they are alerted in the event of a fire.

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7.5 Fire Safety Equipment

7.5.1 We will ensure that all shared and supported housing properties and communal areas of other tenures are appropriately equipped with fire protection equipment and emergency lighting, fire doors, dry risers and safety signs, as advised by a fire risk assessment.

7.5.2 Fire extinguishers found in communal areas will be removed to prevent untrained occupants from attempting to tackle a blaze. Extinguishers will be supplied within areas where staff have been adequately trained or risk areas that have been identified. For example*:

- Sheltered scheme manager's offices.
- Lift motor rooms.
- M&E plant room.
- Electrical intake cupboards where necessary.

*please note the above list is not exhaustive

7.6 Fire Safety Equipment Maintenance

7.6.1 We will ensure that all fire safety equipment including fire protection equipment, fire alarms, emergency lighting, dry risers, sprinklers etc. are maintained and serviced in line with current regulation and/or manufacturers instructions.

7.7 Portable Appliance Testing

7.7.1 Any portable electrical appliances (such as vacuum cleaners or toasters) are provided by Network Homes, regular checks and testing will be carried out in line with The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

7.8 Furniture

7.8.1 In all residential properties where furniture is provided, whether in common areas or as part of a furnished tenancy, furniture will be fire retardant in compliance with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988.

7.9 Additional Safety Measures

7.9.1 In addition, all residential properties (including mutual exchanges) will receive:

- An annual landlords gas safety check (only undertaken where there is a gas supply within a property).

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- A five year electrical safety test both within general needs accommodation and in communal areas, and a risk based approach to new build properties thereby reducing the risk of fire from faulty electrical systems.
- Where a property is re-let, there will be an additional gas safety check and electrical safety test.

8. Fire Risk Assessments

8.1 Regulations

8.1.2 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires us to undertake fire risk assessments on all relevant properties.

8.2 Fire Risk Assessment Scope

8.2.1 As a minimum standard, where applicable, all accommodation owned, managed, controlled or occupied by Network Homes will have a type 1 fire risk assessment as detailed in the *LGA Fire Safety in Purpose Built Flats* document undertaken.

8.2.2 Type 2, 3 or 4 fire risk assessments may also be undertaken when it is deemed that a further level of inspection is required.

8.3 Fire Risk Assessment Frequency

8.3.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is not prescriptive and does not define how often fire risk assessments should be undertaken or reviewed.

However, as a minimum, we will undertake/review fire risk assessments:

- Within the buildings risk based timescale (detailed in 8.4).
- Following a fire, near miss or threat of arson investigation that recommends a review.
- Following any significant changes to the type of occupants within a building that the previous fire risk assessment did not consider (i.e. general needs building changed to sheltered etc.)
- Whenever there have been any structural or material changes to the building or its use.

8.4 Property Risk Based Timescales

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Property Risk Reference	FRA Frequency	Typical Building Type
3	FRA every 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose Built (General Needs) Blocks with 1-2 storeys
2	FRA every 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose Built (General Needs) Blocks with 3-5 storeys Converted street (General Needs) Properties with 1-4 storeys
1	FRA every 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose Built (General Needs) Blocks with 6 or more storeys All Sheltered Housing / Extra Care Blocks Converted street (General Needs) Properties with 4 or more storeys All HMOs Any other buildings with known groups of vulnerable occupants

8.5 Further Risk Considerations

8.5.1 Some properties within Network Homes Portfolio have a greater risk than others, and the risk assessment programme will take this into account.

8.5.2 Occupancy and building use are essential factors which are taken into account in the risk grading of a property. These include but are not limited to:

- How able customers are to respond to emergency situations
- Evidence of Smoking (including E-Cigarettes)
- Whether there is stored oxygen or any other flammable substance such as paraffin or camping gas kept in or around the properties (where known).

8.5.3 Where one or more of these factors is identified in a property, or another factor is identified which affects the risk of the building, it may be necessary to upgrade the risk level.

8.5.4 Should the fire risk assessor think this is necessary, this will be taken into account when making the decision.

8.6 Remedial Items

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- 8.6.1 During fire risk assessments issues are identified that require action in order to preserve fire safety within the building.
- 8.6.2 Details of these issues, a photograph and proposed method of remedy is recorded on the fire risk assessment.
- 8.6.3 Any actions identified on site that are critical and pose an immediate risk are referred to Network Housing Group by the risk assessor whilst on site and are actioned by Network Homes immediately.
- 8.6.4 Remedial items identified during the fire risk assessments are categorised dependant on their nature as detailed in the below table.

Category	Description
A	Where an urgent action is required to preserve fire safety standards within a building.
B	These items are regarded as important but a lead time to organise is recognised to be necessary.
C	Where an immediate risk to fire safety is not present but improvements/actions are necessary to maintain the essential systems & standards.
R	Works to be considered in future improvements or ongoing/rolling maintenance programmes.
M1	Relates to important management issues that need to be prioritised in order to preserve fire safety standards within a building.
M2	These management improvements are not urgent but are required.

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8.6.5 The length of time given to complete each remedial item is set by our fire risk assessment contractor. This timescale is calculated by assessing a combination of the Property Risk Rating and the Remedial Item Category.

8.6.6 When all the FRA remedial items are collated these can amount to large volumes of works and therefore it is not reasonably practical to undertake some of these recommendations within the original recommended target. (E.g. a single fire door replacement identified a hundred times would become a planned programme of works and it may not be feasible to adhere to the initial rating.) Remedial items and their priorities are audited and assessed monthly by both NH staff and our fire risk assessment contractor to ensure that they are appropriate and reasonably practical, and therefore in some instances a priority rating may change having been viewed collectively.

8.7. Audits

8.7.1. NH will undertake external audits of the management of fire safety across the organisation.

8.7.2. NH will work alongside our fire risk assessment contractor to continually audit the remedial items identified and the priorities they have been allocated.

8.7.3. NH will engage with the LFB As part of our primary authority agreement, through this mechanism external audits will be conducted of the organisations approach to fire safety management.

8.7.4 NH will ensure that specialist passive fire safety works are undertaken by competent and where appropriate 3rd party accredited contractors. NH will arrange for a sample of on site audits to be undertaken by the relevant accredited bodies to provide further assurance that works have been completed correctly.

9. Evacuation Policies

9.1 Network Homes employs one of two evacuation policies depending on the type, use and occupants of the building. A fire action notice will be erected in all communal areas informing any visitors of the buildings evacuation policy.

9.2 Stay Put Policy

9.2.1 Generally a stay put policy will be implemented within a purpose built block where the buildings construction will provide a level of resistance to fire that can support a stay put policy.

A stay put policy may be implemented in another type of building where a fire risk assessment confirms a building has adequate provisions to sustain such a policy.

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9.3 Total Evacuation Policy

9.3.1 A total evacuation policy will usually be in place in a converted property where the original design and construction of the building does not provide an adequate level of fire resistance to support a stay put policy.

10. Legislation and Regulation

10.1 The legislation listed in this policy is not intended to cover all legislation applicable to this policy. To comply with clause 1.1 of the Regulator of Social Housing's Governance and Financial Viability Standard, which requires adherence to all relevant law, Network will take reasonable measures to ensure compliance with any and all applicable legislation by reviewing policies and procedures and amending them as appropriate.

The legislation listed within this policy was considered at the time of the development of this policy, but subsequent primary and secondary legislation, case law and regulatory or other requirements will be considered and the policy reviewed and adopted in accordance with the requirements set out therein, even should such subsequent legislation not be explicitly listed within this policy. Any queries relating to the applicable legislation should be directed to the policy owner.

The following Regulations, approved codes of practices and guidance notes relate to Fire Precautions. It is not an exhaustive list, but includes the main Regulations to which Network Homes' Staff, Contractors and Tenants should adhere:-

10.2 Regulations

- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, particularly Section 3: - General duties of Employers and Self-employed persons other than their employees.
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which came into force in October 2006.
- The Housing Act 2004, which introduces the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Building Regulations 2010: Part B: Fire Safety
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Electrical Equipment (Safety and Use) Regulations 1994
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998

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10.3 Approved Codes of Practices: -

- Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Sleeping Accommodation
- Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Small and Medium Places of Assembly

10.4 Guidance

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Guidance Note No. 1: Enforcement Chief Fire Officers Association
- Building regulations - Approved Document B (Fire Safety)
- National Fire Safety Protocol. LACORS
- Fire Safety in Purpose-built Blocks of Flats. Communities and Local Government.
- Fire Safety in Housing. Chartered Institute of Housing

11. Equality and Diversity

We will apply this policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010.

12. Review

All policies should be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum, or sooner if there is a specific legislative, regulatory or service requirement or change in guidance, law or practice.

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