

# Brentwood Borough Council Housing Department Fire Management Policy

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# Version Control

Version	Date of change	Officer	Title
V1	20/01/2022	Judith Evans	Rowans Fire Ltd
V2	13/07/2022	Johanna Batchelor-Lamey	Compliance Manager
V3	24/08/2022	David Wellings	Corporate H&S Advisor
V4	15/11/2022	Johanna Batchelor-Lamey	Compliance Manager
		and David Wellings	and Corporate H&S
			Advisor

1. Introduction

As a landlord, Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) considers the safety of everyone living, working in, or visiting our properties as a priority.

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, we have a responsibility to ensure fire safety standards within our properties are met and complied with. This policy will outline our approach to managing fire safety in all housing properties which are owned or managed by BBC. Other legal requirements such as the Housing Act 2004, Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Regulations 2010 must also be adhered to.

2. Overall Aims

The aims of this policy are:

Ensure the safety of all people living, working in, or visiting properties owned by BBC

Ensure compliance with current legislation and government policy on fire safety in all our owned properties; and

Provide an overview of our approach to ensuring fire safety within our properties.

3. Policy Statements

We ensure that all required properties have a fire risk assessment carried out at the appropriate intervals (see section 08)

We will carry out all servicing and required maintenance on equipment related to fire safety in all housing blocks under BBC management (see sections 13 and 14 for user and contractor inspections)

We will ensure all housing blocks adhere to the appropriate levels of fire safety in communal areas (see section 10 CAMP)

We will ensure all housing blocks under BBC management have appropriate evacuation strategies and notices displayed for occupants. (see sections 9 and 16 for evacuation strategies and occupant information)

At present, there is no legal requirement for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in domestic accommodation.

We will ensure we provide the appropriate level of information to all employees, tenants, leaseholders, or users of our properties (see section 16 for occupant information)

We ensure that employees are trained to the required levels for the tasks they carry out (see section 12 training)

We will liaise regularly with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to ensure communication relating to building works, procedures, and other fire safety matters are shared (see section 18 consultation with authorities)

We will ensure all roles and responsibilities for fire safety in our properties are properly detailed (see section 5 management and responsibilities)

This is a continuous process which can be affected by things such as legislation changes, building management changes, organisational arrangements, and equipment breakages.

# 4. Fire safety policy structure

The first part of the policy sets out the level of compliance BBC is aiming to achieve.

The second part of the policy sets out how we will work towards attaining compliance. Not all sections will be relevant to all employees or their job roles. They set out the component parts to ensure all areas of fire safety are covered for buildings, occupants, and processes.

This policy and the related sections give guidance and advice on how BBC as an organisation, and the employees within BBC, are in compliance with the Fire Safety Order and all associated legislation. It also covers occupants of BBC buildings and all relevant persons using them.

# 5. Management and Responsibilities

The Council recognises its responsibility to implement in full its duties in respect of the fire safety of its estate and to ensure that all its employees understand their role regarding fire prevention and fire safety management.

The Chief Executive is the Responsible Person under the Fire Safety Order.

To assist the Chief Executive in managing fire safety within the Borough, Council Officers will provide day to day assistance by performing certain roles. These officers include, but are not limited to:

- Director of Housing
- Corporate Manager Housing Estates
- Estates Management Team Leader
- Housing Support Team Leader
- Compliance Manager
- Housing Data Administrator
- Housing Support Offices (Sheltered Housing)
- Estate Officers (Estates Management)
- Caretakers
- Specialist Fire Risk Assessor

- External consultants
- Corporate H&S

Director of Housing shall ensure the following:

- That the Fire Safety Policy is implemented in buildings under the control of the Housing Service.
- The appointment of nominated persons in those buildings to carry out the statutory fire safety checks/tests and the recordings of all such actions in the Fire Safety Logbook.
- That nominated persons undertake any training deemed necessary to ensure they are competent to carry out their duties regarding fire safety.
- The correct implementation and monitoring of the fire safety management system for those buildings, including the Fire Risk Assessments and Fire Action Plans.
- The appointment of nominated persons in each building and to ensure that staff know and understand their duties in relation to fire safety.
- That Housing staff are trained and competent to carry out their duties regarding fire safety.

Corporate Manager – Housing Estates

- Implement the fire safety management system and ensure its effectiveness.
- Advise on the implementation of fire safety legislation and other guidance relevant to premises and building management.
- Ensure that notices and advice issued by the Fire Brigade are complied with in a timely manner.
- Ensure that staff under their control are adequately trained and competent to carry out their duties regarding fire safety.
- Co-ordinate such work with the Scheme Managers/Caretakers or other authorised person
- Liaise with the Fire Service on repair and maintenance matters relevant to fire safety.
- Seek advice from the Specialist Fire Risk Assessor or other competent persons.
- Receive reports from contractors and consultants and report the significant findings of such to relevant persons.
- Advise on the implementation of fire safety legislation and other guidance relevant to premises and building maintenance issues.
- Co-ordinate the maintenance of the fire safety logbooks for all relevant buildings.

Estates Management Team Leader

• Ensure that staff under their control are trained and competent to carry out their duties regarding fire safety.

Housing Support Team Leader

- Monitor the statutory fire safety checks, tests, and logbooks on a 3 monthly basis and report deviations to the Compliance Manager.
- Ensure that staff under their control are trained and competent to carry out their duties regarding fire safety.
- Enable Housing Officers to undertake monitoring of CAMP (see section 10) and follow up actions as required, to maintain compliance with Council policies and procedures, and statutory duties.

Compliance Manager

- Reviewing risk assessments received from the Specialist Fire Risk Assessor and ensuring the actions have been recorded, updated on the master tracker held on Microsoft Teams
- Ensuring any faults found with fire safety equipment is rectified and documented on Keystone
- Ensuring areas of non-compliance are investigated, rectified and implement a process preventing non-compliance failures

Housing Data Administrator

- Ensuring Keystone is updated with current Fire Risk Assessments
- Monitor that fire risk assessment actions are being completed and updating these actions on the master tracker held on Microsoft Teams
- Provide statistics of compliance to the Compliance Manager and use these to report on at the Fire Safety Actions meeting

Housing Support Officers (Sheltered Housing)

- Ensure that fire safety devices and systems are in place and that all the statutory safety checks are carried out and recorded in the Fire Safety Logbook.
- Carry out fire safety checks and tests and record the results in the Fire Safety Logbook on a weekly basis and ensure that any deviations are dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Estate Officer (Estates Management)

• Monitor the outside and surrounding areas of Housing properties as well as communal areas for fire safety issues and inform the Estates Management Team Leader of any arising issues.

Caretakers

• Monitor the outside and surrounding areas of Housing properties as well as communal areas for fire safety issues and inform the Estates Management Team Leader of any arising issues.

Specialist Fire Risk Assessor

- Carry out periodic fire safety checks on all communal areas. Ensure that all fire safety devices and equipment is in place and is fully operational, carry out statutory tests within the communal areas and record information in the fire safety logbook.
- Report faults with fire safety equipment to the Housing Manager (Who is the Housing Manager? Report cases of non-compliance to the Housing Manager.

Competent advice

- An external consultant will be used to provide fire safety advice and guidance for managers where expert advice is required beyond their knowledge level.
- 6. Governance

The Landlord, as owner of the premises, is responsible for compliance with all statutory health and safety requirements regarding fire. This landlord *responsibility* cannot be delegated and rests with the Local Authority.

This is because under legislation, the legal person or entity that has control of the premises for the purposes of a business or undertaking (such as social housing) is responsible for fire safety. In law they are known as the <u>Responsible Person.</u>

Specifically, BBC will ensure:

- Clearly defined managerial responsibilities for fire safety exist within the Authority
- That nominated persons have the necessary skills and training to undertake their duties competently.
- The provision of compulsory training for all employees, relevant to their fire safety duties.
- The provision of adequate fire warning systems means of escape, and firefighting equipment (together with good housekeeping practices) to minimise the risk of fire.
- That all fire safety equipment and systems are tested in accordance with statutory and applicable standards.
- That sufficient records are kept and audited at appropriate intervals.
- That a system is in place for assessing structural, fire protection and management of needs in premises, determining fire safety priorities, and that funds are allocated for the completion of any such works identified.

The main piece of legislation is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2006 with additional requirements under the Housing Act 2004. These pieces of legislation are supported by British Standards which identify how fire safety equipment is installed and maintained. There is other guidance in the HM Governments Fire Safety Guidance to purpose built blocks of flats.

All buildings have to comply with Building Regulations 2010 and for fire safety specifically document B, but also accessibility which is document M.

#### Leaseholders

The Lease agreement will always take precedent over this policy unless there is an over-riding legal or regulatory requirement.

## 7. Building Categories-for Fire Risk Assessment

Caveat – there are a number of cross-over buildings where residential buildings fall under Corporate management, and a number of smaller non-residential buildings which fall under Housing.

The Housing stock comprises of a mix of buildings spilt into four main categories.

Category 01) Individual dwellings where access is directly from the outside

Category 02) Low rise flat blocks of under four storeys where access to the dwellings is via a shared common area

Category 03) High rise blocks of over four storeys where access is via a shared common area

Category 04) Sheltered housing, where there is a mix of types of dwellings, but communal facilities are provided and a higher level of staff provision

# 8. Fire Risk Assessments (FRA)

All buildings where people work, even briefly, must have a fire risk assessment. This includes all common areas of residential buildings where cleaners or service engineers work.

Individual dwellings are not generally fire risk assessed but have compliance checks under the Housing Act to ensure the appropriate housing standards are provided for tenants.

Low rise blocks of under four storeys are fire risk assessed on a two yearly cycle to ensure the safety of the block and common areas.

High rise blocks of over four storeys are fire risk assessed on an annual basis to ensure the safety of the block and common areas.

Sheltered Housing sites are risk assessed on an annual basis.

A number of dwellings in low rise and high rise blocks, as well as sheltered housing, will have an intrusive fire inspection known as a type 4 FRA, where service penetrations and compartmentation will be checked. This will be on an ad hoc basis when dwellings are available or when hazards are identified.

Caveat: There are a number of low rise blocks that will be risk assessed on an annual basis until building works are completed on them.

## Competency of FRA assessors

There are several different associations such as the IFE or the IFSM where the competency of fire risk assessors is checked, involving looking at continual professional development, existing skills and knowledge, and level of expertise. BBC will ensure suitable FRA assessors are employed either internally or using an external consultancy.

## FRA methodology

All FRAs will consist of the following elements which must be of specific relevance to the building to which the assessment refers:

- Identification of fire hazards
- Identification of those at risk, especially young, elderly, disabled, visitors
- Consideration of current controls including Building construction material (including any cladding), compartmentalisation, fire door construction, fire detection and warning systems; means of escape; means of fighting fire; maintenance and testing procedures; information, instruction, and training for staff etc.
- Evaluation of risk posed, and further control measures needed, if appropriate.
- Recording of findings
- Preparation and implementation of an action plan based on the risk rating and prioritisation, if appropriate
- Review and revision arrangements

Additional FRAs or reviews will be carried out:

- Following a fire, near miss, or threat of arson.
- Following any changes which may impact upon fire risks (for example in housing, a resident loses mobility, or a new disabled resident joins a scheme).
- Whenever there has been any structural or material changes to the building or its use.

Within housing premises risk assessed, a certain number of different archetype dwellings will be subject to a type 4 intrusive FRA to ensure compartmentation between dwelling and common area.

Where major building work is carried out on a premise, this constitutes a significant change.

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All FRA documents will contain an action plan of items to improve the fire safety of occupants within the premises, or the building structure. These will be listed with a RAG rating based on the danger to life or breach of duties under the Fire Safety Order.

## Management of FRA findings

All actions identified will be taken seriously with the allocation of every action to a named person within BBC, except where specialist expertise is required. These actions will be allocated to the respective contractors or consultants working with BBC.

High priority actions will be those focussed on first based on their severity.

There will be timescales allocated to the respective actions for first evaluation depending on the type of action. This may be a simple repair, installation of a sign, or require project planning and large investment. Once first evaluation has been carried out, the timescale for an action can be adjusted.

The initial timescales for evaluation will be 3 months for a high priority action, six months for a medium priority action, and nine months for a low priority action.

The actions will be tracked and checked on a monthly basis to ensure that none are missed, leaving occupants in danger.

#### **Risk Grading**

As set out above, some properties have a greater risk than others, and the risk assessment programme will take this into account.

However, occupancy and building use are also essential factors which need to be considered in the risk grading of a property. These include but are not limited to:

- External wall system construction
- Poor compartmentation within the building
- Major structural failings within the building
- Occupants with limited mobility
- History of anti-social behaviour and fire setting in the area
- High interest buildings (for example listed buildings or where the public gather)

Where one or more of these factors is identified in any of the above properties, or another factor is identified which affects the risk of the building, it may be necessary to upgrade the risk level or downgrade the cause. Should the Fire Risk Assessor think this is necessary, this should be considered when making the decision.

9. Fire evacuation procedures – stay or leave

Stay safe, or Stay put, defend in place (different terms used for the same method)

Based on the building regulations, all flat blocks are designed for residents to be safe to stay in their dwellings if a fire occurs in another part of the building. The construction of these buildings is such, a fire will not spread through the structure. This is an initial evacuation procedure and once the Fire and Rescue Service are on site, they take over the site and can decide whether this is suitable, or they need to decant the building.

A Stay Put procedure is one where the occupants of the room or dwelling on fire evacuate and raise the alarm, but the occupants of all other dwellings stay in place unless they feel in danger, or until they are told otherwise.

There will be circumstances based on the fire risk assessment where a stay put procedure is not suitable and provision will be put in place for simultaneous evacuation or phased evacuation from a building. This will be identified on evacuation notices in the building as required, as well given individually to residents in that building.

Where a Stay Put evacuation strategy has been introduced, this must be communicated clearly with the residents and their representatives to ensure they understand this advice in the event of an emergency.

# 10. Communal Area Management Procedure

There is currently a separate Communal Area Management Procedure which sets out management arrangements for the monitoring of common areas of blocks of flats and sheltered housing ensuring they are clear of objects and items that not permitted.

Following the tragic Grenfell Tower disaster, the inquiry found one of the contributing factors tenants were unable to evacuate the building safely, was due to obstructions in the communal areas where contractors had left materials, which impeded evacuation of the building. It must be ensured that communal areas that enable evacuation from the building, are not obstructed with objects, door mats, furniture, household equipment or used as additional storage areas. Also, tenants and other relevant persons **MUST NOT** prop open or block fire doors in communal areas.

# 11. Fire extinguisher provision

Current guidance regarding fire safety in purpose built blocks of flats including sheltered housing schemes discusses the need for fire extinguishing equipment. It states there is no longer a need for equipment to be provided for residents in these areas as it can endanger their lives – resident leaves a burning flat to get a fire extinguisher the Council has not provided training on and re-enters the flat on fire. The Fire and Rescue Service are also not happy with this potential situation. Fire extinguishing equipment is provided for the use of housing officers and other employees of Brentwood Borough Council or the Fire and Rescue Service on attendance.

No general needs blocks of flats will have any fire extinguishers installed the building.

# Sheltered Schemes

After discussions with Essex Fire and Rescue Service, reviewing the guidance on Purpose Built Blocks of Flats, and reviewing the British Standard relating to positioning and installation of Fire extinguishing equipment BS5306 part 8:2012 the following decisions have been made on locations requiring fire extinguishing equipment and the types required. There was also input from the Fire Risk Assessment.

Communal halls and entrance foyers – 9 or 6 litre Water, Water additive or Foam, 2kg Carbon Dioxide where electrical equipment is prominent

Kitchens – Fire Blanket and 2kg Carbon Dioxide

No dry powders are to be in kitchens or laundry rooms due to the hazards of the contents to the residents. If Foams are currently installed, they can stay until the extended service then are to be changed to carbon dioxide

Plant rooms and areas of specific hazard – Appropriate fire extinguishers for the hazards, generally 6 or 9kg Dry Powder or 6 or 9 litre Foam, electrical plant rooms to have 2kg Carbon Dioxide or occasionally 5kg dependant on the hazard; fire extinguishing equipment for plant rooms must be inside the plant room rather than located outside

Laundry – 2kg Carbon Dioxide

Housing Support Officers Office – Dependant on size, some require 2kg Co2 and some additionally require 6 or 9 litre water or foam. Where staff are rarely on site no fire extinguishing equipment will be installed.

Residential communal corridors and individual residential block areas – All extinguishing equipment to be removed from these areas including brackets and signage.

# 12. Training

All employees, as identified as appropriate must be provided with suitable Fire Awareness training on a three-year rolling basis. Where employees are responsible for premises, such as those with responsibility for the management of Sheltered Housing Schemes, additional Fire marshal/Fire Extinguisher training must be provided. The Responsible Person must provide employees, contractors or other person working in or on a premise with comprehensible and relevant information for:

- The risks to them identified by the risk assessment
- The preventive and protective measures
- The emergency / evacuation procedures; and
- The risks from other parties using the same premises

The above information must be provided to all persons and consideration given to any needs that people may have, for example: - Hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning difficulties and those that English is not their first language.

This information also needs to be provided to contractors, either by providing information cards which can be given when they sign into a premise or by a verbal induction to the premise.

Where a child (some not over compulsory school age) is to be employed (this is generally a work experience student) the above must be communicated to the parent/guardian of the child. Close supervision must be given always, and they will be advised of the Fire Evacuation procedure.

## 13. User inspections (BBC led)

To safeguard all persons on a premise it is essential that all equipment and devices that are provided are fully maintained and tested according to the manufacturer's instructions. This is generally a contracted annual service visit from the suppliers of the firefighting equipment, fire detection/alarm systems and emergency lighting systems. In addition to the servicing visits, the Responsible Person must arrange regular inspections to ensure the equipment and devices are in good working order.

Weekly communal housing checks must be carried out in all sheltered schemes, documented and include:

- Fire routes are clear
- Emergency lighting indicator checked
- Fire extinguisher in place (where applicable)
- Fire alarm panel \*
- Fire alarm test
- Smoke detector test

\* Daily checks for fault lights should be carried out

Monthly communal housing checks must be carried out in all sheltered housing schemes and general needs premises, documented and where they are installed:

- Smoke control systems i.e. Automatic Opening Ventilation (AOVs) where installed
- Emergency lighting flick test
- Fire door assemblies secure and in working order

Where garages are used for storage under the management of the Estates Management Team, these will be inspected for fire safety as part of the general estate inspections on a regular basis.

# 14. Contractor inspections

Following on from user inspections, the same applies for equipment maintained and serviced by contractors. The following equipment checks are completed for specific fire safety items:

- Fire alarm six monthly checks
- Fire extinguisher annual checks
- Emergency lighting annual three hour drain down and monthly flick test
- Smoke control systems (AOVs) annual service
- Dry riser maintenance (visual checked six monthly and wet test annually)
- Sprinkler systems
- Fire shutters and curtains

All records will be sent to BBC and recorded on the data management system Keystone.

# 15. Mobility Scooters

There is a mobility scooter policy relating to storage and charging of scooters but needs organisational Housing arrangements to enable the Policy to be implemented. in common areas of blocks including sheltered schemes which applies in partnership to this fire safety policy.

# 16. Information for residents

We will publicise the importance of fire safety to all tenants on a regular basis, regardless of tenure, but generally, the responsibility for safety in individual private domestic properties that are not sheltered housing falls on the individual Tenant or Leaseholder, rather than the Council, including carrying out regular tests of their individual fire detection system (smoke alarms).

We will ensure that all buildings have an evacuation procedure notice relevant and site specific for the building, which will be communicated to all residents by a letter and installed, and updated when required, within each block. We are responsible for fire safety in sheltered housing properties, and for communal areas in all tenures. However, sheltered residents must ensure they behave responsibly and, follow all the points below that all other residents are expected to comply with.

The actions of residents may affect the fire safety of a building. For Example.

- Some residents 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 tenant or leaseholder to inform sheltered housing or an estate officer of the presence of oxygen equipment in their property.
- Where we are aware that oxygen is stored at the property, and where a tenant or leaseholder has not already done so, we will notify the fire authority of the presence of stored oxygen. Where appropriate, stickers or signs posting a warning against smoking or other high-risk activities in the area can be used.
- Residents' goods left in communal areas can be a source of ignition and support combustion, as well as potentially blocking escape routes. For this reason, there is a separate Communal Area Management, Procedure –in place, which needs to be read in conjunction with this document.
- Barbeques (including gas barbeques) are 'open fires' and in accordance with Fire Brigade advice, and Council Policy, are not permitted inside any of our properties including on any balcony areas, which are extensions of properties. 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 in an enclosed space will also pose a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Tenants and Leaseholders should not fit metal security gates to their homes without seeking permission from the Council first. As gates of this type can often hinder entry to and exit from the premises for purposes of evacuation and firefighting, permission will not normally be given for these to be fitted.
- Where tenants and leaseholders 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 act in line with the tenancy agreement/lease to ensure they are removed.

We will not permit exceptions to the application of the above policy and where a tenant or leaseholder refuses to comply, will consider taking enforcement action in line with the tenancy agreement/lease.

# 17. Auditing and Review

BBC will check fire safety compliance against current standards and legislation and identify what improvements could be made. It is likely this will be through some form of plan, do, check, act system, such as is laid out in BS9997:2019.

Because this is such a high-risk area, we will carry out an audit every two years as a minimum. We monitor and test compliance against procedures.

We will manage compliance and keep accurate records.

BBC's Housing Contracts Manager and Compliance Manager has responsibility to ensure that contractors are compliant with all the relevant health and safety legislation.

Annual reviews of contractor health and safety procedures as well as regular review of the contractor compliance and performance will be carried out.

This policy is reviewed every three years and updated whenever legislation, regulation, or the Council's organisational arrangements changes.

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.

We expect all our contractors to behave and operate in line with our Contractor Code of Conduct.

Quality of works undertaken by contractors are generally assessed by:

- Assessment of a percentage of works by a suitably experienced and qualified officer or consultant
- Self-assessment and quality assurance by the contractor
- Resident feedback and satisfaction surveys

The Responsible Person will delegate monitoring of all health & safety including fire arrangements to other officers within the organisation as covered in section five. This monitoring will be part of an overall audit of health & safety systems and any actions required from the audit will be prioritised on a risk basis.

# 18. Consultation with Authorities and other Groups

BBC will meet quarterly with representatives of the local Fire Service, to discuss projects, incidents, and any other relevant information.

When projects are undertaken, plans will be submitted to Building Control and the Fire Service for comment and approval as required.

BBC will meet with the Residents Liaison Group to consultate and inform of changes to conform with legislation.

## 19. Building Safety Bill

The Building Safety Bill has now received Royal Assent (28 April 2022). Following this, the various provisions are expected to come into force within two to 18 months after Royal Assent, dependent on the level of work involved. BBC will nominate a responsible person for all buildings in line with guidance relating to building work, controlled service, and controlled fitting.

BBC will put suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that the design work and the building work can be completed in accordance with building regulations. In practice, this means appointing the right people, with the right competencies (the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours or organisational capability) for the work and ensuring those they appoint have systems in place to ensure compliance with building regulations.

The responsible person in this case may be a group of people or specific named people for each building.

# 20. Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

The legislation is relevant only to multi-occupied residential buildings which are high rise buildings, buildings over 11 metres in height.

The Responsible Person has a list of duties including passing on fire safety instruction and information to residents relating to the importance of fire doors.

Additionally, building plans must be provided to the local Fire and Rescue Service both electronically and as a hard copy. Monthly inspections of fire fighting lifts must be undertaken (currently none in the Borough managed by BBC). External Wall System construction information to be provided to the Fire and Rescue Service.

There are other requirements under this legislation that are covered in other sections of this policy.

ENDS.