

DRAFT

# Fire Safety Policy

## **1 Introduction**

The majority of deaths and injuries from fire in the United Kingdom occur within units of accommodation. In England alone in 2014/15 there were 194 fatalities and 5903 injuries caused by, mainly accidental, fires in dwellings. 166 of the fatalities were due to accidental causes. The risk to occupants of death or injury from fire is particularly relevant in accommodation that has shared facilities or common ways.

Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) will make every effort to minimise the risk to occupants in council owned housing stock by complying with all relevant legislation and subsequent guidance. These include The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) and The Housing Act 2004.

BHCC currently own 738 low rise blocks (1-2 floors), 426 medium rise blocks (3-5 floors and 43 high rise blocks (6 floors and above) alongside 23 Seniors housing schemes.

Our general needs housing currently comprises of 10,674 dwellings (of which 6,358 comprise of flats and 4,316 comprise of houses and bungalows) and we have 2,935 leasehold properties (including Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes).

## **2 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all BHCC owned blocks of flats and to the communal parts of converted properties managed by the Housing department and applies to all tenancies. This policy sits beneath the council's standard for fire safety.
- 2.2 The main objectives of this policy are to ensure the council has adequate measures in place:
  - to safeguard all relevant persons from death or injury in the event of fire
  - to minimise the risk of fire and to limit fire spread
  - to minimise the potential for fire to disrupt services, damage buildings and equipment or harm the environment

## **3 Policy Statement**

- 3.1 The Housing department aims to provide a safe environment in which our residents are assured that the risk of injury or damage to their homes caused by fires is minimised.
- 3.2 We will foster and maintain good working relationships with partner services to help ensure the ongoing safety of our residents; this includes East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS).
- 3.3 In aiming to deliver this environment we will seek to identify, assess and reduce risks to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 3.4 In discharging our obligations to fire safety we will:

- carry out our Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- facilitate fire risk audits with ESFRS
- carry out joint training exercises with ESFRS and other agencies as necessary to ensure readiness for emergencies.

3.5 We provide tenants and leaseholders with advice and information about fire safety in newsletters; leaflets; posters in blocks; website; the tenant handbook and at tenancy visits.

## **4 Fire Risks**

4.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO 2005) places a duty on landlords to take general fire precautions to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of the people on the premises and in the immediate vicinity. The main fire risks identified in communal areas are:

- combustible materials, including rubbish and furniture
- faulty electrical installations
- smoking
- failures in compartmentation.

## **5 Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)**

5.1 The RRO 2005 identifies BHCC as the responsible person and as such we have a duty to carry out a FRA in relevant premises and take reasonable steps to remove or reduce any risks that have been identified and act upon significant findings.

5.2 We will regularly review FRA's as follows:

- high rise blocks – annually, after a fire or following any significant changes
- Seniors schemes – annually, after a fire or following any significant changes
- low and medium blocks and converted properties i.e. houses converted into flats – every three years, after a fire or following any significant changes.

5.3 *Fire Risk Assessor*

The fire risk assessor's role will be carried out by a competent person who shall:

- carry out FRA's
- provide technical and expert advice
- ensure compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

## **6 Fire Prevention**

6.1 Our fire preventative measures are designed to protect people, property and assets against the loss of life, injury and damage caused by fire.

6.2 Wherever possible we will undertake measures to prevent the risk of fire, this will include:

- ensuring that our common ways and storage areas are kept clear and by carrying out enforcement where breaches occur
- that staff are trained in order to identify and report any potential risks
- that we provide good information and advice to existing and new tenants and leaseholders about how to reduce the risk of fires with the help of ESFRS
- that we provide leaflets and posters to highlight the risks of fires and how to help prevent them
- ensuring we identify and work with our more vulnerable tenants who may be at greater risk should there be a fire
- carrying out individual risk assessments and putting in place control measures to manage risk where identified.

## **7 Fire Protection**

### *7.1 Evacuation routes and fire exits*

To ensure safe evacuation, routes will have adequate signage and be kept free of sources of ignition, flammable and combustible material and obstructions at all times. We will enforce this with tenants and residents where necessary by implementing the fire safety and clearance of common ways procedure. In high rise blocks of flats FRA's will be carried out to identify and deal with such issues alongside those identified during cleaning and estate inspections.

Fire exits will not be left open to ensure that security of the building is maintained. In high rise blocks of flats and in Senior's schemes inspections will be carried out to identify and deal with such issues.

### *7.2 Evacuation plan*

*All high, medium and low rise blocks and Seniors schemes:*

The council operates a delayed evacuation procedure in purpose built blocks where residents if not directly affected by the fire should remain within their property until advised otherwise, usually by the emergency services.

The construction of a purpose block gives a minimum of up to 30 minutes containment of a fire, with the fire doors and walls resisting before spreading into the common parts of the block. In addition residents in other flats will have 60 minutes protection when their own front door is taken into consideration.

*Converted properties (HMO's) and all other properties*

Delayed evacuation does not apply, where fire is discovered residents must leave the building, alert others and call the fire service on 999. If possible and it is safe to do so, all windows and doors should be closed to prevent fire spread to other areas of the building.

7.3 When the fire service attends they may decide to:

- when and if to commence a full evacuation
- when to instigate a visual inspection
- when residents can return to their premises
- when to involve the Police and the Local Authority
- any other steps appropriate to the circumstances

7.4 *Fire Doors – common areas and tenant/leaseholder doors*

Fire doors are provided to help prevent the spread of smoke and fire and must be kept closed or fitted with door holders which are designed to release when the fire alarm is activated. Fire doors in common areas are checked regularly during FRA's and by Estates Service to ensure they are operating correctly and are not damaged. Fire doors' including entrance doors to tenants'/leaseholders flats provide a minimum of 30 minutes fire resistance (the standard specification is FD30S). Doors should not be propped open, tampered with or compromised in any way, i.e. materials affixed to frame/door to prevent banging noises.

7.5 *Signage*

Appropriate fire safety signage is displayed throughout communal areas indicating the fire exit/s for example. Fire action notices are also present in all communal areas. Fire doors are marked to keep shut and no smoking signs are affixed inside the block.

7.6 *Smoke alarms*

Hard wired smoke alarms are being fitted when properties are empty or re-wired. Alternatively tenants can contact ESFRS for a home fire safety visit where they can check/fit smoke alarms as appropriate and also give a range of advice around home safety.

## **8. Partnerships**

8.1 Housing works with the ESFRS on carrying out the following aspects:

- to facilitate an annual audit of the common ways in high rise blocks. The purpose of this inspection is to identify immediate risks and to ensure that actions from the previous inspection have been implemented.
- regular training exercises with the fire service to ensure procedures are in place and that they are familiar with block layouts in the event of a real fire
- training staff
- awareness campaigns for our residents
- trialling of sprinkler systems in designated blocks in partnership with ESFRS
- attending the Community Initiatives Partnership a multi-agency forum chaired by ESFRS

## 8.2 *Fire Health and Safety Board*

The Fire Health and Safety Board hold monthly meetings attended by the council's Health & Safety Team, Housing staff and ESFRS. The board meets to discuss and take action against any issues related to fire and health and safety.

## **9 Publicising the Fire Safety Policy**

9.1 BHCC will publicise this policy in the following ways:

- BHCC website
- Tenant Handbook
- Leaseholder Handbook
- Fire safety leaflets
- Staff briefings and training

## **10 Policy review**

10.1 The Fire Safety Policy will be reviewed in the event of a fire, every three years, or where circumstances change significantly.

## **11 Related documents**

- Fire safety and clearance of common ways procedure
- Seniors housing fire safety procedure
- BHCC Fire Safety Standard
- Local Government Association: Fire safety in purpose built blocks of flats
- LACORS: Fire Safety Guide
- Housing fire safety leaflet

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