



Fire Risk Management Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aim

The aim of the policy is to state the approach of Solihull Community Housing (SCH) to the management of fire safety of managed housing stock and communal areas in line with key legislation detailed under the section heading; Key Fire Legislation of this document.

1.2 Objectives

The objective of the policy is to:

Keep tenants safe by maintaining legal compliance as a minimum standard for fire safety and aiming to achieve industry best practice where possible. This will be achieved by ensuring:

- all SCH properties with communal areas are subject to regular Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) in accordance with the relevant fire legislation;
- all Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) and associated Action Plans (AP) are subject to regular review and updated in line with legal requirements and best practice;
- staff, tenants, contractors and visitors are provided with relevant fire safety information;
- the appropriate fire protection measures installed in the SCH' buildings are maintained efficiently and where necessary all staff receive all required training;
- a policy framework whereby SCH manage, plan and co-ordinate appropriate fire safety systems and procedures across the entire property portfolio;
- any fire risk, once identified, is adequately managed to ensure the safety of occupants and protect the property and environment.

1.3 Scope

The following property types are considered within the strategy

- All properties contained within the SCH managed portfolio including leasehold where applicable.
- All managed property communal areas as applicable;

1.4 Out of scope

This policy and supporting procedures is limited to the SCH stock and does not cover the office environment which is subject to the corporate procedures on fire safety and evacuation.

1.5 Key Fire Legislation

The strategy has been developed using the following fire legislation:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005-Guide for Sleeping Accommodation (Sheltered Schemes);
- The Housing Act 2004 – specifically the Housing, Health and Safety Ratings System (HHSRS);
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988;
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994;
- The Local Government Guide “Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of flats” 2011 (Blocks of flats with communal areas);
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DESAR) 2002.

1.6 Policy Statement

Solihull Community Housing (SCH) takes its responsibility to ensure fire safety very seriously and will strive to reduce the risk of fire to as low a level as is reasonably practicable. In order to do this SCH:

- aims to provide a safe environment in which our customers are assured that the risk of injury or damage to their homes caused by fire is minimised.
- aiming to deliver this environment, SCH, as a general principle, will seek to identify, assess and reduce risks to ensure compliance with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- will encourage the assurance and confidence of our customers, through regular fire safety awareness updates and making information readily available. This will include making our customers aware of their own obligations to safely maintain their tenancies in a fashion that minimises the risk to themselves and other occupants of the accommodation in which they reside.
- will foster and maintain good working relationships with partner services to ensure the on-going safety of our customers, this includes West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service.
- In discharging our obligations to fire safety, SCH will:
 - Carry our Fire Risk Assessments in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;
 - Undertake Fire risk Audits with West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service;
 - Provide relevant employees with Fire Safety training;
 - Maintain and improve fire safety as required through the recommendations of the fire risk Assessments and the Fire Audits;
 - Carry out all necessary servicing to ensure that fire prevention equipment is fully operational at all times;
 - Consider Fire Safety in all improvement programmes carried out by SCH.

2 Responsibilities

In order to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Fire Risk Management Policy and Procedures are fulfilled, the organisational arrangements are as follows:

2.1 Solihull Community Housing Non Executive Board

The Board is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Policy. In order to achieve this, the Board (or its nominated sub-committee(s)) will review this Policy every three years and analyse quarterly performance reports to ensure that issues of significant risk are actioned appropriately.

2.2 Chief Executive and Executive Management Team

The Chief Executive is deemed to be the responsible person, along with the Executive management Team. They are ultimately responsible for the implementation of this Policy at all levels of the organisation, and the provision of adequate human and financial resources to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and other relevant legislation and guidance.

2.3 The Head of Asset Management

Is the member of EMT with responsibility for Health and Safety and leads on all operational health and safety issues. The Head of Asset Management shall serve as the Fire Safety Plan Manager and be responsible for the strategic management of fire precautions within the responsibility of Solihull Community Housing, reporting directly to the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team and shall:

- Formulate, review and amend SCH's Fire Safety Plan,
- Conduct audits to ensure that the provisions within the Fire Safety Policy are being enforced to the standard required,
- Ensure sufficient information, instruction and training is carried out,
- Ensure that all fire precautions are maintained effectively,
- Investigate fires and introduce controls to reduce the risk of such incidents recurring,
- Appoint a designated deputy (Senior Operations Manager) to assist and provide cover in their absence.

2.4 Corporate Health and Safety Group

The Health and Safety Group is attended by senior manager representatives from all areas of the business and chaired by the Head of Asset management. Meetings take place on a bi-monthly basis and will review:

- Updates in legislation and related guidance;
- Fire incidents and false alarms, including patterns and trends;
- Contact with enforcing authorities;
- Feedback from the fire risk assessments;
- Feedback from fire investigations;
- Results of fire safety related audits and inspections;
- Fire safety related training delivered;
- Fire related objectives.

Further advice from relevant bodies, for example fire risk assessors, insurers, architects and fire safety provision engineers, will be sought as and when necessary.

2.5 SMBC Health and Safety Support Team

SMBC Health and Safety Support Team are responsible for providing guidance to SCH to ensure that the requirements of this Policy are implemented at all levels of the organisation and will:

- Respond to any reported **fire safety** related concerns from employees at all levels of the organisation to ensure appropriate action is taken and that they are monitored and reviewed;
- Develop a **fire safety training** programme for employees and ensure suitable records are retained in conjunction with the SCH training record officer.
- Ensure **fire safety** related incidents are investigated to identify the immediate, root and underlying causes and, where possible, implement measures to prevent recurrence;
- Maintain a current understanding of **fire safety** legislation, codes of practice and industry standards;

2.6 Operations Manager – Compliance

Is responsible for the management of **fire safety** systems, equipment and installations and will ensure that:

- Emergency escape lighting is serviced by a competent and suitably qualified contractor in accordance with the standard to which it conforms and maintained in a safe and operational condition;
- **Fire** alarm systems are serviced by a competent and suitably qualified contractor in accordance with the standard to which it conforms and maintained in a safe and operational condition;
- **Fire** fighting equipment, systems and fixed installations are serviced by a competent and suitably qualified contractor in accordance with the standard to which they conform and maintained in a safe and operational condition;
- Appropriate records are kept of the servicing and maintenance of **fire safety** systems, equipment and installations and internal systems, , are updated with the relevant details;
- All statutory records, registers and other documents concerning the provision, installation, inspection, testing and maintenance of plant and equipment are kept in accordance with relevant legislation.

2.7 Compliance Contracts Officer

- Oversee the fire risk assessment process to ensure that all fire risk assessments are completed within the designated timescales
- **fire safety** works assigned to employees and contractors are allocated appropriately, completed to the required standard within the required timescales and where applicable post inspected to ensure compliance.

2.8 Operations Manager – Responsive Repairs , Operations Manager – Capital Programmes,

Will ensure that:

- Contractors appointed are competent, suitably qualified and can demonstrate their ability to meet all statutory requirements;
- All works relating to fire safety are adequately monitored, controlled and post inspected by Asset Management staff;
- Fire safety works are completed in a timely manner and prioritised based on risk;
- Records are kept with details of the fire safety works completed and the internal systems are updated with relevant details.

2.9 Compliance Risk Assessors

Competent Risk Assessors undertake the FRA programme on behalf of Solihull Community Housing and will have a recognised level of competence that may include a formal fire qualification such as UKAS, IFE etc.

The compliance risk assessor will:

- carry out the fire risk assessments as per the agreed schedule within Section 3.
- inform the relevant Operations Managers, of any issues identified during the assessment process, including the recommendation of required actions and timescales that must be achieved to maintain/ensure compliance.

2.10 Estates Assistants

For premises under their control, Estates Assistants will,

- Carry out Fire safety checks within the appropriate timescale. These are to be recorded and include reference to all actions taken where defects are found;
- Report any fire safety related concerns to their appropriate line manager as applicable
- Report all fire safety accidents, near misses and false alarms to their line manager.

2.11 Employees at all levels of the organisation

All employees have a duty of care to themselves, their colleagues, contractors, residents and members of the public. Any work situation that represents a serious, immediate or long term danger to fire safety should be reported to their manager as soon as possible. This includes any deficiencies or shortcomings they have identified within this Policy.

Employees are therefore required to:

- Familiarise themselves with this Policy;
- Attend fire safety training courses as and when required

- Report all fire incidents, near misses and false alarms to their Line Manager as soon as practicably possible;
- Not interfere, tamper or misuse any items provided for fire safety;
- Use safe systems of work for tasks relating to electricity, gas installations, the handling of chemicals, the use of dangerous equipment and any other activities that present a significant risk to fire safety.

3 **Arrangements**

3.1 **Management of Risk**

- SCH undertake suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments of the communal areas in blocks of flats and sheltered housing schemes as required, to assess whether risks are adequately controlled and to identify further measures to be taken to eliminate or reduce the risk further.
- **High Rise Buildings** -Every year or following any significant changes
 - The term high rise building encompasses any building with more than four floors with separate apartments where customers can live without the need for sharing facilities.
- **Low Rise buildings** – Every three years or following any significant changes.
 - The term low rise building encompasses any building with between two and four floors with distinct flats where tenants can live without the need for sharing facilities.
 - Houses of shared Occupation (HMO's) in the main are considered in line with Low rise building processes and recommendations.
- Other circumstances to carry out a risk assessment review include
 - Following a fire
 - Following a Near Miss
 - Following the introduction of a significant risk (e.g. customer profile)
 - Following the introduction of new working practices
 - Following any works affecting the means of escape or alarm systems
 - As deemed necessary by the Compliance Manager
 - Change in National Legislation / Guidance
- Risk assessments will be managed by the Compliance Contract Officer responsible for fire safety. SCH will employ suitably qualified Risk Assessors to carry out fire risk assessments, supported by the Contracts Officer when required.

Managers are expected to:

- recognise the need for fire risk assessments and to ensure that these are considered before maintenance, servicing, major works or improvement activities take place;
- only allow on site activity to commence when fire risks have been properly assessed and appropriate control measures are in place;
- attend any fire safety training they need to enable them to fulfil these aspects of their role;
- ensure that residents, staff or others working in communal areas will have access to the fire risk assessments.

Fire risk assessments will be reviewed at regular periods to ensure that their findings remain valid in accordance with the requirements of the Fire Safety policy.

3.2 Training and Information

- All staff are required to undertake fire safety awareness training as part of their induction. This will include information on the fire safety policy and procedures, fire risk assessments, and information on safe systems of work, as well as any particular risks from the person's job or role.
- Relevant staff, whether employees, interims or contractors, must receive their fire safety induction at the earliest opportunity and it is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that their new staff receive this induction.
- It is also the line manager's responsibility to ensure that the fire safety training needs of their staff are assessed and fulfilled. Further specific fire safety training relevant to each individual's role and responsibilities will be provided.
- SCH will communicate relevant fire safety issues through the intranet and other appropriate means.
- The Compliance Contracts Officer and Compliance Operations Manager will maintain relevant fire safety information, including policies and procedures on the SCH intranet. Fire risk assessments will be held on the Open Housing system. The Compliance Contracts Officer will advise relevant staff of the location of this information and of any significant changes.
- All managers are required to ensure that their staff are made aware of the Fire Safety policy and its contents, and of other fire safety policies, procedures or information relevant to the job.

3.3 Managed Use of Common Areas

The SCH policy is to adopt a sensible balance between minimising the risk of fire in the communal areas and allowing customers to make these areas more attractive. This policy will provide guidelines to strike the most appropriate balance.

The "managed use" approach for the communal parts of the managed stock portfolio enables SCH to limit the items allowed in order to reduce the risk of fire. This includes controlling combustible materials and ignition sources so far as is reasonably practicable in order to maintain access and egress from a block in the event of a fire or other emergency.

In communal areas Residents are permitted to:

- Place “live” plants in pots on a window sill
- Have a small door mat outside the front door which lays flat
- A small number of framed pictures

In communal areas Residents are not permitted to store:

- bicycles, prams and mobility scooters unless they are in places out of the way which will not cause an obstruction
- combustible materials e.g. paper, books
- plastic or fabric plants and flowers
- rubbish awaiting disposal
- furniture
- BBQs
- motorcycles, mowers and other gardening equipment containing petrol or other fuels
- plastic or timber sheds or lockers
- hazardous chemicals, gas containers, or flammable liquids in the communal area or storage cabinets, dedicated storerooms or cupboards
- DIY materials or tools
- barbecues
- electrical appliances, such as tumble dryers and washing machines
- toys and play furniture
- recycling materials
- bedding, clothing and shoes
- curtains, including nets
- food or other organic matter
- items that present a hazard, such as panes of glass
- any other bulky items

In addition residents are not allowed to charge mobility scooters, batteries or other electrical equipment in communal areas.

Where goods that are not permitted, are found to be located in a communal area, SCH will give notice to residents to remove said items. If ownership of items is unknown, a notice will be attached to the item. However, goods that present a significant fire risk will be removed immediately without notice. Failure to remove such goods will result in SCH removing the items to a place of storage for a period one month [in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1982]. Any goods that are not reclaimed will be disposed of without compensation. The costs associated with removal, storage and disposal may be re-charged to the resident concerned. Appropriate legal action may be taken against any person who persistently breaches rules relating to the use of communal areas.

3.4 Serious and Imminent Danger

Where a serious and imminent safety danger to any person arises in the communal areas of the managed portfolio, any person, without exception, who notices such a situation, or if such a situation is brought to their attention, must take all reasonably practicable action to eliminate or adequately control the danger.

3.5 Accident / Incident Investigations

Fire safety incidents in communal areas will require investigation. The investigation is the responsibility of SCH managers (supported by the SMBC HSST), for incidents involving SCH staff, customers, visitors, contractors and consultants on premises or in operations they control.

In addition the Chief Executive, any member of EMT or the Compliance Operations Manager may require any incident to be investigated. The Health and Safety Advisor will review all accidents and incidents to consider if they are reportable to the HSE under RIDDOR.

3.6 Audit, Monitoring and Review

All health and safety policies, guidelines and procedures (incl. Fire Risk Management policy) will be regularly audited, monitored and reviewed by the Corporate Health and Safety Group. The timescales will depend upon the particular issues and whether there is a need for early review (e.g. because of learning from incidents or changes to legislation).

Compliance in line with health and safety management (including this policy) requirements is monitored through a variety of processes including internal and external audits.

The effectiveness of health and safety training will be evaluated and reviewed on an on-going basis by the Corporate Health and Safety Group.

Fire safety performance indicators will be provided to assist in monitoring performance. These include compliance in respect of Fire Risk Assessments, common parts inspections and fire safety incidents. These indicators will reflect national standards and measures required by the enforcing authorities.

3.7 Fire Evacuation

SCH will inform all residents of the appropriate evacuation procedure for the type of dwelling they reside in.

High Rise –

- Where a fire starts in a flat, the occupiers are to leave the flat, closing the front door behind them and raise the alarm (dial 999 and ask for the Fire Service). They should leave the building by the stairs and meet the fire service when they attend.

- All other persons should remain in their flat with the doors and windows closed unless there is significant smoke ingress to that flat. If residents feel they are at significant risk, they are to leave their flat, closing the front door behind them and leave the building.
- Any person in the communal areas of the building are to leave the building by the nearest safe route.
- Lifts should not be used in the event of a fire. Smoke venting will be maintained to ensure stairways remain available for evacuation.

Low Rise –

Due to the high number of Low Rise archetypes it is not possible to accurately state the evacuation procedures relating to these properties. However escape will be considered as part of the fire risk assessment process and where deemed necessary, printed documentation will be produced and/or individual consultation will take place.

3.8 Records

A fire record will be held for each **high rise** building. This will detail:

- Risk Assessment
- Inspections
- Alarm maintenance and servicing (where appropriate)
- Emergency lighting tests
- Visits from a fire officer
- Dry Riser servicing
- Fire Hydrant servicing

A fire record will be held for each **low rise** building. This will detail:

- Risk Assessment
- Inspections
- Alarm maintenance and servicing (where appropriate)
- Emergency lighting tests
- Visits from a fire officer

3.9 Lettings / Tenancy

All customers will be briefed on fire safety measures specific to their new home at sign up. They are to be advised that they may be contacted by WMFS who will offer a home safety check and urged to accept the offer, which is free of charge.

Customers are required to provide reasonable access as per their tenancy agreement to allow SCH to complete annual gas safety checks and allow WMFS to conduct their home safety checks if required.

3.10 Fire Management Arrangements

SCH will put into place arrangements for the management of the following areas, these will updated and maintained by the appropriate officer and information held in the relevant contract folders

- Fire Fighting Equipment
- Alarm Systems
- Smoke Alarms
- Gas
- Electricity
- Decorations of the occupied flats / apartments
- Fire Stopping and Proofing arrangements
- Mobility Scooters
- Arson, Security and Doors
- Fire Doors
- Storage
- Communal Facilities

3.11 Liaison with Emergency Services

SCH is committed to working with West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) to create a safer place to live and work. All new tenancies are referred to WMFS for their Housing Focus group to contact and carry out a free home safety check. This promotes awareness of fire safety.

Liaison is also a critical part of identifying trends and working with WMFS to develop methods of risk identification and risk reduction. Both parties, SCH and WMFS, will share relevant information to reduce fire risk to as low as possible and will include:

- Provision of a list of all SCH managed properties,
- Joint working to enable accurate assessments of risk,
- Provision of WMFS training to enhance fire awareness of visiting officers,
- Sharing of the key results of home safety checks,
- Sharing information on fire incidents.

SCH will work with the fire service to promote best practice in reducing fire risk.

3.12 Equalities and Diversity

This Policy was subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. No significant issues were identified. When implementing this policy we will take into account the needs of diverse employees and customers and take appropriate and necessary action to reduce barriers for older, disabled and vulnerable people.

3.13 Safeguarding

This policy seeks to ensure that SCH undertakes its responsibilities with regard to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults and will respond appropriately to any concerns raised as a result of the Health and Safety Policy. This will include the investigation by the Health and Safety Support Team of any safeguarding issues raised as a result of reported incidents and concerns raised via the risk assessment process.

This statement applies to all related health and safety policies, guidance and procedures.

SCH take into account the need to ensure that contractors and sub-contractors have effective safeguarding policies and procedure, and where not, they work in accordance with SCH's policy and working practices.

3.14 Planned Date of Review

Unless there are major changes to SCH's approach to managing health and safety, this Policy will be reviewed every three years and any revisions will be approved by the Executive Management Team. Expected Review date October 2020.

3.15 Further Advice and Guidance

For further information, please contact the Health and Safety Support Team on telephone
0121 704 6328.

Structure Chart Relating to Fire Management – (Not representative of the entire compliance team)

