

Appendix A

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Housing Services

Fire Safety in Council Housing Policy

Version	For Portfolio Holder decision (10-01-2017)
Reference	POL LL Fire Safety

Housing Services Fire Safety Policy

Contents

- 1 Fire Risk Assessments
- 2 Tenants and leaseholders at risk
- 3 Responsibilities
- 4 Tenants and Leaseholders
- 5 Equalities
- 6 Reviewing decisions, complaints and compliments
- 7 Review of this policy

Policy background and coverage

- a. This policy applies to all residential properties in ownership of Powys Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- b. All HRA properties should provide a safe and healthy environment for occupiers and visitors.
- c. Powys County Council's Housing Service (the Council) aims to minimize the risk of fires starting and spreading in HRA properties and safeguard residents, staff, contractors and visitors in the event of fire.
- d. The Council will ensure that it manages fire safety in accordance with best practice and relevant policy, legislation and Council housing service standards.
- e. The Council will ensure that, where it has discretion, this is exercised in a reasonable, fair and equitable manner.
- f. The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the "Council Housing Fire Safety Working Group" and "Housing Health and Safety Forum".

1 Assessing fire risk and managing fire safety

1.1 Objective

- a. The Council will ensure Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken to comply with legislation.
- b. The Council will ensure that recommendations in the assessments are followed up.

1.2 Assessing premises

- a. The Council will complete Fire Risk Assessments annually, or sooner if circumstances change, in:
 - I. blocks of flats, including communal areas
 - II. communal rooms and facilities
 - III. shared accommodation
 - IV. residential accommodation on mixed use premises
 - V. gypsies and travellers sites
 - VI. homeless accommodation
- b. Changed circumstances, including new tenants, maintenance or improvement works, should lead to a review of the Fire Risk assessment.

1.3 Approach

- a. The Council will adopt a fire safety approach that provides early warning of any fire to all occupiers and to ensure that they can safely evacuate the building to a place of permanent safety (total evacuation).
- b. Accommodation designated for older people will be fitted with smoke detectors that are linked with Powys Careline.
- c. Blocks of flats which were constructed or converted in compliance with the Building Regulations 1991, approved document B or equivalent may adopt a different approach, such as 'safe to stay'. The level of compartmentalisation means there will be a low risk of fire spreading beyond its unit of origin.
- d. The Council will ensure that blocks of flats meet the fire safety requirements as set out in Building Regulations. The Council will follow the guidance "Housing – Fire Safety, Guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing", August 2008, published by LACORS and "Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats", May 2012, published by the Local Government Association.
- e. The guidance includes:
 - I. protected escape routes
 - II. fire resistance of wall, ceilings, floors and doors

- III. automatic fire detection and alarm systems
 - IV. lighting of escape routes
 - V. fire fighting equipment
 - VI. sprinklers
 - VII. fire safety signs
 - VIII. surface finishes and floor coverings
- f. The Council will ensure that all domestic premises meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) on fire safety. This includes:
- I. Dwellings must have a suitably located, mains powered (with a backup secondary power source such as a sealed lithium battery) smoke alarm on each floor.
 - II. Common areas of flats must have adequate fire alarms and equipment as defined in current Building Regulations Part B.
 - III. The dwelling should have an external fire escape where there is habitable space more than 7.5m above ground level and there is only one protected stairway or route, or comply with Fire Officer's alternative recommendations for an additional fire escape route.
 - IV. Dwellings should be easy to escape from by having an escape route from the rooms used for sleeping to an external door which may be via a landing and staircase to a front door, back door or fire escape. Rooms used for sleeping which cannot be normally exited except by passing through another room should be capable of providing an alternative means of escape as agreed with the Fire Officer.
 - V. The dwelling should not have windows fitted with locks with an automatic locking action in rooms used for sleeping.
 - VI. The gas, solid fuel or oil service and safety inspection certificate must be current. All heating installations and appliances provided by the Council must be checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person at least annually and as required by law.
 - VII. Electrical lighting and power installations must be checked and certified safe by an appropriately qualified person at least every 10 years as a minimum.
 - VIII. Electric appliances provided by the Council should be inspected:
 - when first supplied
 - annually
 - at the beginning of each new tenancy

1.4 The five steps of a Fire Risk Assessment

The Council will carry out Fire Risk Assessments and comply with the following duties:

- I. Identifying fire hazards:
 - Sources of ignition
 - Sources of fuel
 - Sources of oxygen
- II. Identifying people at risk:
 - people in and around the premises

- people especially at risk
- III. Evaluating, removing, reducing and protecting from risk:
 - evaluating the risk of a fire occurring
 - evaluating the risk to people from fire
 - removing or reducing fire hazards
 - removing or reducing the risks to people
 - detection and warning
 - fire-fighting
 - escape routes
 - lighting
 - signs and notices
 - maintenance
 - IV. Recording, planning, informing, instructing and training:
 - recording significant findings and action taken
 - preparing an emergency plan
 - informing and instructing relevant people; co-operate and co-ordinate with others
 - providing training
 - V. Reviewing
 - keeping assessment under review
 - revising where necessary

1.5 Significant findings

Each assessment will record any significant findings. These will include details of:

- I. the fire hazards that have been identified
- II. the actions taken, or which will be taken, to remove or reduce the chance of a fire occurring (preventive measures)
- III. persons who may be at risk, particularly those especially at risk
- IV. the actions taken, or which will be taken, to reduce the risk to people from the spread of fire and smoke (protective measures)
- V. the actions people need to take if a fire occurs. This will include any special arrangements made with staff such as housekeepers or others (the emergency plan)
- VI. any information, instruction and training identified as being needed, and how it will be given
- VII. any discussions that have taken place with residents

1.6 Management and maintenance

The Fire Risk Assessment will include recommendations on management and maintenance of fire safety, including, where applicable:

- I. keeping escape routes clear from obstruction
- II. checking fire doors and smoke seals are not damaged and doors not propped open

- III. testing fire detection and warning systems
- IV. checking:
 - fire blankets and extinguishers
 - artificial lighting
 - sprinkler systems
 - gas installations
 - electrical installations and appliances
 - furniture and furnishings.

1.7 Fire Safety Logbook

- a. All premises that need periodic Fire Risk Assessments, will have a Fire Safety Logbook.
- b. The logbook will be situated in a locked metal cupboard which is located internally by the front entrance door.
- c. The logbook will contain the following:
 - I. named responsible and competent persons, including contact details;
 - II. fire safety guidance
 - III. location and contact details of Fire Station;
 - IV. name and contact details of the responsible Fire Officer
 - V. notes on test procedures and frequencies
 - VI. records of tests
 - VII. fire Instructions and drills
 - VIII. record of false alarms
 - IX. planner for Tests and Inspections
 - X. Fire Risk Assessment review record
 - XI. visits by the Fire Officer
 - XII. a short guide to making the premises safe from fire

1.8 Plan of action

- a. The Council will agree a plan of action to bring together all the identified issues from fire risk assessments.
- b. The plan of action will include how the Council intends to reduce the hazards and risks that are identified and how to implement the necessary protection measures.
- c. These actions will be prioritised to ensure that any findings which identify people in immediate danger are dealt with straightaway.
- d. In other cases where people are not in immediate danger but action is necessary, it may be acceptable to plan this over a period of time.

1.9 Performance

The Fire Risk Assessment will be used as a measure of fire safety performance, with the number of outstanding issues measured on a periodic basis. The aim is to achieve a “clean sheet” of Fire Risk Assessment actions within a maximum time span of:

- I. 1 year for all high risks identified, this is before 01-07-2017
- II. 2 years of all medium risks identified, this is before 01-07-2018
- III. 3 years for all low risks identified, this is before 01-07-2019

2 Tenants and leaseholders at risk

2.1 Objective

The Council will identify all tenants and leaseholders that are at risk and those especially at risk. The Council will provide personal advice to those at risk.

2.2 Information and training

- a. Each household will be given advice on fire prevention and fire safety in the home. This will be provided at the start of each new tenancy and reviewed periodically.
- b. The advice will include, where applicable:
 - I. an explanation of the escape routes, particularly where secondary means of escape is provided
 - II. how the fire detection and alarm system operates and what to do if it activates
 - III. avoidance of false alarms
 - IV. how and when to call the fire brigade
 - V. how to report defects
 - VI. the importance of maintaining clear escape routes, free of obstruction
 - VII. the importance of keeping fire doors closed, not propped or wedged open
 - VIII. smoking and cooking safety
 - IX. gas safety advice
 - X. safe storage and disposal of refuse
 - XI. the safe use of escape windows where appropriate
 - XII. the importance of switching off appliances when leaving the house

2.3 People especially at risk

- a. The Council will aim to identify people that are potentially especially at risk. This might include:
 - I. people with disabilities, including mobility, hearing or vision impairment
 - II. people who are sensory impaired due to alcohol, drugs or medication
 - III. people that might find it difficult to escape unaided
- b. The Council will discuss a Home Fire Safety Check by the Fire Service with occupiers; particular those especially at risk.
- c. Where the home is above ground floor and tenants are unable to leave the home without assistance of another person, the Housing Management & Options Officer will discuss the possibility, and provide assistance, to move to suitable alternative ground floor accommodation.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Objective

The Council will ensure that all its employees understand their role with regard to fire prevention and fire safety management.

3.2 Roles and responsibilities

- a. A detailed list of responsibilities is included in appendix A. Below is a list with the key responsibilities.
- b. The following roles have specific responsibilities regarding fire safety.

Head of Housing

- ensuring this policy is implemented

Service Manager Asset Management

- ensuring there are nominated persons to carry out fire risk assessments
- ensuring that staff under their control are adequately trained

Service Manager Tenancy Services

- ensuring that staff under their control are adequately trained

Client Services Team Leader

- ensuring there is a fire safety management system operated
- addressing notices from the Fire Service
- developing a plan of action to follow up any recommendations

Planned maintenance and Improvements Team Leader

- ensuring that programmes of works are carried out to improve fire safety

Housing Surveyor

- carrying out fire risk assessments, unless the Senior Housing Manager has nominated others
- managing day to day fire safety

Housing Management and Options Team Leader

- monitoring periodically that fire safety checks are carried out

Housing Management & Options Officer

- giving basic fire safety advice to tenants
- identifying vulnerable tenants that are especially at risk

Project Officers

- developing and piloting fire safety procedures in conjunction with Fire Officers and Housing staff

Contracts Officers

- ensuring fire safety is not compromised by any works

All staff

- taking action if there is a concern regarding a fire safety issue

4 Tenants and Leaseholders

4.1 Objective

Tenants and leaseholders will act responsible in managing fire safety in the home and premises they occupy.

4.2 Changes to the premises by tenants and leaseholders

- a. Tenants will need to obtain written permission from the Council before they can carry out works to improve the home they live in.
- b. Leaseholders will need to obtain written permission from the Council before they can make structural changes to the premises, including entrance doors.
- c. The Council will give permission to all reasonable requests from tenants and leaseholders. The Council will take fire safety into account and will always require that works comply with Building Regulations.
- d. Where the Council becomes aware of tenants or leaseholders that have changed the property and the works do not comply with Building Regulations and/or Fire Safety Regulations, they will be contacted and given the opportunity to rectify the situation within a reasonable timescale.
- e. Where the unsafe situation continues the Council will take appropriate action to remedy the situation and any incurred costs will normally be recharged.

4.3 Items in communal areas inside buildings

- a. It is the responsibility of the tenants and leaseholders not to use communal areas for storage of goods. The communal areas will need to be free from obstruction, trip hazards and significant fire hazard or additional fire loading.
- b. Items that are not permissible include, among other things:
 - I. rugs, runners and carpet tiles
 - II. furniture
 - III. plastic flowers and plants
 - IV. large plants such as „cheese“ plants, yucca plants
 - V. plastic containers, vegetable racks or other storage containers
 - VI. shoes
 - VII. pictures and other wall ornaments
 - VIII. bicycles, prams, pushchairs and scooters
 - IX. recycling and rubbish bins
- c. A doormat will be acceptable as long as they are:
 - I. specifically intended to be a door mat

- II. with a non-slip backing material
 - III. in good condition and free from curling edges
 - IV. placed directly in front of the front door
 - V. not oversized (max width of door x 18 inch/45 cm)
 - VI. Not located at the top of stairs
- d. Housing staff or Fire Service staff will decide if a mat causes a risk.
 - e. Storage of any items must especially not occur in means of escape or escape routes. These items will be removed immediately.
 - f. Where a member of Housing staff becomes aware of items in communal areas, not being in means of escape or escape routes or creating a health and safety risk, residents will be contacted and given the opportunity to remove the items within a reasonable timescale, typically 24 hours.
 - g. If the items are not removed or if there is a situation that needs immediate action, the Council will remove and may dispose of the items. Photographic evidence will be taken and any incurred costs for removal will normally be recharged.

4.4 Mobility scooters

Where a communal area is used for storage of a mobility scooter, the scooter user will be informed that this is not allowed and that the scooter must be removed to a safe location. The Council will look to provide safe storage and charging points, where possible, for blocks of flats. In such instances the Council will charge the scooter owner a service charge for the use of a dedicated scooter store and charging point.

5 Equalities

5.1 Introduction

The Council is committed to giving an equal service to all.

5.2 Procedures and practices

- a. The Council's staff and contractors will operate in such a way to ensure that their procedures and practices are sensitive to the needs of individual residents. They will ensure that they do not discriminate in any way.
- b. Enforcement and application of this policy will from time to time need to be tailored to meet the needs of individuals. All cases will be considered on an individual basis.

5.3 Information

- a. The Council will in all reasonable circumstances make information available in a variety of information formats, including for example:
 - I. Braille
 - II. large print
 - III. audio tape
- b. Where specialist services are required to ensure that information is accessible to the tenant or member of their family, the Council will provide these specialist services where reasonable.

6 Reviewing decisions, complaints and compliments

6.1 Introduction

The Council is committed to improve service delivery and put right any mistakes.

6.2 Review

Anyone that is affected by a decision of the Council's Housing Service is entitled to ask an independent review from a manager or team leader that was not involved in making the decision.

6.3 Complaints and compliments

- a. The Council welcomes all feedback from customers, because it helps to improve services.
- b. When the Council receives a complaint, the Corporate Complaints Procedure will be followed.
- c. The Council will aim to clarify any issues that are deemed unclear.
- d. Where possible, the Council will put right any mistakes it may have made.
- e. Where the Council gets something wrong, it will apologise and where appropriate try to put things right.
- f. The Council will aim to learn from good practice and mistakes and use the information gained to improve services.

7 Review of this policy

- a. This policy will be reviewed by the Council every three years unless there are circumstances that require a review, for example a change in legislation or regulation.
- b. Where there has been a change in legislation which has an impact on the policy, the policy will be reviewed within 3 months of the legislation or regulation coming into effect.

Appendix A – roles and responsibilities

1. The **Head of Housing** as Council Housing Landlord will act as a deputy to the Chief Executive, and will be responsible for ensuring that:
 - a. the Fire Safety Policy is implemented in buildings under the control of the Housing Service.

2. The **Service Manager Asset Management** will be responsible for ensuring that:
 - a. nominated persons are appointed to carry out the statutory fire safety assessments, checks and tests and the recording of all such actions in the Fire Safety Logbook.
 - b. nominated persons undertake any training deemed necessary to ensure they are competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety.
 - c. the fire safety management system is implemented correctly and monitored, including the Fire Risk Assessments.
 - d. competent nominated persons are appointed for each building and to ensure that staff know and understand their duties in relation to fire safety.
 - e. Housing staff are trained and competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety.
 - f. if it is decided to change responsibilities or procedures this is documented and communicated to all staff who have a responsibility in Fire Safety.

3. The **Service Manager Tenancy Services** will be responsible for :
 - a. ensuring that staff under their control are adequately trained and competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety.

4. The **Client Services Team Leader** will be responsible for:
 - a. implementing the fire safety management system and ensure its effectiveness.
 - b. advising on the implementation of fire safety legislation and other guidance.
 - c. ensuring that notices and advice issued by the Fire Service are complied with in a timely manner.
 - d. establishing a framework of competent contractors and consultants that can be appointed by Housing Surveyors.
 - e. ensuring that staff under their control are adequately trained and competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety.
 - f. developing and implementing the plan of action to address all the findings from the Fire Risk Assessments.

5. The **Planned maintenance and Improvements Team Leader** will be responsible for:
 - b. developing and implementing the programmes works that follow from the plan of action, including procuring competent contractors and consultants.
 - c. ensuring that staff under their control are adequately trained and competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety.

6. The **Housing Surveyor** will be responsible for:

- a. addressing significant findings from the assessments
 - b. ensuring 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.
 - c. carrying out fire safety checks and tests and record the results in the Fire Safety Logbook on a periodic basis as recommended in the Fire Risk Assessment and ensure that any deviations are dealt with in an appropriate manner, unless the Senior Housing Manager has nominated others.
 - d. arranging for the maintenance and inspection of fire safety equipment in accordance with the relevant British Standards.
 - e. arranging for repairs and remedial measures relevant to fire safety to be undertaken in a timely manner.
 - f. liaising with the Fire Service on repair and maintenance matters relevant to fire safety.
 - g. ensuring that changes to the property by tenants are not compromising fire safety.
 - h. reporting near misses, incidents and accidents within five days, in line with the Powys County Council incident report procedure.
7. The **Housing Management and Options Team Leader** will be responsible for:
- a. monitoring the statutory fire safety checks, tests and logbooks on a 3 monthly basis and report deviations to the Responsive Repairs Team Leader.
 - b. ensuring that staff under their control are trained and competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety.
8. The **Housing Management & Options Officer** will be responsible for:
- a. giving specific advice on fire prevention and fire safety in the home at the start of the tenancy or “settling in visit”.
 - b. identifying tenants that are especially at risk or are vulnerable at the start of the tenancy and refer tenants that are especially at risk for a Home Fire Safety Check by the Fire Service.
 - c. providing tenants that are especially at risk with a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).
 - d. visiting tenants after concerns are raised, like:
 - I. rubbish bags accumulating outside a property;
 - II. hoarding;
 - III. disconnected water or electricity supply;
 - IV. abandonment;
 - V. unauthorised occupants.
9. The **Project Officers** will be responsible for:
- a. developing and piloting fire safety procedures in conjunction with Fire Officers and Fire Safety Working Group, including:
 - I. tenant profiling;
 - II. fire safety advice to tenants;
 - III. personal emergency and evacuation plans (peeps);
 - IV. fire safety logbooks.

- b. ensuring procedures work, before rolling them out county wide and handing responsibility over to other Housing Surveyors and Housing Management & Options Officers.
10. The **Contracts Officers** will be responsible for:
- a. ensuring fire safety is not compromised by any works
 - b. considering fire safety when ordering works or developing framework agreements
 - c. ensuring risks will be assessed after improvement works have been carried out in individual flats or blocks of flats
 - d. liaising with the Fire Service on matters relevant to fire safety.
11. **All staff** that becomes aware of a fire safety issue or a potential issue is responsible for taking action by:
- a. remedying the situation themselves and making a note in the Fire Safety Logbook, if there is one, and/or registering on QL; or
 - b. informing the person that is able to remedy the situation and making a note in the Fire Safety Logbook, if there is one, and/or registering on QL.