

Policy title:	Fire Safety Policy		
Scope:	Group-wide		
Policy owner & job title:	Dan Gray, Property Director		
Approver:	Aspire Housing Board		
Date:	November 2017	Review Due Date:	November 2020

POLICY SUMMARY

In October 2006, fire safety legislation was rationalised through the enactment of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO). The FSO replaced practically all previous fire safety legislation.

Following the tragic loss of life at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, Aspire Housing has reviewed its approach to fire safety taking advice from both the British Safety Council and the Fire and Rescue Service. In order to comply with the requirements of the FSO, and to discharge its duty of care to residents and occupants of its properties, Aspire Housing will:

- Carry out, or require to be carried out, suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments of all relevant premises, using an appropriately trained and competent person, in order to assess the risk to occupiers and users of the premises from fire and to evaluate the adequacy of the protection measures and compliance with all relevant legislation.
- Adopt and promote a “Stay Safe” policy in the event of fire within its older persons housing schemes, general needs flat blocks, general needs housing and operational premises.
- Provide and maintain passive fire detection; automatic fire detection systems (AFD); emergency lighting; fire fighting equipment and evacuation signage as and where appropriate based upon the risks associated with the type of accommodation and its occupants.
- Provide buildings in which fire precautions appropriate for their use are taken into account and implemented. This will include fire suppression measures in housing developed by Aspire Housing on a design and build basis (or acquired for major refurbishment) specifically for older people or vulnerable client groups.

- Communicate through a combination of appropriate means and level of frequency with residents and occupiers of its premises about the importance of fire safety and how to respond in the event of fire.
- Consult and engage with staff, residents, users of premises, and the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure effective fire safety planning and statutory compliance monitoring.
- Ensure that competent persons, who have sufficient knowledge and training, are available to implement and manage fire safety procedures relevant to this policy
- Test, record, audit and review its policy, procedures, fire prevention and protection measures in line with current legislation, best practice and British Standards.

Associated Documents:

- The Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document B as amended
- The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- National Fire Safety Protocol. LACORS
- Fire Safety in Purpose-built Blocks of Flats. Communities and Local Government
- PAS 79:2012 Fire Risk Assessment. Guidance and a recommended methodology
- PAS 7 Fire Risk Management Specification
- BS 9999-2017 Fire Safety in the Design, Management and Use of Buildings approved code of practice (A.C.O.P.)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Aspire Housing is committed to taking all reasonable steps to protect tenants, employees, visitors, contractors and members of the public from the effects of fire in its premises. In doing so we will, where reasonably practicable, implement fire prevention measures designed to eliminate or reduce fire hazards in our buildings, thereby reducing the likelihood of a fire occurring and indeed the impact of any fire should one occur.

The risk of fire can, however, never be totally removed. We will, therefore, also ensure that we are and remain compliant with the requirements of the FSO and have suitable fire protection measures in place. In discharging its duty of care in respect of fire safety, Aspire will adopt the following policy principles:

1.0 Fire Risk Assessments

- 1.1 Aspire Housing will undertake robust fire risk assessments and inspection regimes that are compliant with current legislation, relevant industry standards and best practice.
- 1.2 Fire risk assessments across the Aspire Housing property portfolio will be subject to a full formal review every 12 months and actions arising will be completed within the recommended timescales.
- 1.3 Aspire Housing will require its commercial leaseholders to provide a fire risk assessment of the demised premises and will request evidence of measures taken to mitigate any risks identified. Action will be taken against commercial leaseholders, where necessary and lease terms permit, to ensure the safety of residents living in linked accommodation units.

2.0 Stay Safe Policy

- 2.1 Aspire Housing will adopt and promote a “Stay Safe” policy in the event of fire within its older persons housing schemes, general needs flat blocks, general needs housing and operational premises.
- 2.2 Using this approach, residents and tenants should commence evacuation immediately via communal corridors/staircases if their individual detector starts to sound, or if smoke and the products of combustion become apparent through smell or sight. Evacuation should be undertaken at normal walking pace in a calm and controlled manner.
- 2.3 In the event that an escape route is impassable, due to the presence of fire or smoke, residents should remain in their flat with the front door closed and where possible raise the alarm and contact the Fire Service.
- 2.4 Upon evacuation of the building residents should not return into the building until advised that it is safe to do so by the Fire Service. Residents should never put their own safety at risk by attempting to fight fire themselves.

3.0 Fire Detection and Prevention Measures

- 3.1 All individual residential properties will be fitted with automatic fire detection in the form of either hard-wired smoke detectors, or an inter-linked fire alarm system, according to the level of risk associated with the type of accommodation. As a short term measure, if the primary system has failed or requires replacement, it will be appropriate to fit battery powered detectors in order to maintain protection for occupiers of the accommodation.

- 3.2 The communal areas of enclosed older persons housing schemes will be covered by automatic fire detection, in the form of an inter-linked fire alarm system, that will make residents aware of an incidence of fire within the premises. The communal areas of general needs walk-up flat blocks will not have automatic fire detection retro-fitted as a matter of course, on the basis that all individual residences have hard-wired AFD. Where AFD has been installed within communal areas as part of the original build Aspire Housing will continue to maintain and update the system as required.
- 3.3 The front entrance door to flats off communal areas will meet or exceed the recommended minimum standards for fire resistance, including provision of a self-closing mechanism which will be checked on change of tenancy. Door condition surveys will be included as part of the fire risk assessment process. Aspire Housing will be proactive in ensuring that the doors to leaseholder flats, sold under shared ownership, Right to Buy or Right to Acquire, also meet the required minimum standard of fire resistance.
- 3.4 Fixed installation fire fighting equipment such as sprinkler/misting systems will not be retrofitted as a matter of course into individual accommodation units or the communal parts of premises. The ongoing programme of fire-risk assessments and site surveys will consider the need for any fixed installations, based on the level of risk associated with use of the premises, the vulnerability of residents, the presence of other fire detection measures and whether effective evacuation can be achieved in the absence of a fixed installation.

Examples of scenarios where attention will be paid to reviewing the need for fixed installations are residential premises above commercial shop units selling hot food, plant rooms or kitchenettes in older persons housing schemes, and any buildings with a history of arson attacks.

New build accommodation designed and built by Aspire Housing, or acquired for major refurbishment, specifically for an older person or vulnerable client group will specify fixed installations (e.g. misters or sprinklers) within individual units and common parts. Properties bought off-the-shelf from a developer, where the specification has been finalised prior to Aspire's involvement and which meet the requirements of the prevailing Building Regulations, are expected to be an exception to this policy.

- 3.5 Aspire Housing will ensure that contractors, especially those carrying out 'hot works', are managed and supervised to prevent inadvertent or unexpected breaches of fire safety or increased risk of fire by their activities. All contractors will be required to replace or repair ALL fire stopping on completion of works.

3.6 Common parts of all buildings under Aspire's control will be subject to a sterile environment policy, in order to allow effective evacuation of the premises and to remove potential ignition sources. Mobility scooters will not be permitted to be stored overnight within the common parts and will be restricted to a designated scooter store room or inside the owner's residential property.

3.7 Aspire Housing will have in place regular regimes of maintenance designed to ensure that equipment is operating correctly and in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. All defects will be rectified in a timely manner, with any necessary repairs and replacements prioritised and undertaken according to their urgency.

4.0 Communication, Resident and Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Aspire Housing will use a range of communication methods to ensure that its fire safety policy is communicated to residents and that the profile of fire safety is prominent amongst occupants and users of its premises. These will include but not be limited to:

- Information provided to customers at the start of their tenancy on the Stay Safe policy, general fire safety advice and obligations arising from their tenancy agreement or lease
- Fire safety advice provided on the Aspire Housing corporate website with links to relevant external expert websites
- Social media campaigns linked to specific fire safety awareness raising events or campaigns
- Neighbourhood get-together or estate walkabout events involving residents and external stakeholders
- Customer Forum meetings in relation to fire safety policy considerations
- Fire action notices and related signage (e.g. running man fire exit signs) within communal areas of premises

4.2 We will consult with any residents who have concerns regarding individual fire safety within occupied premises in order to provide high levels of assurance in relation to personal safety.

4.3 Aspire will engage proactively with the Fire & Rescue Service, to reduce fire risk to its residents and users of its premises, with the aim of creating a safer place to live and work.

4.4 Employees tenants, visitors, contractors and members of the public will be provided with clear and relevant information on the risks identified by fire risk assessments, about the measures that have been taken to prevent fires, and how these measures will protect them if a fire breaks out.

4.5 We will ensure that employee participation is encouraged and supported by Aspire senior management, through regular engagement and input relating to continual improvement within fire safety policy and practice.

5.0 Training and Competence

5.1 Aspire will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that relevant staff are provided with the necessary support and training, both to effectively manage fire safety in the premises under their control and to competently fulfil their fire safety duties and responsibilities.

6.0 Assurance and Review

6.1 Aspire Housing will ensure that an appropriate programme of formal audit and advisory reviews is in place to provide assurance that it is meeting its statutory obligations and duty of care to residents and employees.

6.2 When fires occur we will investigate the root causes, identify any lessons learnt, take any remedial action required and implement new processes identified as a result.

6.3 The Fire Safety Policy will be reviewed every three years, or when significant changes are made to fire safety legislation or guidance, or when related policies and procedures are amended.

Equality & Diversity:

Aspire Housing will endeavour to identify and support residents who have an increased risk in the event of fire. This includes those with recognised disabilities who may need assistance to evacuate the building. There may also be residents whose behaviour as a result of vulnerability increases the likelihood of a fire starting.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEE

To act in accordance with all fire safety procedures, safe systems of work or instructions that have been initiated by management for their health and safety.

Not intentionally or recklessly to interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of fire safety and not to do anything that will place themselves or other people at risk from fire.

To report without delay to their line Manager any defects or concerns regarding fire safety including hazards, maintenance issues, general fire precautions or any preventative or protective measures in place to reduce the risk to employees from fire.

To participate fully in fire safety training, as agreed with their Manager and co-operate in undertaking fire drills and evacuation.

To inform line managers of any disability that may impact on their safe egress from premises in the event of an emergency situation.

To report any near misses, occurrences of fire or false alarm activations to managers.

3. RESPONSIBILITY OF ASPIRE

Aspire Housing is responsible for ensuring that it discharges its duty of care to employees and residents arising from relevant fire safety legislation and that it remains compliant with its statutory obligations at all times.

The responsibility for implementing the Fire Safety Policy lies with all Directors, Managers and colleagues. We expect them to plan and organise safe systems of work, maintain accurate records and regularly review Fire Safety performance in line with our commitment to compliance with fire safety legislation. This will enable us to reduce the likelihood of a fire occurring and to minimise its effect.

Management/Responsibility Structure

The Dutyholder (Responsible Person)	Name:	Sinead Butters
	Position:	Chief Executive
	Telephone:	01782 635200 (ext 4800)
	Email:	sbutters@aspirehousing.c.uk

Chief Executive has overall responsibility for this fire safety and is required to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to managing fire risk.

Managing Director	Name:	Wayne Hughes
	Position:	Managing Director
	Telephone:	01782 635200 (ext 4755)
	Email:	whughes@aspirehousing.co.uk

The Managing Director is responsible for ensuring the discharge of the fire safety policy on behalf of the Chief Executive.

Property Director	Name:	Dan Gray
	Position:	Property Director

	Telephone:	01782 635200 (ext 4906)
	Email:	DGray@aspirehousing.co.uk

The Director is responsible to the Managing Director for all matters relating to fire safety within their buildings.

Competent Person	Name:	Matthew Eyley
	Position:	Compliance Manager
	Telephone:	01782 635200 (ext 4919)
	Email:	meyley@aspirehousing.co.uk

The Competent Person is responsible for the detailed arrangements necessary to manage fire risk within their areas of control. Where contractors are being managed and there is likelihood that fire precautions may be affected, regular monitoring is to be included to ensure these precautions are maintained.

Deputy Competent Person:	Name:	Gavin Jewkes
	Position:	Compliance Delivery Officer
	Telephone:	01782 635200 (ext 4977)
	Email:	gjewkes@aspirehousing

To deputise for the Competent person if required.

Specialist Fire Safety Contractor	Organisation:	Security and Fire Experts
	Contact Address	Unit 9, J2 Business Park, Bridge Hall Ln, Bury BL9 7NY
	Representative:	Dave Layland
	Telephone:	0800 0471 999
	Email:	dave.layland@safe-group.co.uk

Staffordshire Fire And Rescue Services Northern Service Delivery Group	Name:	Peter Hall
	Position:	Community Fire Safety Officer
	Telephone:	01785898886
	Email:	Pete.Hall@staffordshirefire.gov.uk