

Westfield Housing Association

Fire Safety Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

Westfield Housing Association have a duty to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any other relevant legislation and guidance in the management of its properties, including but not limited to the Fire Safety Bill 2021, Building Safety Act 2022, Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations 2015 (as amended) and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

2.0 Purpose

The overall aim of the Fire Safety Policy is to minimise the risk of fires starting and spreading in properties that are managed by Westfield and to ensure the safety of customers, staff and contractors who reside, visit or work in these properties. The specific objectives of the policy are:

- To ensure that a clear and consistent approach is set out in respect of fire risk assessments and inspections of internal communal areas and the Minto Centre;
- To ensure that there is a clear and consistent approach to the removal of belongings in communal areas;
- To set out the maintenance and servicing regime for fire equipment at the Minto Centre;
- To ensure that customers have a clear message about fire evacuation procedures for their building;
- Identifying those particularly vulnerable customers who may require a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA) which will be in addition to the Fire Risk Assessments;
- To ensure compliance with existing legislation, not limited to that set out above, and to review in line with any incoming legislation in the future.

3.0 Responsibilities

The Association's Responsible Person on behalf of the Board is the Chief Executive

The "responsible person" will:

- Be responsible to ensure the Association complies with its duties under this policy, the Fire Safety Order and any other relevant legislation and standards;
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to enable the Company to fulfil its fire safety duties/obligations;

- The significant findings of fire risk assessments relating to building fabric and structure are properly addressed and suitable control measures implemented in accordance with the principles of control defined in the Fire Safety Order;
- Relevant statutory bodies are consulted on matters of fire safety as and when necessary;
- Ensure appropriate guidance and standards are developed to enable the requirements of this policy to be properly implemented;
- All activities and processes falling under their control are assessed for fire safety and suitable control measures implemented in accordance with the principles of control (General and Dangerous Substances) defined in the Fire Safety Order;
- All staff falling under their control are given training and instruction in fire safety matters commensurate with their activities;
- Ensure in any multi-occupied residential buildings with 2 or more domestic premises, tenants are provided with appropriate fire safety instructions and fire door information;
- Identify any high risk (over 18m) and/or any mid-risk (over 11m) buildings which the Association may currently own and/or ensure these are identified if they become owned in the future and ensure legislative requirements are met.

Operations Manager

The Operations Manager will be responsible for ensuring that, in areas falling under their control:

- They liaise and co-operate, as applicable, with other responsible persons, e.g. tenants / contractors, to ensure that they are aware of the Association's Fire Safety Policy and Procedures and to identify any risks arising from their activities which could impact upon the Association or members of the Associations staff;
- Fire risk assessments and firefighting equipment checks (Minto Centre) are undertaken, and significant findings brought to the attention of those responsible so that they may fulfil their duties under this policy;
- Ensure any information as required is passed onto tenant's of the Association where necessary and as required by legislation;
- Appropriate fire safety information, instruction and training is made available to all employees of the Association commensurate with their activities;
- Carry out quarterly fire drills at the Minto Centre;
- All staff and visitors falling under their control comply with the requirements of the fire safety policy;
- Adequate building insurance is held for all properties.

Property Services Officer

The Property Services Officer will be responsible for ensuring that, in areas falling under their control:

- All premises features (e.g. structural components, fire doors, partitions etc.) and equipment provided in connection with assuring fire safety is maintained, by a competent person, in a fit and efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair;
- Where relevant, construction contractors engaged for, or on their behalf, undertake a fire risk assessment before commencing works on site;

- All contractors comply with the requirements of the Fire Safety Policy;
- All contractors are aware of the Association's 'Hot work' procedures. It does NOT allow for any 'hot works' on any of its premises.

Development Officer

The Development Officer will be responsible for all new and refurbished areas and properties are so designed to ensure compliance with this policy and the requirements of any relevant fire-safety legislation. The Development Officer will identify any high or mid risk level buildings if acquired as new to the Responsible Person.

Housing Services Officers

The relevant Housing Services Officer responsible for the flats with communal areas will be responsible for ensuring that, in areas falling under their control:

- 6 monthly inspections of the flats with communal areas are carried out. These are not full risk assessments but are ongoing checks by a competent person:
 - During the visits the Housing Services Officer will inspect all areas to ensure all fire exits are left clear, there are no combustible materials stored in communal areas and there is no damage that could cause an obstruction in entrances, landings, or stairs. This inspection will include the inside and outside of all communal areas.
 - If items are found, the Housing Services Officer will write to the tenant/tenants advising of the issue identified and request that the goods be removed within 7 days from the date of the letter.
 - The letter will explain that if the items are not removed in the given timescale the Association will dispose of the items.
 - The letter will advise the tenant that this is a breach of tenancy and could result in the tenant/s responsible being recharged for the disposal of the items.
 - After 7 days the Housing Services Officer will carry out a second inspection to ensure the items have been removed.
 - If the items are still present the Housing Services Officer will arrange for the items to be removed and notify the tenant/s of this.
 - The Housing Services Officer will liaise with Maintenance Services to establish if a recharge is relevant. Each case will be dealt with on an individual bases and all circumstances taken into consideration.
- A Person Centred Risk Assessment is discussed and completed, if required, with vulnerable persons who are tenants;
- All new tenants are given the following information:
 - A Fire Safety Advice for Tenants who live in Flats with Communal Areas leaflet including information relating to the importance of fire doors in fire safety.
 - Fire Safety in Shared or Rented Accommodation leaflet.
 - Important Fire Safety Instruction letter.

This information is then re-issued every 6 months to existing tenants to remind them of their responsibilities and highlight fire safety. All new tenants are also encouraged to purchase contents insurance as part of the tenancy sign up process.

Maintenance Services Officers

The Maintenance Services Officers will be responsible for ensuring that the relevant fire detection and emergency lighting checks are completed, in areas falling under their control:

- Arrange 6 monthly checks for the fire detection and emergency lighting service. The contractor must provide at least two dates (with a one-week gap) to ensure prompt access to complete checks within tenants homes. The second date is to ensure follow up to any 'no accesses' from the first date;
- Tenants are notified in advance of the date the services will take place;
- Ensure relevant service reports and certification are received following these checks;
- Ensure any follow up repairs or issues are dealt with from the service reports;
- Ensure an annual fire risk assessment of the communal flats is completed by a suitably qualified person within 12 months of the previous inspection;
- Ensure any new communal flat developments are added to the existing lists and spreadsheets for annual safety checks.

Employees

All employees have a responsibility to comply with the Fire Safety Policy. This will include, but not be limited to:

- Observing all instructions, information and training intended to secure fire safety;
- Co-operating with the Association on matters of fire safety;
- Not interfering with any building fabric or equipment provided in connection with assuring fire safety;
- Complete visual checks when visiting these premises and report any issues and obvious defects or shortcomings;
- Seek to identify any issues with Smoke or Carbon Monoxide Alarms within properties and identify any repairs to Maintenance Service Officers;
- Report any obvious defects or shortcomings in the Association's fire safety arrangements or procedures to the Operations Manager or Chief Executive as soon as possible.

Contractors

Contractors are required to:

- Assess the fire safety risks arising from their works / activities and implement control measures in accordance with the principles of control defined in the FSO;
- Co-operate with the Association on all matters of fire safety;

- Ensure that they and all staff falling under their control have received appropriate information, instruction and training to enable them to comply with this policy and the Association's emergency arrangements;
- Obey all instructions relating to fire safety given by authorised members of the Association.
- To feedback immediately to the Safeguarding lead at the Association of any concerns relating to tenants/occupants.
- To complete the required training/refresher courses as required by the Association.
- To attend bi-monthly Contractor Meetings held with the Association where items covered will include performance, changes in regulations and checking documentation is valid (certification, risk assessments, method Statements). It is also a platform to discuss any other issues relating to health and safety keys tasks.

Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants are responsible for meeting their obligations in preventing the risk of fire and to ensure the safety of other tenants and visitors.

It is also tenant's responsibility to allow access to flats for servicing and keeping fire exits clear of rubbish/clutter. Tenants are advised via letters and a leaflet which is issued at tenant start. To this end the Association ensures:

- Fire and Smoke alarms and emergency lighting are tested by a properly qualified fire and security specialist every 6 months. Letters are sent to tenants before this testing takes place to advise them of the importance of allowing access;
- Fire safety policy and procedures are regularly sent to tenants and are issued to new tenants when the sign up for the property;
- Fire action notices are displayed in the communal areas of block of flats, informing tenants how to evacuate the building in case of fire. These notices advise:
 - When the alarm rings they should leave the building immediately remaining calm, do not run and do not ignore the alarm
 - In the event of the fire alarm sounding ring 999
 - After the detection of a fire, the alarm sounder should only be silenced by a competent person when **everyone** is out of the building and accounted for, or the Fire Service have attended and given permission for people to go back inside.
 - If the alarm is sounding and they are sure there is no sign of a fire then telephone 01900 602906 during office hours or 0845 345 7808 out of office hours.
 - Please inform Westfield Housing Association if they think the alarm is faulty, or there are repeated false alarms;
 - Residents with information relating to the importance of fire doors in fire safety.

4.0 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 came into force on 1 October 2015.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 came into force on 1 October 2022. From that date, all relevant landlords must:

1. Ensure at least one smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of their homes where there is a room used as living accommodation;
2. Ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers);
3. Ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced once informed and found that they are faulty;

During the annual gas service visit, the engineer will check the above alarms are in place. Where alarms are not in place, these will be fitted during the visit. Alarms already in situ will be tested and the expiry date will be checked. Any alarms which fail the 'push button' test, have passed their expiry date or date to expire is before the next gas service visit will be replaced during the visit.

5.0 Fire Risk Assessments

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies only to the internal common areas and shared common areas and excludes dwellings and customers' accommodation.

Customers in houses will be protected by the level of structural fire precautions implemented in the construction of the building for newer properties. We have a number of older properties and the Association has supplied and fitted smoke detectors in these properties and maintain these for the protection of all customers.

A Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) is a method of identifying fire hazards and it assesses the likelihood and potential safety issues, so that general precautions can be implemented to reduce the risks of fires starting. We have appointed a competent and qualified person to carry out the FRAs in the blocks of flats where there is an internal communal area and The Minto Centre.

The FRAs will be carried out every year to The Minto Centre and all schemes with internal communal/common areas by a Fire Risk Consultant. Actions that are required/identified from the FRAs are assigned a priority and timescale for completion. These are ordered through our SDM system to ensure we maintain the properties in line with the Act. The completion date for any actions identified is recorded on the appropriate page of the FRA and health & safety tracker.

The FRAs may be reviewed if improvement works have been carried out and the fire safety of the building requires it to be reassessed. The FRAs are stored on SDM and at our office and are available on request.

In addition, the Association carries out weekly inspection and checking of manual call points in all communal areas and The Minto Centre. The completion and results of these are recorded and kept on file.

The Association will also ensure that in any multi-occupied residential building it owns with 2 or domestic premises, tenants are provided with appropriate fire safety instructions and fire door information.

6.0 Reporting & Risk

Key performance indicator (KPI) measures have been established and will be maintained to ensure that Westfield is able to report on performance in relation to fire safety.

KPI measures will be produced and provided at operational level on a monthly basis and at board level on a quarterly basis.

Westfield will carry out an independent audit of fire safety at least once every two years. This audit will specifically test for compliance with regulation, legislation and approved codes of practice and identify any non-compliance issues for correction.

The audit will also look at and test processes to ensure that they are being adhered to and are still fit for purpose.

Consider inclusion of paragraph in relation to Equality Act 2010. There is a risk that due to the nature of fire safety and some residents being more vulnerable as to a potential to indirectly discriminate. It'd be useful just to box this off.

Example : This Policy is not to be applied in any way such that it discriminates, either directly or indirectly and is designed solely with the purposes of Fire Safety for all the Association's tenants in mind. In considering, drafting and reviewing this policy, the Association has had regard for its position under the Equality Act 2010.

7.0 Legal Framework/References

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022
- Housing Act 2004
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

8.0 Linked Documents

- Fire Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety Policy
- Domestic Heating Policy
- Electrical Safety Policy

To be completed by Corporate Services OfficerDocument Control

Business Owner (name & job title)	Helen Timney, Property Services Officer
Policy Author (name & job title)	Helen Timney, Property Services Officer
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Document History

Date	Version Number	Author	Description of Update
July 2024	1.4	HE	Minor updates to responsibilities of contractors.
September 2023	1.3	D Fox	Minor changes following review by compliance solicitor to ensure policy covers existing & incoming legislation.
July 2023	1.2	HR	Minor changes which include compliance follow up works and record keeping.
August 2022	1.1	HR	New Fire Safety Policy including Minto Centre & Communal Flats.