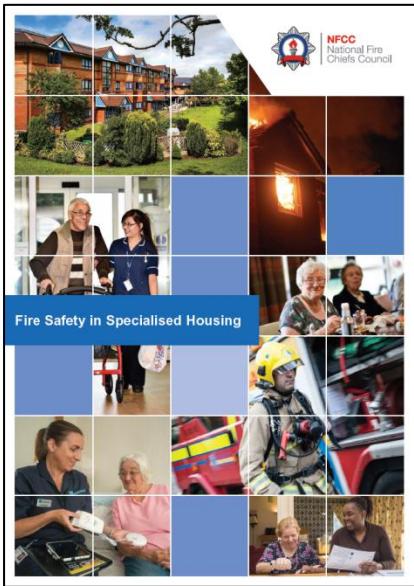


The new guide to ‘Fire Safety in Specialised Housing’



A summary sheet for commissioners and providers of specialised housing and care services

Reducing the risk of fire for vulnerable residents in Sheltered Housing, Extra Care and Supported Living properties.

A copy of this guide can be downloaded from: NFCC Launches Specialised Housing Guidance
<https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/News/nfcc-launches-specialised-housing-guidance>

Overview of the guidance and readership

- ❖ It’s aim is to clarify, build upon and consolidate existing good practice, and introduces for the first time guidance on the various responsibilities for fire safety and a ‘Person Centred’ approach to identifying fire risks to vulnerable residents in these types of premises. It includes case studies, templates, diagrams and worked examples to clarify the issues.
- ❖ The intended readership and those that must consider the recommendations of the guide includes:
 - Commissioners of care services in specialised housing.
 - Those who own, operate or manage specialised housing.
 - Those who provide care and/or support to residents in specialised housing.
 - Fire Risk Assessors and those who give advice on standards in this type of housing.
- ❖ This summary sheet is to promote the new guide and provide some background information which will help to navigate the comprehensive document.

Why do we need this new guide?

- ❖ London’s population, like the rest of the UK, is getting older. The changing social care landscape and ageing demographic means that there is nearly a million residents currently living in various forms of sheltered, extra care and supported housing and this will increase as the years progress.
- ❖ By definition those living in this type of housing represent those most vulnerable to injury or death if a fire occurs, whether by a propensity to contribute to the likelihood of a fire, reduced capacity to respond or health/mobility constraints. These factors already lead to a disproportionately high number of deaths and injuries from fire for these residents.

- ❖ A lack of understanding of this increased vulnerability and a proper assessment of the fire risks, means that additional fire protection measures are overlooked and avoidable deaths and injuries will continue to occur – impacting severely on the victim, their families, carers and neighbours, and the community around them.

Key Features, new guidance and requirements

1. Responsibilities for the management of fire safety in Specialised Housing

- ❖ Section I of the new guide emphasises and outlines the legal requirement for the various responsibilities of commissioners, care providers and housing providers to be agreed and documented, and provides a simple matrix document for this purpose. A copy of this is attached to this paper.

2. The Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA)

- ❖ Section D and Appendix 4 of the new guide outlines the **Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment** and a template for this process. The steps in this assessment are:

- Step 1: Consider characteristics, behaviours and capabilities of the resident that may lead to fire
- Step 2: Determine the potential causes of fire and the existing measures to prevent fire.
- Step 3: Identify any circumstances that could lead to the rapid development of fire.
- Step 4: Identify existing measures to protect the resident if fire occurs.
- Step 5: Consider capacity of resident to respond appropriately to fire alarm signals or signs of fire.
- Step 6: Consider ability of resident to make their way to safety.
- Step 7: Determine the level of risk to the resident from fire
- Step 8: Prepare action plan.
- Step 9: Determine period for review of the assessment.

Step by step process from: [NFCC Fire Safety in Specialised Housing](#), page 87.

- ❖ A simple two page ‘hazard spotting’ checklist has also been developed specifically for anyone or any organisation that has contact with vulnerable residents - family members, informal or paid carers, housing providers/managers/ wardens, adult Social Care, Health or Care Services Providers. It will enable them to identify residents at higher risk and guide them on the actions to be taken. An editable Word copy of this is attached to this document and is also available from the London Fire Brigade Website.
- ❖ Section G of the guide then provides guidance on managing the fire risks and additional protection measures that can be provided for higher risk residents.
- ❖ Section I of the guide emphasises that collaboration and cooperation between commissioners, care providers and housing providers will be essential if higher risk residents are to be identified and additional care planning/control measures implemented to keep them safe.

3. Fire protection, guidance and other control measures

- ❖ Section H emphasises the importance of Fire Compartmentation and introduces new guidance on fire barriers in roof voids.
- ❖ Sections G and H emphasise and provide new guidance on the importance of smoke/heat alarms throughout flats in sheltered/extracare housing - with remote monitoring by alarm receiving centres.
- ❖ Appendix 5 emphasises and provides new guidance on the storage and charging of mobility scooters in these types of premises.

Fire Safety in Specialised Housing

The Table below provides a brief summary of each chapter in the new guide and who each section is most applicable to:

Sections	Key Points page:	Summary	Essential reading for:
Part A: Fires in specialised housing and their impact	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains an analysis of fires in specialised housing that concludes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Vulnerable residents are at higher risk ◦ The greatest risk of death is for those in the room in which the fire started ◦ The most significant influences on fire risk are the ‘people factors’, such as age, physical disability and cognitive difficulties. • The recommendations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Conducting a ‘person centred fire risk assessment’ for residents to identify those at higher risk ◦ Extra fire detection, watermist and sprinkler systems can reduce the risk of death/ harm where a higher risk is identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners • Housing Providers • Care providers • Fire Risk Assessors
Part B: Fire safety - how specialised housing differs from other residences	39-40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General principles of fire safety in specialised housing. • Compartmentation in supported housing is not normally adequate to support a ‘stay put’ strategy; therefore, it may be necessary to evacuate all residents during a fire. • Sheltered housing schemes generally do not have staff available to support the evacuation therefore those with mobility and other issues may find escape difficult. • A person centred risk assessment may indicate that additional fire safety measures may need to be put in place for these residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners • Housing Providers • Care providers • Fire Risk Assessors
Part C: The law governing fire safety in specialised housing	59-60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legal framework in relation to fire safety in specialised housing. • Detailed information on building legislation that is applicable to specialised housing. • Application of the Housing Act 2004 and defines the role of the enforcing authorities in keeping residents lawfully safe. • The FSO imposes duties to carry out fire risk assessments and maintain fire safety measures on various responsible people. This can include care providers and contractors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners • Housing Providers • Care providers • Fire Risk Assessors
Part D: The person-centred approach	79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to the person centred fire risk assessment to identify residents at a higher risk from fire. • The London Fire Brigade ‘Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment Checklist’ has been developed for front line staff to support this approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners • Care Providers • Housing Providers • Fire Risk Assessors • Carers • Housing Wardens/ Managers
Part E: Fire risk assessment for specialised housing premises	89	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles and methodology of the building fire risk assessment. • Different types of fire risk assessment that may be suitable for the premises, as well as who is responsible for carrying this out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Providers • Fire Risk Assessors

Sections	Key Points page:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential reading for:
Part F: Preventing fires in the building	107	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily aimed at landlords and those that manage fire safety in buildings of this kind. • Practical measures to prevent fires caused by the fire hazards commonly found in specialised housing. • Detail about potential hazards such as cooking, smoking, arson, electrical hazards, mobility scooters and housekeeping. Policies that should be implemented to mitigate the risk. • Behaviours and habits of residents, such as hoarding and smoking, and liaison with external agencies and relatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing providers • Housing Wardens/Managers
Part G: Managing fire risk – fire protection for the person	139-140	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person-centred approach to consider how a fire might start and various fire safety measures that can be applied to reduce the risk to vulnerable residents. • Mental capacity should be considered as fire safety measures have less impact if residents are not able to respond effectively. • The level of need might mean that the risk cannot be reduced sufficiently in their current dwelling, even with the control measures advocated in a person-centred approach. This may lead to the resident being considered for more suitable accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners • Housing Providers • Care Providers • Carers • Housing Wardens/Managers • Fire Risk Assessors
Part H: Managing fire risk – fire protection for the building	153-154	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How various fire safety measures may be applied in a building to reduce risk. • Provides a 'Decision Flowchart for Assessing the Adequacy of Fire Safety Measures in Existing Premises'. • Details of fire detection, smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, signage and the use of telecare systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Providers • Fire Risk Assessors
Part I: Managing fire risk – ongoing control	229	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly aimed at landlords and others with the responsibility for the ongoing control of fire safety. Recommendations are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The need for a defined fire safety policy, with one organisation taking the lead in overseeing its implementation ○ There should be a matrix of responsibility recorded where a number of different organisations have a role to play in management of fire safety. ○ The need for testing and maintenance of fire safety provisions. ○ All agencies that engage with residents are to consider the safety of residents from fire by identifying hazards and those that are at a higher risk from fire. ○ All staff should be given adequate fire safety instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing providers • Fire Risk Assessors
Appendices – useful templates, case studies, worked examples etc :			
Appendix 1: Summary of fire protection measures for sheltered, extra care and supported housing			
Appendix 2: Steps in a building fire risk assessment			
Appendix 3: Selecting a competent professional fire risk assessor			
Appendix 4: Steps in a person-centred fire risk assessment			
Appendix 5: Further guidance on mobility scooters			
Appendix 6: Guidance when commissioning Telecare services			
Appendix 7: Fire safety advice for residents			
Appendix 8: Examples of fire action notices			
Appendices 9-14: Case studies and worked examples			

Responsibility for fire safety in ‘Specialised Housing’

(Sheltered Housing, Extra Care Sheltered Housing, Supported Living/Hostels)

1. In all Specialised Housing buildings there will be one organisation or person that is the ‘Responsible Person’ under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This organisation or person has the legal responsibility to take general fire precautions and ensure that they are complied with.
2. The ‘Responsible Person’ will depend on the nature of the premises, its occupancy and operation but will be one of the following:
 - The organisation or person that employs people to work in the premises,
 - The organisation or person that has control of the premises,
 - The organisation or person that is the owner of the premises.
3. In addition, in some Specialised Housing there may be several organisations or persons that have, to any extent, control of those premises or an obligation in relation to:
 - the maintenance or repair of any premises, including anything in or on premises; or
 - the safety of any premises,and therefore they may also have duties imposed by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
4. There should be formal agreements between the ‘Responsible Person’ and these additional duty holders in relation to these controls, obligations and duties, and these should be documented in legal agreements, leases and maintenance contracts as necessary.
5. In situations where there are several organisations or persons with control or obligations there is greater potential for significant matters to be overlooked (e.g. because every duty holder assumes that some aspect of fire safety management is the responsibility of another duty holder).
6. To avoid such a situation arising, it is therefore important that the ‘Responsible Person’ and/or one of the additional relevant duty holders takes overall responsibility for coordinating all arrangements for general fire precautions, management and compliance, so that no key aspects of fire safety are overlooked.

‘Matrix of Responsibilities’

7. These formal agreements and arrangements can also be documented in the form of a matrix, which clearly identifies the agreed responsibility for every key aspect of fire safety management. A sample matrix is set out overleaf.
8. The responsibilities for fire safety management should form part of the record of fire safety arrangements required by Article 11 of the Fire Safety Order. When a fire risk assessment is carried out, the fire risk assessor should take account of this and verify that the agreed arrangements are still in place and working effectively.
9. The matrix will also assist each duty holder in compliance with Article 22 of the Fire Safety Order, which requires that, where two or more duty holders exist for any premises, each duty holder must co-operate with other duty holders to co-ordinate the measures required for compliance with the Fire Safety Order.

Responsibility for fire safety in Specialised Housing - Matrix of Responsibilities

Aspect of Fire Safety Management	Agreed Responsibilities				
	Owner/ landlord	Housing Provider	Managing Agent or Facilities Managers (if different from housing provider)	Care Provider	Commissioner of Services
Overall responsibility for coordinating fire safety agreements & arrangements ¹					
Building fire risk assessment					
Person-centred fire risk assessment					
Testing of fire alarm system					
Maintenance of fire alarm system					
Testing of emergency lighting					
Maintenance of emergency lighting					
Testing of sprinkler system					
Maintenance of sprinkler system					
Testing of smoke vents					
Maintenance of smoke vents					
Testing of door release mechanisms					
Maintenance of door release mechanisms					
Testing of social alarm system					
Maintenance of social alarm system					
Routine housekeeping inspections, including checking fire doors, fire exit doors, fire extinguishers, etc.					
Maintenance of fire doors					
Maintenance of fire extinguishers					
Maintenance of rising mains					
Maintenance of lightning protection system					
Provision of fire safety information to new residents					
Ongoing engagement with residents regarding fire prevention					
Ongoing engagement with residents to remind them of fire procedures					
Fire drills (if applicable)					
Maintaining a record of the fire safety arrangements					
Ensuring that fire procedures are up to date					
Liaison with local fire service crews					
Training of staff					
Inspections during contractors' works					
Provision of information to outside contractors					
Recording false alarms					
Holding of relevant records re testing maintenance, training, drills, etc.					

¹ This is not intended to represent a legal interpretation of responsibility, but should reflect the agreement amongst duty holders in place for overseeing fire safety. (Ref: NFCC Fire Safety in Specialised Housing)

Checklist for Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment

This simple checklist can be used by anyone who has contact with vulnerable residents -family members, informal or paid carers, housing providers, adult Social Care, Health or Care Services. Organisations using the checklist should ensure their contact details are included on the reverse. The content (notably the checked boxes) may be adapted if required.

Name of Resident			
Full Address			
Date		Form completed by	

1. Does the individual have an increased fire risk?

- Yes** If yes, tick all the fire risk factors they exhibit
- Smoking – with signs of unsafe use of smoking or vaping materials (e.g. smoking in bed).
 - Use of emollient creams that are petroleum or paraffin based.
 - Air pressure mattress or oxygen cylinders are used.
 - Unsafe use of portable heaters (e.g. placed too close to materials that could catch fire).
 - Unsafe cooking practices (e.g. cooking left unattended).
 - Overloaded electrical sockets/adaptors or extension leads.
 - Faulty or damaged wiring.
 - Electric blankets used.
 - Previous fires or near misses, burns or scorch marks on carpets and furniture.
 - Unsafe candle/tea light use (e.g. left too close to curtains or other items that could catch fire or within easy reach of children or pets).
 - Other (please specify):
- No** Skip to next question

2. Would the individual be less able to react to an alarm or fire?

- Yes** If yes, tick all the fire risk factors they exhibit
- Mental health issues (e.g. dementia, anxiety or depression).
 - Cognitive or decision making difficulties.
 - Alcohol dependency or misuse of drugs.
 - Sensory impairments (e.g. hard of hearing or sight loss).
 - Other (please specify):
 - Mental health issues (e.g. dementia, anxiety or depression).
 - Cognitive or decision making difficulties.
- No** Skip to next question

3. Does the individual have a reduced ability to escape?

- Yes** If yes, tick all the fire risk factors they exhibit
- Have restricted mobility, are frail or have a history of falls.
 - Are blind or have impaired vision.
 - Lacks capacity to understand what to do in the event of a fire.
 - Is a hoarder, or there are cluttered or blocked escape routes.
 - Are bed or chairbound.
 - Internal doors are left open at night.
 - Would be unable to unlock front door to escape.
 - Other (please specify):
- No** Skip to next question

4. Are there any smoke or heat alarms fitted within the individual's home?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify which rooms have them fitted:

5. Are there any smoke or heat alarms fitted within the individual's home?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify which rooms have them fitted:

What to do next

If there are any questions in sections 1–3 that have been answered ‘Yes’, or you have identified that there are no smoke or heat alarms fitted, or they are broken or poorly sited, this suggests there is a risk from fire. Immediate actions are required to ensure agreed safety measures are in place:

If you are a family member or an informal carer:

Contact your local Fire & Rescue Service to arrange for a free home fire safety visit:

Tel:

Email:

Web:

In addition, extra support and advice can be sought from Adult Social Care Teams and your housing provider or landlord where serious risk has been identified.

If you are employed by a company or organisation:

- Return this checklist to your manager for a full Person-Centred Risk Assessment to be conducted where necessary.
- Inform the resident or other family members of the risks identified, if you are certain they will understand.
- If a care plan exists, all actions taken should be noted in that plan.
- Ensure appropriate partnership referrals are made as required.

Fire safety in the home

What happens during a home fire safety visit? Firefighters or trained staff will visit the home and offer advice based on individual needs, this includes information on how to prevent fires, the importance of smoke alarms to detect a fire and having escape plans in the event of a fire. They will usually also fit smoke alarms if required. Some basic fire safety advice has also been provided below:

Prevention

- It is safer not to smoke; but anyone who does should try to smoke outside and always make sure cigarettes are put out properly.
- Never smoke in bed, or anywhere else, if there's a chance of falling asleep.
- Use fire-safe ashtrays and fire-retardant bedding, nightwear and throws.
- Ensure paraffin based emollient creams are replaced with non-flammable alternatives.
- Candles, tea lights and incense burners should only be placed in stable, heat-resistant holders. Keep these items or any other type of naked flame well away from curtains, furniture and clothes.
- Sit at least one metre away from heaters and keep them well away from anything that can catch alight.
- Don't overload electrical sockets.
- Close all doors at night as this helps to prevent fire and smoke spreading.
- Switch off and unplug electrical items such as TVs and avoid charging devices like mobile phones whilst asleep.

Early warning and detection of a fire is essential

- As a minimum, fit at least one smoke alarm on every level of the home and in any room where a fire could start. The ideal position for these are usually in rooms that are used the most, in hallways and anywhere electrical equipment is left switched on.
- Fitting multiple linked smoke alarms, that all activate together, is the best way to be alerted in the event of a fire. For some, the provision of a Telecare monitoring system may also be beneficial.
- Specialist alarms can be fitted for people who may have a delayed response to escape – for example; strobe light and vibrating pad alarms for the deaf or hard of hearing.
- Remember to test all alarms monthly

Escape

- Make sure escape routes are kept clear of anything that may slow down or block exit routes.
- Ensure security gates can be easily opened from the inside without the need for a key. Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them.
- Mobility aids and any methods of calling for help should always be kept close to hand (e.g. mobile phone, link alarm/pendant).