**All Services**

**FIRE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS PROCEDURES**

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of these Fire Safety Procedures are to ensure that all staff in the project know what to do if there is a fire, and to provide guidance on good practice and fire

prevention. The Fire Safety Procedures also serves as a staff training aid.

A copy of the Fire Safety and Evacuations Procedures should be made available to all service staff. It is important for all staff to attend training and be aware of the procedures at the various services. This is the responsibility of the service manager to make all staff aware of their roles and responsibilities in the event of a fire.

All staff should be involved in fire evacuations and report any issues related to fire safety to the service manager so they can make the required adjustment in the services.

In the event of a fire, people we support are instructed to leave the building at the nearest exit route supported by staff. The staff are responsible to ensure all reasonable steps have been taken to support vulnerable individuals to leave the building safely and as quickly as possible with minimal risk to self and others.

**Progressive Horizontal Evacuation**

**If you see or suspect a fire:**

1. Operate the nearest fire alarm call point.

2. Move anyone who is in immediate danger.

3. Close the door to the room or affected area to restrict the spread of smoke or fire.

4. Start to evacuate other individuals who are near the fire.

5. Only attempt to attack the fire if it is small and you will not put yourself at risk.

**On hearing the alarm:**

1. The person in charge or nominated person should call the Fire Brigade using ’999’.

2. All staff not already at the scene of the fire should proceed to the pre-arranged staff assembly point. En-route they should check that doors are closed.

3. The person in charge will direct staff to the affected area to check for fire.

4. If there is any sign of fire, commence evacuation of the affected area. Move

people we support along the corridor through the next fire door.

5. Carry out a roll call for the affected area.

6. Ensure the Fire Brigade is met on arrival and given all relevant information e.g. location of the fire, access doors and any hazards (e.g. oxygen cylinders), and whether any persons are missing and plans of the premises (fire wallet).

7. Do not use lifts.

8. Do not re-enter the building until told that it is safe by the fire officer.

**Notes**

1. Between the hours of 0800 and 2000 (8am to 8pm), it is acceptable to check whether there is a fire before calling the Fire Brigade. They must be called immediately if there is any doubt at all other times outside of these hours. If there is a false alarm and the fire brigade will not be attending, the fire alarm should be reset and the incident recorded in the fire incident log.

2. The fire brigade must be called to all fires, no matter how small.

3. A clear address must be given to the fire brigade operator, together with details of the incident. If it is a confirmed fire, additional fire appliances will be mobilized.

4. The fire alarm may be silenced by staff to improve communications and reduce the disturbance to service users, but it must not be reset if the fire brigade is attending.

**Fire procedure for People we support and visitors**

* If the fire alarm is sounded, people we support must be assisted by staff to a place of safety.
* People we support who refuse to leave their rooms must be left with the fire door closed.
* Staff can make a decision for themselves about how safe it is to stay with an individual during a fire.
* No staff will be asked to risk their lives during a fire if the people we are supporting refuse to leave the building.
* Visitors will be asked to leave the building and assemble with staff and all individuals will receive support.

**Advice to staff**

**Searching for fire**

1. The fire alarm panel will indicate the area in which the alarm has been activated. Modern systems may also indicate the actual detector or call point that has been operated if the project has one.

2. Whenever possible, staff should be sent to investigate in pairs.

3. Staff should check all areas in the indicated zone. They should be aware of the location of all fire alarm call points and detectors e.g. store rooms, cupboards, plant rooms, lift shafts, roof spaces, voids etc.

4. Activated detector heads will show a red light.

5. Before entering a room, observe the door for any signs of smoke and check the temperature of the door and handle using the back of the hand. If it feels warm or hot**, DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR – EVEN IF THE ROOM IS OCCUPIED**. There is likely to be a substantial fire in the room. Opening the door will let in fresh supplies of oxygen which may cause rapid and severe fire growth, or even an explosion. This could jeopardize your life and make exit routes impossible to use.

6. Any relevant information should be passed to the person in charge as soon as possible e.g. whether it is a fire or false alarm, the exact location, whether anyone is missing etc.

**Evacuation procedure**

1. A progressive horizontal evacuation should be implemented. This will concentrate the efforts of available staff on the most essential actions in the initial stages, and reduce danger and confusion for the individuals.

2. Initially, only those individuals most at risk should be moved i.e. those in the room of origin (if safe to do so) and in the section of corridor where the fire is located.

3. People we support should be moved horizontally along the corridor through the next fire door used to sub-divide the corridor. They will then be in a place of comparative safety, with two fire resisting doors between them and any fire in a room. Each fire resisting door gives 30 minutes fire resistance.

4. If fire or smoke starts to spread from the room of origin, the individuals should be moved further down the corridor through the next fire door or into a staircase enclosure.

5. In the event of a serious fire, a total evacuation of the building should be carried out. People we support should be moved to the assembly point. Consideration should be given to the safety and welfare of people we support in designating an assembly point. Ideally, this should be in a separate building, but in large premises it may be possible to use a lounge etc. on the ground floor, well away from the location of the fire, providing that there is a door direct to open air in case further evacuation is necessary.

6. Where possible, people we support should be moved horizontally away from the fire rather than down stairs because it is much quicker and easier for staff to move them.

7. Please be aware that this will be localized to all services.

**Fire prevention**

* It is necessary for fuel, heat and oxygen to be present for a fire to start. Oxygen is present in the atmosphere and cannot normally be controlled. Many materials in common use for furniture and furnishings are combustible, however, some are easier to ignite than others.
* Fire prevention is largely based on controlling ignition sources and keeping them separate from combustible materials wherever possible.
* Fire exit routes must always be kept clear of obstruction and combustible materials.
* High risk rooms such as kitchens, boiler rooms, plant rooms, etc. must not be used for storage.
* All furniture, furnishings, beddings, etc. used or introduced into the home should be resistant to ignition.
* All electrical equipment should be in good condition and tested regularly by a competent person.
* Staff should carry out a fire safety check of the premises each night when the individuals go to bed.
* Smoking should only be allowed in designated areas. None of our properties are designated for smoking within the buildings.

The following information appears on the fire action signs in the homes.

**On Discovering a Fire**

Immediately raise the alarm by operating the nearest break glass call point.

**Staff Fire Action**

* If it is safe, tackle the fire using the appropriate extinguisher.
* Instruct a member of staff to call the fire service by dialling 999.
* Close all doors in the immediate area.
* Ensure no people we support or visitors access the location of the fire.
* Report details to the fire marshal/assistant fire marshal on their arrival.

**On Hearing the Fire Alarm - All Staff**

* Proceed to the main fire zone panel, liaise with other staff, identify and proceed to the activated zone and refer to the individuals’ evacuation form (PEEPS), and the plan of the building kept in a red bag by the door. Close all doors on route.
* On arrival, your fire marshal/assistant fire marshal will take control and provide full instructions to you, such as:

• If it is safe to tackle the fire with appropriate extinguishers.

• Calling the fire service and liaison upon their arrival.

• Informing/advising the people we support and visitors during the alarm.

**On Hearing the Fire Alarm People We Support and Their Visitors**

* If safe, service users should stay where they are in their room or communal area until a member of staff or the fire services instruct them of any required action.
* Staff should assist individuals to exit the building using the nearest fire exit.

**Further Guidance**

* Make sure all individual are safe, i.e. if in bath — pull out plug and wrap in a towel in empty bath; if assisting with walking — place the individual in a protected area and stay with them if it safe to do so.
* Staff may open a bedroom door behind which the fire exists, only if safe to do so. Firstly, feel the external face of the door and handle with the back of the hand, as this will give an indication of the severity of the fire. If warm, it is unwise, possibly dangerous to open the door.
* In all instances, if you suspect a fire, open the door by kneeling down or standing to one side adjacent to the wall as this gives some protection should flames immediately appear when the door is opened.

NOTE: The presence of fire may be indicated by smells of burning, crackling, and other fire related noises as well as possible smoke seepage. The temperature of a closed fire door may feel quite normal, and due to the response time for care staff to arrive at the room involved is very short, sufficient time may not have elapsed for the heat to conduct through the door.

**Place of Total Safety**

Place of total safety for this home is: outside the front door or in the rear garden.

**Fire Drill — Simulation**

The Fire Drill Simulation should cover all the procedural aspects of the Fire Action Evacuation plan including:

* Identify any weaknesses in the evacuation strategy;
* Test the procedure following any recent alteration or changes to working practices;
* Test the procedure with minimum staff levels;
* Familiarise new members of staff with procedures;
* Carry out fire drills 2 x per year with the people we support and ensure this is documented and recorded in the fire file;
* Test the arrangements for disabled people.

Who should take part? All staff

You should consider the feasibility of drills involving non-ambulant or semi-ambulant people being supported where their medical condition permits. If this is not possible, utilise members of staff to act as individuals.

**Carrying out a drill**

The simulation exercise should involve a fire within a part of the home. This could be the kitchen, laundry, communal lounge or an individuals’ bedroom. It is up to the fire marshal to decide. The relevant alarm call point should be activated, and the drill commenced. The majority of drills should involve a simulated fire in an individuals’ bedroom. For premises that have more than one escape route, the escape plan could be designed to evacuate all people on the assumption that one exit or stairway is unavailable because of the fire. This could be simulated by a designated person being located at a suitable point on an exit route. Applying this scenario to difficult escape routes at each fire drill will encourage individuals to use alternative escape routes which they may not normally use.

**When carrying out the drill you should:**

* Circulate details concerning the drill and inform the relevant staff of their duty to participate. It may not be beneficial to have ‘surprise drills’ as the health and safety risks introduced may outweigh the benefits.
* Explain the process to individuals where possible.
* Ensure that equipment can be safely left behind;
* Nominate observers;
* Inform the alarm receiving centre if the fire warning system is monitored (where the fire and rescue service is normally called directly from your premises, ensure that this does not happen).
* Inform visitors if they are present.
* Ask a member of staff at random to set off the alarm by operating the nearest alarm call point using the test key. This will indicate the level of knowledge regarding the location of the nearest call point (a different call point should be used on different drills).

**Monitoring and debrief**

Throughout the drill, the responsible person and nominated observers should pay particular attention to:

* Difficulties in moving, or the time taken to move, non or semi-ambulant individuals.
* Communication difficulties.
* The use of the nearest available escape routes as opposed to common circulation routes.
* Difficulties with the opening of final exit doors.
* Difficulties experienced by people with disabilities.
* The roles of specific people.
* Inappropriate actions, e.g. stopping to collect personal items, attempting to use lifts, etc.
* Windows and doors not being closed as people leave.

**Escape Routes**

**Suitability of escape routes**

You should ensure that your escape routes are:

* Suitable;
* Easily, safely and immediately usable at all times;
* Usable without passing through doors requiring a key or code to unlock;
* Free from any obstructions such as furniture, slip or trip hazards and fire hazards;
* Well lit by normal or emergency escape lighting;
* Available for access by the emergency services.

All doors on escape routes should open in the direction of escape. All escape route walls, ceilings and fire doors should be 30 minutes fire resistant.

**Fire Doors**

These are part of the buildings structure and have been designed to contain fire and smoke within compartments throughout the building. They must always be shut, (unless alarm linked door holders are fitted). If you hold them open by wedges etc, then the large amount of smoke produced by even a relatively small fire would rapidly spread. When this happens, escape from the building is more difficult or impossible. Being overcome by the effects of smoke is the main hazard and this will kill or make it impossible to escape the actual fire.

**Fire doors may cause inconvenience in daily work, but they are a necessity!**

**Fire Detection and Warning Systems**

Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) and warning systems provide the means to notify you of the presence of fire at the earliest possible opportunity. It offers you the opportunity to carry out firefighting (because the fire is still small) and the maximum period of time to initiate your emergency plan and to evacuate your individuals and staff.

Your electrical fire detection and warning system includes the following:

* Automatic fire detectors, e.g. smoke and heat;
* Manual call points (break-glass call points) next to exits with at least one call point on each floor;
* Electronic sirens or bells;
* A control and indicator panel.

If, for any reason your system fails, you must still ensure that people in your premises can be warned and escape safely. A temporary arrangement, such as gongs, whistles or air horns, combined with suitable training, may be acceptable for a short period.

The fire warning sound levels should be loud enough to alert everyone, taking into account background noise. In sleeping areas, to ensure that people are woken, a sufficient sound level should be achieved at the head of the bed (i.e. 75dBA). Where this is not desirable, e.g. because this might cause alarm to people who are dependent on staff to help them escape, then a sound level of at least 45dBA should be available throughout the premises to alert staff and others who are awake. Where staff sleep on the premises, a sound level of 75dBA should be provided at the head of the bed in staff bedrooms.

**People with hearing difficulties**

Where people have hearing difficulties, particularly those who are profoundly deaf, simply hearing the fire warning is likely to be a major difficulty. If a person with hearing difficulties is likely to be alone, then consider other means of raising the alarm. Among the most popular systems, are visual beacons and vibrating devices or pagers that are linked to the existing fire alarm. Details of individuals with hearing difficulties should be recorded as part of the Care Plan, and any required warning devices should be purchased and supplied to the individual.

**Manual Call Points**

Manual call points, often known as ‘break-glass’ call points, enable a person who discovers a fire to immediately raise the alarm and warn other people in the premises of the danger.

People leaving a building because of a fire will normally leave by the way they entered. Consequently, manual call points are normally positioned at exits and storey exits (where these exist), that people may reasonably be expected to use in case of fire, not just those designated as fire exits.

**Automatic Fire Detection**

All homes have automatic fire detection, which activates the fire warning system.

Automatic fire detectors can detect smoke, heat (or a combination of both). Areas fitted with detection include boiler rooms, laundries, kitchens, high risk and unoccupied areas, storage areas & walk in cupboards, large day rooms, access ways to bedrooms, bedrooms, roof voids and areas or buildings served by a single stairway. As well as sounding the fire warning, the system also operates any automatic door release.

**Reading False Alarms**

False alarms from automatic fire detection systems are a major problem and result in many unwanted calls to the fire and rescue service.

If there are frequent false alarms in your premises, people may become complacent and not respond correctly to a warning of a real fire. In such circumstances, you may be failing to comply with fire safety law. All false alarms should be investigated to identify the cause of the problem and remedial action taken.

**Fire Fighting Equipment**

**Portable Fire Fighting Equipment**

Fire extinguishers provided are appropriate to the specific risks found in accordance with the Table below.

Appropriate staff should be trained in the use of all such equipment.

The following paragraphs describe the different types of extinguisher. The colour referred to, is the colour of the extinguisher or the colour coded area.

**Information, Instruction and Fire Training**

In the event of a fire, the safety of the people we support relies heavily on the ability of the staff to respond promptly and correctly. We consider it vital that all members of staff are trained and instructed so that they understand fire precautions, fire prevention and the action to be taken in the event of a fire. The Company in conjunction with the registered manager/project manager/training manager will be responsible for organising and recording attendance of Basic Fire Training sessions and fire marshal sessions. Details of inductions, information and instruction provided will be recorded by the company.

**Induction**

Fire instructions and information will be provided to all staff as part of their induction and/or within the first week of employment. This will cover the items contained within the Fire Safety Procedures. The information and instructions will be provided by a trained fire marshal.

**Basic Fire Training**

All care staff will receive basic fire awareness training as soon as reasonably practicable following their first day of employment. Additionally, every six months, in-house fire training will be given. Basic fire awareness training will be provided by a competent fire training provider and cover the items highlighted in the Fire Safety Procedures document and Fire Training Programme including:

* Fire prevention measures
* Fire doors and exit routes
* Alarm systems
* Practical use of fire extinguishers (at least one third of staff in the home including all night shift)
* Theoretical use of fire extinguishers (to the remaining staff)
* Understand fire signs

**Instruction for People We Support**

All individuals will be given instructions regarding fire. These may be in various formats to meet the needs of the individuals.

**Risk Assessments**

**People We Support Fire Risk Assessment**

An individual Fire Risk Assessment will be completed for all new individuals as part of the support Plan. This should be reviewed at 6 monthly intervals and when the individual circumstances, health and mobility changes. Staff should be made aware of the contents.

The individual evacuation needs gives a summary of needs should there be a fire and is kept in the red evacuation pack by the front door.

**Records**

**Fire Equipment and maintenance checks**

All homes must ensure the fire records of testing equipment are up to date and relevant checks have been carried out.

**Fire Instruction Checklist for Use during Induction and Ongoing Training**

**Subjects to Be Covered:**

* Hazards and safe practices
* Locations of fire alarm call points and indicator panel
* How to raise the alarm
* Action on hearing the alarm
* Calling the fire service
* Location of equipment
* Use of fire equipment and extinguishers
* Escape routes and assembly points (location, use and keeping clear)
* Safety signs
* Use of and importance of fire doors, self-closers and release devices
* The importance and need to report hazards, faults, dangers etc.
* Particular instructions related to specific duties
* Smoking policy
* Fire procedure — staff, people we support, visitors and contractors
* Floor walk (induction)
* Location of evacuation pack

**Preventative Measures**

**Housekeeping**

Keep waste material in suitable containers before it is removed from the premises. If bins, particularly wheeled bins are used outside, secure them to prevent them from being moved to a position next to the building and set on fire. Never place skips against a building — they should normally be a minimum of 6 metres away from any part of the premises.

Other housekeeping issues include:

* The appropriate storage of aerosol sprays and medical gases;
* Where possible, avoiding the use of flammable materials and liquids;
* Orderly stacking of linen, paper, medical consumables, packaging, furniture and furnishings.

Waste should not be allowed to accumulate inside the building, particularly in escape routes, whilst they are awaiting collection.

In higher risk areas, you need to make sure arrangements are in place for safe close down, e.g. checking all appliances are turned off and combustible waste has been removed.

**Laundries**

Washing and drying machines should not be loaded in excess of the manufacturer’s recommendations. Exhaust filters should be cleaned, and maintenance carried out regularly. Items such as cleaning cloths and mop heads placed in the dryers can spontaneously combust if there is any chemical residue left on them.

Ironing equipment should be correctly used and maintained.

**Kitchens**

A suitable fire extinguisher and fire blanket should always be provided. All deep fat cooking equipment should have a thermostatic temperature control and should never be left unattended. Open cooking, such as frying, should not be left unattended. There are approximately 8,000 chip pan fires every year.

Extractor ducting, grease traps and filters should be regularly cleaned and maintained. Isolation switches for gas and electricity supplies, as well as isolation switches for any extractor fans which should be located near an exit.

**Storage**

Combustible materials are not just those generally regarded as highly combustible, such as polystyrene, but all materials that will readily catch fire. However, by carefully considering the type of material, the quantities kept and the storage arrangements, the risks can be significantly reduced.

In your office, the retention of large quantities of paper records, especially if not filed away in proper cabinets, this can increase the fire hazard. Such readily available flammable material makes the potential effect of arson more serious.

Do not pile combustible material against electrical equipment or heaters, even if turned off for the summer, and do not allow smoking in areas where combustible materials are stored.

To reduce the risk, store excess combustible materials and stock such as baggage, linen and furniture in a dedicated storage area, storeroom or cupboard that is fire resistant. Do not store excess stock in escape routes or areas where service users or visitors would normally have access. Bathrooms should not be used for storage unless they are separated from the rest of the premises by fire resistant doors and walls, and are fitted with automatic fire detection.

Consider the following to reduce these risks:

* Use fire retardant materials wherever possible (suppliers should be able to provide evidence of this).
* Ensure electrical equipment in your store rooms does not become a potential source of ignition.
* Provide adequate space for your equipment, furniture and wheelchairs. Allow storage in designated areas only.
* Provide separate storage areas for medical gases, aerosols and flammable gases.

**Voids**

Voids (including roof voids) should not be used for the storage of combustible material. Such voids should be sealed off or kept entirely open to allow for easy access for inspection and the removal of combustible materials.

**Dangerous Substances**

Your supplier should be able to provide detailed advice on safe storage and handling. The following principles will help you reduce the risk of fire:

* Where possible, substitute highly flammable substances and materials with less flammable ones.
* Reduce the quantity of dangerous substances to the smallest reasonable amount necessary for running the home.
* Correctly store dangerous substances e.g. in a fire resisting enclosure. All flammable liquids and gases should be locked away.
* Ensure you and your staff are aware of the fire risk that dangerous substances present and the precautions necessary to avoid danger.

**Flammable Liquids**

Highly flammable liquids present a particularly high fire risk. Flammable liquids stored in plastic containers can be a particular problem if involved in a fire as they readily melt, spilling their contents and fuelling rapid fire growth.

The risk is reduced by ensuring the storage and use of highly flammable liquids are carefully managed, that materials contaminated with solvent are properly disposed of and when not in use, they are safely stored. Up to 50 litres may be stored in a fire resistant cabinet or bin that will contain any leaks.

There should be no potential ignition sources in areas where flammable liquids are used or stored, and flammable concentrations of vapors may be present.

**Aerosols**

Some aerosol cans contain flammable products stored at pressure. They can present as a significant hazard. When ignited, they can explode and produce fireballs. Their presence can make it unsafe for fire fighters to enter a building and they have the potential for starting multiple fires.

Damaged and leaking aerosols should be removed immediately to a safe, secure and well-ventilated place.

**Medical Gases**

Where medical oxygen is being used, you should consider the following:

* The room where the oxygen is being used should be designated a ‘No Smoking Area’;
* There should be clear instructions and warnings for occupants — in particular ‘no smoking’;
* The room should be adequately ventilated to ensure any leaks of oxygen cannot accumulate;
* All staff involved in operating the oxygen equipment should be properly trained, including the provision of written procedures.

The number of medical oxygen cylinders stored should be kept to a minimum as necessary to ensure sufficient supply is available for patients’ needs. Where possible, especially when significant numbers of cylinders need to be stored, the cylinders should be preferably stored outside, in a safe and secure location where they cannot be interfered with.

Where spare cylinders need to be stored indoors, the number should be kept to the practical minimum and located in well ventilated areas, but not in passageways, stairwells or adjacent to emergency exit. Ideally, they should be located in designated marked cupboards or rooms provided with permanent ventilation to the outside.

Cylinders should be:

* Kept away from extremes of heat, fires and naked lights (smoking should be prohibited in the vicinity);
* Not be stored areas where there is a possibility of them being contaminated with oils or greases; e.g. kitchen and garage areas;
* Secured to prevent their falling over;
* Separate the full and empty cylinders in order to avoid confusion.

The fire and rescue service should be informed if oxygen is used and stored on the premises and a warning sign should be displayed where stored or in use.

**Hazardous Materials**

Where it is necessary to use or store hazardous materials, such as fuels (whether in containers or within fuel tanks and machinery), fertilisers, weed killers, paints and solvents, they should be stored in a secure and safe location, for example a properly ventilated fire resisting bin or storeroom. Care should also be taken to ensure that incompatible materials are not stored together.

**Heating**

Individual heating appliances require particular care if they are to be used safely, particularly those which are kept for emergency use during a power cut or as supplementary heating during severe weather. The greatest risks arise from lack of maintenance and staff unfamiliarity with them. All heaters should preferably be secured in position when in use and fitted with a fire guard if appropriate.

As a general rule, convector or fan heaters are preferable over radiant heaters because they present a lower risk of fire and injury. The following rules should be observed:

* All heaters should be kept well clear of combustible materials and in a position where they do not cause an obstruction.
* Heaters which burn a fuel should be sited away from draughts.
* Portable fuel burning heaters, including bottled gas (LPG), should only be used in areas used by service users or visitors in exceptional circumstances and if shown to be acceptable in your risk assessment.

All gas heating appliances should be used only in accordance with manufacturers instructions and should be serviced annually by a competent person.

In general, people we support, visitors or staff should be discouraged from bringing their own portable heaters into the premises.

The use of boiler rooms to store combustible materials should be avoided.

**Electrical Safety**

Electrical equipment can be a significant cause for accidental fires in

buildings. The main causes are:

* Overheating cables and equipment, e.g. due to overloading circuits, bunched or coiled cables or impaired cooling fans;
* Incorrect installation or use of equipment;
* Damaged or inadequate insulation on cables or wiring;
* Combustible materials being placed too close to electrical equipment which may give off heat even when operating normally or may become hot due to a fault;
* Arcing or sparking by electrical equipment;
* Overloading sockets;
* Inadequate servicing and maintenance of equipment, e.g. electrical blankets;
* Overheating cables due to retention in a coil;
* Lack of maintenance or testing.

All electrical equipment should be installed and maintained in a safe manner by a competent person. If portable electrical equipment is used, including items brought into a workplace by staff, your fire risk assessment should ensure that it is visually inspected and undergoes portable appliance testing (PAT) at intervals suitable for the type of equipment and its frequency of use.

Issues to consider include:

* Overloading equipment;
* Correct fuse ratings;
* PAT testing and testing of fixed installations;
* Protection against overloading of installation;
* Protection against short circuits;
* Insulation, earthing and electrical isolation requirements;
* Frequency of electrical inspection and test;
* Temperature rating and mechanical strength of flexible cables;
* Portable electrical equipment, including lanterns;
* Physical environment in which the equipment is used (e.g. wet or dusty atmospheres);
* Suitable use and maintenance of personal protective equipment.

**Smoking**

Carelessly discarded cigarettes and other smoking materials are a major cause of fire. A cigarette can smolder for several hours, especially when surrounded by combustible material. Many fires are started several hours after smoking materials have been emptied into waste bags and left for future disposal.

**Your risk assessment must take account individuals who smoke** **in their flats**

In those areas where smoking is permitted, provide deep and substantial ashtrays to help prevent unsuitable containers being used. Empty all ashtrays daily into a metal waste bin and take it outside. It is dangerous to empty ashtrays into plastic waste sacks which are then left inside for disposal later. You should carry out regular inspections in all areas, particularly smoking permitted areas once these areas have been vacated at night and actively encourage individuals to smoke outside because of the risks posed.

**Managing Building Works and Alterations**

Fires are more frequent when buildings are undergoing refurbishment or alteration.

You should ensure that before any building work starts, you have reviewed the fire risk assessment and considered what additional dangers are likely to be introduced. You will need to evaluate the additional risks to people, particularly since the project may continue to be occupied. Lack of pre- planning can lead to haphazard co-ordination of the fire safety measures.

You should liaise and exchange information with contractors who will also have a duty under the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996 to carry out a risk assessment and inform you of their significant findings and the preventative measures they may employ.

You should continuously monitor the impact of the building work on the general fire safety precautions, such as the increased risk from quantities of combustible materials and accumulated waste. You should only allow the minimum materials necessary for the works in hand within or adjacent to your building.

Additional risks can include:

* Hot work such as flame cutting, soldering, welding or paint stripping;
* Temporary electrical equipment;
* Blocking of escape routes including external escape routes;
* Introduction of combustibles into an escape route;
* Loss of normal storage facilities;
* Fire safety equipment, such as automatic fire detection systems becoming affected;
* Fire resistant partitions being breached or fire doors being wedged open;
* Additional personnel who may be unfamiliar with the premises.

Activities involving hot work such as welding, flame cutting, use of blow lamps or portable grinding equipment can pose a serious fire hazard and need to be strictly controlled when carried out in areas near flammable materials.

**Particular Hazards in Corridors and Stairways used as Escape Routes**

Items that are a source of fuel pose an ignition risk, or are combustible and likely to increase the fire loading or spread of fire. These should not be located on any corridor or stairway or circulation space that will be used as an escape route. Such items include:

* Portable heaters, e.g. bottled gas (LPG) or electrical radiant heaters and electrical convectors or boilers;
* Gas cylinders for supplying heaters;
* Cooking appliances;
* Unenclosed gas pipes, meters, and other fittings.

However, where more than one escape route is available, items such as those below may be acceptable if the minimum exit widths are maintained and the item presents a relatively low fire risk:

* Non-combustible lockers;
* Vending machines; and
* Small areas of clothing and/or small quantities of upholstered furniture which meet BS 7176 or the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended 1989 and 1993).

**Restricting the Spread of Fire and Smoke**

The majority of people who die in fires are overcome by the smoke and gases. It is important therefore to ensure that, in the event of fire, the rate of fire growth is restricted in its early stages. Most measures which restrict the rate of fire growth in its early stages will also serve to restrict the fire spread in its later stages.

**Furniture (including beds), soft furnishings and textiles**

The type and quantity of any combustible contents stored or used in your premises can significantly affect the way a fire can grow and spread, therefore, using only products that are resistant to ignition and flame spread can significantly help reduce the fire risk to people.

Upholstered furniture, soft furnishings and textiles which are easily ignited or have rapid spread of flame characteristics should, where practicable, be avoided in any type of project and all such products should meet a recognised fire performance standard. Information on fire performance and testing of furniture, furnishings and textiles can be found in the following standards:

* Ignitibility of upholstered furniture (including composites of cover material and infill) and loose covers: BS 5852.
* Resistance to ignition of upholstered furniture for non-domestic use: BS 7176.
* Ignitability of mattresses, divans and bed bases: BS7177.
* Ignitability of mattresses with waterproof covers: BS 6807, Section 2.
* Flammability of fabrics for curtains and drapes (including nets and linings, blackout curtains and roller blinds): BS 5867-2, Type, Type B.
* Burning behaviour (ignitability and flame spread) of curtains and drapes: BS EN 1101 (ignitability) and BS EN 1102 (flame spread).

In some existing premises, you may not be able to achieve appropriate fire performance standards immediately, but they should be applied to all new or replacement items.

Textile fabrics that are capable of meeting an appropriate type of standard of fire performance referred to include, durably flame retardant treated cotton and 100% flame retardant polyester. 100% modacrylic is also suitable if available.

It is important to note that retaining the flame retardant effectiveness of all chemically-treated flame retardant fabrics, such as flame retardant treated cotton, is dependent on the correct laundry procedures being followed. Careful note should be taken to all wash and care instructions provided. Advice should be sought from the supplier if no such instructions are provided.

People we support should only be allowed to provide items of their own furniture or textiles for their own bedroom if the item meets a fire performance standard similar to those described above.

You should take care when selecting decorative finishes or multi-layer decorative systems, e.g. textile based linings and oil based paints, particularly those used for wall and ceiling linings, and ensure that they are suitably fire retardant.

**Bedding and Sleepwear**

Bedding and sleepwear should also meet recognised standards of fire performance. Information on fire performance specifications for bedding and sleepwear can be found in the following standards:

* Flammability of blankets for use in the public sector. BS 5866-4, or for ignitability of a representative fabric sample: BS 7175.
* Flammability of counterpanes for use in the public sector: BS 5815-3.

**Note**: Counterpanes covering the bed at all times will help to protect the other textile bedding items from involvement in a fire.

* Ignitability of continental quilts and duvets: BS 7175.
* Flammability of quit covers: BS 5815-3.
* Ignitability of sleepwear (including dressing gowns and bed jackets): BS5722.

**Note**: This standard gives three different levels of flammability performance. Level 3 is suitable for normal situations, but higher performance levels can be specified for high risk situations (level I being the highest).

**Note**: For all the above standards, equivalent European classifications and standards, where available, may also be used.

Bedding and sleepwear provided by the service users and their families should, as far as is practicable meet equivalent standards of fire performance.

Many products such as mattress overlays, fleeces and under-pads are used in the care of service users with, or with pre-disposition to, pressure sores. They are usually placed within the bed assembly, or on easy chairs or wheelchairs. Where possible, these products should be resistant to ignition. BS 7175, Section 3 gives further guidance. However, nursing or medical advice should be sought if there is likely to be a conflict between an individuals’ needs and fire safety.

**Arson**

Be aware of other small, deliberately set fires in the locality, which can indicate an increased risk to your premises. Be suspicious of and record any small ‘accidental’ fires on the premises and investigate them fully.

Fires started deliberately can be particularly dangerous because they generally develop much faster and may be intentionally started in escape routes. Of all the risk-reduction measures, the most benefit may come from efforts to reduce the threat from arson.

Measures to reduce arson may include the following:

* Ensure the outside of the premises is well lit and if practical, secure the perimeter of the premises;
* Thoroughly secure all entry points to the premises, including windows and the roof, but make sure that this does not compromise peoples ability to use the escape routes;
* Make sure you regularly remove all combustible rubbish;
* Do not place rubbish skips adjacent to the building, and secure waste bins in a compound separated from the building;
* Do not place vehicles, caravans or other portable structures adjacent to the building;
* Encourage staff to challenge people acting suspiciously;
* Remove automatic entry rights from staff who have been dismissed;
* Ensure that your security alarm/fire-detection system is monitored and acted on;
* Secure flammable liquids so that intruders cannot use them;
* Secure all storage areas and unused areas of the building that do not form part of an escape route against unauthorised access, ensure access to keys to those areas is restricted;
* Fit secure metal letterboxes on the inside of letter flaps to contain any burning materials that may be pushed through;
* Deter unauthorised entry to the site;
* Prevent unauthorised entry into the building;
* Maintain security of the main access door in the event of a fire. An assistant senior support workers discretion should be used to decide whether a carer should then return to wait with the special evacuation service user until evacuated, if the progression of the fire so requires.

This Fire Policy has attempted to cover all aspects of fire prevention. However, it is up to us as individuals to remain vigilant and keep our individuals safe.

Date: 01/01/2024

Policy Implemented: 01/01/2024

Review Date: 03/01/2025

Signature: Eamonn Cummings (Director of Operations)