Luton Borough Council
Housing Landlord Services

Fire Safety Policy

Version 2.2

Notice to staff using a paper copy of this policy or guidance

The policies and procedure database holds the most recent and approved version of this guidance. Staff must ensure they are using the most recent guidance.

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<th>Abdul Kahir</th>
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Fire Safety Policy

1 Scope

1.1 This policy applies to all General Need blocks of flats managed by Housing Landlord Services only. This policy does not relate to any corporate buildings managed by Fixed Assets.

The policy applies to Introductory, Secure and Non-Secure Tenants.

This policy also applies to tenants living in sheltered schemes,

2 Policy Statement

2.1 LBC aims to provide a safe environment in which our residents are assured that the risk of injury or damages to their homes caused by fires is minimised.

2.2 In aiming to deliver this environment, Luton Borough Council, as a general principle, will seek to identify, assess and reduce risks to ensure compliance with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

2.3 To encourage the assurance and confidence of our residents, regular fire safety awareness information will be made available. This will include maintain residents aware of their own obligations to safely maintain their tenancies in a fashion that minimise the risk to themselves and other occupants of the blocks in which they reside.

2.4 LBC will foster and maintain good working relationships with partner services to ensure the ongoing safety of our residents, this includes Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service.

2.5 In discharging our obligations to fire safety, LBC will:

- Carry our Fire Risk Assessments in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;
- Undertake Fire risk Audits with Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service;
- Provide relevant employees with Fire Safety training;
- Maintain and improve fire safety as required through the recommendations of the fire risk Assessments and the Fire Audits;
• Carry out joint training exercises with Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service and other agencies as necessary to ensure readiness for emergencies;

• Carry out all necessary servicing to ensure that fire prevention equipment is in full operation at all times;

• Consider Fire Safety in all improvement programmes carried out by LBC.

3 Fire Risk Assessments

3.1 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

3.1.1 Under the fire legislation, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) 2005, as the responsible person (landlord) we must carry out a fire risk assessment and take reasonable steps to remove or reduce any risks that have been identified.

3.1.2 LBC will ensure that all residential communal blocks owned by Luton Borough Council’s Housing Department have a fire risk assessment carried out.

3.1.3 Where practical Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) will be located within the premises. On some sites may not be practical and in this event the FRA will be located in the landlord’s office (based either at the Town Hall or at Kingsway Depot). They will also be located centrally within the authority’s servers, and therefore have a read only access by all housing staff.

3.2 Management and review of Fire risk Assessments (FRA)

3.2.1 The fire risk assessment is reviewed regularly. If the findings of the assessment are considered to be no longer valid or there has been a significant change to the premises which has affected the fire risk or the fire safety measures. Situations which might prompt a review include:

• A change in the number of people present or the characteristics of the occupants including the presence of people with some form of disability.
• Introduction of new equipment, structural alterations to the building, including the internal layout, significant changes,
• Alterations to building such as replacement entrance doors or internal decoration to communal areas,
• The introduction or increase in the storage of hazardous substances; or
• Becoming aware of shortcomings in fire safety measures or potential improvements.

• If fire occurs.

• Updates in legislation.

3.2.2 LBC will regularly review Fire Risk Assessments as follows:

Blocks are assigned to a risk rating category, which is based on RED being high risk blocks where multi people reside, AMBER which are medium risk as they are occupied by vulnerable people and GREEN as blocks of low general risk - The timescales each the review of the FRA for each of the categories are:

High Rise blocks – Every year or following any significant changes
Sheltered blocks – Every year or following any significant changes
General needs blocks – Every three years or following any significant changes.

4. Fire Risks

4.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) places a duty on LBC as Landlord to take general fire precautions to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of the people on the premises and in the immediate vicinity.

Therefore, the main fire risks identified in communal areas are;

• Arson
• Faulty electrical installations
• Accumulation of flammable rubbish
• Smoking
• Failures in construction (fire doors, lack of emergency lighting and smoke ventilation etc)

4.2 LBC will manage its obligations under the FSO as detailed in this policy.

5. Fire Precautions

5.1 Fire precautions are designed to protect people, property and assets against the loss of life, injury and damage caused by fire.

5.2 LBC will undertake and maintain the following fire precautions:

5.2.1 Fire Prevention Measures (expanded in item 6)

• Good housekeeping e.g. removal of rubbish in communal areas, fire stopping etc.,
• Adequate security measures, (e.g maintenance of secure entries,
CCTV camera where it exists),

- Maintenance, inspection and testing of electrical installations and equipment,
- Prohibition of smoking.
- Control of contractor’s operations on our premises (i.e. method statement, risk assessment, permit to works)

5.2.2 Fire Protection Measures (expanded in item 7)

- Install smoke detection systems – where necessary
- Install and maintain fire alarms – where necessary
- Install and service Fire Fighting Equipment, e.g. fire extinguishers, dry risers – where necessary
- Maintain compartmentation and fire doors
- Maintain and communicate evacuation plan
- Maintain Fire exits
- Install and maintain emergency lighting
- Install and maintain smoke ventilation where possible

5.2.3 Pre-Planning

- Carry out fire drills – where blocks have a central alarm system
- Train, educate and inform (residents, staff and contractors)
- Formulate and maintain fire policy and procedures
- Carry out Fire Risk Assessments and Fire Audits as necessary
- Co-operation and co-ordination with other premises users
- Place and maintain clear safety signage

6. Fire Prevention (see also item 5.2.1)

6.1 Housekeeping – in order to prevent possible sources of fire and to minimise the risk to our residents the following principles will be applied:

- No dumping of rubbish is permitted in chute areas
- Rubbish should not be left outside of flat doors and should be disposed of in the designated bin chute or taken to the bin outside
- No rubbish should be left in communal areas especially flammable material
- Keep clear all corridors, walkway, landings and exit routes (means of escape)
- Electrical and Service cupboards must not be used for storage of any material

6.2 Fire stopping – to maintain the integrity of communal areas and prevent the spread of fire the following principles will be applied:

- High Rise blocks will be inspected periodically to check for fire stopping breaches where services pass through floors and walls, and where necessary filled with an appropriate material to prevent fire and flame spread
• Contractors working on any block should take care to avoid penetrating walls, ceiling or floor slabs for passing through cable, pipes or conduits, where this is unavoidable the contractor will ensure that the penetration is sealed and fire stopped adequately and where necessary with intumescent fillers. This must be agreed with LBC before work commences and inspected directly upon completion.

• Service and electrical cupboards within the communal areas must be kept locked at all times.

6.3 Electricity – in order to ensure that the electrical installation within blocks of flats, the electrical installation to the communal parts of the building will be checked every 5 years in accordance with the guidance provided by the Institute of Electrical Engineers Wiring Regulations 17th Edition (as amended). In addition PAT testing to be carried out to Council supplied electrical equipment in sheltered blocks.

6.4 Gas Installation – in order to prevent a gas escape or combustible incident with blocks of flats, the building/individual heating systems are annually serviced to ensure compliance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

6.5 Smoking – to prevent the likelihood of a fire starting, LBC operates a no smoking policy in all communal areas of a building. In accordance with the Health Act 2006 and the Smoke Free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006.

6.6 Regular testing of Lightning Protection systems for high rises.

This applies to all communal areas and work areas under Housing Landlord control, and therefore affects sheltered housing as well as high and low rise blocks of flats, including the lifts. It does not apply to residents smoking in their own dwellings within a block.

7. Fire Protection (see also item 5.2.2)

7.1 In order to minimise the risk from any fire that may occur within the blocks and to ensure safe evacuation, the following control measures have been implemented:

7.1.1 Evacuation Routes

To ensure safe evacuation the routes must be kept free of sources of ignition, flammable and combustible material and obstructions at all times. In High Rise blocks of flats daily inspections will be carried out to identify and deal with such issues.

7.1.2 Evacuation Plan

The following applies to all High Rise and Sheltered blocks:
Providing that the integrity of the front door, to each individual flat, is maintained and not compromised in any way, a potential fire within a flat will act as a sealed fire compartment. The flat should contain a fire for up to 30 minutes, with the fire doors and concrete walls resisting before spreading into the common parts of the block. In addition residents in other flats will have 1 hour protection when their own front door is taken into consideration.

THE FIRE BRIGADE HAS ADVISED THAT RESIDENTS SHOULD REMAIN IN THEIR INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES UNLESS THEY ARE IN THE IMMEDIATE LOCATION OF THE FIRE, IN WHICH CASE THEY THEN WILL BE LED, BY THE FIRE CREW IN ATTENDANCE, TO A PLACE OF SAFETY

On the arrival of the fire brigade they will determine:

- When and if to commence a full evacuation.
- When to instigate a visual inspection.
- When residents can return to their premises.
- When to involve the Police.
- Any other steps appropriate to the circumstances

Where the fire is located within the resident’s own property then it is necessary to escape the building, this should be carried out in an orderly fashion, through the nearest Fire Exit. If possible and it is safe to do so, all windows and doors should be closed to prevent fire spread to other areas of the building.

The following applies to all other blocks:

Providing that the integrity of the front door, to each individual flat, is maintained and not compromised in any way, this should contain a fire for up to 30 minutes. Where it is necessary to escape the building, this should be carried out in an orderly fashion, through the nearest Fire Exit or designated escape route. If possible and it is safe to do so, all windows and doors should be closed to prevent fire spread to other areas of the building.

7.1.3 Fire Exits

All fire exits must be kept free of all obstructions, both inside and out, and be available for use when required. Fire exits will not be left open to ensure that security of the building is maintained, nor shall fire exits be used by the occupants of the building as a main entrance/exit to the building. In High Rise blocks of flats daily inspections will be carried out to identify and deal with such issues.

7.1.4 Fire Doors – common areas

Fire doors are provided to help prevent the spread of smoke and fire and must be kept closed. Fire doors are checked regularly to ensure they are operating correctly and are not damaged. Fire doors’, including entrance
doors to tenant’s flats and cupboards, should NOT be propped open, tampered with or compromised in any way, i.e.; materials affixed to frame/door to prevent banging noises. Any problems should be reported immediately to LBC.

7.1.5 Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are positioned in boiler / lift rooms and are not for use by the residents or the public. They should not be removed from their designated location.

Fire extinguishers are maintained and tested annually.

7.1.6 Dry Risers – High rise flats only

Dry risers are positioned and secured on each floor within the block. The riser is located within a secure metal box to prevent theft of the valve, using an FB17 padlock (Fire Brigade approved). They are inspected by the Fire Service and wet tests are carried out, risers are tested, maintained and serviced on a regular basis.

7.1.7 Signage

Appropriate fire safety signage is displayed throughout communal areas building indicating the fire exit/s and action notice information. Fire doors are marked to keep shut and no smoking signs are affixed inside the block.

7.1.8 Smoke Alarms

All flats are fitted with hard-wired smoke detectors.

Smoke detectors are not installed in communal areas, where fire risk assessments have determined a low level of risk (i.e no combustible material or ignition sources should be found in communal areas). In addition there is a high probability of vandalism in communal areas. If smoke detectors are fitted, it introduces a further risk in that tenants will be relying on smoke detectors which are likely to be damaged through vandalism

Sheltered housing blocks with the exception of Acworth Court (High Rise) have their own fire alarm systems. Smoke detectors within each property are connected to the Central Control alarm centre.

Gas servicing engineers will carry out an annual check on the Smoke Detectors as part of the gas servicing programme; a separate programme will pick up properties that do not have individual gas boilers.
8. Partnerships

8.1 LBC work closely with Bedfordshire and Luton Fire & Rescue Service and our specialist Fire Risk Assessor on the following aspects. Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Service

- To carry out an annual audit of the High Rises. The purpose of this inspection is to identify immediate risks and to ensure that actions from the previous inspection have been implemented.
- Regular training exercises with the Fire Service to ensure procedures are in place and that they are familiar with block layouts in the event of a real fire
- Jointly producing relevant policies and procedures
- Training to LBC staff
- Awareness campaigns for our residents

Fire Assessor

- To carry out Fire Risk Assessments
- Technical and expert advice
- Compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO).

9. Vulnerable people

9.1 High Rise and Sheltered blocks – If the fire is not within the residents own property, it is a recommendation that all residents to stay in their home until rescued by the fire service. If the fire is within the resident’s home – they must escape safely from within their property, through a fire exit or a designated escape route. If possible and it is safe to do so, all windows and doors should be closed to prevent fire spread to other areas of the building. Appendix A (Stay Put Policy).

9.2 Mobility Scooters - the policy is being reviewed for storing scooters within blocks especially in the Sheltered Blocks, which covers the associated risks. As a general rule LBC does not allow mobility scooters in any property that has a single staircase access.

10. Publicising the Policy

10.1 LBC publicises its policies and procedures on Tenancy Rights and Obligations to residents and staff in a number of ways:

- Tenant Handbook
- Factsheets
- Housing Matters
- LBC Website
- Staff Briefings and
- Training

11. **Review of the Policy**

11.1 This policy will be reviewed and amended periodically to ensure that it meets the needs of the Council and its tenants.

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Appendix A
Housing & Community Living Department

Housing Landlord Service

Fire Action Advice for Flats

May we take this opportunity to remind you of the actions to take in the event of a fire.

CHECK YOUR SMOKE ALARMS REGULARLY, REPORT ANY FAULTS IMMEDIATELY TO HOUSING REPAIRS ON FREEPHONE 0800 0147333

- We have a “STAY PUT” policy agreed with the Fire Service. This means that unless the fire is in your flat you should stay in the flat. If there is a need to evacuate the Fire service will supervise this.

- If you discover a fire raise the alarm immediately by telephoning 999 and ask for the Fire Service.

- If the fire is in your flat, then get out immediately taking all other occupants with you, then telephone 999.

- Close all doors and windows on the way out if safe to do so.

- Do not use lifts.

- If a smoke alarm goes off and there is not a fire in your flat, don’t open any doors that feel warm, get everybody in one room and close the door. Telephone 999.

- If possible seal the bottom of the door with wet towels, bedding etc.

- If you are near the window open it to get air and to let emergency services see you.

Things to check at night before you go to bed

- Close all internal doors to stop a fire from spreading

- Switch off electrical heaters, blankets, TVs etc. and other items that do not need to run all night.

- Put out cigarettes and any candles safely.

- Make sure exits are clear

- Keep door and window keys where everybody can find them

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