

# Fire Safety Policy

Version: 2

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# 1. Background

Connect Housing manages in the region of 3,000 tenanted properties. A proportion of these properties are flats, a majority of which have communal/ common areas which fall within the remit of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO).

This policy explains how Connect's commitments to fire safety will be met. It will be supported by a Fire Safety Management Plan providing more detailed guidance and procedures. Connect will manage fire safety for its housing stock through a partnered approach using the expertise of internal staff, external consultants (as necessary) and the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

# 2. Objectives of the Policy

As a Landlord and Employer, Connect Housing is responsible for meeting all their statutory obligations. In addition, as a Landlord and provider of Social Housing, they must meet the Regulatory Standards contained within the Regulator for Social Housing's [Regulatory Framework for Social Housing](#).

A key objective of this Policy is to describe how Connect Housing will meet the required statutory, contractual and regulatory requirements in relation to fire safety.

In addition, Connect Housing must undertake a monitoring role to ensure that they are able to demonstrate a validated landlord compliance position, and in doing so, can provide assurance to other 3<sup>rd</sup> Parties that statutory and regulatory standards are being achieved.

Further objectives of this policy are detailed below:

- Provide clear lines of responsibilities for the management of fire safety.
- Form part of Connect Housing's wider organisational commitment to health and safety as set out in its Health and Safety Policy.
- To ensure that Connect Housing provide a safe environment for customers, colleagues and third parties to live and/or work
- To ensure that all persons involved with Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs), the installation, inspection and servicing of fire systems and appliances are properly trained and accredited.
- Provide a commitment to customers who are affected by fire safety to communicate and raise awareness regarding the key issues.

- Encourage customers, through the provision of publicity information, to allow access to carry out FRAs and remedial works which will contribute to their own safety.
- Put in place quality assurance and performance management arrangements to ensure that we are delivering excellent services to our customers.
- To provide a timetable for the review of the Fire Safety Policy
- Provide a service that recognises the diversity of our customers as well as being inclusive and respectful.

### **Fire Safety General Aims and Objectives:**

In order to help minimise the likelihood of fire occurring, and the consequences in the event that a fire occurs, Connect Housing will implement arrangements designed to ensure:

- Suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are undertaken (at appropriate intervals), the significant findings recorded and necessary remedial work undertaken in a timely fashion.
- Adequate drills, servicing, maintenance and testing of fire safety equipment
- Effective liaison and co-operation with West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

This document will be stored on Connect Housing Intranet for internal stakeholders and will be available to be viewed by external stakeholders via their web site.

## **3. Compliance with Regulatory Standards and Legal Obligations**

The application of this policy ensures compliance with the regulatory framework for social housing in England, which requires all housing providers to 'meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes'.

Connect Housing will comply with all current and relevant legislation in relation to fire safety and specifically as detailed in the following:

- the Building Regulations 2010,
- the Housing Act 2004 and
- the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005)
- The Fire Safety Act 2021

Connect Housing takes the view that delivery of the commitments within this policy will ensure that the requirements of other legislation, such as the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Landlord Tenant Act 1985, will also be met.

It is essential to ensure customers, residents, employees, contractors and visitors remain safe in our premises (both individual homes and offices). Failure to properly discharge our legal responsibilities may result in:

- Prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive under Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Prosecution under Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007
- Regulator of Social Housing serious detriment judgement
- Reputational damage
- Loss of confidence by stakeholders in the organisation

## 4. Scope

This policy applies to the fire safety arrangements in all workplaces, common areas of residential premises and any other premises managed and/or owned by Connect Housing that fall within the remit of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

This policy includes the undertaking of Fire Risk Assessments, and the remedial works and actions arising from the FRA; cyclical maintenance of fire safety systems and equipment; and general repair and maintenance activity which could have an impact on fire safety within a building or individual property.

Fire safety systems and equipment includes: Automatic fire detection and alarm systems, emergency lighting, automatically opening smoke vents or smoke control systems, portable fire-fighting equipment, dry or wet risers, sprinkler/mist systems, fire-fighting lifts (or fireman lifts).

Where properties are managed on behalf of external owners and also where Connect properties are managed by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, responsibility for fire safety is set out in the terms of the management agreement.

### **Property Classification**

Connect Housing will clearly categorise those properties falling within the remit of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and requiring that an FRA be undertaken and clearly identify those properties which do not require an FRA.

Where flats exist that do not require an FRA, because they have no communal areas, evidence which explains their exclusion from the FRA programme will be held.

## Record Keeping

The requirement whether to undertake an FRA or not will be held within the core housing management database system (“the database system”)

All other fire safety related information will be recorded centrally on Connects Property Database and Connects electronic document management system, with records kept up-to-date. This will include:

- documented fire risk assessments
- documented reviews or amendments of the fire risk assessment,
- fire precautions records (including regular checking of all fire precaution measures, the fire alarm system tests, the emergency lighting system tests, fixed systems (heating and electrical) and fire extinguishers service records),
- fire safety training records and fire drills,
- installation of mains operated fire detection in domestic dwellings
- Miscellaneous correspondence relevant to fire precautions policies and measures.
- Records relating to training, drills, inspections completed by or on behalf of 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who manage buildings on behalf of Connect

A database will be established to identify all fire safety systems or equipment which require regular maintenance, and a process to update progress with the various maintenance regimes, and store the maintenance certification will be in place.

General fire safety maintenance records will also be held in the log book which is kept on site (where applicable), and in all other instances be held electronically by the Customer Safety Team (CST) with other Landlord Compliance records. These records must be retained for a minimum of 3 years and in accordance with Connect Housing's data policy and governance arrangements. Typical records which are expected to be held are:

- Fixed electrical installation testing and maintenance
- Fixed heating installation testing and maintenance
- Portable Appliance Testing
- Lightning protection inspection and testing
- AOV and smoke control systems testing and maintenance
- AFD and alarm testing and maintenance
- Emergency lighting testing and maintenance
- Portable Fixed Firefighting Equipment servicing records
- Rising mains inspection and testing
- Firefighting lifts maintenance
- Automatic suppression systems testing and maintenance

Fire systems and appliances owned by Connect Housing will be repaired and maintained to the approved standards and manufacturer recommendations.

Connect Housing will carry out regular validation checks to identify whether properties not recorded on QL are required to be added.

Connect will actively consider whether a new FRA will be required on New Property Acquisitions, and when existing buildings are refurbished or there is a change of tenancy or tenure. In these instances Connect will also consider update associated databases of fire safety systems and appliances as necessary.

### **Contractors Competency**

Connect Housing has a responsibility to ensure that directly employed colleagues, managing agents and contractors are appropriately skilled and qualified and are competent to undertake the relevant services. The following controls will operate to ensure competence can be demonstrated:

#### **Competency of Fire Risk Assessors**

Connect will ensure that any fire risk assessors undertaking fire risk assessments on their premises are competent to do so. Appropriate checks will be made on assessors working on behalf of Managing Agents.

In-house fire risk assessors should be able to demonstrate competency by having completed a recognised and examinable fire risk assessment course

External consultant fire risk assessors should be able to demonstrate competency individually via registration on a recognised national scheme such as the Institution of Fire Engineers Register of Fire Risk Assessors or similar. Companies providing fire risk assessment services should be assessed and registered under BAFE SP205-1. Connect will ensure that risk assessments meet this standard and assess the full extent of each building in accordance with the Fire Safety Act 2021. External fire risk assessment providers (whether individuals or companies) should be able to demonstrate reasonable experience of undertaking fire risk assessments in the type of properties concerned.

In selecting fire risk assessors Connect Housing will make reference to the document 'A Guide to Choosing a Competent Fire Risk Assessor' by the Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council.

#### **Contractor Controls**

All contractors used by Connect Housing will be assessed as being suitably competent to undertake the work for which they are being considered. Contractors, where possible, should be third party accredited to a nationally recognised scheme, such as BAFE SP203 (relevant part) for fire alarm contractors, BAFE SP101 for firefighting equipment etc.

Connect Housing will ensure there are appropriate fire safety conditions imposed on all outside contractors. This will be work specific but should ensure that contractors do not place themselves at risk or place any other relevant persons at greater risk from their acts (or omissions).

In addition, Connect Housing will ensure satisfactory control over works carried out by both outside and in-house contractors, for example hot works permits. This will involve confirmation of competent contractors and the planning, controlling and monitoring safe working practices and procedures.

It is the responsibility of the contractor to conduct a risk assessment to ascertain whether work could impact on fire safety measures within a property, before carrying out any repairs. This risk assessment may:

- demonstrate that no further action needs to be taken before works can proceed;
- demonstrate that works can proceed but methods need to be adjusted to account for fire safety issues highlighted;
- require the contractor not to proceed with works until they have looked at the fire risk assessment for the property;
- require the contractor to request a survey/testing to be undertaken.

Contractors must provide suitable Method Statements prior to work commencing and Connect Housing require contractors to replace any fire stopping on completion of any works and interim and post work inspections will be carried out to ensure this is completed

If any responsive repair needs to be carried out to a related fire safety installation, the appointed contractor attending the address must review the examination reports on the compliance database and any other available related information.

For all works, it is expected that the Contractor will also subsequently take appropriate steps to safeguard his own and the occupant's safety prior to commencement of any works.

### **Internal Competency**

Connect Housing will ensure that all colleagues undertaking key roles within the delivery and management of this area will have access to training and support applicable to their roles. This will be categorised into 2 main areas:

- Task specific: training tailored to the specific fire safety related tasks that individuals may be required to undertake as part of their remit.
- Policy and General fire safety awareness: general training for all staff covering the main aspects of basic fire safety and any issues relating to Connects' policy.

## **5. Hierarchy of Control & Monitoring**

**Connect Housing Board** is the Landlord and as such is the legal entity responsible for meeting the required standards. It requires regular assurance on the performance of



this Policy. Board will also oversee the discharge of the required standards and will receive regular reports on the performance of this policy, and is accountable for ensuring its implementation. It will also ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place. The Board, through the Audit and Risk Management Committee, will receive regular summary reports on performance as detailed in this policy and be responsible for ensuring any necessary remedial action is undertaken to comply with the policy.

**Audit and Risk Committee** – will receive quarterly KPI reports and commentary on landlord compliance performance. It will draw any concerns they may have arising from such reports to the attention of the Board.

**Connect Housing Chief Executive Officer** will retain the overall responsibility for the monitoring of the consistent implementation of this policy.

**The Director of Home** shall have overall responsibility for Fire Safety and for implementing this policy. They shall appoint /nominate Principle Duty Holders for relevant areas of Fire safety as described within this Policy.

**Director of Finance and Resources and the Senior Manager Business Assurance** shall provide an effective performance management framework that will strengthen risk control and provide greater levels of assurance. Implementation of this policy and monitoring of audit feedback shall be the role of the Business Assurance Team who will also oversee the timetable for review of each Landlord Compliance service area.

**Fire Safety Core Group** must ensure the establishment of a fire policy that is much more than a document - it should be an integral part of the organisation's culture, of its values and performance standards. They must resource the fire safety programme as necessary and consider the safety implications of decisions they make. Terms of Reference for the Core Group are included at Appendix B.

**Data Governance** –fire safety responsibilities will be held within a master database (QL). The completeness of the master database will be regularly validated and reconciled. The reconciliation will identify the addition or removal of any properties which require inclusion or removal from the programme i.e. new build, acquisitions, disposals and sales. The number of Officers who can add or remove properties within the master database will be limited and closely managed. Other databases or spreadsheets used to manage the implementation of this Policy will also be reconciled with the master database on a regular basis.

**Key Performance Indicators** - weekly reports will be generated for designated senior managers direct from the QI databases to ensure compliance can be monitored against minimum agreed Performance Indicators. The Audit and Risk Committee (3 monthly) and Board (3 monthly as a minimum) will receive high level KPIs as follows:

- % of buildings with a valid FRA renewed within its due date
- Total no of outstanding and overdue remedial actions
- % buildings with outstanding and overdue remedial actions

- % of buildings with fire alarms and emergency lighting present where all systems/equipment has been tested/maintained in accordance with this policy
- Number of notices received by the Fire and Rescue Services in the reporting period

In addition to the above Performance Indicators weekly Management Performance reports will be generated for designated senior managers, and each Health and Safety Working Group meeting. The detailed MPI's will include

- FRA Remedial Works Outstanding Priority 1
- FRA Remedial Works Outstanding Priority 2
- FRA Remedial Works Outstanding Priority 3
- % of fire extinguishers maintained in accordance with this policy

Commentary will be provided for any properties without the relevant certification and the steps being taken to bring them back into a compliant position.

**Internal Audit** - this service area will be included within the cyclical Internal Audit Programme which will review (in particular) adherence to process, data and record keeping.

In addition, Connect Housing will seek additional independent **3<sup>rd</sup> Party Quality Assurance** to ensure they can robustly demonstrate fire safety compliance by procuring independent specialist to regularly inspect, monitor and report on the technical performance and quality of this business-critical service area.

Fire safety is a priority for Connect in order to ensure we provide our customers with safe homes and this policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis. If, as a result, of either the finding of the Internal Audit Programme or other investigation, the service is not performing to the desired level then this will trigger an external strategic review.

## 6. Policy Statement

The Chief Executive, Directors and the Board of Connect acknowledge their moral and legal duty to ensure that all employees, tenants, and any other visitors to premises under Connect Housing's control, are adequately protected from all foreseeable fire risks that may arise.

In order to achieve this, Connect Housing will ensure that adequate resources are made available, suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments are conducted, and appropriate preventive and protective measures are identified and implemented in all premises under Connect Housing's control.

Connect Housing aims to provide a safe environment in which our tenants (and other relevant persons) are assured that the risk of fire or fire safety related injury is minimised. Across our stock we have a variety of tenants and our approach will take

into consideration additional needs for vulnerable, older, and mobility impaired residents.

In order to comply with regulatory standards and legal obligations, and to ensure the safety of its customers, staff, contractors and visitors to its properties, Connect Housing will:

### **Process**

- Provide clear lines of responsibility for the management of fire safety.
- Ensure that a clear and consistent process including front-line engagement and enforcement is in place to obtain access to properties to undertake fire safety checks and complete remedial works, which shall include legal action when required.
- Proactively assess available data for relevant information about the customer to help gain access (disability, vulnerability, local connections, etc.)
- Foster and maintain good working relationships with partner services to ensure the ongoing safety of our tenants, employees and customers; this includes the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

### **Delivery**

Connect is committed to ensuring ongoing compliance with all applicable fire safety legislation, in particular the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005. To this end they will undertake Fire Risk Assessment to every property which falls within the remit of the Order.

### **FRA Property List**

Connect will keep an up to date property list of all premises within their control which require fire risk assessments.

- The full property address and UPRN
- The property designation: General needs, sheltered, supported, temporary accommodation etc.
- Construction type: Purpose built or converted
- Whether the building is managed (and the extent of that onsite management)
- Where shared responsibilities occur (i.e. owned by Connect but managed externally)
- The 'Risk Profile' for the property
- The recommended evacuation strategy for the property
- The date of the last and the next due fire risk assessment

## Fire Safety Asset Register

Connect will maintain a fire safety equipment asset register of all premises within their control which have 'maintainable' fire safety equipment. This list will detail the extent to which properties have:

- Common area automatic fire detection and alarm systems
- Common area emergency lighting systems
- Automatically opening smoke vents or smoke control systems
- Portable firefighting equipment
- Dry or wet risers
- Sprinkler/mist systems
- Fire fighting lifts (or fireman lifts)

## Frequency

The RRFSO is not prescriptive and does not define how often fire risk assessments should be reviewed. However, as a minimum, Connect Housing will review all fire risk assessments no matter what the risk category is:

- following a fire, near miss or threat of arson;
- following any works affecting the means of escape or alarm systems; and
- whenever there has been any structural or material changes to the building or its use.

The above circumstances may prompt a new fire risk assessment not just a review. Connect Housing will also aim to carry out reviews of fire risk assessments as outlined in the table below.

Risk Profile of the Premises	Example of Property Type	Review of FRA
<b>Low Risk</b>	Purpose built, general needs residential blocks of no more than 2 storeys above ground.	Every 5 years
<b>Medium Risk</b>	Purpose built, general needs residential blocks of between 3 and 5 storeys (inclusive) above ground.	Every 3 years
<b>High Risk</b>	Premises with vulnerable occupants (e.g. sheltered and supported housing), HMO's, converted premises, high rise blocks (greater than 5 storeys), assembly buildings, offices etc.	Annual

The above table relates to the frequency of fire risk assessments across Connect Housing's property portfolio. The suggested frequency levels are based on robust and

regular management checks of common areas within premises in the intervening period between assessments.

The risk profile of a property may be altered depending on individual circumstances and the associated risk.

Remedial Works and Maintenance

### **Fire Risk Assessment Remedial Works:**

Connect Housing will maintain a current and up to date collated remedial list for the entire portfolio which will detail all work that has been recommended from the fire risk assessments. The collated remedial list will include:

- The full address of the property to which each individual item of remediation relates
- The item of work that is required (specified in detail)
- The priority of the item of work and when it is to be completed by
- The person responsible for completing the item of work
- When the work was completed (as necessary) and who 'signed off' the item of work.

All fire safety remedial work should be carried out in accordance with the relevant British Standard, approved code of practice or associated best practice guidance.

### **Responsive Repairs**

All responsive repairs must consider fire safety and should be carried out in accordance with the relevant British Standard, approved code of practice or associated best practice guidance by a suitably competent person. The adequacy of proposed 'temporary' repairs should be approved by Property Services Management Team.

### **Planned / Upgrade Works**

Before commencing any planned maintenance or upgrade works a risk assessment must be undertaken by Connect Housing. Current reports/examinations/Fire Risk Assessments should be provided together with any historic works records, both responsive and planned. The collated remedial list should be referred to.

### **Testing and Maintenance (and Repair) of Fire Safety Equipment**

Typical systems to be included in the fire safety equipment maintenance programme will include:

- AFD and alarm systems (and associated equipment such as hold open devices, door release mechanisms, fire curtains etc.)
- Smoke control systems (such as automatically opening smoke vents)

- Emergency lighting systems
- Portable firefighting equipment
- Rising (dry and wet) mains
- Firefighting lifts
- Fire suppression systems such as sprinklers / mist systems
- Lightning protection systems
- Access control systems

### **Post Project Fire Safety Checks**

Where work being carried out by a contractor is likely to have had an impact on existing fire safety measures in a building Connect Housing will ensure that an appropriate volume of post project fire safety checks, proportionate to risk, will be completed by a competent person independent to the contractor. This check will provide confirmation that all existing fire safety measures remain in place and are fully functional.

As it is not unusual for fire compartmentation and firestopping to be disturbed or breached in the course of construction or services work, the post project fire safety check will include visual inspection of vulnerable locations such as roof voids and services risers etc.

### **General Fire Safety Principles**

A strict no smoking policy will be maintained in all communal areas.

### **Liaison with other Responsible Persons**

Connect will comply fully with Article 22 of the RRFSo, and ensure that where we are considered jointly responsible for a property or common area, we will share our fire risk assessment with other relevant parties, and co-operate with them so far as is necessary to ensure the safety of relevant persons.

### **Safety Testing of (Non-Fire Safety Specific) Equipment**

All residential properties will receive the following checks which contribute to reducing the risk of fire:

- Where a property has a gas supply, an annual gas safety check, thereby reducing the risk of fire from gas faults (see [Gas Safety policy](#))
- An electrical safety test in general needs accommodation (dwellings) in accordance with Connect Housing's Electrical Safety Policy. Five-yearly electrical safety tests in general needs common areas, sheltered and supported schemes, thereby reducing the risk of fire from faulty electrical systems
- an additional gas safety check and electrical safety test when a property is re-let (including mutual exchanges)
- regular checks and testing where portable electrical appliances (such as vacuum cleaners or toasters) are provided and maintained by Connect

Housing, in line with the Portable Appliance Testing procedure located in the Electrical Safety policy.

### **Furniture and Furnishings**

In all residential properties where furniture is provided, whether in common areas or as part of a furnished tenancy, furniture will be fire retardant in compliance with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988.

### **Changes of Use and Redesigns**

Where there is a significant change in use proposed to an individual unit or block of dwellings Connect Housing will ensure that all relevant building control legislation is complied with, in particular for fire safety.

Where a property is significantly redesigned or altered by Connect Housing, it will be ensured that all relevant building control legislation is complied with, in particular for fire safety.

Once a change of use or redesign is completed, Connect Housing will ensure that a building regulations completion certificate is obtained and that the premises are fire risk assessed prior to occupation.

### **Common Areas and Escape Routes**

Goods left in communal areas by tenants, residents, leaseholders can be a source of ignition and support combustion, as well as potentially blocking escape routes. For this reason, storage of goods in communal areas is not allowed without our express permission and all tenancy agreements include a clause prohibiting the storage of goods in communal areas. Connect will take action to remove items that are left in communal areas. In particular, bicycles, motorbikes and mobility scooters can present a hazard by blocking important access and escape routes. The storage of bicycles, motorbikes and other customer goods will not be permitted in communal areas, except in designated storage areas.

In the case of mobility scooters, where no designated storage area exists, they must not be stored in access or escape routes. Under no circumstances should mobility scooters be charged in any communal areas other than specially equipped designated charging/storage rooms.

Where customers are storing goods in communal areas, if the owner is known Connect Housing will contact them to request removal as outlined in our procedures. To deal with a general problem a range of approaches will be considered, including for example putting up signs, or carrying out a mailshot to all customers in the building.

Under no circumstances should flammable materials be stored in any communal areas other than designated storage rooms.

## **Managing Customer Influences on Fire Safety**

### **Stored Oxygen:**

Where residents have stored medical oxygen in their properties, they are responsible for informing Connect so the Local Fire Service can be alerted to the presence of stored oxygen in the premises.

### **Security gates and grills:**

Customers (including leaseholders) should not fit metal security gates to their homes without seeking permission from Connect Housing first. Where customers have already fitted metal security gates and these have been identified as an unacceptable fire risk in the fire risk assessment, Connect Housing will request for them to be removed.

### **Domestic Smoke Detection:**

Beyond the scope of the RRFSo, all dwellings owned across Connect Housing's portfolio (excluding leasehold and shared ownership) will have mains operated fire detection systems (BS 5839-6 2013 Grade D) installed as part of tailored planned improvement programmes, void improvement works or cyclical maintenance contracts such as electrical testing.

Maintenance of such systems will be carried out annually or in accordance with manufacturers' instructions. Smoke detection units will be checked as part of the annual heating servicing contract, through technicians carrying out day to day repairs, or through other cyclical maintenance contracts (e.g. servicing of Fire Detection equipment). Where works are refused by the customer, Connect Housing will treat the situation sensitively but will be clear that the work must be completed to ensure their health and safety and that of others in the property.

Residents of individual general needs, market rent, shared ownership and leasehold properties are responsible for their own fire safety within their private homes, including carrying out regular tests of their individual fire detection system.

### **Evacuation Policy**

The evacuation strategy for each independent building must be stated clearly in the fire risk assessment. The strategy will be clearly communicated to residents, usually by means of a suitable Fire Action notice in the communal areas, close to the final exit door.

A 'stay put' policy involves the following approach:

- When a fire occurs within a flat, the occupants alert others in the flat, make their way out of the building and summon the fire and rescue service.



- If a fire starts in the common parts, anyone in these areas makes their way out of the building and summons the fire and rescue service.
- All other residents not directly affected by the fire would be expected to stay put and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.

It is not implied that those not directly involved who wish to leave the building should be prevented from doing so. Nor does this preclude those evacuating a flat that is on fire from alerting their neighbours so that they can also escape if they feel threatened.

The alternative to a stay put policy is one involving 'simultaneous evacuation'. Simultaneous evacuation involves evacuating the residents of a number of flats together. It requires a means to alert all of these residents to the need to evacuate, i.e. a fire detection and alarm system. Simultaneous evacuation is generally applicable to converted blocks of flats, but usually only where it has not been possible to confirm the level of compartmentation required for a 'stay put' policy. Where the recommended evacuation strategy for a block requires the simultaneous evacuation of all building occupants this is often referred to as 'total simultaneous evacuation' or 'total evacuation'.

Evacuation policies for each building will be specific to that building, however as a general premise:

#### Residential accommodation:

- Converted accommodation to have a '**simultaneous evacuation**' policy. All occupants to self evacuate when directed or once the fire alarm sounds.
- Purpose built accommodation to have a '**stay put**' policy. All occupants to self evacuate when directed or once the fire alarm sounds.
- If the Fire Risk Assessment determines that it is appropriate and all remedial works are complete, the Director of Home may approve a "**Stay Put**" policy for purpose built accommodation. Occupants have the option to stay in the building or self-evacuate provided they feel it is safe to do so.

#### Commercial accommodation and community premises

- All premises to have a '**simultaneous evacuation**' policy. All occupants to self-evacuate when directed or once the fire alarm sounds.

Note: Evacuation drills – Fire evacuation drills will be conducted twice annually in office buildings. Residential premises with alarms will be assessed as to the appropriateness of regular fire drills on an individual basis. Performance will be monitored to ensure that buildings can be evacuated in a safe and timely manner. All persons new to the organisation will be instructed in the fire evacuation procedure on induction.

## **Equality and Diversity:**

Connect acknowledges its responsibilities to ensure that persons with disabilities are not put at increased risk in the event of a fire.

### Assisted Evacuation

- In commercial and community premises Connect will be proactive in becoming aware of people who may need assistance to escape and develop specific Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP), as required. This may involve the assistance of staff in the evacuation.
- For non-residential buildings it is the responsibility of each employee to inform their line manager of any physical or sensory impairment he/she may have, including temporary impairment, which may affect the speed in which they can safely evacuate the premises.
- In residential premises, where practicable and should assistance be requested, Connect Housing will provide advice and guidance to assist residents in developing their own means of escape plan in general needs premises. This will not involve the assistance of staff in the evacuation. Liaison will take place with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service on how best to record and store information on non-ambulant or disabled residents in residential blocks where higher dependency residents are expected (such as sheltered or extra care premises).

## **Communication**

### Customer Safety Team / Fire Safety Core Group

A cross group team of employees will join the Customer Safety Team to sit as the Fire Safety Core Group who will meet regularly to:

- To ensure compliance with all aspects of fire safety legislation
- To keep abreast of changes to legislation and associated guidance documents
- To report to Management Team on any and all appropriate matters in particular, progress against action plans, resource requirements and any matter that may require further consideration
- To develop, monitor and review policies and procedures that reflect the role stated above.
- To ensure consistency of approach to fire safety through effective communication.
- To ensure fire safety training is adequate and up-to-date for all staff
- To monitor, record and measure performance
- To liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service and any other appropriate body
- To report to the Board

See Appendix B for terms of reference of the Fire Safety Core Group

#### Communication with Staff

Through training, fire drills, appropriate signage and the intranet.

#### Communication with residents

Through appropriate 'Fire Action' signage in conjunction with other forms of communication provided on a regular basis such as web-site, newsletters, leaflets and home information packs.

#### Liaison with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Connect Housing will engage in a regime of regular communication with the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure good lines of communication and operational familiarity of Connects' buildings. This will include a review of Home Fire Safety Checks in residential properties where consent is given from the tenant (to include hoarders where identified).

#### **Access**

There will be a detailed record of all attempts to gain access. If reasonable access is not provided Connect Housing will escalate action and seek a legal or legislative remedy to ensure access is gained at the earliest possible opportunity in accordance with best practice.

## 7. Inclusive Services

Connect Housing puts people at the heart of everything we do, to ensure customers are happy with the service we provide. To do this, we always strive to provide an inclusive service.

To achieve our aims, we have put in place, a wide range of support tools and adaptations to services that can support our diverse customer base, including our vulnerable customers. In addition, we are constantly seeking to improve our service to customers and will continue to introduce new and innovative ways to achieve this.

While we treat all tenants and their homes with courtesy and respect, listening and responding to individual needs, we also recognise that our customers' safety, and that of visitors to their property is paramount. We must ensure that we gain entry to undertake appropriate safety checks, servicing and repairs. We will always try to work with the tenant to resolve any issues and gain entry and any relevant information is passed to our employee or our contractor to enable an appropriate response.

We operate in a community with wide social diversity and are committed to providing equal opportunities and value diversity. We will treat all tenants fairly, with respect and professionalism, regardless of gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status. We recognise the importance of working in partnership with our tenants to develop and continually improve our services and raise standards, and will work in line with our Neighbourly Places team.

All activities will be subject to compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

## 8. Value for Money

It is our aim to continually assess opportunities to enhance our services to customers and actively involve our employees and customers to achieve value for money.

We continually look for the best value for money by sourcing the best materials at the best price. And we're always looking for ways to make our services work more efficiently and effectively.

There is a culture of "do the right things" and "do things right", helping ensure our service delivery is efficient, effective, and economical.

# Appendix:

## A: Overview of Fire Safety Responsibilities

	<b>Office Premises</b>	<b>Supported Housing, managed properties, Sheltered Schemes</b>	<b>Communal Areas of Residential Properties</b>
<b>Fire Risk Assessment</b>	Responsibility: <b>Asset Manager</b> Recording: <b>QI</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>	Responsibility: <b>Asset Manager</b> Recording: <b>QI</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>	Responsibility: <b>Asset Manager</b> Recording: <b>QI</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>
<b>Management of actions arising from FRA</b>	Responsibility: <b>Asset Manager</b> Recording: <b>Sharepoint</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>	Responsibility: <b>Asset Manager</b> Recording: <b>Sharepoint</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>	Responsibility: <b>Asset Manager</b> Recording: <b>Sharepoint</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>
<b>Arrangements for maintenance and inspection</b> Fire alarm systems, emergency lighting and extinguishers etc.	Responsibility: <b>Service Manager: Customer Safety</b> Recorded: <b>Compliance Register</b> Monitoring: <b>Monthly Performance Report</b>	Responsibility: <b>Service Manager: Customer Safety</b> Recorded: <b>Compliance Register</b> Monitoring: <b>Monthly Performance Report</b>	Responsibility: <b>Service Manager: Customer Safety</b> Recorded: <b>Compliance Register</b> Monitoring: <b>Monthly Performance Report</b>
<b>Fire Safety Checks</b>	Responsibility: <b>Senior Manager Customer Experience</b> Frequency: <b>Weekly</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>	Responsibility: <b>Senior Manager Support Services</b> Frequency: <b>Weekly</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>	Responsibility: <b>Senior Manager Property Services</b> Frequency: <b>Weekly</b> Monitoring: <b>Core Group</b>

<p><b>Auditing of Arrangements</b></p>	<p>Responsibility: <b>Senior Manager Business Assurance</b></p> <p>Frequency: 3 yearly rolling audit cycle</p> <p>Report to: ARMC</p>	<p>Responsibility: <b>Senior Manager Business Assurance</b></p> <p>Frequency: 3 yearly rolling audit cycle</p> <p>Report to: ARMC</p>	<p>Responsibility: <b>Senior Manager Business Assurance</b></p> <p>Frequency: 3 yearly rolling audit cycle</p> <p>Report to: ARMC</p>
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## B: Terms of Reference of the Fire Safety Core Group

### 1. Role and Responsibilities:

The role and responsibilities of the Fire Safety Core Group is to ensure ongoing compliance with all relevant fire safety legislation. It will keep under review the effective management of fire safety across Connects with the object of promoting fire safety at all times.

### 2. Terms of Reference:

Duties of the Fire Safety Core Group will be:

- To ensure compliance with all aspects of fire safety legislation
- To keep abreast of changes to legislation and associated guidance documents
- To report to Senior Management Team on any and all appropriate matters in particular, progress against action plans, resource requirements and any matter that may require further consideration
- To develop, monitor and review policies and procedures that reflect the role stated above
- To ensure consistency of approach to fire safety through effective communication
- To ensure fire safety training is adequate and up-to-date for all staff
- To monitor, record and measure performance
- To liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service and any other appropriate body
- To report to the Board

### 3. Meetings:

The Chair of the Fire Safety Core Group is to be the Director of Home and the Vice Chair to be the Asset Manager. Meetings are to take place once every two months and are to be attended by:

Director of Home  
Service Manager Customer Safety  
Asset Manager  
Senior Manager Property Services  
Service Manager; Neighbourhoods  
Senior Manager Business Assurance  
Senior Manager Supported Housing  
Fire and Rescue Service (representative)  
Fire Safety Consultant (as necessary)

If an attendee is unable to make any given meeting then the responsibility will be delegated upwards to their line manager, this will ensure the Core Group is given priority.

#### **4. Authority:**

The Fire Safety Core Team is authorised by the Chief Executive undertake any activity within its terms of reference.

#### **5. Agenda:**

The fire safety core group will discuss at every meeting;

Legislation/Compliance

Fire Safety Risk Assessments

Fire and Rescue Service

Fire Safety Checks

Arrangements for Maintenance and Inspection of Fire Detection / Prevention Equipment

Fire safety action plan:

- Office premises
- Sheltered Schemes
- Communal Areas (Residential)



## C: Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
2	February 2022	2 yearly review. Introduced reference to 2021 Fire Safety Act
1	October 2019	Introduced as part of compliance review