

FIRE SAFETY POLICY

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An equalities impact screening assessment has been undertaken to determine any potential negative impacts on the nine protected characteristics. None have been identified.

As part of the screening process, TCH also considers any negative impacts on financial inclusion and community cohesion. Again, none were identified. 12

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21. Equality impact assessment **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

1. Legislation

This policy has been amended to take account of recent changes in fire safety legislation as set out below. It outlines how TCH will meet the new requirements.

- **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO)** sets out the requirement for a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) to be carried out for any property other than a single private dwelling, and for the FRA to be continually managed and reviewed.
- **The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022** sets out what is required for buildings over 18 meters and 11 meters.
- **The Fire Safety Act 2021** clarifies the RRFSO in how it applies to the common parts of blocks of flats, doors, windows and walls separating flats from the common parts, external walls and balconies. It sets out the Responsible Person's duties in taking a risk based approach to fire safety.
- **The Building Regulations 2010** as defined by Approved Document B (Fire Safety) volume 1: Dwellings, 2019 edition incorporating 2020 amendments.
- **The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022** came into force for social housing providers on 1st October 2022 and require TCH to ensure alarms are installed and tested.

The new legislation is in addition to our existing obligations to comply with the following:

- Under the **Defective Premises Act 1972** the Landlord has an obligation to the resident for maintenance and repair and a duty of care that the resident is safe from personal injury caused by a relevant defect.
- Under the **Health and Safety at Work (etc.) Act 1974** and the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**, landlords have general duties to protect their employees and any other person's safety when employees are working in the property or the surrounds.
- Under the **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended)** the resident is obliged to allow the Landlord reasonable access to the property, in order to carry out any necessary repairs for which the Landlord is responsible.

2. How TCH will meet its statutory fire safety responsibilities.

The RRFSO states that we must manage any fire risk in our premises. Fire authorities no longer issue fire certificates and those previously in force will have no legal status.

TCH will:

- Ensure compliance with the *Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005*.
- Ensure compliance with the *Fire Safety Act 2021*.
- Apply a risk based approach to FRAs and Fire Safety Management and to determine targeted timescales for actions to the risk.
- Ensure that FRAs and Fire Safety Management are core functions of TCH.

- Ensure effective management of Fire Safety to residential stock in order to secure the safety of all residents, visitors and contractors. This means ensuring that leaseholders fulfil their obligations, i.e. that their individual flat entrance doors comply with current regulations.
- Ensure the Fire Risk Assessment process is reviewed on an annual basis (or as deemed necessary where there are changes in circumstances, after the introduction of new plant or processes, changes in legislation, or where lessons have been learnt regarding fire safety).
- Review the FRA and act on its findings as necessary

3. Fire Risk Assessments

- FRAs will be done by a mixture of specialist fire consultants and “in house” staff.
- FRAs will be carried out at appropriate frequencies according to risk.
- The maintenance of a robust management information system to monitor and audit the FRA process.
- Newly acquired properties have an FRA if they have communal areas or other features requiring one etc. The Development Team will arrange a formal FRA to be carried out prior to handover.
- An effective system is in place for responding to serious incidents involving fire including a thorough investigation process. This will then be reported and reviewed at the FRA working group meetings.
- Enforcement notices will be acted on within five working days or sooner depending on the severity of the notice. All notices should be reported to the Head of Contracts and Compliance who will ensure that this notice is actioned, monitored and the necessary enforcing authority is adequately informed of TCH action.
- Any enforcement notices will be logged onto the central Fire Risk Assessment data record which will record details of the notice and any action undertaken by TCH.
- That Fire Safety awareness is promoted amongst TCH residents.
- That a “zero tolerance” policy is enforced. Ensuring that no items such as bikes, prams or plant pots are kept in internal communal areas. This is to prevent a build up of combustible items and to ensure escape routes are kept clear.
- The zero tolerance policy also includes pictures and paintings etc. on walls.

4. FRA frequency targets

Depending on the likely fire safety characteristics of individual buildings, TCH will decide on what level of fire risk assessment is to be undertaken on each building as follows:

- Type 1; non-intrusive / non-invasive survey to the common parts only
- Type 2; intrusive / invasive survey to the common parts only

- Type 3; non-intrusive / non-invasive survey to the common parts and the flats, or a representative sampling of the flats, usually a 20% target.
- Type 4; Intrusive / invasive survey to the common parts and the flats, or a representative sampling of the flats, usually a 20% target.

In addition we are working towards having a Type 4 survey of all of our buildings within the next five years that have an external wall system or timber construction.

- A new FRA is required when there has been a material change to the building. Examples of material change are as follows:
- Major works carried out such as new roof, entire door replacements, re-wire etc.
- Re-design to the building such as a construction of a new extension or conversion.
- Re-modelling to the building such as converting a living room to a bedroom.
- Improvements such as wholesale window replacements, changes in floor coverings etc.
- Re design of mechanical components such as new communal lighting systems.

High risk properties

Sheltered premises and properties over commercial premises, high rise (over 18 meters) and supported housing to be completed on an annual basis

Medium risk properties

Large schemes, multiple areas of communal hallways and schemes with more than one communal staircase to be completed every two years.

Low risk properties

Houses with an upstairs flat and a downstairs flat and one communal hall and staircase, properties with simple layouts and small communal areas. Will commit to complete every four years.

New-build schemes

New build homes requiring one will have a Fire Risk Assessment carried out before handover and again after 1 year following handover.

5. Remedial works schedule

FRAs identify work and risk. Work will be carried out as outlined below, although allowances to these targets must be made for the availability and delivery of new fire door sets and/or other equipment:

- Immediate risk to be completed within 24 hours. This includes items such as a broken fire alarm.
- High risk works to be completed within three to four months. This includes items such as fire stopping and door seals.

- Medium risk works to be completed within six months. This includes items such as security of doors and repairing fire doors.
- Low risk works to be completed within twelve months. This includes items such as signage and lighting.

6. Management review

- The relevant teams will meet monthly to review the FRA main data store to ascertain if any properties have had material changes that would necessitate a new FRA to be carried out.
- The Head of Contracts and Compliance will assess the data to ensure it is kept up to date and has relevant information contained within.
- An annual Health and Safety report will be presented to the TCH Board which reports on TCH's current position and will include the numbers of FRAs carried out.
- The Contracts and Compliance Department will review the FRA programme monthly to ensure it is fully updated and accurate. Any anomalies will be investigated.
- Reviews will be undertaken to ensure compliance with procedures and legislative requirements. TCH will work with internal and external auditors.
- The mid-year FRA meeting will provide a management plan for the following year and will include setting the annual budget required for the following year's FRA programme. It will aim to include planned remediation projects.

7. Training and competence

All staff will have fire safety awareness training when starting employment with TCH, and refresher training will be given on an annual basis.

Selected staff will have training in the selection and safe use of fire extinguishers when starting employment with TCH, and refresher training will be given on an annual basis.

TCH will ensure that contractors and consultants have the relevant skills, knowledge, experience, training, qualifications and accreditations to ensure fire risk assessments are carried out to the required standard. This will be monitored and audited.

8. Provision of firefighting equipment

It is not the policy of TCH to provide firefighting equipment in the common parts of blocks of flats.

TCH will provide sufficient and appropriate fire extinguishers in its offices and sheltered housing schemes where staff are present to use them. Residents are not expected to use fire extinguishers. They are only in place in sheltered schemes and TCH offices.

9. Testing, inspection and maintenance of fire safety equipment

TCH will inspect and test all of its fire safety equipment as per the targets set below or as recommended by a fire risk assessment:

- Fire detection and alarm systems; weekly where flats are above commercial premises, otherwise monthly. Full smoke-pot tests annually.
- Emergency lighting; monthly / quarterly testing with an annual “drain-down” test.
- Smoke vents operation; monthly / quarterly testing.
- Wet and dry riser systems; 6 monthly testing.
- Sprinkler systems; annually fully tested. Monthly monitoring of pressure level indicators.
- Fire extinguishers are inspected and serviced annually.
- PAT testing; annually.
- Mains electrical services; 10 years after a new installation and five-yearly following that.
- Mains gas services and gas appliances provided to residents; annually.
- TCH will maintain on all of the above equipment in accordance with the requirements identified by the inspections.
- TCH will install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and annually test them. Faulty alarms will be repaired or replaced.

10. Fire detection and alarm systems

TCH will not provide automated fire detection and alarm systems in its blocks of flats, unless called for as a result of a specific fire risk assessment. This is in accordance with current guidance.

TCH will provide at least one smoke alarm internally to their rented flats on every storey of each property, and will ensure that the alarms are in working order at the start of each new tenancy.

TCH will provide adequate automated fire detection to all of its sheltered housing schemes. This will be to a BS 5839 Part 1 L1 specification, which is detection to all areas with some exceptions such as showers, toilets and bathrooms etc.

TCH will provide adequate automated fire detection to all its offices.

Where provided, these provisions will be in accordance with BS 5839 Part 6 Grade D, which is a system incorporating one or more interlinked mains powered smoke detectors (and heat detectors or combination detectors if and as required), each with an integral stand-by supply and alarm sounder. The interlink can be hardwired or radio-interlinked.

11. Over 18 Meter Buildings

In high-rise residential buildings, TCH are required to:

- Provide their local fire and rescue service with up-to-date electronic building plans and information on the design and materials of their external wall

- Undertake monthly checks of firefighting lifts, evacuation lifts and other key pieces of firefighting equipment
- Install a secure information box
- Wayfinding signage

12. Over 11 Meter Buildings

In mid-rise residential buildings (over 11 metres), TCH are required to undertake annual checks of flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of all fire doors in the common part.

13. Fire safety signs

TCH will provide suitable fire action notices in all common parts of blocks of flats letting people know what to do in the event of a fire.

Wayfinding signage will be provided in buildings over 18 meters

In complex premises where the source of an alarm may not be obvious, fire alarm zone charts will be displayed next to the fire alarm control panel.

TCH will not provide fire exit signs in simple properties where there is only one obvious means of escape, such as the normal use front door served by only one staircase.

Where there is a choice of directions for escape TCH will provide clear and appropriate signage for the whole length of that route to a place of “final safety” (i.e. a non-dead-end outside the building where there is means of further escape away from the building).

Lifts which are not to be used in the event of a fire will have clear signage on every landing stating that they are not to be used if there is a fire.

14. Requirements for fire doors and frames

Fire doors and frames (known as door sets) are an important element of TCH’s fire safety strategy. Used correctly, they stop fires from spreading through a building, giving people time to escape and the fire brigade time to attend. The main categories of fire doors are FD30 and FD60 fire doors which offer 30 and 60 minutes fire protection respectively.

They are a legal requirement for flats which open onto communal areas shared with other tenants. This is to make sure crucial escape routes are protected if a fire breaks out. This requirement relates to doors leading to or within common parts and not doors inside flats.

These doors are designed to automatically close behind you in the event of fire, holding flames back and stopping the spread of the fire and toxic smoke into escape routes, corridors and other flats in the block.

15. Fire doors and frames compliance

There has always been requirement for suitable fire door sets to be installed between flats and common parts. The Fire Safety Act 2021 now places a legal requirement on the ‘Responsible Person(s)’ to ensure that these are suitable and sufficient for purpose.

Where door sets do not meet the required standards they need to be replaced. If they fall within the tolerances they may be able to be repaired.

16. TCH fire door sets standards

Gaps: Doors should be close-fitting to the frame with a maximum gap of 3mm (+1mm) around the sides and top of the door. The threshold gap at the bottom of the door may be a maximum of 8mm (+2mm).

Fire door thickness: Fire resisting means that the construction is designated as being capable of resisting the passage of flame and smoke, and providing insulation as defined under the prescribed conditions of appropriate testing.

- 30 Minute fire resisting doors - FD30 doors should generally be no less than 44mm in thickness.
- 60 minute fire resisting doors - FD60 doors should generally be no less than 54mm in thickness.

Self-closing devices: Self-closing devices are to be provided to all fire doors, including flats front doors. Suitable standard overhead units should be used. Note that the strength and features of the control must be correct for the size and use of the door fitted and suitable for the needs of the residents, especially where mobility or disability issues are present.

Any automated hold-open / release devices on fire doors must be positioned at the same level as the self-closer, so that the combined effect of the two forces acting against each other do not warp the doors over time.

Hinges: Hinges should be tested as part of the overall fire door set. Where a door assembly exists replacement any replacement hinges should be certified for use in the relevant door assembly configuration (timber/timber, timber/metal, metal/metal etc.). Where a door is subject to repair it is recommended that the hinges are confirmed to be fitted with intumescent pads as part of the works.

- Seals: In addition to intumescent strips, which are standard on most fire doors, cold smoke seals must also be installed. In general, all fire doors leading onto means of escape (such as protected corridors, stair-cores and protected lobbies) must be fitted with cold smoke seals.
- Glazing: If a vision panel is required in a fire door the glazed panel, including the glass, frame and fixing method must have been successfully tested in a similar door set. The opening in the door set must be formed for the glazed panel in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The glazing has to be fire resisting to 30/60 minutes integrity. Glazing should be marked with an acid etching giving the trade name in the corner of the pane and marked with the appropriate British Standard.

In order to accurately measure the required standards within fire door sets, TCH would expect the following tools to be used by the responsible person to ensure accuracy:

- Fire door check cards (gap and dimensions)
- Calibrated measuring wedges (gaps up to 15mm)
- Vernier measures (internal measurements, door thickness etc)
- Stud-locators (identifying door make up)
- Torches

17. New fire door set certification

New door sets (doors and frames) should meet the minimum requirement of being a FD30S door and the door and frame should be fitted and accredited by FIRAS (Fire Accreditation Scheme) or BM TRADA Certification Scheme.

TCH need to receive the FIRAS certificate or BM TRADA certificate for both the door and frame itself and the certificate for installation. We will also need to see the test evidence to support the components being supplied on the door are in fact those that have been tested under controlled conditions by a third-party accreditor.

18. Lofts

TCH will ensure that all lofts accessed from the common parts and within tenanted flats will be included in the FRAs. We will undertake fire safety control measures as identified by the FRA.

19. Managing internal areas

Buildings are separated into fire zones to stop the rapid spread of gasses, smoke and fire throughout a building. This is done by installing fire doors, seals, fire stopping measures, building materials in use, etc.

Structural load bearing walls must have 60 minute resistance to the effects of fire.

Walls between flats and the common parts must have a minimum of 30 minutes resistance to the effects of fire.

Doors and hatches etc. between flats and the common parts must have a minimum of 30 minutes resistance to the effects of fire.

Any windows and glazing, including fanlights above doors, between flats and the common parts must have a minimum of 30 minutes resistance to the effects of fire.

Cable and service runs between flats must be sealed with appropriate materials giving at least 30 minutes resistance to the effects of fire.

20. External wall cladding

TCH will arrange for intrusive fire safety surveys and investigations into potential combustible exterior cladding or building materials as required under current legislation and guidance.

TCH will undertake remedial measures to correct unsatisfactory work or materials.

TCH will take a comprehensive risk assessment based approach where a building is not specified in legislation as a “high risk building”, and where there is more than 25% of potentially combustible cladding on any one single elevation. Actions will be taken based on the results of that assessment.

21. Balconies

TCH will survey and investigate potential combustible balcony construction materials as required under current legislation. Remedial measures will be undertaken based on the recommendations of these surveys.

A balcony is an integral part of the external elevation of the building and, as such, must achieve the same level of fire resistance. The fire resistance of balconies had been left to the interpretation of Building Control Officers until the clarification issued by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in 2019.

All materials must achieve class 0 surface spread of flame, be of limited combustibility or Class A2 or better, as determined by the height and location of the building as defined by Regulation B4 and the guidance in the Approved Document B2.

22. Fire safety and leaseholders responsibilities

TCH will survey and investigate potential combustible exterior cladding or building materials as required under current legislation and guidance.

It may be necessary to replace the fire door sets of flats that are tenured by leaseholders or shared owners (SO) where the required standards are not met. The respective leases of these flats should be reviewed to determine whether the leaseholder/SO or TCH are responsible for the maintenance of the door set.

Where TCH are responsible for leasehold/SO door sets and they do not meet the standards TCH will carry out Section 20 consultation for their replacement and re-charge the leaseholder/SO.

It is still the freeholders responsibility to ensure the door set conforms with current fire standards even where the leaseholder/SO are responsible for the maintenance of the door set. This also applies to balconies where they are demised to leaseholders. TCH will let the leaseholders/SOs know by letter what actions they need to take. This will be followed by a grace period to allow the door to be brought up to the required standard. The grace period should be relative to the maximum permissible period of non-compliance as stated in the FRA or fire door survey.

If the leaseholders/SO do not comply with this, enforcement action should be taken by the Love Living Homes team with support from the Neighbourhood Teams.

23. Equalities Statement

An equalities impact screening assessment has been undertaken to determine any potential negative impacts on the nine protected characteristics. None have been identified. As part of the screening process, TCH also considers any negative impacts on financial inclusion and community cohesion. Again, none were identified.

24. Policy review and authorisation

This assessment must also be considered a “living document” and must be reviewed after corrective works are completed, new equipment, electrical goods / machines etc., processes are introduced to the premises, after any change in fire legislation, or because of an incident that could be learnt from at another building, from an occurrence that may increase the threat of arson, or in any case at least within one year of its assessment date below.