

Fire Safety Policy

Our mission is to enhance the Life Chances of residents and service users through providing great homes, first class services and working in partnership to build sustainable communities.

1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all Group members. It sets out our approach to mitigating the risks associated with fire in domestic properties owned or managed by Circle's Group members, including:
- supported and sheltered housing properties
 - general needs properties
 - communal areas, including any curtilage (enclosed area of land around a dwelling)
 - temporary accommodation
 - intermediate and market rented properties
 - leasehold and shared ownership properties.
- 1.2 Staff health and safety with reference to fire safety is covered by the Group Health and Safety policy

2 Policy

- 2.1 The safety and security of our residents is paramount. Circle is committed to protecting residents by mitigating the risks associated with fire in all of our properties. We will comply with all relevant legislation and regulation. See Appendix One.
- 2.2 If premises have been designed and built in line with modern building regulations and are being used in line with those regulations, structural fire precautions should be acceptable. However, a fire risk assessment must still be carried out and all fire precautions and maintenance routines continued, as set out in this policy and procedure.
- 2.3 We will work in partnership with local fire authorities and local housing



authorities, including complying with any orders they issue.

3 Policy

3.1 As a group of responsible landlords and property owners Circle will minimise the risks associated with fire and ensure that all of our fire safety duties are carried out. We will:

- take general precautions, including carrying out planned programmes of work in all of our properties to install mains wired fire alarm systems over a reasonable period of time
- carry out stock condition surveys on all our properties including a Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment of fire risks, and take action to rectify identified hazards
- comply with the requirements of the Fire Safety Order 2005, including:
 - carrying out fire risk assessments of all supported and sheltered accommodation as well as communal areas of other tenures, and removing or reducing any risks as far as possible, including ensuring that any flammable or explosive materials are appropriately stored and removing obstructions
 - putting together a property specific evacuation plan for supported and sheltered housing properties, considering the particular needs of the residents including any residents with disabilities (where appropriate the plan may be for residents to remain in their properties in the event of a fire)
 - carrying out regular safety checks in supported and sheltered housing and in communal areas of other tenures, and keeping a record of these checks.

3.2 We will nominate Responsible Persons to manage and carry out fire safety obligations on behalf of each landlord. All relevant staff will receive appropriate training to carry out the work they are required to do under this policy.

Responsible Persons

3.3 'Responsible Persons' are those defined as owing a duty to the occupants of their premises and receiving a rent, although not necessarily the owner. The Responsible Person must as far as is reasonably practical make sure that everyone on our premises, or nearby, will be safe if there is a fire.

3.4 At Circle the Responsible Person for any one property is the Managing Director of the owning partner. Where we own properties that are not managed within the Group we retain responsibility for fire safety: the Managing Director of the owning partner will remain the responsible person.

Different tenures

3.5 Circle is responsible for fire safety in supported and sheltered housing properties, and for communal areas in all tenures. This includes communal areas

shared by any one tenure of properties, as well as communal areas shared by a mix of tenures.

Resident Responsibility

- 3.6 The actions of residents may affect the fire safety of a building. In general residents of individual general needs, market and intermediate rent and leasehold properties are responsible for their own fire safety, including carrying out regular tests of their individual fire detection system.
- 3.7 Some residents will have stored oxygen in their properties for medical reasons. Oxygen aids combustion, therefore sources of heat or open flames in the vicinity should be minimised. Where we are aware that oxygen is stored at the property and where a resident has not already done so, we will notify the relevant fire authority of the presence of stored oxygen in the property. Where appropriate stickers or signs posting a warning against smoking or other high risk activities in the area can be used.
- 3.8 Residents' goods left in communal areas can be a source of ignition or combustible material, as well as potentially blocking escape routes. For this reason storage of goods in communal areas is not allowed without express permission from the housing provider.

4 General Precautions

- 4.1 All residential properties owned within the Group (excluding leasehold and shared ownership properties) will have mains operated fire detection systems 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.
- 4.2 We will consider additional needs of residents who tell us they have a disability such as a hearing impairment, and install appropriate equipment to ensure they are alerted in the event of a fire.
- 4.3 We will ensure that all shared and supported housing properties and communal areas of other tenures are appropriately equipped with fire protection equipment and emergency lighting, fire doors, and safety signs, as advised by a fire risk assessment.
- 4.4 In addition, all residential properties will receive:
- an annual gas and heating installations safety check, thereby reducing the risk of fire from gas faults (see Gas Safety, Heating Installations policy)
 - a ten yearly electrical safety test, thereby reducing the risk of fire from faulty electrical systems (see Electrical Safety policy)
- 4.5 In all residential properties where portable electrical appliances (such as vacuum cleaners or toasters) are provided, regular checks and testing will be carried out in line with the Portable Appliance Testing procedure, located in the Electrical Safety policy.

- 4.6 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.

5 Stay Put Policy

- 5.1 A Stay Put policy may be introduced at a particular locality providing that a full fire risk assessment has been completed on the building and individual premises within that building and that the author of the fire risk assessment is satisfied that a Stay Put policy can be introduced. This must be stated in writing in the fire risk assessment.
- 5.2 Where the author of the fire risk assessment states that a Stay Put policy can be introduced, providing that certain remedial works identified in the report are implemented, then a Stay Put policy must not be introduced until those remedial works are fully completed to the satisfaction of the fire risk assessor or other competent person. However, in consultation with and the direction of the relevant Fire Authority, a Stay Put policy can be retained or introduced in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.3 Any properties without a Stay Put policy must be totally evacuated, providing it is safe to do so, on operation of any fire warning which may include a verbal 'alarm'.

6 Equality and Diversity

- 6.1 Circle will treat all customers and staff with fairness and respect. We value diversity and work to promote equality and tackle unlawful discrimination.
- 6.2 We are committed to helping customers to access information about their homes and services in a way that suits individual needs. Please get in touch with your local provider to discuss this.

Glossary

Term	Definition
CLG	Communities and Local Government is the government department that sets policy on local government, housing, urban regeneration, planning and fire and rescue.
LGR	Local Government Regulation is the local government central body responsible for overseeing local authority regulatory and related services in the UK.
Stay Put	In certain premises where the evacuation of the residents may pose a high risk during a fire, the risk assessment process may allow for these resident to 'stay put' in their rooms/homes in the early stages of fire fighting operations
HHSRS	The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is the risk assessment procedure for residential properties.
Dry risers	A dry riser is a main vertical pipe intended to distribute water to multiple levels of a building or structure as a component of the fire suppression systems. The pipe is maintained empty of water. The dry riser is related to a wet riser or wet standpipe system where the pipes are kept full of water for automatic operation.
British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE)	BAFE is a non-profit making organisation dedicated to improving standards in fire protection. BAFE adopts third party Certification schemes developed by independent certifications bodies and where there are not relevant schemes in place, develops its own.
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	The Housing Act 2004 sets out in detail what constitutes an HMO. An HMO is any building or part of a building which is occupied by more than one household and in which more than one household shares an amenity.

Appendix One: Legislation and Regulation Circle complies with:

- The [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#) (referred to as the Fire Safety Order) which introduced the current system of people centred risk assessment of properties
- The [Housing Act 2004](#) which introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the [Housing Health and Safety Rating System Regulations 2005](#) which set out the associated scoring system
- The [Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations \(DSEAR\) 2002](#) which regulates the storage and use of flammable materials
- The [Furniture and Furnishings \(Fire Safety\) Regulations 1988](#) which set standards of fire resistance for furniture and furnishings provided by a landlord
- The [Smoke Detectors Act 1991](#) which required all new build properties to include hard wired smoke alarms
- The [Gas Safety \(Installation and Use\) Regulations 1998](#) (our compliance with this is set out in our Gas Safety (Heating Installations) policy and procedure)
- The [Electrical Equipment \(Safety\) Regulations 1994](#) (our compliance with this is set out in our Electrical Safety policy and procedure)
- Circle will comply with all requirements of the [Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002](#), including consultation with leaseholders about Major works and service charge increases incurring a charge of over the established threshold.

We will also comply with Building Regulations 2006 Approved Document B (Fire safety) – Volume 1: Dwelling houses, and all relevant British Standards.

We will follow the guidance set out in the following publications:

- [CLG Guidance for Landlords and Property Related Professionals on the Housing Health and Safety Rating System](#)
- CLG Guidance on fire safety risk assessments in:
 - [Sleeping Accommodation](#)
 - [Residential Care premises](#)
- [CLG Guidance on Means of Escape for Disabled People](#)
- [LGR Guidance on fire safety provisions](#) for certain types of existing housing.