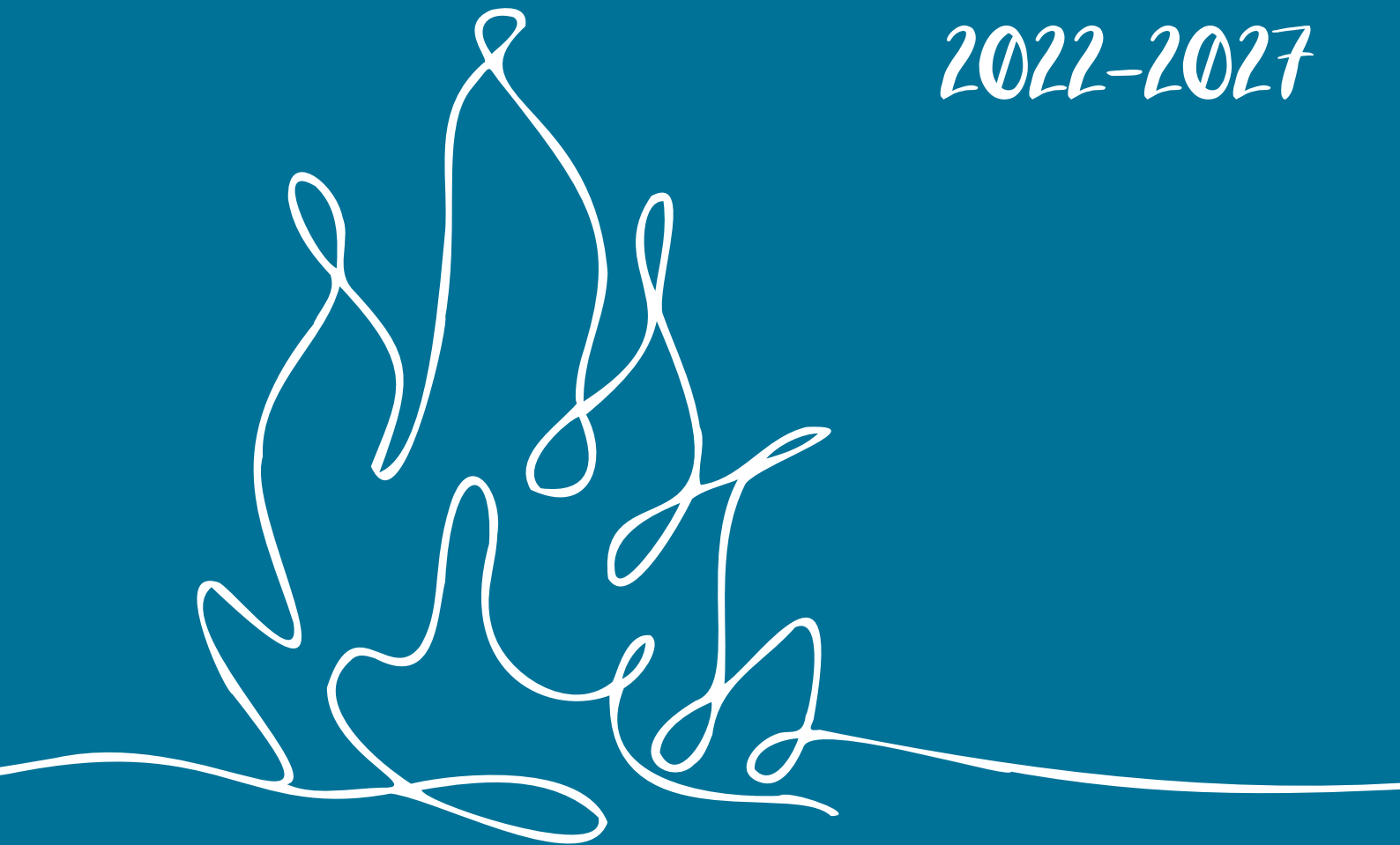




**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

# Fire Safety Policy for Sheltered and Extra Care Accommodation

2022-2027





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# Introduction

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Darlington Borough Council is committed to protecting staff, residents, visitors, partner organisations and contractors from the effects of fire within all our properties.

We aim to achieve this through:

- Robust fire risk assessment processes.
- Increasing fire safety awareness to our residents.
- Eliminating and reducing fire hazards in our premises.

- Preventing the spread of fire and early warning and notification to County Durham & Darlington Fire Service.

Safety is paramount and this policy is based on the principle that Scheme Managers, care staff and tenants continually assess the risks to their own safety prior to taking any action.

# Relevant Legislation

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The Fire Safety Policy is based on the principles of partnership working between Darlington Borough Council (Housing Services & Adult Services, Building Services, CCTV Control Centre), County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services and voluntary organisations.

Darlington Borough Council has a duty to comply with the requirements of fire safety legislation namely:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order 2005.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order 2005-Guide for Sleeping Accommodation (Sheltered Schemes).

- The Housing Act 2004.
- Furniture and Fittings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988.
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994.
- The Local Government Guide “Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats” 2011 (Blocks with Communal areas.)
- Building Regulation 2010 (as amended) Schedule 1 Part B.
- The Health and Safety at Work act 1974.
- Dangerous Substance and explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DESAR) 2002.



# Policy Statement

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The purpose of the Fire Safety Policy is to provide staff, residents, visitors, and partner organisations with clear guidelines of what action they should take in order to protect themselves and others.

This Policy is specific to Sheltered and Extra Care schemes owned by Housing Services, for general needs accommodation, with communal areas, please see the specific fire evacuation plans which are provided in all communal hallways.

The following bodies were consulted in the preparation of this document:

- Housing Services.

- Darlington Borough Council Health & Safety Team.
- Adult Social Care.
- CCTV.
- Building Services.
- County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

This policy has been developed with the recognition that staff may remain in the building in some instances, when the fire alarm has been activated, to maintain essential services to vulnerable and/or tenants with a disability.

## Policy Aims

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The aims of this policy are:

- To give appropriate guidance to Darlington Borough Council staff within the extra care and sheltered housing schemes while providing a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the Fire Safety Policy.
- To provide procedures, which accurately define the actions to be taken in the event of a fire within each facility. To be read in conjunction with other documents such as, Resident Information from each site. To ensure procedures meet the latest national guidance and best practice.
- To provide, monitor and update the Fire Safety Policy, so that it is fit for purpose, including a process, which, if followed in the event of a fire, will help to ensure that staff, residents, visitors, partner organisations and contractors are safe and protected.
- To meet the requirements of Darlington Fire and Rescue Services by providing quality information for each property. This information is located within the main entrance Property Information Box (PIB). This will include as a minimum; the building design/layout drawings and up to date information for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans.
- To improve resident's knowledge of Fire Awareness and promote responsibility towards Fire Safety. Where possible utilising the fire service support.



# Our Schemes

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Sheltered properties are contained under the same roof, however all are individual flats. All schemes have communal lounges together with gardens, guest rooms, laundry, bin storage, mobility scooter store, security and safety features. Some have hair salons and meeting rooms. Communal areas can also be used by the wider community by prior arrangement.

Extra care schemes are similar in design to sheltered schemes but also have care staff on site 24 hours daily who provide social care.

All schemes have a Scheme Manager providing good neighbourly low level tenant support, housing management and delivery of activities during the normal working day Monday to Friday 08:30 to 17:00 (16:30 on Fridays) with Response Officers available at all other times.

Each property is linked to the Darlington Lifeline Control Centre, ensuring there is a 24-hour emergency response should the Scheme Manager be off duty.

# Responsibilities

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The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Head of Housing.

Delegated responsibility for day-to-day management, implementation and monitoring of the policy will be provided by Lifeline management with the support of staff working within Sheltered and Extra Care schemes.

It is the responsibility of Darlington Borough Council:

- To appoint a Responsible Person and/or Duty holders and have in place a written agreement matrix showing areas of responsibilities and to provide a suitable and sufficient inspection, service and maintenance to each building.
- To provide general fire safety awareness training for all staff covering the main aspects of basic fire safety and any issues relating to each Sheltered or Extra Care scheme. To provide an 'Individual Fire Risk Assessment' for each resident and record in the support plan.

It is the responsibility of residents and their visitors:

- To comply with the requirements of the Fire Safety Policy.

- To follow instruction provided by Darlington Borough Council staff and/or members of the Fire Service.

Other responsibilities are:

- The chair of any meetings held within any of the Sheltered or Extra Care schemes is responsible for ensuring attendees are familiar with fire safety procedures for the building, using information available and provided within meeting rooms.
- Partner organisations will be responsible for informing staff of this policy and provision of any suitable training to meet the needs within.

It is the responsibility of all to maintain good housekeeping, within both communal areas and individual accommodation. To report any defect found to the repairs and maintenance section at the earliest opportunity.



# Construction Features

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Our schemes provide independent living with communal facilities. Each property was constructed to the standards and regulations applicable at the time of build. Each subsequent remodelling scheme has also followed this process providing some degree of compartmentation.

Construction is typically, concrete floors, solid wall construction between flats and flats to communal spaces, FD30 Fire Doors on entrance to the flats, within corridors and onto the stair enclosures. The roof void is also sub-divided by the apartment walls.

It is key to note that:

- The travel distances for means of escape in case of fire in the existing buildings were suitable for its existing use.
- Any remodelling works undertaken includes fire doors within the flats, an upgrading of the fire doors and frames to also prevent the passage of smoke, reinstatement of the cavity barriers in the roof and ceiling voids.

General repairs and maintenance are carried out to the building/structure in a manner that will not compromise the compartmentation in communal areas and/or between flats or any means of escape or egress from the building.

All staff and contractors working in the building are suitably supervised and managed to prevent compromising the compartmentation while maintaining fire exit routes and ensuring good housekeeping is always kept.





# Fire Alarm System

All Sheltered and Extra Care schemes have a fire alarm designed (as a minimum) to L2 Standard that was applicable at the time of design; the systems are permanently connected to a fire alarm monitoring centre, located at the CCTV centre in the Town Hall Darlington. Each Fire Alarm System is maintained as required in BS5839.

Within individual flats, as a minimum a combined heat and smoke detector is fitted in the entrance hall area that forms a part of the building's L2 fire detection system, which also connects to the voice call system. Each apartment is also provided with domestic smoke/heat detection to the kitchen and corridor.

In all sheltered accommodation schemes, activation of the fire alarm will trigger a response from:

- A duty member of staff on site (the Scheme Manager or a member of the care team) to the voice module within the apartment. Should this not be responded to, the activation will default to the fire alarm monitoring centre (CCTV)

or

- The fire alarm monitoring centre (CCTV) to the voice module within the accommodation unit.

In all Extra care accommodation units, activation of the fire alarm will trigger a response from:

- A duty member of staff on site (the Scheme Manager or a member of the care team) to the voice module within the apartment. Should this not be responded to, the activation will default to the fire alarm monitoring centre (CCTV).

Any no responses or an unsatisfactory response from the occupant will be investigated by the carer or Lifeline staff and emergency services will be contacted. An adequate response from the occupant and the sounder ceasing will result in the call being closed, with the safeguard that any second activation and/or no response or inadequate response will result in the full emergency procedures being followed. Instructions for residents on the actions to take if they discover a fire or on hearing the fire alarm, are in Appendix 1.

In communal areas, smoke detectors and heat detectors are installed throughout the building, with



manual call points located at each exit. Activation of any of the smoke detectors will result in activation of the fire alarm and should result in the actions as detailed in Appendix 1 by the following persons:

- Residents, their visitors, other visitors, and contractors.
- Staff on site.
- Staff on call.
- Alarm Receiving Centre.
- Staff from partner organisations.

Activation of a manual call point (break glass) or any smoke/heat detector in the communal areas will result in activation of the full fire alarm.

All activations of the fire alarm system will be recorded. This information will include.

- Location of the unit activated.
- The reason for activation.

- Actions taken following the investigation into the activation of the alarm.
- On site staff attendance within 3 minutes of the detector head detecting the fire situation (this is to allow some investigation if members of staff are on site and prevent unnecessary disruption of vulnerable residents).
- Off-site staff (Lifeline response officers) will respond within a 30-minute time frame but County Durham & Darlington Fire Service may already be in attendance.

All existing staff will be trained in fire safety and new staff will be working towards this. They will have suitable and sufficient building and procedure knowledge to cope with any situation that may arise. Further 24-hour support will be provided by managers and supervisors.

# Fire Risk Assessments

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A Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) will be undertaken by a competent person in line with guidance and any relevant legislation. We will make all staff aware of the findings of the risk assessment, and this assessment will be reviewed regularly every three years or following any significant changes to the building or its use.

A copy of the FRA will be provided in a prominent place within each Sheltered and Extra Care scheme. All new residents at the start of tenancy will be made aware of the FRA. Details of new FRA's, reviews or completed remedial work will be provided to residents during tenant engagement sessions and coffee mornings.

All electrical installations will have an 'Electrical Installation Condition Report' (EICR) completed every 5 years or earlier, should a report indicate this is required.

A 'No Smoking' policy applies in all communal areas.

The Fire Alarm System will be regularly tested with records of the test maintained. The Emergency Lighting System will be regularly tested with records of the test maintained. All staff will be given Fire Awareness Training.

Regular reviews of and training on what to do in the event of a fire will be carried out with staff, residents, visitors, the Fire Service and Building Control, included within the review.

We will ensure appropriate staffing levels are maintained 24 hours each day.



# Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan PEEPs and Care Assessments

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A comprehensive list of residents, who may require assistance to evacuate the building, will be maintained close to the main fire alarm control panel. The list will be immediately accessible to the Fire Service on their arrival and, where possible, will be presented to them by a member of staff on duty. Any client information will be held in the fire document safe located next to the fire panel and is secured using a code known only to staff, and CCTV Control Centre, who will inform the Fire Service of the code on request.

When required, a PEEP will be jointly developed by the resident and Lifeline Services. This will aim to address how the resident can safely exit the building during an emergency. A copy of the PEEP will be placed in the Property Information Box (PIB).

A Care Assessment will be completed prior to any tenant moving into Extra Care accommodation. In addition, Lifeline staff will contact each tenant Monday to Friday and visit regularly. This will include, monitoring the fire risks associated with each tenant in their own home and reporting to the relevant line manager to take the appropriate preventative measures. This could include the removal of equipment if a risk is identified, and the provision of additional fire detection and warning devices, such as, smoke/heat detectors linked to the fire alarm system in the habitable rooms, along with vibrating pillows, visual alarms, or additional fire protection features, if required.

## Stay Put Policy

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The medical condition and degree of awareness of some residents can result in them not being capable of being moved easily during an evacuation or fire alarm scenario. They may become confused and disorientated if permitted to leave the building without adequate supervision or assistance.

It has been determined by the Fire Service and regulatory authorities for a 'Stay Put Policy' to be implemented.

The 'Stay Put Policy' for Sheltered and Extra Care schemes is based on the factors below. Should any item not be in place, a review will be undertaken to assess the risk and the findings and will be recorded and placed in the PIB.

- The building has a fully working and maintained Fire Alarm System for communal areas.
- Each apartment has working and maintained hard wired smoke detectors.
- Fire Doors, glazing and door furniture that meets the FD30 standard.
- Suitable compartmentation throughout the building.
- Concrete floors.
- Emergency lighting installed and maintained.
- Annual gas boiler checks (flats and communal).
- Fire retardant soft furnishings (communal areas).
- Good standard of housekeeping throughout.
- 'No Smoking' policy in place and enforced for communal areas.
- The building has an up-to-date EICR in place



- The building has an up-to-date FRA in place and that all issues identified have been addressed.
- Firefighting equipment is in place and serviced, such as, fire blankets.
- Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is up to date on items within the building.

#### 'Stay Put Policy' Quick Guide for Residents and Visitors

- On discovering a fire in your apartment or communal area, you and your visitor(s) should leave immediately, closing all doors behind you, raising the alarm on a Manual Call Point as you exit the building.
- If the fire is in a communal area and it is safe to

remain in your apartment, you will need to advise your visitors of the process to be followed.

- Only leave your apartment on the request of the building manager, Fire Service or if smoke or heat affects your home and if safe to do so.
- If you or your visitors are in the communal areas, you must leave the building by the nearest exit.
- Do not return to your apartment.
- If in any doubt, get out.
- On exiting the building, proceed to the Fire Assembly Point (FAP).

Further details of what to do in the event of a fire can be found in Appendix 1.

## Review and Monitoring

The policy will be reviewed every five years or on change of legislation or regulatory guidance.

In addition, a Fire Safety Group chaired by the Compliance Manager will meet quarterly to review any changes in legislation and processes.



# Appendix 1

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## Instructions to Residents and Visitors

### DISCOVERING A FIRE IN/NEAR YOUR FLAT

1. If the fire is in your flat or near vicinity **LEAVE IMMEDIATELY**
2. If the front door is hot or there is smoke coming in do not open the door. Move into the lounge or bedroom, shutting the internal door/s and stay by an open window
3. If possible and safe to do so leave the flat and make your way to the nearest fire exit, leave the building, and meet at the fire assembly point
4. **DO NOT RETURN TO YOUR FLAT**
5. **DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING** (unless instructed by Fire Service)

### WHEN IN YOUR FLAT AND YOU HEAR THE ALARM

1. You should 'STAY PUT' (remain in your flat on alert)
2. You must provide guidance and direction to any visitors in your flat in line with this policy.
3. Keep your front door closed but be ready to leave if instructed.
4. Await further instructions, either by the fire service, the duty staff or via the intercom system.

### IF YOU ARE IN A COMMUNAL AREA

1. Make your way calmly to the nearest fire exit, leave the building and meet at the fire assembly point
2. Take any able-bodied person with you
  - DO NOT USE THE LIFTS
  - DO NOT STOP TO COLLECT BELONGINGS
  - DO NOT RETURN TO YOUR FLAT
  - DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNLESS TOLD IT IS SAFE TO DO SO

# IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS

1. Leave the area of the fire immediately and proceed towards the Fire Assembly point via the nearest fire exit.
2. Operate the nearest manual call point (break glass) when exiting the building or when safe to do so.
3. Only if possible and when safe to do so dial **999**, giving them a full address/post code.

Darlington Borough Council's CCTV control Centre monitor the fire alarm systems.

On any fire alarm activation, they will:

- Attempt to communicate with Scheme Manager via the intercom to try and establish the cause of the alarm activation
- Contact the emergency services providing all information
- Instigate the appropriate actions

## Assembly Points

### Fire Assembly points (FAP):

Safe areas for people to meet and are identified by signage like the example below



### (FAP) Locations by Building

- Dalkeith House – The Front Car Park
- Oban Court – The Front Car Park (Staff to Manage Access)
- Rosemary Court – The Rear Car Park
- Rockwell House – The Front Car Park or Garden Area
- Ted Fletcher Court – The Grassed Area of the Main Car Park
- Branksome Hall – The Grassed Area Near the Main Front Car Park
- Linden Court – The Front Car Park
- Dinsdale Court – The Car Park of Dinsdale Close Flats
- Roxby Court – The Pavement next to The Bungalows
- Windsor Court – The Front Car Park or Garden Area







