



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Housing Services Fire Safety Policy

for purpose-built blocks
of flats, Sheltered and
Extra Care schemes

2025 - 2030



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1 Introduction

We are committed to protecting staff, tenants, visitors, partner organisations and contractors from the effects of fire within all our properties. We are accountable for tenant fire safety as a social housing provider and are responsible for ensuring suitable management to tenant fire safety to ensure:

- Tenants feel safe in their homes.
- The requirements of regulatory standards are met.
- Relevant fire safety legislation is complied with.
- We eliminate and reduce fire hazards in our premises.
- We increase fire safety awareness for our tenants.
- We have robust fire risk assessment processes.
- We prevent the spread of fire and have early warning and notification to Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

This policy is applicable to all residential purpose-built blocks of flats, sheltered, and extra care accommodation we own and/or manage. There is a separate Fire Policy for workplaces and non-residential properties.

Fire is a significant hazard to the safety of both buildings and their occupants. We are committed to ensuring fire safety is managed through the provision of suitable, sufficient and risk appropriate fire precautions and management systems to enable the safe evacuation of staff, tenants, and others and to minimise fire damage should a fire occur.

This Policy describes the fire precautions and management arrangements we have put in place to ensure that the risk of fire is effectively managed and delivers compliance with all applicable fire safety legislation and industry best practice.



2 Relevant Legislation

We have a duty to comply with the requirements of fire safety legislation, fire safety guidance and best practice:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO 2005) brought together different pieces of fire legislation. It applies to all non-domestic premises, including communal areas of residential buildings with multiple homes. RRFSO 2005 designates those in control of premises as the responsible person for fire safety and they have a duty to undertake assessments and manage risks. RRFSO 2005 is enforced by the Fire and Rescue Authorities.
- The Fire Safety Act 2021 sets out to amend the RRFSO 2005 and is designed to ensure that people “feel safe in their own homes and that a tragedy like the Grenfell Tower fire never happens again” in England. The Act clarifies that for any building containing two or more sets of domestic premises, the RRFSO 2005 applies to the building’s structure and external walls and any common parts, including the front doors of residential areas.
- It also clarifies that references to external walls in the RRFSO 2005 include “doors or windows in those walls” and “anything attached to the exterior of those walls (including balconies).” These amendments to the RRFSO 2005 aim to increase enforcement action in these areas, particularly where remediation of aluminium composite material cladding is not taking place.
- In summary, the Duty Holder/building owner for multi-occupied, residential buildings will manage the risk of fire for:
 - The structure and external walls of the building (such as cladding, balconies and windows).
 - Entrance doors to individual flats that open into communal areas.

This is also supported by other legislation including, but not limited to:

- The Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards.
- The Housing Act 2004.

- The Building Regulations Approved Document B – Fire Safety.
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Electrical Equipment (safety) Regulations 1994.
- The Local Government Guide “Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of Flats” (blocks with communal areas).
- Dangerous Substance and explosive atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002.
- The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations.

Guidance Documents

- Fire Sector Federation ACOP - A National Framework for Fire Risk Assessor Competency.
- Fire Sector Federation - A Guide to Choosing a Competent Fire Risk Assessor.
- Fire Risk Assessment in Residential Care Homes.
- Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Means of Escape for Disabled People.
- HSE Fire Safety Webpages.
- PAS 79-2:2020 Housing – British Standards BSI.
- PAS 9980:2022, Fire risk appraisal of external wall construction and cladding of existing blocks of flats – Code of practice.
- BS991 Fire safety in the design, management, and use of residential buildings. Code of practice (under review.)
- PIBS_Guide_06-21_V2.pdf (nationalfirechiefs.org.uk).

Under the Regulator of Social Housing’s consumer standards, all registered providers of social housing have an obligation for their tenants’ safety, which includes fire safety. The objectives of the Regulator are set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.

We are accountable for overall tenant fire safety and are responsible to ensure tenants feel safe in their homes and the requirements of the regulatory standards are met.

3 Scope

The purpose of this fire safety policy is to provide staff, tenants, visitors, contractors, and partner organisations with clear guidelines of what action they should take to protect themselves and others.

We take our responsibilities to manage the risk from fires within our managed housing stock very seriously and strive to reduce this risk through:

- Defined roles and responsibilities for fire safety, including individual responsibilities, which are outlined in the corporate [Fire Safety Arrangement](#).
 - Compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Fire Safety Act 2021, and any other relevant legislation.
 - Ensuring fire safety is included when designing and constructing new and/or refurbishment projects.
 - Ensuring that appropriate funding is allocated where deficiencies in fire safety measures are identified and the remedial actions taken.
 - A comprehensive programme of fire risk assessments, undertaken by competent person(s).
 - Ensuring suitable and sufficient fire precautions and management systems are in place.
- A programme of regular fire safety inspections based on building risk.
 - Providing regular fire safety awareness updates to tenants, staff, and others every three years, unless significant changes to fire safety have occurred sooner.
 - A programme of regular fire door inspections.
 - Where required, we will provide a Property Information Box (PIB) at the main entrance of the building, which holds all relevant fire information on the building and residents for the fire service.
 - Making information on the specific fire safety arrangements in each residential building of two or more domestic properties readily available to:
 - Tenants, to ensure they are assured that the risk of injury or damage to their homes caused by fire is minimised.
 - Staff, contractors, visitors.
 - Fostering and maintaining good working relationships with partner services and relevant stakeholders, including Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service..



4 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff and tenants to maintain good housekeeping within both communal areas and individual accommodation and to report any defect found to Housing Services at the earliest opportunity.

The following outlines the responsibilities we have in relation to fire safety for tenanted properties with purpose-built blocks of flats with two or more domestic flats.

We are a landlord and building manager in respect of our managed housing stock with communal areas and supported living residential accommodation.

To meet our responsibilities as an employer and landlord we will ensure that tenants feel safe in their homes and the risk from fires is effectively managed.

We have identified a number of objectives for all our managed housing stock of domestic properties with two or more flats.

Responsibilities of Darlington Borough Council:

- A responsible person will be appointed and be aware of all the areas of responsibility.
- Fire Risk Assessments have been undertaken by competent persons in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and current standards.
- Fire Safety measures are included in all new construction projects, existing building renovations and improvement programmes.
- Fire Safety risks posed by the structure and external walls (including cladding, balconies and windows and front doors) are assessed in line with current standards.
- The ongoing suitability and effectiveness of current fire safety measures in buildings classed as 'Low Risk' are reviewed at least every 3 years or after a fire incident, as part of the overall fire risk assessment process.
- Fire safety priorities, improvement areas and areas of non-compliance are identified and actioned.

- All relevant residential buildings under our control will, where appropriate, have adequate fire warning systems, signs, means of escape and fire-fighting equipment.
- All fire safety precautions are inspected, maintained, serviced, and tested to ensure they are always fully operational, in accordance with statutory requirements and manufacturer's instructions.
- Regular inspections are undertaken of communal areas to ensure good housekeeping practices are in place to minimise the risk and spread of fire.
- Gas and electrical safety inspections are undertaken in each of our residential properties to ensure that these do not present a fire risk to the tenant or building.
- Staff are provided with the necessary skills and training to undertake their duties defined in this policy in relation to fire safety.
- Suitable and sufficient records are kept and available to be audited at appropriate intervals.
- We keep up to date with changing legislation and fire mitigation measures.

Responsibilities of tenants and visitors:

- To comply with the requirements of this fire safety policy.
- To follow instructions provided by our staff and/or members of the fire and rescue service.

5 Arrangements

We have a duty under fire safety legislation to carry out fire risk assessments of all residential properties comprising of two or more domestic flats.

We have a number of arrangements in place to minimise the risk of fire. The day-to-day arrangements to managing the risks of fire is underpinned by:

- A programme of comprehensive fire risk assessments, including:
 1. Assessing the risk from fire, including a building's structure, the external walls (including doors or windows in those walls, anything attached to the exterior of those walls such as balconies) and any common parts, plus all doors between the domestic premises and common parts.
 2. Evaluating the adequacy of existing fire protection measures and identifying additional measures that minimise the risk of fires starting and spreading.
 3. Assessing compliance with all relevant legislation and relevant standards.
- The provision and maintenance of appropriate fire detection, alarm systems, emergency lighting, fire-fighting equipment (where in place), evacuation signage, appropriate means of escape and protected escape routes in communal areas of residential properties.
- The provision of essential training and fire safety information for all staff and tenants.
- Appropriate instructions for contractors and other visitors on the actions to be taken in the event of a fire in any property they may be working in.
- The reporting, reviewing and investigation of all fire related incidents and measures put in place to prevent a recurrence, where possible.
- A zero-tolerance relating to the storing of items by tenants in communal areas.
- Strict enforcement of no-smoking in communal areas.

5.1 Fire Risk Assessments:

The level and complexity of any fire risk assessment undertaken in residential buildings, comprising of more than two flats, that we own and/or manage varies dependant on risk. A schedule of fire risk assessments has been drawn up and these will be undertaken by competent persons or third parties, depending on risk.

A fire risk assessment will:

- Identify the fire hazards, including those posed by the structure of the walls, doors, and windows.
- Identify people at risk.
- Evaluate, remove, or reduce the risks.
- Record findings, prepare an emergency plan and provide training.
- Be reviewed and updated regularly, in particular when something changes that could affect fire safety or where there it is no longer valid, such as a change in:
 - occupancy.
 - the building.
 - nature of contents or after a fire.

Fire Safety risk assessments will include:

- The structural ability of the building and individual flat to withstand fire, prevent fire spread and contain a fire in a single flat, where a Stay Put fire evacuation policy is in place.
- Emergency routes and exits.
- Fire detection and warning systems.
- Firefighting equipment.
- The removal or safe storage of dangerous substances.
- Details of the emergency fire evacuation strategy.
- Details of any vulnerable tenants, where known, with temporary or permanent disabilities, including mobility issues or sensory impairment(s).
- Providing information to tenants, staff, and other people on the premises.
- Fire safety training for staff.

Actions arising from any fire risk assessment will be acted upon in a timely manner. This means the fire risk assessor will update the fire action log and assign officers to respond to those within a period as specified by the risk priority that the fire risk assessor has determined from the guidance. These fit into priorities and timescales:

Timescales:

- Immediately.
- Short Term.
- Medium Term.
- Long Term.
- Consideration for future implementation.

Priorities:

- High.
- Medium.
- Low.

These actions are reviewed and reported within the Housing Compliance meetings.

All fire risk assessments will be reviewed frequently, which is generally every three years, but may be sooner, by a competent person and updated to reflect any changes in the building or recommend whether a more comprehensive fire risk assessment is required due to more significant changes.



5.2 Fire Risk Assessment types

Type	Definition
1	<p>Type 1 Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) is non-destructive, and the most common. This type of survey focusses on identifying visible hazards and concerns without any intrusive or destructive work. It assesses all the common parts of a building, such as a lobby area in a shared block of flats – but not individual dwellings. In some cases, a Type 1 FRA will inspect construction points between individual dwellings (such as shared supportive walls).</p> <p>Type 1 FRA's have the purpose of ensuring that common parts of a building have the arrangements which allow people to escape if there was to be a fire – such as clear signage pointing to entry and exit points.</p> <p>The results of a Type 1 FRA may reveal the requirement for further FRAs. If this is the case, the Type 1 FRA will list reasons why this would be required.</p>
2	<p>Type 2 Fire Risk Assessments are normally only recommended if a Type 1 FRA concluded that there may be serious structural flaws in a building which may increase the risk of fire spreading.</p> <p>Type 2 FRA includes destructive sampling. This will involve intrusive and destructive methods to assess hidden hazards. This will require repairs to be carried out following the assessment. This applies to common areas only.</p>
3	<p>Type 3 Fire Risk Assessment is comprehensive. This type of assessment covers all common areas of a building – and individual dwellings.</p> <p>Type 3 FRA considers all means of escapes (including those within individual dwellings), structures, and compartmentation between flats and any means of fire detection.</p> <p>Type 3 FRA is non-destructive – and is usually only considered necessary if there are fire risks within individual dwellings. This type of survey focusses on identifying visible hazards and concerns without any intrusive or destructive work.</p>
4	<p>Type 4 Fire Risk Assessments are similar to Type 2 FRAs, as they include a destructive sampling, but in both the common parts of a building and living areas – such as apartments. This will involve intrusive and destructive methods to assess hidden hazards. Type 4 FRAs are more comprehensive – and complicated to complete. This is because access to individual dwellings is required, and destructive sampling can lead to a need for repairs.</p>

5.3 Low risk residential properties

All blocks of flats owned by us have been identified as low risk as they are below 11m in height and basic design/layout and are purpose-built blocks of flats.

A medium risk building is defined as being between 11m and 18m with high risk being over 18m. We do not have any buildings which meet those criteria.

Sheltered schemes are lower than the 11m rule but due to the complexity they are classified as a medium risk.

Type 3 FRA's are undertaken by a team of competent in-house fire risk assessors for low-risk properties every 3 years. Individuals in the team have a recognised level of competence that includes a formal fire risk assessment qualification and are an accredited fire risk assessor. Where an assessment is carried out by an external fire risk assessor, they will also have the same level of competency and be an accredited fire risk assessor.

5.4 Fire Risk Assessment Outcomes

We will undertake any outcomes and actions from a fire risk assessment (FRA). Where destructive FRAs result in the need to complete building work to reduce identified fire risks, including additional ventilation, to allow smoke to escape or additional fire compartmentation additions, we will complete these within agreed timescales. All actions will be reviewed to identify the practicality and viability of the recommendation. In some cases, in line with legislation, it may be identified that some recommendations are not implemented, for example a sprinkler system.

5.5 Asbestos Considerations

If destructive FRA's are to be undertaken, we will provide information on the presence of any asbestos and commission a Refurbishment and Demolition (R&D) survey as required. This is in line with our [Asbestos Management Health and Safety Arrangement](#).

5.6 Shared Occupation/ Lettings/Landlord Responsibilities

In the case of residential buildings we own and/or manage but other service providers are contracted in to provide the services provided within the building such as, homeless and temporary accommodation, care and support services to elderly and vulnerable, clear fire safety arrangements will be in place as to who is responsible for managing the day-to-day fire safety arrangements.

We are responsible for ensuring that a fire risk assessment is undertaken. This may require communication and cooperation between all parties to ensure coordination of fire safety provisions, fire-fighting measures, evacuation procedures etc.

In the event that part of a building may be let, the building manager has the responsibility to ensure that those hiring the site are aware of the fire risk assessment for the site and evacuation procedure, including contact names in the event of an emergency.

5.7 Reporting of Fire Incidents

Any incidents of fire, regardless of how minor, will be reported to Housing managers, which includes the Responsible Person and recorded on the Councils EcoOnline system. Incidents will be investigated, and lessons learnt to prevent a recurrence.

We will liaise with external emergency services, where required, to minimise the potential risks that could arise from activities where there is a reportable incident related to fire within properties that we manage.

5.8 Fire Evacuation

We operate an evacuation policy in our purpose-built residential buildings with more than two sets of flats and will have a clearly defined evacuation strategy, determined by our fire risk assessments and overall risk to the occupants. This does not include our sheltered housing and extra care schemes, the evacuation strategy for those is outlined in section 5.9.

Tenants will be made aware of the fire safety and evacuation arrangements in place in the building they live in. This will be made available at sign-up and on display in noticeboards in the communal areas. Any evacuation plan will include:

- The actions tenants should take if they discover a fire.
- How people will be warned if there is a fire and how this is linked to the fire service and landlord.
- Key escape routes, how people can gain access to them and escape from them to places of safety.
- Arrangements for the safe evacuation of people identified as being especially at risk, such as young children and babies and those with disabilities or cognitive impairments.
- Where people should assemble after they have left the building and clear directions to the assembly point.

Although this is in place at present, we are working with the new regulations and the fire service to implement those changes. This means that during the lifetime of this policy we will move to a stay put policy as outlined in section 5.9.

5.9 Stay Put Policy

Purpose built blocks of flats

Following the changes to the guidance to the Building Regulations Part B and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance, we operate a 'Stay Put' policy in most of our residential buildings containing self-contained flats and communal areas. This requires occupants not directly affected by any fire to stay in their flat. This is regularly reviewed as part of the fire risk assessment, to ensure it is the safest strategy to employ. The 'Stay Put' policy may change during a major fire event and this decision will be managed by the Incident Commander from the fire and rescue service dealing with the emergency situation at the time.

Additionally, we will have internal procedures in place for responding to a fire incident in any of our properties, including procedures for liaising with the fire and rescue service on arrival, and notifying them of any special risks or vulnerable tenants.

The following points are further measure we may take consideration of following a fire risk assessment or guidance change in conjunction with the fire service::

- Further protect fire exit routes.
- Develop procedures for evacuating persons who are unable to use the stairs in an emergency, or who may require assistance (such as disabled people, older people, and young children).
- Work in conjunction with the Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to develop policies for partial and total evacuation of purpose built residential flat blocks.
- Draw up and keep under regular review evacuation plans. Copies, where required, will be provided in electronic and/or paper form to Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.
- Include up-to-date information about persons with reduced mobility and their associated Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs).
- Install sprinkler systems in high-risk residential buildings that will further safeguard tenants in their own home, in the event of a fire.

Sheltered and Extra Care schemes

A stay put policy is in place for all sheltered and extra care schemes due to the medical condition and degree of awareness of some tenants that 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.

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 will be recorded.

- The building has a full working and maintained fire alarm system for communal areas.
- Each flat has working and maintained wired smoke detection.
- Fire doors, glazing and door furniture meet the FD30 standard.
- Suitable compartmentation throughout the building.
- Concrete floors.
- Emergency lighting installed and maintained
- Annual gas safety checks (flats and communal).
- Good standards of housekeeping throughout.
- Fire retardant soft furnishings (communal areas).
- No Smoking policy in place and enforced in communal areas.
- The building has an up-to-date Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) in place.
- Firefighting equipment in place and serviced, such as fire blankets.
- Portable appliance testing (PAT) up to date on items in communal areas of the building.

5.10 Keeping records – Fire Logbook

We will keep records of tests, maintenance and safety training relating to each residential building of two or more flats. An effective way of demonstrating compliance is to keep records in a well-maintained fire logbook.

We will keep records up to date and readily available for inspection by any visiting authority, including, but not limited to, the Health & Safety Executive, Regulator of Social Housing or Fire Service when required. Records that will be kept include:

- Fire alarm system - record of testing, maintenance, and false alarms (where applicable).
- Emergency lighting – record of testing and maintenance (where applicable).
- A record of any visits by the Fire and Rescue Service or other enforcing authorities.

All records of servicing by nominated contracted servicing companies will be retained and kept.

5.11 Training and Instruction

We will provide appropriate fire safety awareness training to staff. Staff, tenants, visitors, partner organisations and contractors will receive information on the fire safety arrangements in the building where they live or work, and the action they need to take in the case of a fire.

Staff working in residential properties will be instructed by their line manager in the following:

- What to do if there is a fire.
- What to do if the fire alarm sounds.
- The location of the nearest fire alarm.
- The location of the nearest fire exit, as well as a secondary route.
- The location and route to the designated assembly point(s).

All staff are required to complete regular refresher training every three years, however staff working in residential care premises and services, which include sleeping accommodation, receive specific training included, but not limited to, fire panel training, use of firefighting equipment and how to use extinguishers. Although staff are trained in the use of firefighting equipment, staff are not expected to tackle fires.

6 Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed and updated every five years, or if there are any significant changes to current fire Legislation, HSE approved codes of practice or guidance, or as the result of the outcome of an incident review.

7 Sheltered & Extra Care Scheme Specific building information

Our Schemes

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.



Construction Features

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 will be 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 will be 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 will be permanently connected to a fire alarm monitoring centre, located at the CCTV centre in the Town Hall Darlington. Each Fire Alarm System will be maintained as required in BS5839.

Within individual flats, as a minimum a combined heat and smoke detector will be 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 will also be 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 tenants on the actions to take if they discover a fire or on hearing the fire alarm, are in Appendix 2.

In communal areas, smoke detectors and heat detectors will be 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 will result in the actions as detailed in Appendix 2 by the following persons:

- Tenants, 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 Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service may already be in attendance.

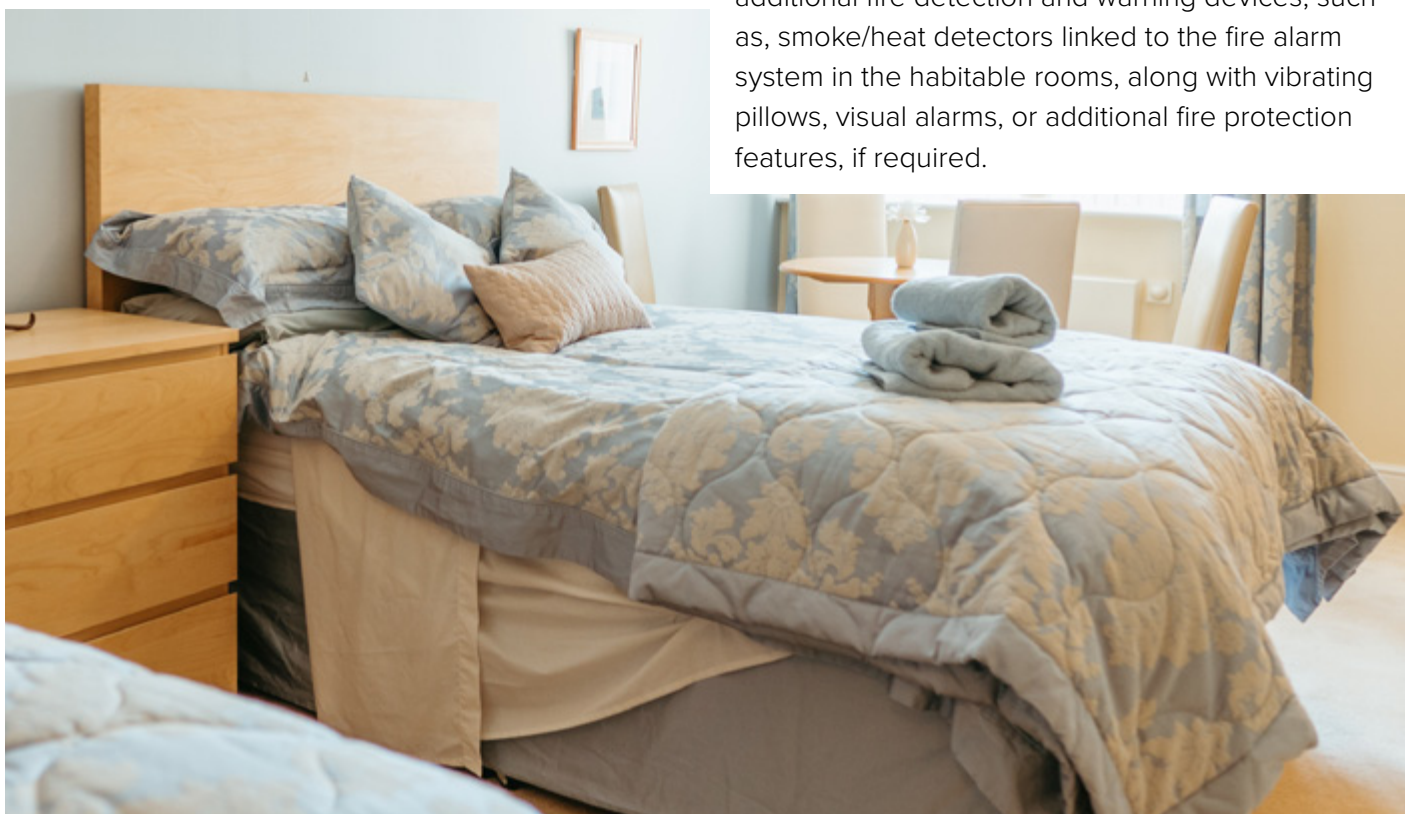
All existing staff will be trained in fire safety and new staff will be working towards this. They will have suitable and sufficient building and procedure knowledge to cope with any situation that may arise. Further 24-hour support will be provided by managers and supervisors.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and Care Assessments

A comprehensive list of tenants, 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 and Rescue 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 and Rescue Service of the code on request.

When required, a PEEP will be jointly developed by the tenant and Lifeline Services. This will aim to address how the tenant 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.



Appendix 1 Specific Fire Safety Arrangements

1 Fire Safety Measures

Each residential building comprising of two or more flats will have a number of fire safety measures installed. These will have been assessed as the most suitable for that particular building, as part of the fire risk assessment and can consist of a combination of the following:

1.1 Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

Where appropriate, buildings will be fitted with automatic fire detection and alarm systems in line with current regulations, standards, and guidelines. Where these systems are in place, they will be periodically serviced and inspected by a competent service provider, in line with the relevant British Standard. The period between visits to undertake inspection and service will be based upon a risk assessment and manufacturer's guidance but the maximum period between visits will not exceed six months. All visits will be recorded in the site's fire logbook. The responsible person will ensure that regular weekly checks and testing of the alarm system are carried out on a local level in line with the manufacturer's instructions. All activations of the fire alarm will be recorded within the fire logbook – testing, maintenance, and false alarms.

We will also carry out regular fire evacuation practice sessions to ensure our tenants understand what is required. This may be a physical on-site staged evacuation or a desktop review. We will also arrange feedback sessions to understand any concerns raised from our tenants during those practice sessions.

1.2 Emergency Escape Lighting

Emergency escape lighting is lighting that comes on when the power supply to the normal lighting provision fails. It provides illumination for the safety of people leaving a location or attempting to terminate a potentially dangerous process beforehand. Emergency lighting will be periodically serviced and inspected by a competent service provider in line with the relevant British Standard. The period between visits to undertake inspection

and service will be based upon a risk assessment and manufacturer's guidance but the maximum period between visits will not exceed twelve months. All visits will be recorded in site's fire logbook. The responsible person will ensure that regular monthly checks and testing of the emergency lighting are carried out on a local level in line with manufacturer's instructions. Tests will be recorded in the fire logbook.

1.3 Fire Fighting Equipment

The Fire Risk Assessment will determine what is suitable and sufficient fire-fighting equipment for all buildings we own and/or manage. In most cases this will include fire extinguishers and fire blankets (recommended for all kitchen areas).

The Responsible Person will ensure that any fire-fighting equipment is inspected annually by a competent person to ensure it remains in an operational condition and is kept in an easily accessible position. A record of these services will be recorded in the fire log.

In addition to an annual service, the Responsible Person will ensure that fire extinguishers are kept in good order and available for use at all times. This can be achieved by regular inspections by a nominated person and will include checking:

- That the tamper indicator is not broken - this is usually a plastic tag or disc to show the pin has not been removed or tampered with.
- That the pressure gauge needle is in the green area - if there is no pressure gauge, the extinguisher is discharged using an internal gas cartridge, therefore no check is required.
- The unit has no signs of corrosion, dents, damaged, discharge or deterioration.

Any issues found will be reported to the contracted service provider and entered in to the fire logbook.

It must be emphasised that staff are not expected to put themselves at risk by fighting fire. However, if they have been given training in the use of extinguishers or are familiar with the operation of and appropriate use of extinguishers, small fires, no bigger than the size of a wastepaper basket, may be tackled. This must only be done after raising the alarm. It is imperative that, if staff feel themselves to be at risk, they leave the fire and make their escape.

1.4 Fire and Flat Entrance Doors

Fire doors within communal areas, such as staircase and cross-corridor doors, and flat entrance doors opening onto communal areas of a residential building containing two or more flats will be checked and regularly maintained in working order.

The inspection frequency for these doors will be determined by risk as part of the fire risk assessment. Checks will ensure that fire doors are correctly installed, are of the right specification and maintained in working order, including an effective, working self-closing device.

Staff will carry out a formal programme of visual fire safety inspections, which include visual checks on communal area fire doors and report on any areas of concern relating to fire safety.

Further guidance on formal fire door inspection frequencies is outlined in the Fire Safety Regulations 2022, regulation 10, which states that all buildings over 11m will have an annual flat front door inspection with communal doors inspected quarterly. Although guidance has not yet been published for buildings under 11m, we are adopting the same inspection regime.

1.5 Passive Fire Protection

Passive fire protection (PFP) consists of products installed in a building to improve its fire safety rating. PFP keeps people safe and limits damage to a building's structure and its contents by restricting the spread of fire and smoke and shielding escape routes long enough for occupants to exit the building calmly and safely. PFP products include but are not restricted to:

- Fire protection to the structural frame of the building.
- Fire-resisting doors and fire door furniture.
- Fire shutters.
- Compartment walls and floors.
- Fire-resisting walls and partitions.
- Suspended ceilings.
- Fire-resisting glazing.
- Fire doors and hardware.
- Industrial fire shutters and curtains.
- Fire-fighting shafts and stairwells.
- Fire-resisting ductwork.
- Fire-resisting service ducts and shafts.

PFP can sometimes be damaged or even removed during building and maintenance works or the installation of cabling and ductwork. When

commissioning contractors or when any in-house works are undertaken the Responsible Person for the residential building will ensure that PFP is maintained intact or suitably replaced or repaired with like for like materials to ensure the fire integrity is preserved.

1.6 Sprinklers and Smoke Control Systems

If sprinkler systems are installed in residential buildings, these will be tested and inspected annually by a competent person. Pumps will be fitted with a weekly self-check system and flow switches will be fitted with an auto check system that runs every quarter. All results of any inspections will be entered in the relevant building fire logbook.

Where smoke control systems are in place, these will be tested weekly to ensure that they are operating effectively, with a full system inspection and test carried out by a suitably qualified person at least annually.

1.7 Signage

Every new tenant within a residential building comprising of two or more flats will receive information regarding fire safety arrangements for that building. Regular newsletters and safety information will be available on our website. Social Media channels will also be utilised for general fire safety advice. Where required, communal areas of residential buildings will have clearly displayed Fire Action notices providing instructions in both pictures and words to tenants of what to do in case of a fire in their flat, or a fire elsewhere in the building.

Signs denoting the fire escape route will be prominently displayed on each floor. The signs will be on a contrasting background, easily legible and readable in low level lighting conditions or when illuminated with a torch.

1.8 Tenant Fire Safety

As part of the sign-up process, new and existing tenants will be made aware of their own obligations to reduce the risk of fire within their homes and not create a fire risk, both within their home and in any communal areas that may affect the safety of others.

A detailed list of specific responsibilities is given at appendices 2 and 3. This will then be issued to tenants as part of their tenancy sign up process.

Tenants are responsible for ensuring that they:

- Do not create a fire hazard in their home, for example:
 - Storing flammable items on their balcony, in common areas or by blocking fire escape

- routes, including not storing, parking, or charging (however temporary) petrol and/or battery driven items, such as motorbikes and mobility scooters.
- Not leaving candles lit and unattended.
- Avoiding smoking in bed and dispose of cigarettes safely if smoking inside the home.
- Leaving chip pans and items cooking unattended.
- Not smoking in communal areas, as this is prohibited.
- Ensuring electronic devices are charged responsibly using a British Standard charger.
- Not allowing stored items to build up within their home.
- Not leaving domestic rubbish on communal landings.
- Not placing large items or forcing large items into refuse chutes that may cause blockages and result in a fire hazard.
- Not leaving large bulky items or rubbish in communal areas or outside, against the building. This is a breach of the tenancy agreement.
- Are aware of fire safety measures, including the evacuation plan for their building.
- Do not make any structural alterations to their flats.

All tenants will be briefed on fire safety measures specific to their new home at sign up. Tenants will be advised that they may be contacted by Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, who will offer a home safety check and urged to accept the offer, which is free of charge.

E-bikes and E-scooters use rechargeable Lithium-Ion batteries. When used correctly these are not dangerous, but it is important to be aware of fire safety advice relating to these vehicles and particularly the charging of them. All Tenants should see our [Guide to E-scooter and E-bike safety](#) for advice on charging your vehicle safely as well as things to consider before your purchase an E-scooter or E-bike.

Additional advice is also available in our [safety advice for electric mobility vehicles](#) webpage.

1.9 Managed Use of Communal Fire Escape Routes

We have adopted a policy of zero tolerance relating to the placing and storing of objects in fire escape routes and stairwells. This is to reduce the risk of fire breaking out in these areas and the potential for any fire to compromise fire escape routes, as well as creating obstructions and restricting access to the fire and rescue services.

In communal stairwells, corridors and communal cupboards, tenants will not be permitted to keep and/or store:

- Bicycles, prams, pushchairs, and mobility scooters.
- Combustible materials, such as paper, books.
- Plastic or fabric plants and flowers.
- Rubbish awaiting disposal.
- Furniture.
- Barbeques.
- Motorcycles, mowers and other gardening equipment containing petrol or other fuels.
- Plastic or timber sheds or lockers.
- Hazardous chemicals, gas containers, or flammable liquids in the communal area or storage cabinets, dedicated storerooms, or cupboards.
- DIY materials or tools.
- Electrical appliances, such as tumble dryers and washing machines.
- Toys and play furniture.
- Recyclable materials.
- Bedding, clothing and shoes.
- Curtains, including nets.
- Food or other organic matter.
- Items that present a hazard, such as panes of glass, fairy lights and decorations.
- Any other bulky items.

In addition, residents will not be allowed to charge mobility scooters, batteries, or other electrical equipment in escape routes. There is a separate guide relating to [Mobility Scooters](#). This is in line with our [Housing Management Policy](#).

Where items are found in escape routes and stairwells, we will give notice to tenants to remove these items. If ownership of items is unknown, a notice will be attached to the item. However, goods that present a significant fire risk will be removed immediately, without notice.

Failure to remove items will result in us removing them. They will be placed in storage for a period one month [in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1982]. Any goods that are not reclaimed will be disposed of without compensation. The costs associated with removal, storage and disposal may be re-charged to the tenant concerned. If we are unable to identify the tenant concerned, we may recharge all tenants within the block. Appropriate legal action may be taken against any person who persistently breaches rules relating to the use of communal escape routes and stairwells.

Appendix 2 Fire safety information specific for purpose built blocks of flats

For all purpose-built blocks of flats a stay put a 'Stay Put' evacuation strategy will be implemented and this means you can remain in your property when there is a fire in another area of your building. This is because your apartment is designed with barriers such as compartmentation, fire walls and fire doors to prevent the fire from spreading across your development.

Unless the fire started in your apartment, it should remain unaffected for at least 60 minutes. During this time, the Fire and Rescue Service should be able to prevent further spread or help you safely out of the building should it be required.

Do I have to 'Stay Put'?

If you don't feel safe and wish to leave your property, no one can prevent you from doing this. But you must be aware that a fire in another part of the building may affect your normal escape route. The Fire and Rescue Service will require clear access to the fire as quickly as possible and additional people leaving the building may slow their response.

Who do I report a fire to

- You **MUST dial 999** immediately.
- Please advise Darlington Borough Council as soon as you are made aware of a fire in the building (**DO NOT** do this before calling **999**).
- Advise your insurance company after the fire has occurred if it has affected your property.

What do I need to do?

If you are not in an area directly affected by fire, you should remain in your apartment, close doors and windows and await further instructions from the emergency services.

What to do if there is a fire in YOUR property

- **DO NOT** stay to fight the fire.
- If there are others in the property alert them and make your way out of the building.
- If it is safe to do so, close windows and internal doors, switch off your cooker or oven if it is on.
- Always close the front door of your property behind you, **leaving it unlocked** where possible.
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service by dialling 999 and providing your full address and apartment number.
- Wait outside, in a safe location away from the building, until instructed to return by the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Do not put yourself at risk or cause unnecessary delay.

What to do if you see or hear of a fire in ANOTHER part of your building

- **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR FLAT.**
- Call the fire service by dialling **999**.
- The building is designed to contain a fire in the apartment where it starts. This means it will typically be safe for you to stay in your own apartment if the fire is elsewhere in the building.
- You must leave **IMMEDIATELY** if smoke or heat affects your home, or if you are told to do so by the fire service.
- If you are in any doubt, get out

If you are NOT in your property and become aware of a fire within another part of the building

- **Dial 999 immediately** while making your way to safety using your nearest escape route.
- **DO NOT** use a lift.
- **DO NOT** stop to collect belongings or return to your property.
- **DO NOT** enter the building until the emergency services advise it is safe to do so.

Appendix 3 Fire procedures specific for Sheltered and Extra Care Schemes

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



Appendix 4 General fire safety information

Fire door safety

Your front door/entrance door is a self-closing fire door that will prevent smoke and fire entering and leaving your property in an emergency. It is important that you **DO NOT** make any alterations to the door, such as removing the self-closing device, as this will compromise the fire safety of your development.

The new regulations require us to check your flat front door at least once per year. We will visit your property to gain access. Where we don't gain access, we will leave a calling card to advise we have called.

We will advertise the date of the next visit via letter.

During the visit, a QR code (sticker) will be placed on the top of your door on the hinge side. This sticker is unique to your flat front door and will be used to record inspection history. The QR code must not be removed.

Flat front door – Five-point safety checks:

For your safety we ask that you take time to check your fire doors using the five steps below.

- Door and frame – The door and frame will be checked to ensure that both are undamaged for example, no open holes or breaks exist in surfaces of either the door or frame.
- Door seals – Are there smoke and/or intumescent seals in place around the door or frame? Are these intact with no sign of damage?
- Hinges, handles and latches – Are hinges, handles and latches fixed firmly to the door and frame? Are these operating correctly, not loose or broken? Are there minimum of 3 hinges on each door and no missing screws?
- Door closing correctly in frame – Check the door closer for obvious signs of damage or missing parts. Check the door closes properly into the frame by opening the door halfway and letting it close. Does it close flush into the frame without sticking on the floor, frame, or latch?
- Gaps – When the door is closed in the frame, are the gaps less than 4mm between the door and frame on the top and sides of the door? (A £1 coin is about 3mm thick so use that as a gauge.)

Are the gaps on the bottom of the door (threshold) less than 10mm between the bottom of the door and the floor? As a rule of thumb, if you can see light under the door, the gap is likely to be too big.

If during these checks you identify issues with the door, it is your responsibility to seek advice from a competent contractor to provide advice or undertake a repair. For further information visit:

www.firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/toolkit/five-step-fire-door-check

Communal fire door

There are communal fire doors throughout your development, and we will inspect them to make sure they're in working order on a quarterly basis.

Fire doors are designed to stop the passage of smoke and fire when closed. They are often in place to protect escape routes so people can safely evacuate. You may find them across corridors, on stairwells, and on electrical cupboards.

It's important that fire doors, which are labelled with a blue sign, are NEVER wedged or propped open.



Additional fire safety features

To protect you and your neighbours and enable the Fire and Rescue Services to safely tackle a fire, additional fire safety features may be installed in and around your property. These could include:

Fire signage

Fire signage will be located throughout the building. This may include:

- Fire exit signs indicate where the door to the final exit is.
- Directional fire signage is there for you to follow to reach your emergency exit.
- Fire action notices advise you what to do in the event of a fire.

Emergency lighting

These lights are provided on the escape route so in the event of an electrical failure, they will remain lit up and guide you to the staircase or exit.



Smoke ventilation

Smoke ventilation may be installed. This is commonly known as Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs). These vents open when smoke is detected nearby. The AOV is designed to open and clear smoke to allow for you to escape and for firefighters to safely fight a fire.

Please note not all premises have additional safety features installed. Our competent Fire Risk Assessor reviews the safety features required in line with each building type and legislation.



Safety advice

These fire prevention tips can help reduce the chances of a fire in your home.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

- All properties we own and/or manage will have hard wired smoke alarms/heat detectors installed.
- All properties we own and/or manage will have carbon monoxide alarms installed.

Test the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in your property monthly.

- In some developments, your smoke detector may be linked to the communal alarm system. If you think your fire alarm could be linked to the communal system, please check with your property/development manager before you test. In our sheltered schemes, for example testing your alarm may cause false alarms.
- If any of your smoke or carbon monoxide alarms have a one-year battery, make sure it is changed every year. Only take the battery out when you need to replace it.

- Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your alarm if it goes off by mistake.
- Mains-powered alarms are powered by your home power supply and have a back-up battery in case of a power cut. They need to be installed by a qualified electrician, and, like battery alarms, they do require testing.

In the kitchen

Cook safely - Take extra care if you need to leave the kitchen whilst cooking, take pans off the heat or turn them down to avoid risk.

- Avoid cooking when under the influence of alcohol.
- Avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone when cooking on the hob. Keep matches and saucepan handles out of their reach to keep them safe.
- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob.
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking.

Deep Fat Frying

- Take care when cooking with hot oil – it sets alight easily.
- Make sure food is dry before putting it in hot oil so it doesn't splash.
- If the oil starts to smoke – it's too hot. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool.
- Use a thermostat-controlled electric deep fat fryer. This means it can't overheat.



Electrics

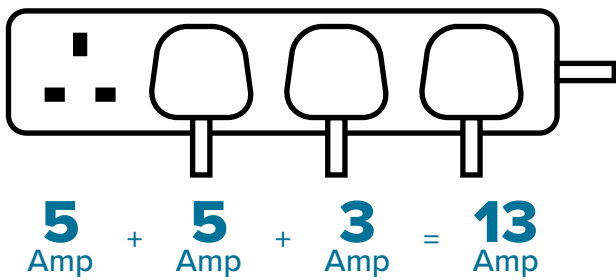
How to avoid electrical fires:

- Try and keep to one plug adaptor per socket.
- Keep your eyes peeled for signs of dangerous or loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reasons, or flickering lights.
- Unplug appliances when you're not using them, they are fully charged, or when you go to bed.

Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them triggering a fire.

An extension lead or adaptor will have a limit to how many amps it can take. Be careful not to overload your plugs to reduce the risk of a fire.

Appliances use different amounts of power – a television may use a 3amp plug and a vacuum cleaner a 5amp plug, for example. It's important to know the limit.



Cigarettes

- Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Put them out and make sure they are out!
- Don't leave a lit cigarette, cigar or pipe lying around. They can easily start a fire.
- Unplug e-cigarettes when fully charged and ensure you are using the correct charger type.

Candles

- Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire – like curtains or tissues.
- Put out candles when you leave the room, and make sure they're out completely at night.
- Consider using LED or battery-operated candles.
- Keep pets away from a lit candle.



Housing Services contact details



01325 405333



housing@darlington.gov.uk



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