

1 Introduction

1.1 The Fire Safety Policy is intended to ensure that regular fire and health and safety inspections are carried out in internal and external communal areas in blocks of flats, including sheltered and temporary accommodation.

1.2 This ensures that any issues which could impact on the safety of residents (tenants and leaseholders) and visitors are identified and addressed promptly.

1.3 The Policy is to be used in conjunction with the Fire Safety procedures for High Rise I Buildings, and Communal Blocks and other associated documents as listed in section two.

2 Strategic Links

2.1 The Policy links to the following legislation:

- Health and safety at Work Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations 1999
- Housing Act 2004
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Building Safety Act 2022
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

2.2 The Policy links to the following Stockport Homes Limited (SHL) policies/procedures:

- High Rise - Fire Safety procedure
- Communal Blocks - Fire Safety procedure
- Sheltered Housing Fire Safety procedure
- Fire safety- storage of mobility scooters Policy
- Estate inspections and Customer walkabouts Policy
- Fire Safety referral form procedure
- Hoarding Policy
- Fire Damaged Properties Policy
- SHL Eyes Wide Open Policy Statement
- Block Inspection Procedure.

2.3 The 'Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England' sets out that Registered Providers shall 'keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so'. This Policy ensures that by regularly undertaking block inspections, SHL will ensure that all communal areas are kept safe and free from obstruction, thereby keeping residents and its housing stock safe.

3 Purpose and Scope of the Policy

3.1 SHL recognises the need for and importance of:

- Ensuring compliance with the relevant legislation as per 2.1 above.
- Communicating a clear policy for employees who have responsibilities for fire safety in communal areas and to ensure adherence to all relevant legislation in relation to fire safety.
- Ensuring staff at all levels are aware of their responsibilities in relation to fire safety in communal areas of SHL properties through tailored training appropriate to their role and responsibilities.
- Ensuring all communal areas are as clear as possible and free of hazards.
- Demonstrating the competencies of employees and contractors who work in any block.

4 Key Principles

4.1 Communal areas must be kept clear of any obstruction that could impede means of escape.

4.2 Information on Vulnerabilities impacting customers safety in relation to fire safety will be collected by the Compliance and Building Safety Team in relation to High Rise and I.L.Os in relation to sheltered schemes.

4.3 The Compliance and Building Safety Team oversee the maintenance and bi-yearly servicing of all sprinkler systems, but routine inspections are also carried out by those responsible for management of each building to ensure they are free from obvious damage or obstruction that may prevent them from functioning correctly.

4.4 Furniture and furnishings may significantly contribute to the spread of fire in communal areas, stairways and corridors. They can also impede access and egress from the building. Therefore, no items of furniture or furnishings are permitted on the communal landings. This includes Christmas trees and Christmas decorations.

4.5 Any items of furniture located within communal lounges or foyers of high-rise accommodation are strictly monitored, must be supplied by SHL and must be fire retardant and comply with British Standard Safety Mark BS5852 and BS5287: 1988.

4.6 Any carpets or floor coverings fitted in communal areas must be fire retardant meeting British standards BS5287:1988 and BS5852. The carpets must be correctly fitted so there is no trip hazard or obstruction to fire doors.

4.7 Individual door mats are not permitted at the entrance of flats.

4.8 Curtains, blinds and/or nets are not permitted in communal areas.

- 4.9 Electrical items are not permitted in communal areas.
- 4.10 Motorbikes and scooters are neither allowed anywhere within the building nor allowed to be parked close to the building. All motorbikes should be parked in designated parking areas.
- 4.11 Barbeques, patio heaters, burners, fire pits, and similar items, are not allowed in communal gardens without the written permission of SHL, who will conduct a risk assessment to establish the feasibility of the request. All items of this nature are not permitted to be stored near the building or inside properties.
- 4.12 Barbeques, patio heaters, burners, fire pits, and similar items, are not allowed on any balconies.
- 4.13 Children's pushchairs must not be stored in communal areas. Due to their collapsible nature, they should be stored inside residents' properties.
- 4.14 Any doors to storerooms, electrical cupboards, plant rooms, bin stores must be kept locked.
- 4.15 All doors in common parts will be routinely checked through a programme of visual inspections in communal blocks by the Compliance and Building Safety Team in high rise using a standardised checklist to ensure they are in good working order and raise repairs where required.
- 4.16 All flat entrance doors should be free from damage and in good working order to ensure they perform in the event of a fire; any alterations or additional door furniture is not permitted without permission from SHG.
- 4.17 Fire extinguishers where installed must be kept in good condition and tested annually by the Compliance and Building Safety Team.
- 4.18 Fire resistant walls, doors and glazing will be in good condition and free of damage.
- 4.19 Any vents (including automatic opening ones) will be in good condition and free of damage or tampering.
- 4.20 Where applicable fire exit signs and/or fire action notices will be in place and in good condition, these will be routinely checked by the Compliance and Building Safety Team in high rise.
- 4.21 Fire panels in Sheltered Schemes will be inspected and tested by ILOs. Fire panels in low rise and high rise are inspected by the Compliance and Building Safety Team.
- 4.22 All service riser doors will be in good condition and free from obstruction.
- 4.23 Emergency lights will be visually inspected to ensure in full working order monthly by the Compliance and Building Safety Team and manually checked every six months.

4.24 Mobility scooters are not allowed to be stored or charged in any communal internal area unless a specific mobility storage room has been provided by SHG.

4.25 Mobility scooters in outside communal areas should only be charged using a specialist external charging point. Charging via any other means is not permitted, such as via an extension cable connected to an individual property mains supply.

Storage and Cage Rooms

4.26 Cage room access in high rise blocks will be limited to residents with explicit consent, SHL staff, contractors and Your Pantry volunteers.

4.27 Many cage rooms in high rise blocks now contain water storage tanks for the sprinklers for the block but are also covered by sprinklers themselves.

4.28 All blocks have designated rooms that can be used for temporary storage of bulky items removed by the Caretaking Team, the frequency of bulky waste collections is managed through the Sweep Up system.

4.29 All plant, storage and cage rooms, in blocks where fitted, will be covered by sprinklers to minimise risk of items being stored in these areas.

Residents

4.30 Residents identified as vulnerable and at an increased level of risk will be referred to Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) for a Home Fire Safety Assessment (HFSA). This will allow GMFRS to assess the level of risk and what level of intervention or support is required to reduce the risk of fire and the likelihood of accidental fires.

4.31 We will collect and record relevant information to understand the diverse needs of our residents, such as protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional needs, as they affect their personal and the building's safety.

4.32 Residents may be identified as vulnerable and referred for an HFSA at various stages throughout their tenancy. The earliest point will be at their tenancy sign up, after this it is likely to be following contact with a member of staff in the Neighbourhoods, Independent Living or Compliance and Building Safety Team.

4.33 Residents have a responsibility to comply with fire safety regulations to ensure the building in which they live is, safe for themselves and other residents. Information relating to good fire safety is displayed throughout the block, communicated by post and social media and residents will also be directed to the SHG website for further information.

5 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

5.1 EIA completed and process is in place to record information regarding abilities/vulnerabilities of residents which is determined by whether they could self-evacuate in the event of a fire or other emergency. This information is gathered and recorded by the Compliance and Building Safety Team. This information is stored locally within the team and also shared with the Greater Manchester Fire Services via the premises information boxes located within each high rise. This information is designed to assist the fire service in the event of an emergency so they can see where there are residents who may not be able self-evacuate and could need assistance should the fire spread in a particular direction.

5.2 Residents are advised that that in the event of a fire residents are advised to remain in their property for as long as they feel safe to do so, if they see signs of smoke, flame or heat then they should leave via the protected stairwells. The exception to this rule would be when the fire is in their own property in which case they should leave and call 999. The advice being giving to anyone who is unable to self-evacuate is to leave their property and find a safe place beyond as many fire doors on their landing as they can, whether that be cross corridor doors, bin chute room doors (where possible) or even other neighbours properties.

6 Ownership

6.1 The Policy is owned by the Operations Directorate and will be monitored by the Operations Management Team.

6.2 The Policy will be reviewed in line with the Operations Management Policy and Procedure Review Schedule.