



Fire Safety Policy

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1. POLICY SUMMARY

- 1.1. This policy covers the Fire Safety management to all properties and communal areas owned and/or managed by EPIC Housing.
- 1.2. The policy sets out the obligations of EPIC Housing and of the rights and obligations of its customers.

2. APPLICABILITY

- 2.1. This policy applies to:
 - All employees of EPIC Housing, regardless of employment status, or contractual condition.
 - Board of Directors.
 - All tenants and occupants of property owned by EPIC Housing as detailed in the policy.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. This Policy sets out EPIC Housing's approach and responsibilities in insuring compliance with the relevant legislation and regulatory guidance to identify, manage, and mitigate risks associated with fire. It will also demonstrate that EPIC is fulfilling its duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO), Fire Safety Act 2021 and other relevant codes of practice and good practice guidance. This includes undertaking suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) and subsequent fire risk remedial actions.
- 3.2 EPIC Housing accepts its responsibilities as a landlord to promote the health and safety of its tenants, and to ensure that all Fire Risk Assessments are in place with actions implemented so that our homes remain safe, effective, and efficient.
- 3.3 This Policy sets out the measures EPIC puts in place to assess the risks posed by the spread of fire and the control systems established to mitigate or eradicate these risks as far as is reasonably possible.

4. CONTEXT

- 4.1. The principal legislation applicable for this policy is:
 - Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 (England and Wales) Fire Safety, as amended by the Fire Safety Regulations 2022.
- 4.2. This policy is set within the context of relevant legislation as below:
 - Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
 - The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended)
 - The Building Regulations 2010 and 2022 amendments
 - The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
 - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
 - Building Safety Act 2022
 - Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England
 - The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
 - Housing Act 2004

- 4.3. This policy considers the regulatory expectations as outlined within the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England.

5. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 5.1. EPIC Housing is required to meet all regulatory landlord responsibilities, including but not limited to, the following:
- The Fire Risk Assessment frequency will be determined by the Fire Risk Assessment of the premises. A Fire Risk Assessment will be conducted annually for high-risk premises, every 3 years for medium-risk premises and every 5 years for low-risk premises. Buildings will also be reassessed following the completion of any major works which are likely to have impacted upon the fire protections of the building.
 - Defects or actions identified by a Fire Risk Assessment will be reviewed by the Head of Capital and Compliance and challenged as necessary to ensure practical solutions are implemented with realistic time scales.
 - Action owners within the Compliance area will be identified and the relevant actions allocated accordingly. Challenged actions will be recorded together with why the item was challenged and the agreed solution.
 - The designated Responsible Person must ensure that all premises for which they have control and comply with current fire safety requirements. This includes ensuring that any fire detection/alarms, fire-fighting equipment, emergency lighting, fire compartmentation, evacuation, PEEPs and fire-prevention methods required in accordance with the Fire Risk Assessment are provided and maintained.
 - In addition to compliance with all applicable statutory requirements, EPIC will liaise with the Staffordshire Fire Rescue and Service (SFRS), the Fire Risk Assessment consultants and follow local recommendations in the design and construction of new schemes or the conversion and improvement of existing premises. A Fire Risk Assessment for all new and converted premises will be undertaken before occupancy, to verify as built against design criteria.
- 5.2. The designated Responsible Person will make suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons are exposed, for the purpose of identifying the general fire precautions that need to be taken to comply with the requirements, and prohibitions imposed by or under the Fire Safety Order.
- 5.3. We acknowledge the significance of the risk posed by fire and will, as far as is reasonably practical, take steps to prevent or minimise the risks to our customers, employees, contractors, and lawful users of our properties of a fire occurring. We cannot, however, guarantee that incidents of fire will not occur.

5.4. EPIC Housing will approach fire safety management through three main criteria:

- Prevention: We will undertake a programme of Fire Risk Assessments, available on request by our tenants. We will regularly inspect our communal areas and proactively address identified risks.
- Controls: We will ensure that our properties have suitable controls to prevent the spread of fire by ensuring adequate compartmentation methods are in place. We will ensure that our properties remain suitable to support the premises Fire Risk Assessment.
- Training and Guidance: We will ensure that employees are trained and have access to the relevant information.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders across EPIC are detailed below:

6.1. The Board

- Reviews reports and/or performance indicators to assure itself that the measures detailed in this policy are met.
- Monitors and reviews compliance.
- Ensures legal requirements are met.
- Approves changes to the Fire Safety Policy.

6.2. The Chief Executive (Duty Holder)

- Ensures that resources are made available to allow for the appropriate management of this policy.
- Is accountable for the proper implementation of this policy.
- Ensures that their responsibilities as the duty holder under the policy is managed to ensure full compliance.

6.3. Executive Team

- Ensures that operational activities are compliant.
- Ensures that statutory duties are discharged and meets monthly to review progress and review operational risk to the policy.
- Recommends changes to the Fire Safety Policy to Board for approval.
- Approves changes to the Fire Safety Procedure.
- Ensures landlord compliance and relevant monitoring within this policy.
- Sets out audit requirements to ensure this policy is compliant.
- Head of Support Services is required to establish fire safety arrangements in office premises to ensure compliance with this policy and supporting procedures, in collaboration with the Head of Capital and Compliance. This will include the appointment of Fire Wardens (where required), who will ensure all personnel under their control are trained and are aware of the premise's evacuation procedures.

6.4. Head of Asset Management and Building Safety

- Will work closely with the operational Compliance team to implement this policy.
- Ensures that legal obligations and policy measures are being adhered to and in line with budget.
- Ensures that comprehensive Fire Safety Policy and Procedural documents are in place to ensure safe working practices across all sections of the company.
- Takes responsibility for compliance with this Policy.
- Implements a policy review.
- Ensures that financial accounting expenditure relating to Fire issues are monitored and included in future budget forecasts.
- Auditing the scheme as instructed by the executive team and/or board.
- Is responsible for the overall implementation and regular review of this policy, ensuring its objectives are achieved.
- Leads on the writing, implementation, monitoring and review of the Fire safety policy and associated policies and procedures.
- Is responsible for the compliance and performance indicator reporting to the Executive Team, Board, and the Chief Executive.
- Ensures that any compliance and/or H&S-related issues are brought to the attention of the Chief Executive and provides regular updates on service delivery against budget.
- Develops and implements operational procedures to deliver the policy objectives.
- Embeds the policy through staff training, learning and development.
- Monitors the overall effectiveness of the policy in terms of cost, quality, and time.
- Arranging Fire Risk Assessments and ensuring that the assigned actions identified are actioned, within the agreed time scales.
- Ensuring the inspection and maintenance of fire safety equipment, including fire detection, alarm systems and emergency lighting.

6.5. All employees and External Stakeholders

- Are responsible for ensuring an understanding and adherence to this policy.
- Report any issue that requires repairs or maintenance whilst visiting any EPIC Housing property.
- Each employee is responsible for maintaining a fire-safe environment within EPIC premises that they work or frequent.
- Employees have an individual responsibility to prevent the break-out of fire, to maintain the integrity of the fire precaution measures, to undertake fire training

and to follow the established procedures for the management of an actual or suspected fire incident.

6.6. Tenants

- EPIC Housing will publicise the importance of fire safety to all tenants, regardless of tenure. The responsibility for safety in all individual private domestic dwellings will fall to the individual rather than EPIC. It is therefore up to the resident to carry out the regular testing of their individual fire detection systems.
- It will be considered a breach of Tenancy if any tenant or occupant does not comply with the requirements for fire safety; we will take all relevant enforcement action to ensure the safety of the premises and tenants.
- EPIC Housing is responsible for fire safety within communal areas in all tenures. Tenants and all occupants, however, have several obligations they are required to fulfil to safeguard the safety of all, including below:

The Storage of Oxygen

- Tenants or occupants may store oxygen in their properties for medical purposes. Oxygen aids combustion, therefore, sources of heat or open flames in the vicinity should be minimised. It is the responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder to inform EPIC Housing of the presence of oxygen equipment in their property.
- The supplier of the medical gas must also inform the local Fire Service as per local requirements.
- SFRS require a sign provided by the medical gas supplier to be fitted inside the home to make the Fire Service aware that an oxygen cylinder is present in the event of a fire.
- Where we are aware that oxygen is stored within a block, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is required.

Tenant's belongings / goods / mobility scooters

- If left in communal areas these can be a source of ignition and support combustion, as well as potentially blocking escape routes. Therefore, the storage of belongings / goods / mobility scooters in communal areas is not permitted.
- EPIC Housing will take action to remove items and, where appropriate, without prior notice to the Tenant.
- Barbecues (including gas barbecues) are considered to be "open fires" and are potentially a fire risk to the building and the subsequent safety of other tenants. The tenancy agreement in general terms does not permit any tenant to put others at risk due to their actions. Therefore, barbecues are not permitted to be stored or used within EPIC Housing properties, including any balcony area.

7. MANAGING FIRE SAFETY

- 7.1. EPIC Housing does not employ direct labour to maintain and certify fire safety in-house; we rely on a network of contractors to deliver our service.
- 7.2. EPIC Housing will take reasonable steps to ensure that all operatives undertaking installation or maintenance works to provide fire safety are suitably qualified and experienced.
- 7.3. EPIC Housing has systems and procedures in place which ensure contractors involved in the fire safety process are trained and have the necessary skills and experience to specify, complete necessary works, manage and monitor service delivery.
- 7.4. EPIC Housing will ensure there is a good line of communication between us, the contractor, and our tenants regarding fire safety in our homes. We will effectively manage expectations for the completion of a repair and ensure tenants are kept up to date on the progress.
- 7.5. EPIC Housing will comply directly and engage with contractors to ensure they comply with all relevant legislation in the delivery of our fire safety service.
- 7.6. The Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order (RRFSO) places a duty on EPIC Housing to carry out FRAs to all buildings where the RRFSO applies, and EPIC is the appointed “Responsible Person” for fire safety. This includes commercial buildings such as offices, houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), the common areas of blocks of flats or maisonettes and specialised housing such as sheltered, retirement living, extra care and supported housing. It does not apply to single family dwellings, which includes the habitable parts of a building such as a flat.
- 7.7. Each property requiring an FRA will have one in place which has been carried out by a competent fire risk assessor, and which is compliant with the British Standards Institution’s PAS 79-2:2020 Specification.
- 7.8. Fire evacuation strategies will be determined on a building-by-building basis in accordance with the recommendation of the competent fire risk assessor.
- 7.9. Generally, a sterile environment approach in all internal communal areas is adopted, requiring residents to remove combustible materials from corridors and fire escape routes.
- 7.10. We will not permit the storage of mobility scooters within internal communal areas of our buildings (except for in suitably designed and designated storage areas).
- 7.11. The RRFSO clearly sets out EPIC’s obligations as Responsible Person. The responsible person must—
 - Take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of any of its employees;
 - In relation to relevant persons who are not its employees, take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances of the case to ensure that the premises are safe; and

- Make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons are exposed for the purpose of identifying the general fire precautions it needs to take to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed on it by or under this Order.

8. SUPPORTING OUR TENANTS

- 8.1. EPIC acknowledges that our tenants may, due to either age or disability, require bespoke information and advice as to the best course of action in the event of a fire. Where this is the case, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) may be considered.
- 8.2. EPIC only operates general needs accommodation and does not offer specialist accommodation for older persons or those with vulnerabilities; therefore, the aim of the PEEP is to provide people who cannot get themselves out of a building unaided with the necessary information and assistance to be able to manage their escape to a place of safety, and to ensure that the correct level of assistance is always available. We will complete PEEPs with those identified as being required by our tenants.
- 8.3. PEEPs should be held with the tenant's personal file, with all the necessary stakeholders informed to ensure the plan is effective; this may mean providing the information to SFRS.
- 8.4. The PEEP author and the person it is written for are responsible for keeping the document updated and the implementation of the PEEP.
- 8.5. EPIC will provide the Fire Risk Assessment to tenants upon request and provide information and support with the interpretation and actions contained within the report.
- 8.6. It is the responsibility of the tenant to advise us of a change in their circumstances which means that they require assistance in the event of a fire or other event that requires the ability to evacuate.
- 8.7. EPIC Housing will provide customers with advice and assistance. We recognise that some of our customers may need help when it comes to fire safety in their home. We may, entirely at our discretion, provide a service in addition to the statutory and contractual responsibilities, to assist our customers who may need support to meet the conditions of their tenancy for Fire Safety. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.8. When letting properties, the suitability of the accommodation of the respective tenant in respect of fire safety will be considered.
- 8.9. EPIC Housing will provide general information for tenants, where necessary, regarding fire safety at tenancy sign-up. Tenants will be advised to contact EPIC Housing to obtain guidance on any fire-related issues.
- 8.10. EPIC Housing will provide appointments where possible to meet the tenant's need. Engaging and encouraging vulnerable tenants to maximise access, utilising out-of-hours appointments, and considering any other request on a case-by-case basis.

9. TRAINING

- 9.1. EPIC Housing will ensure that staff who are accountable for the management of Fire Safety receive the relevant information, instruction, and training to become competent in the positions they hold.
- 9.2. EPIC Housing will provide the necessary equipment to carry out their duties safely.
- 9.3. EPIC Housing will carry out its duties to our employees in the following way:
 - At induction stage for new employees.
 - For all employees being exposed to new or increased risks due to being transferred or given a change of responsibilities.
 - Introduction of new work equipment or a change to equipment already in use.
 - The introduction of new technology.
 - The introduction of a new or revised system of work.
 - During refresher training.
- 9.4. All training needs will be structured in such a way as to assess the resulting levels of competency at the point of delivery.
- 9.5. Suitable and sufficient Fire Safety awareness training will be maintained for all relevant employees and recorded in EPIC Housing HR system.
- 9.6. All staff involved with the allocation, monitoring, and completion of FRAs, and FRA actions will need to maintain suitable and sufficient system training.
- 9.7. The Head of Asset Management and Building Compliance is responsible for the day-to-day operational delivery of fire safety testing and maintenance and will be required to have a good working knowledge on the management of fire safety in occupied buildings. They will also be expected to proactively maintain their Continued Professional Development to keep up to date and abreast of relevant industry and legislative changes and that of relevant team members who have day-to-day involvement in this area.

10. DATA VALIDATION

EPIC Housing will:

- 10.1. Ensure we have accurate and up-to-date records of all servicing and safety checks carried out to properties, including remedial actions and that copies of relevant certificates / reports are held electronically.
- 10.2. Ensure that on completion of all new installations, we receive an FRA and properties are included in ongoing servicing and maintenance contracts.
- 10.3. Review all FRAs received to ensure that they are completed correctly and that any follow-up work is completed, and records updated.
- 10.4. Monitor performance monthly in relation to the percentage of properties with valid FRAs.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. We are committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all. We are opposed to discrimination on any grounds, including race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any unjustifiable criteria. We are committed to developing a culture that values people from all sections of society and the contribution which each individual can make. We will ensure our approach to accessing properties is considerate to people's individual needs. We also adhere to the Equality Act 2010.
- 11.2. EPIC Housing recognises that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances and will strive to ensure no person or groups of persons is treated with injustice due to their personal circumstances.
- 11.3. EPIC Housing will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation and will make sure the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998) will be adhered to.
- 11.4. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out on this policy.

12. MONITORING / REVIEW

- 12.1. EPIC Housing will record and monitor a range of financial and performance indicators to assess and improve the performance of managing Fire Safety in our homes. These will include:
 - Government return performance indicators as defined in TSM.
 - EPIC Housing corporate performance indicators for Board and ET.
 - Contractual performance indicators.
- 12.2. EPIC Housing will use a variety of methods to engage with our customers regarding the quality of managing Fire Safety and commit to using a listening and learning approach to continually improve the service we offer.
- 12.3. This policy will be reviewed annually. A review may be conducted earlier if there are significant changes to either legislation or EPIC's operating practices.

13. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Corporate Plan
- Asset Management strategy
- Repairs policy and procedure
- Damp and Mould policy & Procedure
- Disrepair procedure
- Customer Home Alterations policy
- Compensation policy
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy
- Violence and Aggression policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Data protection policy
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Tenancy Agreements
- Fire Safety Procedure

Version Control

Date of Review	Reviewer	Version Number	Changes	Date of Next Review	Approved By
Sep 2022	J Mitchell	1.0	New Policy	Sep 2023	Board
Dec 2023	J Mitchell	2.0	Format, reworded sections and Minor changes	Dec 2026	Board