Fire risk – your responsibility?
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**Chair:** Martin Hilditch, Deputy Editor, Inside Housing

**Sir Ken Knight CBE QFSM**, Former HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services and Chief Fire & Rescue Advisor in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

**David Crowder**, Fire Scientist, BRE Global

**John Thornhill**, Senior Policy and Practice Officer, CIH
Fire Risk – your responsibility?

Sir Ken Knight CBE QFSM FIFireE
Former Chief Fire & Rescue Advisor
Department of Communities and Local Government
Legislation

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 [FSO]
- Housing Act 2004
- Housing health and safety rating system guidance
Case Study – Notable Practice
Brent Housing Partnership

- Fire safety strategy and planning
- Partnership
- Fire Risk Assessment
- Fire Risk Competency Council
- Training

www.bhphousing.co.uk
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Product specification
Case Study – Notable Practice
Brent Housing Partnership

- Residents
- Communications
- Training
- Fire and Rescue Service

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“The attention to detail that BHP have put into identifying and remedying risks within their buildings has enabled my colleagues to use this information to create bespoke fire plans for each site with documents contained in PIB’s to support on arrival tactics for initial fire crews.”

Borough Commander Brent, London Fire Brigade
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Sir Ken Knight CBE QFSM FIFireE
Formally Chief Fire & Rescue Advisor
Department of Communities and Local Government
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John Thornhill
Senior Policy and Practice Officer at CIH
How are landlords responding to fire safety?

John Thornhill
Senior Policy and Practice Officer
Chartered Institute of Housing
CIH in partnership for fire safety

♦ Culmination of series of Seminars with CIH, West Midlands Fire Service and Chief Fire Officers Association

♦ CIH practice brief June 2011: illustrated what is going on in practice: focus on **partnerships and communities** by negotiation with LGG, not technical

♦ Read in partnership with **Local Government Group technical guidance** on fire safety in purpose built blocks of flats

♦ 2013 aiming to produce: **top 20 questions about fire safety landlords are asking and how to respond**
4 areas of concern emerged at our road-shows for landlords

1. Problems with risk assessments
   - I’ve done a risk assessment but how do I know if it’s any good?
   - I’ve got a risk assessor, but how do I know he or she has done it properly?

2. Problems communicating with tenants and leaseholders
   - I don’t know if my tenants know what to do in the event of a fire? Communication strategy and language barriers.
   - I don’t know who lives in our properties (leasehold and sub-lets)?
   - I don’t know what has been done inside the homes of multi-dwelling buildings (resident’s own home-improvements)
4 areas of concern emerged at our road-shows for landlords

3. Problems with housing management
   - On a **day to day** basis residents keep parking scooters, paper boxes, bikes, etc in communal space
   - Tenants and residents have installed their own security arrangements: (e.g. locked fire-escapes, grills over doors)
   - Vulnerability and **lifestyle** issues (e.g. people with alcohol and substance misuse issues and **hoarders**)
   - How can I ensure work of contractors/sub-contractors is fire proofed?

4. Problems with partnerships
   - I don’t **engage** with my local Fire and Rescue Authority
   - I don’t create opportunities to get my local Fire and Rescue Authority **engage** with my tenants
   - Fire and Rescue Authorities seen in **enforcement** role only
Areas of concern at our road-shows for Fire and Rescue Services

- Although there has been **good progress** in the social rented sector on fire safety: as a % sector house fires have decreased from 42.5% in 2005/6 to 28.7% in 2010/11, there are still challenges with the wider industry:

- The growing role of the **private rented sector** in UK housing solutions (progress has been static in the private rented sector in terms of fire safety)

- Growing **fuel poverty** and **over-crowding** in response to wider economic pressures
Areas of concern at our road-shows for Fire and Rescue Services

- An **aging population** and increase in the number of frail elderly people (Erosh project coming on this)
- Illegal accommodation in the private sector (e.g. ‘beds in sheds’ and accommodation over industrial units)
- **Degradation** of the existing building stock and properties built in the 1960s and 1970s age and are altered
- **Repairs and maintenance** to existing building stock (e.g. fire-proofing trades and subcontractors, Decent Homes and other large stock improvement programmes)
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

**Communication**

- **Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire Rural Homes (SRH)**
  - In partnership, the Fire Service and SRH offer every new resident a **home fire safety check** when they occupy a new home plus **fire safety leaflet** in tenancy pack

- **Glasgow Homes**: regular fire articles in tenant and leaseholder **newsletters**

- **Southampton CC**: now do **annual tenancy audits** in tower-blocks
How the industry is addressing these challenges?

Direct interventions with tenants

- **Hereford and Worcester FRS and Worcester Community Housing**
  - Housing association include a **tenancy requirement** as part of agreement that occupiers have a home fire safety check: elderly profile of residents
  - Worked with FRS to install a **static sprinkler** in home of one tenant found with multiple cigarette burns in furniture, plus **heat-detector** on hob of a tenant who caused kitchen fires

- **South Tyneside Homes and Tyne and Wear FRS**
  - **Checklist for housing staff** going into homes to check vulnerability indicators: smoking, mobility, substance issues

- **Liverpool Mutual Homes** worked with FRS to provide vibrating and flashing smoke alarm for customer with a hearing impairment
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

Working with Fire and Rescue Services

- **North Lincolnshire Homes (NLH)** provided flats in multi-storey blocks for **Fire Service training**
- **Stockport Homes and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service** implemented regular regime of inspections on multi-story blocks with FRS
- **Red box (e.g. Gerda)** system: identify vulnerable people in high-rise and share with fire service
- **Glasgow Housing Association**: provided floor plans for high rise buildings located in a secure area plus information plates in buildings to assist FRS
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

🌟 West Midlands Fire Service and West Midlands Social landlords: Data sharing has resulted in a 45% reduction in fire incidents from December 2010 to the present day.

🌟 All local authorities and a large number of social landlords in the West Midlands are in the process of signing up to data sharing which includes 270,000 properties.

🌟 Southwark Council have signed a memorandum of understanding with London Fire Brigade agreeing shared aims and objectives, quarterly formal meetings, day-to-day contact, information sharing.
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

**Working with the Private Rented Sector**

- **Bedfordshire Borough Council** developed a **Good Practice Guide** which contains information private landlords and tenants of rented accommodation need to know about safety standards that apply to all rented housing.

- All landlords and letting agents involved in the private rented sector have access to this guide.

- Council have also facilitated **fire safety workshops**.

- PRS will play a greater role in housing vulnerable people (Homelessness changes post Localism Act).
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

**Working with leaseholders**

- **South Essex Homes** negotiated with leaseholders (e.g. replacement front doors), partnership working with agencies such as Essex Fire and Rescue, Essex Police, Environmental health, asset management and maintenance and Repairs teams.

- **Housing Association A**: where there is a **silent lease**, written to leaseholders in partnership with local FRS to notify them front-doors to common parts will be changed and billed, final recourse Housing Act 2004.

- **Southwark Council**: remedial works in blocks of flats, arranged and **staged payment plans** for leaseholders for works to common parts for fire safety.
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

Working with contractors and sub-contractors

- **Wolverhampton Homes** do insist that all contractors (in–house and principal construction partners) who are engaged on specific construction related works complete a corporate fire certificate.

- This information is recorded within the stock condition team and it is managed similar to the Landlord’s **Gas Safety Certificates**.

- **Requirements:** “A ‘Fire Stopping Compliance’ Certificate must be completed for all refurbishment, alteration and remedial works where the integrity of the fire stopping is affected to all medium –rise and high-rise blocks of flats that are under the management of Wolverhampton Homes.”
How is the industry addressing these challenges?

**Retro-fitting sprinklers**

- Some FRSs are championing this approach
- 60% of fire casualties have **physical or learning disabilities** which impede escape: sprinklers virtually eliminate fire death and reduce property damage by 90%
- **South Yorkshire Housing Association** have selectively installed domestic sprinklers: cost savings in terms of fire doors, better use of internal space and more flexible use of buildings
- **Sheffield Council** retro-fitted 47-home tower block in 2011 at cost of £55,000 (£1,150 per home)
- But costs are contentious
Take it away: a checklist for fire safety

- Identify a person (persons) in your organisation with **responsibility** for ensuring compliance with the Regulatory Reform Order and for assessing fire risk.
- A comprehensive **risk assessment** should identify fire hazards, identify people at risk, remove, reduce and protect from risk, provide information to plan and train to minimise risk and should be continuously reviewed.
- Place fire safety **information** into all tenancy handbooks or tenancy start-up packs and make sure **signage** is clear and sufficient.
- Liaise with your local **Fire and Rescue Service** to raise awareness of fire safety in the communities with which you work and to offer free home fire risk assessments.
- In blocks of flats or maisonettes make sure all residents are aware of appropriate action to be taken in the event of fire.
- Take particular care to make sure residents whose **first language** is not English have access to clear and understandable fire safety information.
- Fully assess and respond to the needs of **vulnerable residents** in relation to fire safety.
- **Know** your tenants.
- Make sure all relevant staff (RAs, caretakers, wardens, etc) are **trained** for fire safety.
Getting involved....

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please note the following changes in session timings:

The Housing Minister’s session will now take place at 12:45 pm to 1:30 pm on Thursday 27 June

Other changes to session timings:

Spotlight session
– Delivering more for and with local rural communities
  11:30 am to 12:15 pm on Thursday 27 June

Think Tank – Best Practice
– Welfare reform: the impact on customers
  11:30 am to 12:15 pm on Thursday 27 June
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