



Consultation Briefing:

Practical fire safety guidance for existing specialised housing and other supported domestic accommodation

About this briefing - This is a new type of briefing exclusively for CIH members. These briefings are designed to inform you about current consultations, highlight potential implications for the sector that you might want to consider in your own response and set out CIH Scotland's position.

Background

The Scottish Government is gathering views on draft Fire Safety Guidance for Specialised Housing (and other supported domestic accommodation).

The Guidance has been drafted to deliver on the sixth recommendation from the Review of the Fire Safety Regime for High Rise Domestic Buildings in Scotland which highlighted the need for fire safety guidance specifically for specialised and supported housing. The review found that while there are no major gaps in the Scottish legislation, there is currently a lack of fire safety guidance which relates to the needs of vulnerable people.

For most domestic premises to which the Guidance applies, it is 'good practice' advice and not a legal requirement. The Guidance does provide further information on those domestic type premises to which fire safety law does apply. For example, small, domestic care homes, licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation and some other forms of supported housing.

The deadline for responses to the consultation is **22 October 2019** and the full consultation document is available [online](#).

What's in the Guidance?

The draft Guidance is built on two main pillars:

- the **person-centred** fire safety risk assessment which focuses on the introduction of fire prevention measures to directly reduce the personal risk to a resident in their own home; and
- the **premises-based** fire risk assessment which also considers the risk to others beyond the room or compartment where a fire originates.

The **person-centred assessment** is generally outside the scope of fire safety legislation but is strongly recommended as good practice. This approach should be tailored to the individual and should take account of mobility or other issues which may impact on the ability of an individual to escape if a fire occurs.

It also requires effective engagement with residents and the Guidance recommends the use of resident's handbooks, fire safety leaflets, and joint working with health and care services to provide opportunities to inform and educate.

The Guidance also contains an example of basic fire safety advice for residents, as well as templates for displaying fire action notices, and notes the importance of ensuring that this information is reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis.

The **premises-based assessment** is a systematic and structured examination of the likelihood of fire and the likely consequences for all residents on the premises. It involves a more technical assessment than the person-centred approach and requires an understanding of the application of fire safety principles in relation to the built environment.

This approach usually focuses on common areas of buildings and is unlikely to include a detailed consideration of the risk within residents' private accommodation.

The Guidance also includes information on the storage of mobility scooters and the possible use of medical gases which can be common in sheltered and extra care housing. Mobility scooters can block escape routes and pose a fire risk when charged in communal areas, whereas medical gases such as oxygen canisters can pose a fire risk if exposed to



**Chartered
Institute of
Housing**
Scotland

extreme heat.

The Guidance acknowledges that these can be challenging issues for housing providers to deal with but makes suggestions around safer storage and more careful management.

What does this mean for the housing sector?

As noted above, the Guidance is intended to act as a 'good practice' document for most domestic premises (other than those which are covered by additional legal requirements), but the Scottish Government has stated that it will consider introducing new legislation if further support is required.

Specialised housing providers should therefore familiarise themselves with the Guidance as soon as possible to ensure that they are following the advised practice, particularly those who may be planning a review of existing fire safety procedures, and providers should also use this opportunity to identify any potential gaps that may be missing from the Guidance.

CIH Scotland's position

CIH Scotland is pleased that the Review of the Fire Safety Regime for High Rise Domestic Buildings in Scotland did not identify any significant gaps in fire safety legislation but nevertheless supports the introduction of new good practice guidance on fire safety for specialised housing.

Those living in specialised housing are often more vulnerable than tenants in general social housing, so it is crucial that fire safety information is clear and communicated to residents in an effective way. Although housing providers have overall responsibility for fire safety, much of the responsibility lies with residents themselves so it is vital that risk assessments, be these person-centred or premises-based, are carried out on a regular basis to ensure the ongoing safety of all residents.

CIH Scotland recognises that fire safety measures are already stringently applied in Scotland but the introduction of new guidance also provides a timely opportunity for specialised housing providers to review and update their existing fire safety procedures and information.

Have your say

CIH Scotland will be developing a response to this consultation. If you would like to contribute to the response, please send your feedback to

scotland.contact@cih.org

Contact us

T: 0131 225 4544

E: scotland.contact@cih.org

W: www.cih.org/scotland

T: @CIHScotland