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| Policy title: | Fire Safety Policy | | |
| Scope: | Group-wide | | |
| Policy owner: | Executive Director - Place | | |
| Approver: | Executive Team | | |
| Date: | March 2022 <i>(Updated Oct 22)</i> | Review Due Date: | March 2023 |

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out how Aspire will manage fire safety in locations where Aspire has a legal responsibility to comply with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO), amended April 2021 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA).
- 1.2 The Fire Safety Act 2021 amends the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) with the intention of improving fire safety in multi-occupancy domestic premises. Crucially, the external walls of a building and the fire doors to individual flats must now be assessed as part of the requirement for a fire risk assessment. The Act requires the owners and managers of multi-occupied residential buildings to ensure that the fire risk assessments for such buildings are reviewed and updated to encompass the structure, external walls and flat entrance doors.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

- 2.1 This policy is mandatory and applies to all Aspire employees, residents, leaseholders, contractors and other persons or other stakeholders who may work on, occupy, visit, or use its premises, or who may be affected by its activities or services. It will be used by all to ensure they understand and comply with the obligations placed upon Aspire to maintain a safe environment for residents and leaseholders within their home, as well as employees and members of the public within all communal areas of buildings.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all Aspire staff, contractors and others carrying out work on behalf of Aspire in the following locations:
 - Communal areas
 - Rented residential properties
 - Group premises (e.g., offices)
 - Commercial leasehold premises where Aspire retains the responsibility to maintain all or part of the building

- Leasehold and shared ownership residential properties comprising self-contained accommodation where Aspire retains the responsibility to maintain all or part of the building; and
- Applicable premises where Aspire acts as a managing agent.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The responsibility for establishing a health & safety framework for the management of fire safety sits with the accountable person. The Executive Team recognises the importance that is given to the management of Aspire’s assets from a health & safety and commercial perspective.

3.2 Under this policy, Aspire has appointed appropriate persons within the organisation to manage this area of risk, with the support of appointed specialist contractors.

3.3 ACCOUNTABLE PERSON FOR ASPIRE GROUP

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| Accountable Person | Position: | Group Chief Executive |
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3.4 The Group Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for health & safety across the Group and will nominate appropriately qualified and suitably experienced people to discharge those duties in relation to the risk posed by fire safety.

3.5 SCHEDULE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

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| Accountable Person | Position: | Executive Director, Property |
| | Telephone: | 01782 635200 |
| | Responsibilities: | Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and to ensure that adequate resources are made available to enable the policy objectives to be met |
| Appointed Person | Position: | Director of Investment, Maintenance and Sustainability |
| | Telephone: | 01782 635200 |
| | Responsibilities: | To ensure that appropriately qualified and suitably experienced people are employed to implement this policy, that appropriate programmes of work are in place to discharge relevant duties, and to ensure compliance with the FSO (Amended April 2021) |
| Compliance Lead | Position: | Compliance Manager |
| | Telephone: | 01782 635200 |
| | Email: | Complianceteam@aspirehousing.co.uk |

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| | Responsibilities: | To ensure that all activity required for compliance with this policy is carried out |
| | Position: | Building Safety Officer |
| | Telephone: | 01782 635200 |
| | Email: | Complianceteam@aspirehousing.co.uk |
| | Responsibilities: | To administer associated contracts, management of associated dashboards and first point of contact for fire safety related queries |
| Fire Risk Assessor | Name: | SGS DMW |
| | Telephone: | 01902 797950 |
| | Email: | hub@dmwsafety.co.uk |
| | Responsibilities: | To ensure SGS DMW's responsibilities are carried out in line with statutory and best practice requirements |
| Fire Safety Systems and Equipment specialist contractor | Name: | Security and Fire Experts |
| | Telephone: | 0800 0471 999 |
| | Email: | service@safe-group.co.uk |
| | Responsibilities: | Maintenance of fire safety systems and equipment |

3.6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES

- a) To act in accordance with all fire safety procedures, emergency procedures, safe systems of work or instructions that have been initiated by management for their health & safety.
- b) Not to intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of fire safety and not to do anything that will place themselves or other people at risk from fire.
- c) To report without delay to their Line Manager or the Compliance Manager any defects or concerns regarding fire safety including hazards, maintenance issues, general fire precautions or any preventative or protective measures in place to reduce the risk to fire for employees, learners and customers.
- d) To participate fully in fire safety training, as agreed with their Line Manager, and cooperate in undertaking fire drills and evacuation in Aspire workplaces.
- e) To inform their Line Manager or Compliance Manager of any disability, mobility issues or physical and mental wellbeing needs that may impact on their safe egress from premises in the event of an emergency.
- f) To report any near misses, occurrences of fire or false alarm activations to their Line Managers.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1 Aspire is committed in so far as reasonably practicable to ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of persons at its premises. Aspire accepts that it is the legal Duty Holder for its premises, and has a responsibility to protect its customers, employees, those who work in Aspire premises and others from the risks posed by fire.
- 4.2 Aspire will manage fire safety in locations where it has a legal responsibility to comply with FSO and the HSWA.
- 4.3 Aspire will follow a systematic approach to the management of fire safety to ensure it meets the requirements set out in the FSO and other relevant legislation relating to fire safety. This is to ensure the safety of residents, employees, partners, and members of the public.
- 4.4 Aspire will ensure that it meets the regulatory requirements set out by the Regulator of Social Housing, as prescribed through their Regulatory Standards, and particularly in respect of adhering to relevant law and meeting statutory requirements for the health & safety of customers.
- 4.5 Aspire will undertake the following actions to manage the risks arising from fire within its premises.
 - a) Aspire will carry out fire risk assessments of all relevant premises, to current risk based guidance, using an appropriately trained and competent person, and implement all recommended actions within the recommended timeframes where reasonably practicable.
 - b) Aspire will review fire risk assessments in line with recommended review dates put forward by the risk assessor or sooner if appropriate, for example, where an incident occurs which may affect the relevant risks or the assessment's findings. The minimum frequency will be an annual review.
 - c) Aspire will adopt a suitable and sufficient evacuation policy for all relevant premises taking into account the fire risk assessment for that premises and, where appropriate, the recommendations from external expert consultants and the Fire and Rescue Service. See section 9 for more information.
 - d) Aspire will provide general site emergency procedures information in each applicable premises and a formal written site emergency plan for all premises where Aspire staff are employed, including details of designated roles in the event of a fire/evacuation.

- e) Aspire will provide and maintain passive fire protection, fire safety systems, firefighting equipment, and signage where appropriate, based upon the risks associated with the type of accommodation, the relevant fire risk assessment, the evacuation strategy in place and its occupants. In line with the FSO amendment this will include the implementation of a fire door maintenance programme for all relevant premises within Aspire's portfolio. This will be implemented in accordance with current codes of practice (typically British Standards documents) and manufacturer's recommendations. Aspire will endeavor to ensure all defects are rectified in accordance with recommended timescales.
- f) Aspire will provide fire suppression measures (e.g. sprinklers or misters) in new build multi-unit/scheme based housing developed by Aspire Housing on a design and build basis (or acquired for major refurbishment) specifically for older people or vulnerable client groups.
- g) Aspire will provide all individual residential properties with automatic fire detection in the form of either hard-wired smoke detectors, or an inter-linked fire alarm system, according to the level of risk associated with the type of accommodation. As a short-term measure, if the primary system has failed or requires replacement, it will be appropriate to fit battery powered detectors in order to maintain protection for occupiers of the accommodation.
- h) Aspire will ensure that developments, acquisitions, and refurbishment projects comply with fire safety requirements and this policy. This will include the stringent review of any structures and external wall finishes to ensure FSO compliance inclusive of windows, balconies, cladding, insulation and fixings) and all doors between domestic premises and common parts such as flat entrance doors (or any other relevant door).
- i) Aspire will ensure that contractors, especially those carrying out 'hot works', are managed and supervised to prevent inadvertent or unexpected breaches of fire safety or increased risk of fire by their activities. All contractors will be required to replace or repair all fire stopping measures on completion of works to the same standard or higher than as originally fitted.
- j) Aspire will endeavour to ensure that common parts of all buildings under Aspire's control are maintained as sterile environments to allow effective evacuation, to enable the Fire Service to do their work and to remove potential ignition sources.
- k) Mobility scooters will not be permitted to be stored overnight within the common parts and will be restricted to a designated scooter storeroom or inside the owner's residential property. Charging of mobility scooters in common parts (excluding scooter stores) will not be permitted at any time.

- l) Aspire will require leaseholders of commercial shops owned by Aspire to carry out a fire risk assessment and provide a copy to Aspire and, where required, demonstrate that any significant findings detailed in the fire risk assessment and actions required have been completed and evidenced. Please note that this is an obligation through the leasehold agreement and therefore, a leaseholder responsibility.
- m) Aspire will require leaseholders of residential premises to maintain and repair any items which fall under the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Order 2005 (RRO) Under Article 5(4).

5. COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 Aspire will use a range of communication methods to ensure that its fire safety policy is communicated to employees, residents and visitors, and that the profile of fire safety is prominent amongst occupants and users of its premises including group premises. These will include but not be limited to:
- a) communicating with residents and occupiers of its premises about the importance of fire safety and how to respond in the event of fire where there is a duty under the FSO to manage fire safety;
 - b) consulting and engaging with employees, residents, users of premises, and the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure effective fire safety planning and statutory compliance monitoring;
 - c) making this policy and general fire safety advice available to residents, employees, and partners on the Aspire website and on request;
 - d) providing information to customers at the start of their tenancy on the appropriate emergency procedure, general fire safety advice and obligations arising from their tenancy agreement or lease;
 - e) undertaking Neighbourhood get-togethers or estate walkabout events involving residents and external stakeholders like the Fire and Rescue Services
 - f) engaging with the Customer Forum (OASIS) meetings in relation to fire safety policy implementation; and
 - g) consulting with residents who have concerns regarding individual fire safety within occupied premises to provide high levels of assurance in relation to personal safety.

- 5.2 Aspire will engage proactively with the Fire & Rescue Service to reduce fire risk to residents and users of its premises, with the aim of creating a safer place to live and work.
- 5.3 Residents will be provided on request with a clear explanation of any relevant information on the risks identified by fire risk assessments, about the measures that have been taken to prevent fires, how these measures will protect them if a fire breaks out and the relevant emergency evacuation procedures.
- 5.4 Aspire will ensure that employee participation is encouraged and supported by Aspire senior management, through regular engagement and input relating to continual improvement within fire safety policy and practice.

6. TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

- 6.1 Aspire will promote fire safety awareness through training and induction of all employees. The training will be designed to fit the needs and roles of the employees being trained, periodic refresher training will be completed for all employees, those with designated roles in fire safety and emergency procedures will receive additional training relevant to their roles.
- 6.2 Aspire will ensure that competent persons, who have sufficient knowledge and training, are available to implement this policy.

7. ASSURANCE & REVIEW

- 7.1 Aspire will ensure that an appropriate programme of formal audit and advisory reviews is comprehensively carried out in full to provide assurance that it is meeting its statutory obligations and duty of care to residents and employees in line with current legislation, best practice and British Standards.
- 7.2 Aspire will commission audits through a specialist and/or internal audit function for this purpose.
- 7.3 When fires occur, Aspire will investigate the root causes, identify any lessons learnt, take any remedial action required, and implement new processes identified as a result.
- 7.4 This Fire Safety Policy will be reviewed every year, or when significant changes are made to fire safety legislation, regulation, or guidance, or when related policies and procedures are amended.
- 7.5 Aspire will develop procedures and processes that will support the implementation of this policy.

- 7.6 Aspire will retain all records pertaining to fire safety management for 6 years to demonstrate compliance with Regulations and provide evidence to enforcing authorities.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- 8.1 Aspire will endeavor to identify and support residents and employees who have an increased risk in the event of fire. This includes those with recognised disabilities, mobility issues or physical and mental wellbeing needs who may need assistance to evacuate the building or whose behaviour because of a vulnerability increases the likelihood of a fire starting. Where this is the case and appropriate, Aspire will work to implement a 'Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan' (PEEP) or Person-Centered Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA) for the resident(s) and employees.
- 8.2 Aspire will only access this information when is it lawful to do so and in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

9. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- 9.1 The evacuation policy / strategy adopted for any premises will depend on the fire risk assessment for that premises and where appropriate, recommendations from external expert consultants and the relevant Fire and Rescue Service.
- 9.2 Generally, Aspire expects that it will adopt and promote a "Safe to Stay Put" policy in the event of fire within its older persons housing schemes and general needs flat blocks. Residents should commence evacuation immediately via communal corridors/staircases if their individual detector starts to sound, or if smoke and the products of combustion become apparent through smell or sight. Evacuation should be undertaken at normal walking pace in a calm and controlled manner.
- 9.3 Generally, Aspire expects that it will adopt a "Simultaneous evacuation" strategy within operational premises and in any building if deemed appropriate in response to risk levels and recommendations from external expert consultants and the Fire and Rescue Service. All employees, visitors and any residents will exit the building in the event of fire.
- 9.4 If an escape route is impassable, due to the presence of fire or smoke, residents should remain in their flat with the front door closed and where possible raise the alarm and contact the Fire Service.
- 9.5 Upon evacuation of the building residents or employees should not return into the building until advised that it is safe to do so by the Fire Service. Residents should never put their own safety at risk by attempting to fight fire themselves.

10. THIRD PARTIES

- 10.1 Aspire will ensure that third parties carrying out work or surveys on its behalf have appropriate levels of insurance cover and professional competence to perform the tasks in a manner that is both safe and compliant with relevant standards.

11. DEFINITIONS

- 11.1 Residents – Anyone who is legally occupying a property which is Aspire owned or managed where Aspire has a duty to comply with the FSO
- 11.2 Partners – Contractors, advisors and auditors who work in partnership with Aspire
- 11.3 External stakeholders – Emergency services such as the Fire and Rescue Services, Police, Regulator of Social Housing, Health & Safety Executive etc
- 11.4 Aspire – Aspire Housing and its wholly owned subsidiaries, Durata Developments and Incana Sales