

## **Identifying vulnerable persons at risk from fire guidance and checklist**

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Appendix 1 Person centred fire risk assessment checklist

This Guidance note and checklist will support those that work or communicate with any recognised groups that may need adjustment or assistance to ensure they know how to identify whether they are at risk from fire. It can be used by family members, carers, and representatives of Housing Providers, Care Providers, Local Authorities, utility companies and businesses alike.

It provides a 'Checklist person-centred fire risk assessment form', which can be used for an initial quick and easy check of vulnerable residents and will provide specific and relevant information to aid in the completion of a Full person-centred fire risk assessment where one is required. It can also be used for 'Specialised Housing' premises (ie Care Homes, Sheltered Housing, Extra Care and Supported Living type premises) to inform the fire risk assessment process for the whole premises and the evacuation strategy.

If you require any further guidance on the advice given or require advice on another topic please contact Lincolnshire Fire and Rescues Fire safety Team on 01754 898980 or email [Fire.Safety@lincoln.fire-uk.org](mailto:Fire.Safety@lincoln.fire-uk.org)

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Occupants of buildings can vary greatly. In some buildings they can be a mixture of employees, visitors and members of the public and they may be old, young or infirm and could have differing levels of familiarity with the building. For those people who are living in specialised housing, or live in other types of accommodation but are considered to be vulnerable, greater support may be required or a differing evacuation strategy dependent on their individual needs.
- 1.2 It is essential in any building, especially those of a large or more complex nature and those that cater for vulnerable people, for the management to develop a fire safety strategy, including an evacuation strategy that accounts for all people in a documented assessment for the premises and individuals at risk.

## **2 Legislation and responsibilities**

- 2.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Order), places a requirement on the 'responsible person' to manage fire safety and to carry out a fire risk assessment. Article 9 (7)(b) states that an FRA should take into account "any group of persons ....being especially at risk". To achieve this a person-centred risk assessment needs to be carried out for the individuals identified as particularly vulnerable.
- 2.2 Therefore, the onus is on the management to formalise a fire and evacuation strategy to enable effective fire safety procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency. This strategy must be "unified" throughout the building and should be inclusive of all people.

### **3 The person-centred approach**

- 3.1 The person-centred fire risk assessment will help identify residents who are at higher risk from fire in their own accommodation – whether this is due to their behaviours or their ability to respond and escape from a fire. The risk assessment should include an action plan that specifies what steps will be taken to improve the safety of the vulnerable resident.
- 3.2 This approach is particularly appropriate for residents in ‘Specialised Housing’ where the number of residents in each property or scheme is usually limited and the person-centred fire risk assessment can easily be carried out for every resident. It can also be applied to ‘general needs’ and other types of accommodation when vulnerable persons are identified.

A person-centred fire risk assessment should consider whether behaviours of the resident indicate signs of increased fire risk (ie unsafe smoking or cooking etc). It should also consider whether the resident has the ability or the mental capacity to respond appropriately to signs of fire, detection and warning signals, and the ability of the resident to evacuate the premises in the event of fire.

The appropriate person to carry out the person-centred fire risk assessment for a resident will depend on the circumstances of the scheme and the resident. It may be carried out by specialised housing scheme managers, care providers, responsible persons or any other party who regularly engages with the resident.

A person-centred approach should consider a ‘safety from fire’ approach, such as use of fire-safe ashtrays or smoking aprons by those who smoke. The method should also consider how a fire might develop and spread causing possible harm to the occupier. Items such as fire-retardant bedding or personal water mist systems can assist in the protection of a resident at risk and should be considered in appropriate cases.

The detection and warning system for the premises needs to be appropriate for the building and any person at risk. Therefore, fire alarm systems to British Standard 5839 parts 1 and 6 and social alarm systems that are connected to alarm receiving centres should be a requirement. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Specialised Housing Guide can be utilised to ensure that the correct approach is taken.

In the event that a number of vulnerable people are found to be residents within the same building then it may be more suitable to install a full building automatic fire suppression system (sprinkler or water mist). The design and installation of any system to comply with the appropriate British Standards or an equivalent recognised standard.

The fire evacuation strategy and any associated systems put in place to support it must be communicated and explained to residents and staff. In order to monitor the effectiveness of an agreed fire and evacuation strategy, periodic evaluation should be

undertaken. Any deficiencies highlighted can then be investigated and rectified where necessary. Such evaluation will enable the strategy to be kept up-to-date and reflect the changing design occupancy of the building.

#### **4 Steps in a person-centred fire risk assessment**

There are considered to be 9 steps in a person-centred fire risk assessment. These are noted below and full explanations of these are available in the NFCC Specialised Housing Guidance document.

- Step 1: The characteristics, behaviours and capabilities of the resident that may lead to fire risk.
- Step 2: Determine the potential causes of fire and the existing measures to prevent fire.
- Step 3: Identify any circumstances that could lead to the rapid development of fire.
- Step 4: Identify existing measures to protect the resident if fire occurs.
- Step 5: Consider capacity of resident to respond appropriately to fire alarm signals or signs of fire.
- Step 6: Consider ability of resident to make their way to safety.
- Step 7: Determine the level of risk to the resident from fire.
- Step 8: Prepare action plan.
- Step 9: Determine period for review of the assessment.

#### **5 Fire safety in the home**

An initial checklist that can be carried out by a relative, care manager, scheme manager or other designated person is attached as appendix 1 to this guidance note. If risks are identified this should be passed to a manager or person who has responsibility for the safety of the residents (such as the care provider or housing provider) for further action.

Where such a person is not identifiable or does not exist then the checklist should be passed to the Local Authority Social Care Department. They will make arrangements for a more detailed assessment and referrals involving key stakeholders such as the Local Authority, Fire Service, Housing and Care Providers.

## 6 Bibliography

Detailed guidance on the various standards referred to in this guidance note may be obtained from the following bibliography. You can also obtain fire safety advice on other subjects by visiting the [Lincolnshire Fire and Rescues website](#).

Publications can be obtained from the following addresses:

Available from	Title
The Stationery Office (Mail, Telephone, Fax and Internet Orders)  TSO Orders/Post Cash Dept PO Box 29 Norwich NR3 1GN  Telephone: 0870 600 5522 Fax orders: 0870 600 5533 Web: <a href="http://www.tso.co.uk">www.tso.co.uk</a>	Fire Safety – Risk Assessment: Sleeping Accommodation ISBN: 978 1 85112 8174  Fire Safety – Risk Assessment: Residential Care Premises ISBN:978 1 85112 818 1  Fire Safety – Risk Assessment: Healthcare Premises ISBN: 978 1 85112 824 2  Fire Safety - Risk Assessment: Means of Escape for Disabled People Supplementary Guide ISBN: 978 1 85112 873 7
The Chief Fire Officer’s Association (CFOA) 9-11 Pebble Close Amington Tamworth Staffordshire B77 4RD Telephone: +44 (0) 1827 302300	Fire safety in specialised housing
The “Fire Safety” guides listed above may also be downloaded free of charge from the ‘ <i>Fire safety law and guidance documents for business</i> ’ section of the CLG website at:  <a href="http://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities">www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities</a>	

The above publications are current at the time of preparation of this Guidance Note.

**Appendix 1 Person-centred fire risk assessment checklist**

Person identified:

Full address:

Date:

Form completed by:

Tick	Does the individual have an increased fire risk?
	Smoking in bed or carelessness with smoking or vaping materials
	Any petroleum or paraffin-based creams, air mattress, oxygen cylinders used
	Unsafe use of portable heaters i.e. too close to materials that could catch fire
	Unsafe cooking practices
	Overloaded sockets or adaptors or electrical extension leads
	Poor quality or damaged wiring
	Electric blankets used
	Previous fires or signs of burns on carpet, furniture
	Unsafe candle or tea light use ie too close to materials that could catch fire or within easy reach of children or pets
	Hoarding
	Other (please specify):

Tick	Would the individual be: Less able to react to an alarm or fire?
	Mental health issues
	Cognitive or decision-making difficulties or dementia
	Alcohol dependant or use of prescription or recreational drugs
	Sensory impairments (eg hearing, sensory alarms can be fitted by DW Fire)
	Learning disability
	Other (please specify)

Tick	<b>Would the individual have: A reduced ability to escape?</b>
	Being bed or chair bound
	Needs mobility aids, frailty, slow movement, previous falls
	Impaired vision
	Unaware of what to do in the event of a fire
	Cluttered escape route linked to hoarding?
	Internal doors left open at night
	Unable to readily unlock front door to escape
	Other (please specify

Are there any working smoke alarms fitted?  Yes  No

If Yes, please specify which rooms have them fitted?

**If No, contact Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue for urgent referral**

Are there any gas appliances fitted or solid fuels used within the property?  
(such as cooker, boiler, stoves, fires)  Yes  No

If Yes, has a working carbon monoxide alarm been fitted?  Yes  No

## Next steps

Any questions that have been answered 'Yes' in Primary Risk suggests there is an enhanced risk of fire. Further action should be taken, which could include:

- Discussing the identified risk with the resident and/or family members
- If a care plan exists, actions taken to mitigate risk should be noted in that plan and below.
- If you are employed by an organisation, discuss and pass this checklist to your Line Manager
- Informing the Housing Provider that there is an increased risk of fire to the resident
- Referring the resident to Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service for a free Home Fire Safety Check and the provision of free smoke alarms for the property and advice on further risk reduction options.