

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> ALL
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b> Updating the Tenants Guide	
<b>REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING</b>	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO:</b> Fire Safety & Compliance Advisory Panel	<b>DATE</b> 21 June 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT:</b> The report provides details of the proposed fire and building safety update to the Tenants' Guide to reflect changes in fire and building safety legislation and asks the Panel for any additional comments before the section is finalised.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report: No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report,</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Melissa Dillon, Resident Safety Engagement &amp; Governance Lead.</p> <p>Email: melissa.dillon@camden.gov.uk</p> <p>Tel.0207 974 3100</p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>The Panel is asked for their comments and suggestions on the proposed fire and building safety content of the Tenants Guide.</p>	

Signed:



Date: 7 June 2023

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The Terms of Reference for the Panel include a requirement to review the *Tenants' Guide* in relation to fire safety and make proposals for amendments to address any new requirements. In January 2023 the panel considered a report on the approach to update the sections of the guide that deal with residents' roles and responsibilities in ensuring that they are able to live safely in their homes. The proposed changes to these sections are summarised in section 3 of the report and attached in full as an appendix

## **2. Background and Context**

- 2.1 The Tenants' Guide is designed to provide advice and information for Council tenants about the rights they have under their tenancy agreements and in turn what their responsibilities are. Copies of the guide are provided to tenants when they sign their tenancy agreement and the guide is available online on the Camden website via the following link:

<https://www.camden.gov.uk/council-tenant-rights-responsibilities>

## **3. The Tenants Guide**

- 3.1 The 2017 guide contains fifteen sections providing information and guidance and details of the tenancy conditions that apply to both Introductory and Secure Council tenancies. All tenants are provided with a copy of the guide when they sign their tenancy agreement, the guide is also available online on the Camden website via the link at paragraph 2.2.

### *The Fire & Building Safety Acts*

- 3.2 The Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022 have introduced new rights and duties for tenants and their landlords which mean that the Tenants Guide needs to be revised to include these changes.
- 3.3 The new legislation reinforces and extends the Council's duties as landlord to carry out cyclical safety checks to gas, water supply, electrical and lift systems serving Council homes. The Council must also to carry out regular fire risk assessments, keep communal areas area clear, inspect fire doors, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and provide fire and building safety information to residents. We want to make sure that tenants know how to stay safe and understand their rights and responsibilities for fire and building safety.
- 3.4 The Guide has been updated to provide home fire safety advice, information about the fire and building safety checks we will carry out and
- how communal areas can be used safely
  - what can and can't be kept in these areas
  - access to allow safety checks to be carried out
  - the importance of fire doors to a building's fire safety.

The detail of the proposed update is attached as an appendix to this report.

### *Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing - EEIS*

- 3.5 The Government has said that it will introduce emergency evacuation information sharing regulations to define the support landlords should provide to vulnerable residents in an emergency and the information to be provided to local fire & emergency services. To date the Government has not published a response to public consultation about EEIS and the Tenants Guide will be updated again once government publishes regulations setting out what is required.
- 3.6 The revised version will be loaded on the Camden website and tenants will be informed through newsletters and other tailored communications.

## **4.0 Legal Comments**

- 4.1 Legislation surrounding fire and building safety has significantly evolved since the last revision to the Tenants' Guide in 2017 and it is imperative that the guide is updated to take into account such changes. The additional obligations placed upon the Council include (but are not limited to) the following:

- the requirement to provide fire safety instructions to residents within a building which contains at least two flats together with common parts (both to new residents when they move in and annually to all residents generally) such instructions to relate to the evacuation strategy for the building, how to report a fire and any other instructions on action to take when a fire has occurred pursuant to regulation 9 of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022;
- the requirement to provide safety information relating to fire doors (i.e. that fire doors should remain closed when not in use, the fire doors should not be tampered with and any faults or damages should be reported immediately) pursuant to regulation 10 of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022;
- the requirement to undertake annual checks of individual flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of communal fire doors within buildings of above 11 metres in height pursuant to regulation 10 of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022; and
- the requirement to install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms pursuant to the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

- 4.2 By ensuring that tenants are well-informed of such requirements, the Council will be in a better position to meet its obligations under the legislation.

**5.0 Finance Comments**

- 5.1 Contents of the report are noted.

**6.0 Environment Implications**

- 6.1 There are no specific environmental implications for this report.

**ENDS**

## **Appendix – Proposed Fire & Building Safety Update**

### **Fire safety at home**

In the event of a fire in your home, an escape plan can save your life.

The safest fire procedure for your home depends on what kind of building you live in. It is vital you know the fire evacuation plan for your building and where the exits are. We have installed fire evacuation notices informing residents of the fire strategy of each block.

If you are a council tenant you can find advice and information about fire and building safety on the home safety pages on the Camden Council website at [Fire safety advice - Camden Council](#) and you can also contact your on-site caretaker or housing officer for more information about your evacuation plan.

If you are a private tenant in Camden or you do not pay your rent directly to the Council contact your landlord.

### **Smoke alarms and safety checks**

All homes must have a working smoke alarm, you are 4 times less likely to die from a fire in a home where a smoke alarm is fitted. The Council is ensuring that all tenanted homes have hard-wired smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, it is important that you let our contractors and staff in to install and maintain these alarms to keep you safe.

All Camden residents can request a free home fire safety visit from the London Fire Brigade. During your visit, they will:

- fit free and additional smoke alarms, if you need them
- replace any broken equipment
- give advice on preventing fires
- assess your home for fire risks

Visits are targeted in areas and situations where there is a higher risk of fire. This includes homes of older or disabled people.

There are also alarms designed specifically for people with hearing or visual impairments, such as an alarm that activates a strobe light or vibrating pad for the hearing impaired. These are also installed free of charge.

### **Advice to keep you safe in your home**

To help prevent fires from happening, you should:

- avoid leaving your hob or grill unattended while in use
- take care when cooking with hot oil and think about using automatic deep fat fryers
- never leave lit candles unattended

- make sure cigarettes are stubbed out and disposed of carefully
- never smoke in bed
- do not overload sockets and follow advice on electrical devices that can cause fire
- keep matches and lighters away from children
- never use a barbecue indoors or on a balcony
- keep clothing away from heating appliances
- take special care when you are tired or when you've been drinking

The London Fire Brigade website has more fire safety advice, you can find their advice and book a home fire safety visit via this link - [Book a home fire safety visit | London Fire Brigade \(london-fire.gov.uk\)](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/book-a-home-fire-safety-visit)

### **The Fire & Building Safety Checks Safety Checks the Council will carry out to your home and building**

#### **Fire Doors**

By law the Council must provide fire doors in all Council residential building over 11 metres, or 5 floors in height.

The Council must complete **annual** checks of individual flat entrance fire doors and **quarterly** checks of all fire doors in common parts of buildings , these inspections are carried out by Camden Council staff who will show their ID when carrying out these safety checks.

#### **Fire safety instructions**

You should familiarise yourself with the fire evacuation notices installed in the communal areas of each block. We will also provide further information in our newsletter 'Housing News' published four times a year and in other letters and leaflets we send out to you. This will explain key fire safety information including the importance of fire doors and self-closers.

#### **Safety checks in communal areas**

We have a statutory duty to carry out the following fire and building safety compliance checks in communal areas.

#### **Electrical testing**

We test communal electrical systems every five years.

#### **Emergency lighting**

We carry out periodic checks are required where emergency lighting is installed to make sure it is charged and operational.

#### **Water safety**

We carry out water risk assessments on 918 Council residential sites that have a communal water system

### **Asbestos surveys**

We carry out Asbestos surveys of the common parts of 3,852 residential blocks and have asbestos management plans for each block. If you are concerned that they may be asbestos in your building you can report this via our Repairs Service, you can find information about reporting repairs at [Housing repairs - Camden Council](#)

### **Communal area alarms**

Smoke alarms are required in communal areas in residential buildings where an evacuation policy is in place. This covers all street property conversions and a small number of larger blocks. Most Council homes have a stay put policy but in the event your building has a simultaneous evacuation policy the communal smoke detector systems installed in communal areas will sound when any fire is detected signalling you should immediately exit the building by the safest route.

### **Fire Safety in Shared Areas**

Shared areas in your building such as corridors, stairways and fire escapes are everyone's way out. If you store personal belongings in shared areas, they could prevent people from getting out safely during a fire.

We have rules about what you can keep in these areas to keep you and your neighbours safe in the event of a fire. We want you to be able to enjoy your home and personalise your space. But we also need everyone to do their bit to keep your building safe.

### **Hazards in shared spaces**

The two main hazards that could stop people getting out of your building safely are:

- shared areas filling with smoke, making it harder for people to get out
- things tripping people up or getting in their way as they try to leave

To make sure everyone can always get out of the building, you must keep shared areas clear at all times of anything that could catch fire or get in someone's way.

**If you have large items you need to get rid of, find out how to book a bulky waste. You can also call 020 7974 4444, selecting option 4 and then option 3.**

### **Items that must be moved**

All of these items are flammable and you're not allowed to store them outside your home:

- bikes or motorbikes

- prams or buggies
- bin bags
- tools or DIY equipment
- chairs or furniture
- plastic plant pots
- mobility scooters
- shoes or shoe racks

If you're keeping these or anything else that could catch fire outside your flat, in corridors or any other communal area, please find somewhere else to keep them.

### **Guidance for specific items**

#### **Doormats**

Everyone in all Camden blocks or street properties can have a doormat. Please don't put carpet underneath your doormat as it could catch fire and we will ask you to remove it.

#### **Plant pots**

##### ***If you live in a street property***

Plants are not allowed outside your front door or in shared indoor spaces. These areas must be kept clear of anything that can get in the way of someone leaving the property. There may be a risk that smoke or fire can spread more quickly in houses or mansion blocks that have been converted to flats. Plant pots are also a trip hazard in confined spaces.

##### ***If you live in a block or purpose-built flat***

You are allowed plants outside your home, but they must not be in plastic pots or in anyone's way. You are not allowed plastic pots, flowers or plants because they could catch fire and create toxic smoke. Even in terracotta pots, dried out soil can be a fire hazard.

Having lots of potted plants can make it difficult for your caretakers to clean your communal areas. Council Officers may talk to you and ask you to bring some plants inside if there are too many outside your flat. Please work with us to keep everyone safe.

#### **Metal security gate or grille**

You are not allowed a metal security gate or grille unless your flat is on the ground floor in an open courtyard. The London Fire Brigade advises against security gates or grilles wherever possible.

Metal security doors don't catch fire but if left open they could stop your neighbours getting out quickly in an emergency. If there was a fire in your flat and the door was locked, it would be harder for the fire brigade to get in and help you. Never fit a



security gate without speaking to your neighbourhood housing officer first. You will only be allowed to fit one if you have permission from the Council.

### **Working together to improve fire safety**

Please follow this guidance and work with us to help keep everyone safe. We regularly check shared areas and will remove things that could be dangerous for you and your neighbours without notice.

Contact your us if you:

- spot anything in your communal areas that could be dangerous
- need help with storage
- have a question about fire safety or what you can keep in shared areas

In an emergency, always call 999.

**ENDS**