



FIRE SAFETY POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

Fire Safety Policy			
Last Reviewed	March 2026	Next Review	March 2027
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive		

Policy Statement:

The main objective of this policy is to ensure that our Board, Leadership Team (LT), colleagues, contractors, and customers are clear on our legal and regulatory fire safety obligations. This policy provides the framework our colleagues and contractors will operate within to meet these obligations to reduce the risk of an outbreak or spread of fire, to provide adequate means of escape and demonstrate preventative action. This policy forms part of our wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst colleagues and contractors (as defined within our health and safety policy).

At Freebridge, we are committed to acting as a responsible landlord and employer, and we approach our fire safety obligations with the utmost seriousness. We have established a comprehensive Corporate Fire Risk Strategy, Fire Policy, and Fire Management Plan to ensure full compliance with our statutory duties towards customers, colleagues, and visitors under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. In relation to fire safety, this policy further ensures adherence to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Fire Safety Act 2021, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, the Building Safety Act 2022, and the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

Policy Detail:

This policy is underpinned by our comprehensive Fire Safety Management Plan, which outlines the procedures and controls for managing fire risks across the organisation. The Management Plan is guided by the Corporate Fire Risk Strategy, which establishes the overarching strategic direction for fire safety.

This policy applies to the housing assets which are owned by FCH and any which are leased by other agencies or partners and rented and managed as social housing stock. This includes domestic properties (houses and flats), communal areas of any blocks containing such properties, supported living schemes and associated offices/communal spaces within these residential buildings, and properties used as temporary accommodation.

Risk Appetite for Board:

The strategy outlines that the Board have a zero tolerance to ineffective management of safety matters relating to Fire issues and compliance which are set and flex with the corporate risk appetite of the Board.

The board delegates its duties to manage this to the Head of Safety who will:

- Keep Fire risk assessments and fire risk actions within their timeframes and manage and audit these outputs and actions and report these to the Leadership Team (monthly) and Operations Committee (quarterly) to provide transparency and compliance.
- Discuss any emerging issues or compliance changes.
- Manage and document all fire risk matters.
- Keep ahead of legislation and changes.
- Recommend and manage any process for self-referral and audit.

Legislation:

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the FSO)

The Responsible Person (which is FCH, as duty holder) must:

- Carry out a fire risk assessment (FRA) for the purpose of identifying the general fire precautions and other measures needed to comply with the FSO. Although under the FSO this requirement only applies to common parts of premises, in practice the Responsible Person will need to consider:
 - The entire premises, including units of residential accommodation.
 - Consider who may be especially at risk.
 - Implement all necessary general fire precautions and any other necessary measures identified by an FRA to remove or reduce any risks.
 - Implement a suitable system of maintenance and appoint competent persons to carry out any procedures that have been adopted.

The Fire Safety Act 2021

The Act amends the FSO by clarifying that in residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises, the FSO applies to:

- the structure and external walls of the building, including cladding, balconies and windows; and
- all doors between the domestic premises and the common parts, for example, entrance doors to individual flats which open on to common parts.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022

The Responsible Person is required to:

- For all residential blocks of flats - provide customers with fire safety instructions and information on fire doors on an annual basis.
- For blocks of flats that are over 11 metres in height - undertake quarterly checks of communal fire doors and annual checks of flat entrance doors using best endeavours.

- There are also additional requirements for residential block of flats that are over 18 metres in height (as defined within the Building Safety Act 2022), but FCH does not have any buildings which meet this criterion.

The Building Safety Act 2022

As well as bringing specific duties in respect of blocks of residential flats over 18 metres in height (which will not apply to FCH), the Building Safety Act amended the FSO from April 2023. The amendments are applicable to all buildings where the FSO applies and will require the Responsible Person to:

- Record FRAs in full and record fire safety arrangements.
- Appoint a competent person to undertake/review FRAs and record their identity.
- Ascertain whether other Responsible Persons have duties in respect of the premises and share relevant information with them.

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022

The relevant landlord MUST:

- Ensure at least one smoke alarm is installed on each storey of a dwelling where there is a room used as living accommodation.
- Ensure a carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers).
- Ensure smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are repaired or replaced once notified and the alarm is found to be faulty.

Regulatory Standards

- We must ensure we comply with the Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory framework and consumer standards for social housing in England which make up the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023; the Safety and Quality Standard is the primary one applicable to this policy.

Sanctions

- Failure to discharge our responsibilities and obligations properly could lead to sanctions, including: prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive (the HSE) under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974; prosecution under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007; prosecution by the Fire and Rescue Service under the Fire Safety Order; and via a regulatory notice from the Regulator of Social Housing

Freebridge Commitments:

The promotion of effective health and safety practice is the responsibility of all colleagues. Freebridge has the following objectives in relation to fire management.

We will:

- Develop, implement and communicate a comprehensive fire management plan that minimises risk to life, reduces the likelihood and spread of fire, and informs the fire policy and strategy.
- Maintain effective measures to prevent fire outbreaks and limit fire spread, including fire-resisting construction, fire/smoke resisting doors, and regular maintenance of these provisions.
- Ensure adequate means of escape are provided and maintained, including clear signage, unobstructed escape routes, emergency lighting where required, and regular fire evacuation drills (at least twice annually).
- Provide and maintain appropriate firefighting equipment (e.g., extinguishers, fire blankets) and an effective fire detection and alarm system, with weekly alarm testing and prompt notification of routine tests to all site users.
- Maintain accurate documentation and records for all aspects of fire safety management, including full Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs), fire safety arrangements, and evidence of compliance with legal requirements such as The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and subsequent legislation.
- Ensure that fire risk assessments are conducted by individuals with the requisite skills, knowledge and competence, aligned to BS 8674:2025 for fire risk assessors and BS 9792:2025 & PAS79-1 for fire risk assessment documents, and that fire safety management meets the standards set out in the management plan.
- Provide ongoing training and fire safety information to colleagues, visitors, contractors and customers, including induction briefings, refresher training, and updates when procedures or risk assessments change.
- Engage and consult with colleagues and customers on fire safety matters, communicate any changes to fire safety procedures, and provide information to customers at sign-up and through appropriate channels reflecting modern communication practices.
- Ensure visitors are informed of evacuation procedures and are not left unsupervised unless familiar with all available escape routes.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Overall accountability for Health and Safety and Fire Safety lies with the Chief Executive Officer.

The Responsible Person – This is the Organisation FCH and The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Freebridge Community Housing is the person with senior accountability for fire safety issues in FCH properties.

FCH, the body corporate, would be the Accountable Person as defined in The Building Safety Act 2022. The Accountable Person and Principal Accountable Person roles only apply to high rise residential buildings, that is, buildings that have 7-storeys or more (18-metres in height) and consist of 2 or more residential dwellings. Such buildings

are required to be registered with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) and are known as higher risk buildings, FCH does not operate any qualifying buildings.

The Head of Safety is designated as the 'competent person' for fire safety and operates on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in all matters relating to fire. Accordingly, both the Head of Safety and the CEO hold joint responsibility for fulfilling obligations under fire safety legislation, as well as acting as 'Accountable Person' in accordance with The Building Safety Act 2022. The following table outlines the specific responsibilities of each member of the Leadership Team in supporting the objectives of this policy.

Role	Responsibility
CEO	In line with relevant legislation and Freebridge Community Housing's operational remit, FCH is designated as the Responsible Person, with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) holding principal accountability for fire safety matters. This designation covers all premises owned or leased by FCH, including both office and residential sites. While the CEO retains ultimate responsibility, duties may be delegated to other individuals, with such arrangements clearly outlined within the fire management plan. The fire management plan will also identify all accountable persons by name, as required by law. The Responsible Person refers to the individual(s) who exercise control over the premises, and it is possible for multiple persons to fulfil this role.
Director of Operations	To ensure that this policy is supported by budget and resources to implement and aspects that relate to their business. They will also ensure their colleagues understand this document.
Commercial Director - Development	To ensure that this policy is supported by budget and resources to implement any aspects that relate to their area of business. They will also ensure their colleagues understand this document.
Chief Finance and Technology Officer	To ensure that this policy is supported by budget and resources to implement and aspects that relate to their area of business. They will also ensure their colleagues understand this document.
Head of Safety	Is the nominated subject matter expert in fire to manage all links and operate as the main accountable person for Fire and take on delegated responsibilities of the responsible person (CEO) to allow them to discharge their duties under legislation.

The Accountable Person(s) defined below are accountable for the following:

- Being personally aware of this policy and management plan
- Being aware of the Fire Safety equipment and procedures relating to the Building Type listed; and
- Reporting any concerns to the Safety Team and monitor these issues until completion.

Building Type	Role
Sheltered Schemes	The Fire Risk & Strategy Manager *Day to day responsibility with Communities Team Leaders*
Juniper House	The Fire Risk & Strategy Manager *Day to day responsibility with Facilities Manager*
Discover Centre	The Fire Risk & Strategy Manager *Day to day responsibility with Head of Communications & Engagement*
Blocks of purpose built or converted flats	The Fire Risk & Strategy Manager *Day to day responsibility with Estates Team Leader*
Commercial Properties	The Fire Risk & Strategy Manager *Day to day responsibility with Head of Service (New Homes) *
Leasehold Properties (Commercial/Residential)	Leaseholder

Duties of Colleagues:

All colleagues are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk of harm.

Co-operate fully in complying with any procedures that Freebridge may introduce as a measure to protect the safety and well-being of Customers and Visitors.

Colleague roles listed in the Accountable Person section must be familiar with the contents of this Policy and have had documented instructions and training on their responsibilities under the policy.

Authority to amend can only be undertaken by the Policy owner with the relevant Delegated approvals.

For information on interpretations and instructions colleagues should contact the Fire Safety Team or Policy owner and under no circumstances should any deviation be permitted without prior approval and shall support the functions listed below:

- Testing/Inspections of active Fire Safety systems
- Contacting the Fire and Rescue Service in the event of an emergency
- Assist in evacuations
- Provide essential information to the Fire and Rescue Service
- Carrying out regular inspection to ensure sources of ignition are separate from sources of fuel
- Feed in information regarding the effectiveness of the drills and evacuations. This will inform revisions of the local Fire Evacuation Plans and procedures
- Maintain records for ensuring compliance with testing

Documentation and Records:

- This Fire Safety Policy (Corporate Intranet)
- Corporate Fire Risk Strategy
- Fire evacuation procedures (displayed where appropriate and corporate intranet)
- Copies of all Fire Risk Assessments (Documotive)
- Records of all fire training (People team)
- A record of all fire drills
- Records of weekly tests of fire alarms, final fire exits
- Record of annual inspection and testing of all firefighting equipment
- Records of periodic tests of emergency lighting
- Records of all scheduled and unscheduled maintenance of fire detection and alarm systems
- Records of site inspections, risk assessment and maintenance of workplace and electrical equipment
- Records of any unwanted alarm activations and action taken
- Plans of the Buildings
- Records are to be held on the intranet in the location designated by the Head of Safety in agreement with the Compliance Manager, hard copies can be kept as back up on site.

Risk Assessments:

All required fire risk assessments shall be undertaken internally by a team of suitably qualified and competent fire risk assessors. The proficiency and expertise of the internal team must be demonstrably in accordance with BS9792:2025 & PAS79-1 for fire risk assessments, and BS8674:2025 regarding fire risk assessor competency. Assessments will be conducted utilising dedicated software that is fully aligned with the pertinent British Standards, and all outputs will be subject to robust internal moderation processes to ensure consistency and compliance.

To evidence external validation of both competence and the quality of our assessments, the organisation will pursue BAFE SP205 third-party accreditation, following the first-year evidence from internal fire risk assessment. The current standard of our fire risk assessment practices has already been verified through two independent fire safety audits. In addition, our fire risk assessors maintain ongoing collaboration with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that our methodology aligns with nationally recognised best practice as defined by the relevant enforcing authority.

Risk assessments shall be conducted at intervals determined by the level of risk, as specified within the Fire Management Plan and in alignment with the overarching Fire Strategy for all premises falling under the scope of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Each assessment will be suitable and sufficient, identifying all necessary actions to mitigate fire risks. Identified actions will be implemented in accordance with the requirements set out in the Fire Management Plan.

BS 9792 sets out a structured, repeatable nine-step method. Our documented FRA will follow this flow so that the logic behind our conclusions and action plan is transparent:

1. Record premises and occupant information
2. Identify fire hazards and controls.
3. Assess likelihood of fire
4. Assess fire protection measures - detection, warning, means of escape, doors, signs, emergency lighting, manual firefighting, separation/compartimentation, structure, external walls, smoke control, and facilities for firefighters
5. Assess fire safety management - roles, maintenance, records, false alarms, training, contractors
6. Estimate likely consequences of fire
7. Assess overall fire risk and select a risk level

8. Develop an action plan - clear, prioritised, proportionate measures
9. Set review/renewal period - based on risk, building factors and change dynamics

This procedure/policy is subject to constant monitoring but will, as a minimum, be formally reviewed annually or in the event of legislative change or an incident which may require significant changes to be made.