



## Fire Safety - FAQs

### 1/ How many tower blocks are there within the borough?

There are 37 high rise (6+ storeys) blocks within the Council's social housing stock.

### 2/ How many storeys does each tower have?

The heights of our 37 towers are:

6 storeys = 15

8 storeys = 3

11 storeys = 5

13 storeys = 2

15 storeys = 2

18 storeys = 4

22 storeys = 6

### 3/ How many of the Council's blocks include rain screen cladding?

There are seven high rise properties and three medium rise properties with 'rain screen' cladding (utilising solid aluminium cladding). They are:

Belvedere House, Feltham, TW13 4DH (High rise)

Hunter House, Feltham, TW13 4DL (High rise)

Bellamy House, Biscoe Close, TW5 0UU (High rise)

Fenton House, Biscoe Close, TW5 0UU (High rise)

Convent Way (207-280), Southall, UB2 5UJ (High rise)

Clements Court (1-78), Green Lane, Hounslow, TW4 6ED (High rise)

Easedale House, Summerwood Road, Isleworth, TW7 7QE (High rise)

Rothwell House, Biscoe Close, TW5 0UW (Medium rise)

Spooner House, Biscoe Close, TW5 0UW (Medium rise)

Bostock House, Biscoe Close, TW5 0UW (Medium rise)

### 4/ Does the council own any high-rise buildings which required aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding or any other dangerous cladding material to be removed?

Following independent testing of cladding we found one block where ACM needed to be removed. The outer cladding was removed, fire breaks upgraded, fire resistant mineral wool insulation reinstalled, new fire doors fitted throughout the block, and the building has now been completely re-clad with solid aluminium panels.

### 5/ How many flat entrance fire doors installed across the council's housing stock have been identified as failing to comply with building regulations since March 2018, or found to be the same product as those which have failed government tests?

The Council's social housing stock includes 8855 flats and 2443 maisonettes. All flat entrance doors that form part of a fire compartment in a building have had a fire door installed which met the relevant fire safety standard at the time of installation.

The Council's fire risk assessment (FRA) process assesses flat entrance doors against the Local Government Association (LGA) 'Guide to Fire safety in Purpose Built Flats' where applicable.

The Council's flat entrance fire door programme was paused in July 2018 (prior to the final completion of phase 1 relating to high rise buildings and sheltered blocks) while we sought confirmation that the doors supplied complied with the necessary standards. None of these doors failed the Government fire door tests in 2019.

### 6/ Who carries out your fire risk assessments?

Hounslow Council's Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) are completed by Baily Garner LLP, a specialist external consultancy.

### 7/ Can residents have a copy of the last fire risk assessment?

Our Fire Risk Assessments are highly technical documents and deal with sensitive matters. As such, it is our belief that these Fire Risk Assessments are very susceptible to misinterpretation by an unqualified recipient. If there is confusion and misinformed information publicised in relation to the programme of remedial actions, it could adversely affect the delivery of that programme, as well as adversely affecting the reputation of the Council and those who have been involved in planning and executing the actions that have been taken to date. We believe our Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) are also exempt from disclosure on health and safety grounds. The Fire Risk Assessments are a snapshot and misinterpretation may cause tenants / leaseholders unnecessary anxiety which could lead to actions which compromise fire safety. To ensure transparency and openness and mitigate the prejudice outlined above (i.e. the argument that the fire risk assessment would be susceptible to misinterpretation), the Council produces and regularly updates 'Fire Risk Assessment Summaries' for each high-rise block and sheltered scheme that it manages (with the view to this process covering all blocks the Council manages). These can be found on communal electronic and hard copy notice boards within the blocks – and via the Council's website.

#### **8/ Will you be making changes to the 'Stay Put' policy**

We have no current plans to change the Council's advice to 'stay put', which is in line with the London Fire Brigade and Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) believes that a Stay Put strategy is the correct advice in a purpose-built block of flats that is built and maintained correctly. In a building that was originally designed for a stay put policy, a change to simultaneous evacuation should only be temporary until the risk has been removed.

#### **9/ Will you be changing your fire safety procedures?**

We will keep our procedures under review in light of legislation changes and guidance that may be provided by the London Fire Brigade, National Fire Chiefs Council, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Governments, etc.

#### **10/ Do any of the tower blocks have sprinklers installed?**

Yes – but only in the two most recently built high rise blocks as per the legislative requirement for new residential tower blocks over 30m high constructed after 2007. Hounslow Council has not undertaken any major renovations across our other 35 tower blocks which have affected their structure and therefore required the installation of sprinklers. Should this requirement change, then we will, of course, comply.

#### **11/ Why are there no communal smoke detectors or fire alarms?**

The installation of smoke detection in communal areas of purpose-built blocks of flats conflicts with the evacuation strategy for this type of building based on advice from the London Fire Brigade. We will however review the situation in the light of any additional guidance that may be provided by the London Fire Brigade. There may be smoke detection in the common parts of some general needs flats with a stay put policy – with the purpose of this being to signal the actuation of smoke control vents. Note however that there will be no audible alarm. Buildings not originally built as flats (i.e. converted properties) will have common alarms because the fire compartmentation and smoke control features in purpose-built blocks will not be available. Also, to give early warning of fire in Hostel Accommodation and shared houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), there is a fire detection and alarm system in these premises.

#### **12/ What about fire extinguishers in high rise tower blocks**

Rather than providing fire extinguishers, we have provided dry risers for use by the fire service in the event of an emergency in a high-rise tower block. There is no expectation that residents will commit themselves to fire firefighting when making their escape. We will review the situation in the light of any guidance that may be provided.