

Committee:	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	24/05/2021
Subject: Fire Risk Assessments for Vulnerable Residents	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management, Department of Community and Children's Services	

Summary

As part of our work to ensure a high standard of fire safety in the homes we manage, the Housing Service is launching a new procedure for risk assessing vulnerable residents who may need help evacuating in an emergency situation, or who may benefit from further help and advice on fire safety issues in their homes.

The process will ensure that we have a more accurate picture of which residents may require help from the emergency services and that this information is centrally managed to ensure it is up to date. It is also designed to ensure that vulnerable residents are confident that they know how to respond in an emergency.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the work to improve fire safety measures in our the homes managed by the City Corporation, a revised risk assessment procedure is being introduced for residents who might require assistance in an emergency, and to identify those who may be more vulnerable to fire risks due to their circumstances.

2. We already have processes in place to identify vulnerable residents who may require assistance from the emergency services in an evacuation situation. For the purposes of this procedure, a vulnerable resident is defined as someone who is at greater risk of harm in a fire or other emergency; this may be due to a disability or other circumstances that affect their ability to detect fire, respond to an emergency or evacuate to a safe place unaided.
3. Currently, each estate team maintains a list of households that may require assistance, and this information is stored in the red Property Information Boxes (PIBs) for use by the London Fire Brigade in an emergency. The LFB uses the information to enable them to effectively assist residents who may have difficulty evacuating the building unaided, or to identify properties where specific risks are present, such as oxygen canisters.
4. At present, the lists are compiled based on risks communicated to us by professionals (for instance Adult Social Care) and information gathered by estate staff as part of their routine contact with residents. The information is updated if we receive new information on the resident's circumstances.
5. The new procedures are intended to improve our practice in this area and provide:
 - better coordination of information in a central place
 - enhanced document management and storage
 - improved risk assessment procedures
 - an opportunity for residents to discuss their needs and concerns with us directly as part of the process
 - greater reassurance for vulnerable residents about fire safety and emergency actions
 - Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for individual residents who require one
6. Officers have liaised with colleagues from the Resident Safety Team at Hackney Council to discuss their process in this area of work, which is at a more advanced stage. While the scale of the work at Hackney is much bigger, as they have over 30,000 homes under their management, this sharing of good practice has been very informative and has helped in the formulation of the City's new procedures.

Summary of the New Process

7. The new process will involve carrying out risk assessments with individual residents who may be at increased risk during a fire or other emergency. A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will then be agreed with any resident who requires one, to ensure that they are clear about what to do in an emergency evacuation scenario.
8. The risk assessment will involve a discussion around the fire procedures for the building in which the resident lives. This will be informed by the Fire Risk Assessment for the building in question. It will also cover their personal circumstances and identify any vulnerabilities that may increase the risk posed to them in a fire affecting their home or the block in question.

9. In most cases, the advice to residents in a fire situation is:

- If the fire or smoke is in their flat, they should leave immediately, closing the door behind them, and raise the alarm
- If the fire is elsewhere, they should stay in their home as this is normally safest. Decisions on evacuating will be taken by the emergency services

10. There are some exceptions to this approach due to the outcomes of Fire Risk Assessments for certain buildings.

11. The new procedure aims to ensure that:

- vulnerable residents are aware of the fire safety measures for their building
- residents have a clear action plan for emergencies
- any risks specific to the resident are reduced as far as possible (e.g. smoking, hoarding, inability to escape unaided or to hear alarms)
- risk information is made available to the LFB via the PIBs at each site

12. Officers will also offer to make referrals to the LFB's fire safety home visit scheme during the risk assessment process.

Referrals

13. A web form will be created to allow residents, their next of kin and professionals to refer residents to us for risk assessment. This will be included in the fire safety section of the Housing pages on the City's website and promoted via resident communications channels.

14. Residents or their family members can also contact their Estate Manager to refer themselves for assessment. Estate Managers will offer a risk assessment if they note any issues of concern during their contact with a resident.

15. The information included in the PIBs is confined to the resident's flat number, property floor level and the assessed risk rating. It does not contain any sensitive personal information. All information held by us regarding residents' circumstances, including risk assessment documentation, is stored securely and in accordance with corporate data protection policies.

Timetable

16. Officers are working to the following timetable for implementing the new procedure:

Action	Timescale
Information gathering on current vulnerable residents	April/May 2021
Write to all residents to offer risk assessment and inviting self-referrals	May 2021
Complete risk assessments	Jun./Jul./Aug. 2021

Update Property Information Boxes	Aug/Sept. 2021
Review risk assessments/PEEPs and update PIBs	Scheduled intervals or on receipt of new information
Accept self-referrals and professional referrals	Ongoing

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

17. This procedure supports the following aims of the Corporate Plan:

- 1. People are safe and feel safe
- 2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing

Risk implications

18. This process is designed to improve the management of fire risks posed to vulnerable residents living in our residential properties and to reduce the risk of harm occurring to residents during a fire or other emergency affecting their building.

Equalities implications

19. The new procedure will help to safeguard residents who may be more vulnerable due to disability or due to their age. People with physical disabilities and older people are at greater risk of harm from fire in the home. This procedure will address these risks and help reduce them.

Conclusion

20. An improved procedure is being introduced to help identify and safeguard residents who may be at greater risk of harm in a fire or other emergency affecting their home or the building they live in.

21. The information will be used to ensure that Property Information Boxes, used by the fire brigade in emergencies, has up to date information about households at risk.

22. The assessment process will also be used as an opportunity to discuss fire safety procedures, including agreeing an evacuation plan with residents who may need assistance in an emergency.

Appendices

- None

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