

Committee:	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	14/01/2022
Subject: Evacuation Assessments for Vulnerable Residents – Update Report	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: Executive 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 has launched a new procedure for risk assessing vulnerable residents who may need help evacuating in an emergency, or who may benefit from further help and advice on fire safety issues in their homes.

Good progress has been made with the assessments, with two thirds of them now complete. The response from residents has been positive and officers are now in the process of updating the information held in the Property Information Boxes at each block.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the work to improve fire safety measures in the homes managed by the City Corporation, a revised risk assessment procedure was 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. A report to this Committee in May 2021 explained the procedure in place previously. In summary, each local estate office maintained their own list of vulnerable households and used this information to update the Emergency Assistance Required ('EAR') lists which are kept in the secure Property Information Boxes ('PIBs'). The EAR lists are used by the emergency services to identify those residents who may need assistance to evacuate.
3. Before the new process was initiated, the EAR lists were compiled based on professional judgement, rather than through any systematic risk assessment process (with a few exceptions, such as where the result of a risk assessment conducted by the fire brigade or social services was disclosed to us).
4. Officers used the existing EAR lists as the basis for conducting the new assessments. In addition, a letter was sent to every household in July 2021, with information about the assessments and enclosing details about how to request an assessment. A link was also provided to an online self-referral form.
5. In response to the letter, fifteen residents returned paper forms requesting an assessment, with a further 5 completing the online form.
6. The new procedure has improved our practice in this area by ensuring that objective assessments of residents' circumstances are carried out, with the results being stored securely in a central place. This enables us to have greater confidence that information is regularly and consistently updated. It also means that the documentation included in PIBs is standardised and checked for accuracy at regular intervals, and that we have a record of such checks being completed.
7. The assessment involves a discussion with the resident about their individual circumstances and is an opportunity for us to talk about any concerns or additional support needs they may have. During the assessment, officers also explain the action to be taken in an emergency and ensure that the resident understands the fire action policy in force for their building.

Summary of Assessments

8. A total of 218 households require an initial assessment under the new procedure; this number is made up of those households on previous 'vulnerable persons' lists and those who requested an assessment following receipt of our letter of July 2021.
9. At the time of writing, 145 assessments have been completed successfully (two thirds of the total).
10. Each assessed household is given a risk banding. There are four options:
 - Critical Risk (Needs Rescue) – this is the highest risk category
 - High Risk (Needs Assistance)
 - Medium Risk (Needs Support)
 - Low Risk (Independent) – these households are not included on the EAR lists

11. Of the assessments completed so far, around a fifth are classed as Low Risk, meaning that these households will not be included on the new EAR lists. These residents have been advised to contact us should their circumstances change.
12. Around a third of households contacted so far have been assessed as Medium Risk. This category includes people who may have some support needs but would still be able to evacuate unaided if required.
13. When beginning the process, officers prioritised those people who were known to have high support needs, as well as residents living in the five tower blocks managed by the Housing Division.
14. Assessments have been attempted for all known vulnerable residents living in high-rise blocks (Great Arthur House, Petticoat Tower, Centre Point, East Point and West Point) with a high rate of success, with 25 out of 27 having been completed at the time of writing.
15. Residents who could not be reached by telephone have been sent a further letter, asking them to contact us. A short survey was included which they can return to us if preferred. A link to the online form was also provided.
16. Residents have also been offered a referral to the LFB for a home fire safety visit as part of the assessment, and several residents have taken up this offer.

Data Management

17. Residents' circumstances obviously change, and officers will schedule reviews of completed assessments to ensure that the information held is as accurate as possible at any given time.
18. The EAR lists will be refreshed every six months; a check will be completed to ensure that the individual residents are still in occupation before the new list is printed.
19. The PIBs are inspected monthly using the iAuditor system. A check will be made that an EAR list is present and dated within the last six months. All EAR lists show a clear expiry date.
20. For data protection purposes, and to make the EAR lists as useful as possible, the information shown is confined to the resident's flat number, property floor level and the assessed risk rating, which is colour coded. An example is shown in the attached appendix.
21. All information held by us regarding residents' circumstances, including completed risk assessment documentation, is stored securely and in accordance with corporate data protection policies.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

22. 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

23. 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

24. The new procedure helps to safeguard residents who may be more vulnerable due to disability or 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.

25. The new assessment procedure also avoids the need for assumptions to be made about residents and prevents people being stereotyped based on their age or other personal attributes.

Conclusion

26. An improved procedure was introduced in 2021 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.

27. Good progress has been made with the assessments, with two thirds complete and the remaining households contacted regarding an assessment of their needs.

28. The assessment process has been used as an opportunity to discuss fire safety procedures with residents, plus any other concerns or questions they may have. Officers are now in the process of creating EAR lists for those properties where assessments have been completed.

Appendices

- Appendix – example Emergency Assistance Required (EAR) List

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