

# Identifying vulnerable persons at risk from fire



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE**

## A Guide to Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment

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## 1. Introduction

### **National Fire Chiefs Council - Fire Safety in Specialised Housing - May 2017.**

The guide does not introduce new standards or regulations, but builds on existing good practice and guidance currently in place. The guidance does not set prescriptive standards, its aim is to assist in reducing risk to the person and ultimately to the building they reside in.

Definitions are wide and varied and for the purposes of the guidance Specialised Housing includes but is not limited to

- Sheltered or retirement housing where the residents live independently
- Extra care housing
- Supported housing
- Private dwellings where care is given which is not sheltered housing

For the avoidance of doubt the name given to the premises is not the relevant factor in determining whether premises fall within the scope of the guide. The factors to consider are the objectives for which the premises were constructed or converted, the nature of the residents, or to whom the accommodation is promoted.

Further clarification is offered in the legislation section.

By the very definition of specialised housing, those living in specialised housing represent the most vulnerable to injury or death if a fire occurs in their accommodation. This is not related to architectural aspects of the building, but to the characteristics of the residents and their effects on the environment in which they live.

This Guidance note and checklist will support those that work or communicate with the elderly and vulnerable persons in their homes to identify whether they are at risk from fire. It can be used by family members, carers and representatives of Housing Providers, Care Providers, Local Authorities and local Fire and Rescue Service Prevention teams.

It provides a 'Checklist person-centred fire risk assessment form', which can be used for an initial quick and easy check of elderly or vulnerable residents in their own private dwellings and will provide specific and relevant information to aid risk reduction. It can also be used for 'Specialised Housing' premises (i.e. Care Homes, Sheltered Housing, Extra Care and Supported Living type premises) to inform the fire risk assessment process for the whole premises and the evacuation strategy.

## 2. Legislation & Responsibilities

The scope of NFCC Guidance does not include buildings which include integral medical facilities or care homes such as

- Residential homes
- Nursing homes
- Special care homes with accommodation for dementia patients
- Registered premises with CQC
- Hostels
- Children’s homes
- Commercial premises

These are addressed by existing legislation. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Order), places a requirement on the ‘responsible person’ to manage fire safety and to carry out a fire risk assessment. Article 9(7)(b) states that a fire risk assessment should take into account “any group of persons being especially at risk”. To achieve this a person-centred risk assessment needs to be carried out for the individuals identified as particularly vulnerable.

Therefore, the onus is on the management to formalise a fire and evacuation strategy to enable effective fire safety procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency. This strategy must be “unified” throughout the building and should be inclusive of all people.

### **3. The person-centred approach**

The person-centred fire risk assessment will help identify residents who are at higher risk from fire in their own accommodation, whether this is due to their behaviours or their ability to respond and escape from a fire. The fire risk assessment should include an action plan that specifies what steps will be taken to improve the safety of the vulnerable resident.

#### **Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment is focused on 3 key areas**

##### **a) An increased fire risk**

This concerns the residents' behaviours, practices and environment such as smoking, unsafe cooking, oxygen use, emollient cream use and previous history of fires or near misses

##### **b) Ability to react to a fire or alarm**

Even though a resident may be able to physically escape a fire situation their understanding and ability to make safe decisions or even the ability to hear an alarm will greatly affect risk

##### **c) Ability to respond and escape a fire**

This concerns the physical ability to evacuate to a place of safety either through physical disability being bed bound, or restricted movements, locked doors or visually impaired

#### **Completing the Fire Risk Assessment**

The appropriate person to carry out the person-centred fire risk assessment for a resident will depend on the circumstances of the scheme and the resident. It may be carried out by specialised housing scheme managers, care providers or any other party who regularly engages with the resident.

A person-centred approach should consider a "safety from fire" approach, such as use of fire-safe ashtrays or smoking aprons by those who smoke. The method should also consider how a fire might develop and spread causing possible harm to the occupier. Items such as fire-retardant bedding or personal water mist systems can assist in the protection of a resident at risk.

## 4. Steps in a person-centred fire risk assessment

There are considered to be 9 steps in a person-centred fire risk assessment. These are noted below and full explanations of these are available in the NFCC Specialised Housing Guidance document.

Step 1: The characteristics, behaviours and capabilities of the resident that may lead to fire risk.

Step 2: Determine the potential causes of fire and the existing measures to prevent fire.

Step 3: Identify any circumstances that could lead to the rapid development of fire.

Step 4: Identify existing measures to protect the resident if fire occurs.

Step 5: Consider capacity of resident to respond appropriately to fire alarm signals or signs of fire.

Step 6: Consider ability of resident to make their way to safety.

Step 7: Determine the level of risk to the resident from fire.

Step 8: Prepare action plan.

Step 9: Determine period for review of the assessment.

An initial checklist that can be carried out by a relative, care manager, scheme manager or other designated person is included in this guidance note. If risks are identified this should be passed to a manager or person who has responsibility for the safety of the residents (such as the care provider or housing provider) for further action.

Where such a person is not identifiable or does not exist then the checklist should be passed to the Social Care team. They may make arrangements for a more detailed assessment and referrals involving key stakeholders such as, Fire and Rescue Service, Housing and Care Providers.

### **TSA On-line training package – ‘Fire Safety in the Home’**

The link below takes you to the TSA on-line training package that has been developed with the London Fire Brigade. The first module focusses on ‘Fire safety in the Home’ and is available as a resource to anyone who comes into contact with vulnerable people.

<https://www.tsa-voice.org.uk/fire-safety-in-the-home>

## **Contacts and further guidance**

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service - 01722 691000

Contact us - <https://www.dwfire.org.uk/contact-us/>

Safety advice - <https://www.dwfire.org.uk/safety/>

Carer's advice – <https://www.dwfire.org.uk/safety/advice-for-carers/>



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A “[Safer Home](#)” information booklet is available from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and can be downloaded electronically from our website. Some basic fire safety advice has also been provided below.

- Fire retardant bedding can include pillow cases, blankets, aprons and night clothes. Call us for details and advice – 0800 038 2323
- For smokers, fire safe ashtrays may be suitable
- Replace petroleum or paraffin emollient based creams for water based creams for oxygen users and smokers
- Where possible, smoke alarms should be fitted in all areas of risk e.g. any room with electrical equipment left switched on or on standby, electrical items left on charge, anywhere where people smoke, anywhere candles or incense sticks are used.
- Where possible, smoke alarms should be interlinked and where a ‘Telecare’ system is installed they should also be connected to this system so an alarm can be monitored by an external alarm receiving centre.
- The pitch and sound level of smoke alarms may not be audible to ALL people. Hence, think about additional measures such as – strobe light, vibrating pillow alarm, voice alarm, two tone pitch alarms, additional sounders
- Can the resident unlock their front door from inside quickly and easily without the use of a key or is the key kept in the lock?
- Overloaded sockets can be determined as ‘more than one plug per socket’
- Extension leads should not be linked to increase the length. This can overload the electricity demand of the wall socket.
- A closed door can stop flames and smoke spreading to other rooms. Where possible, encourage the closing of doors at night.
- Don’t leave washing machines, tumble dryers or dish washers switched on at night
- **Safe & Well Visits are free and provided by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Trained persons will visit the premises, and provide tips and advice. Where necessary they can also install free smoke and heat alarms. To make a referral, use the links below**

**Safe & Well visit: 0800 038 2323**

<https://www.dwfire.org.uk/safety/safe-and-well-visits/>

## Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment

Full Address					
Date		Name		Initial Form completed by	

Primary Risk	If yes, tick all the fire risk factors they exhibit
<p>Does the individual have:</p> <p><b>An increased fire risk?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (skip to next question)</p> <p>CIR- Clutter Image Rating (Please refer to the images on our DW Fire website under Carer's Advice)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Smoking in bed or carelessness with smoking / vaping materials</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Any Petroleum or Paraffin based creams, air mattress, oxygen cylinders used</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe use of portable heaters i.e. too close to materials that could catch fire</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe cooking practices</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Overloaded sockets / adaptors or electrical extension leads</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor quality / damaged wiring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Electric blankets used</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Previous fires or signs of burns on carpet, furniture</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unsafe candle / tea light use. i.e. too close to materials that could catch fire or within easy reach of children / pets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hoarding – CIR if avail</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 100px; height: 20px; vertical-align: middle;"></span></li> </ul> <p><b>If Clutter Image Rating is above 3+ please make a direct referral to Dorset &amp; Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service</b></p>
<p>Would the individual be:</p> <p><b>Less able to react to an alarm or fire?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No (skip to next question)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mental health issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive or Decision-making difficulties / Dementia</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol dependant or use of prescription / recreational drugs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sensory impairments (e.g. hearing, sensory alarms can be fitted by DW Fire)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):</li> </ul>
<p>Would the individual have:</p> <p><b>A reduced ability to escape?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being bed or chair bound</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Needs mobility aids, frailty, slow movement, previous falls</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Impaired vision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unaware of what to do in the event of a fire</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cluttered escape route linked to hoarding?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Internal doors left open at night</li> </ul>

<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to readily unlock front door to escape <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
<b>Safety Equipment</b>	<b>Actions and details</b>
Are there any <b>working</b> Smoke alarms fitted?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> If Yes. Please specify which rooms have them fitted?  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>If No contact DWFRS for urgent referral</b></p>
Are there any gas appliances fitted or solid fuels used within the property? (i.e. cooker, boiler, stoves, fires) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, has a working Carbon Monoxide alarm been fitted?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No

## Next Steps

Any questions that have been answered ‘Yes’ in **Primary Risk** suggests there is an enhanced risk of fire. Further action should be taken, which could include:

- Discussing the identified risk with the resident and/or family members
- If a care plan exists, actions taken to mitigate risk should be noted in that plan and below.
- If you are employed by an organisation, discuss and pass this checklist to your Line Manager
- Informing the Housing Provider that there is an increased risk of fire to the resident
- Referring the resident to Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service for a free Safer Home Visit and the provision of free smoke alarms for the property and advice on further risk reduction options

Date	Action	Follow up date/ who	Name/ Role	Reviewed date

Referral to Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service does not devolve responsibility for identified client risk.