



# Consultation Briefing: Strengthening fire safety for high-rise domestic buildings

## Background

The Scottish Government is gathering information and views on proposed actions to strengthen fire safety for people who live in high-rise domestic buildings. The responses will be used to improve and refine the proposed actions on strengthening fire safety in high-rise domestic buildings in light of the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017.

The consultation is aimed at anyone who lives in or is responsible for fire safety in high-rise domestic buildings and the deadline for responses is **17 July 2019**. The full consultation document is available [online](#).

## What is being proposed?

The proposed actions outlined in the consultation are aimed at delivering the five recommendations from the [Review of the Fire Safety Regime for High Rise Domestic Buildings in Scotland](#).

The Review focused on ensuring the fire safety regime and regulatory framework provides effective, comprehensive protection. It identified that there are no major gaps in Scottish legislation, but made the following recommendations for where improvements could be made to support and clarify existing guidance and legislation:

1. Specific fire safety guidance is aimed at all residents of high-rise domestic buildings.
2. The introduction of Scottish guidance concerning 'Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats'.
3. The introduction of Scottish guidance concerning Fire Risk Assessments.
4. A consistent position regarding the storage, removal and enforced prohibition of combustible materials in common areas to be devised and agreed by all relevant stakeholders.

**About this briefing** - This is a new type of briefing exclusively for CIH members. These briefings are designed to inform you about current consultations, highlight potential implications for the sector that you might want to consider in your own response and set out CIH Scotland's position.

5. A 'fire safety campaign relevant to common areas'.

A further recommendation is for the introduction of fire safety guidance in specialised housing and the Scottish Government is expected to consult on this later in the year.

## Format of consultation

The consultation is split into 3 parts:

### Part 1 - Fire safety information for people who live in high-rise domestic buildings

The consultation is seeking views on the main fire safety messages and ways to communicate fire safety information to people living in high-rise domestic buildings that are both accessible and easy to understand.

### Part 2 - Fire safety campaign relative to common areas

The consultation is also looking to gather information to help develop a fire safety campaign around common areas in high-rise domestic buildings.

### Part 3 - Fire safety in existing high-rise domestic buildings guidance, including fire risk assessment

The final section of the consultation calls for thoughts and comments on new draft Fire Safety in Existing High-Rise Domestic Buildings Guidance. The Guidance is intended to provide consistent, easily accessible information on fire safety for high-rise domestic buildings.



## What does this mean for the housing sector?

The consultation is seeking views on how fire safety information can be strengthened and better communicated to tenants, particularly in relation to common areas. While many landlords will already have their own preferred methods of communication in place, they may wish to take this opportunity to review these policies to ensure that they are still relevant for tenants. For example, the use of a mobile app is one of the options for communication being considered by the consultation, so some landlords may want to look into updating or expanding their communication options if there is sufficient appetite from their tenants to do so.

The consultation is also seeking views on new draft fire safety guidance. While this guidance is not mandatory, anyone who owns, factors, manages, gives advice on and enforces standards in high-rise domestic buildings, regardless of whether they are owned by housing associations, local authorities or privately, is encouraged to use it. As a result, landlords may wish to pay particular attention to this section of the consultation to ensure that the guidance is comprehensive and practical to apply. However, it should be noted that the guidance is only applicable to those properties which operate a 'stay-put' policy and not those which require complete evacuation in the event of a fire in an individual flat.

In relation to raising awareness of fire safety in common areas, the guidance suggests that landlords should adopt one of the following approaches to keeping common areas clear:

- A **'zero tolerance'** approach which forbids any items in common areas.
- A **'managed use'** approach where certain low risk fire items may be permitted.

Both options have a number of advantages and drawbacks, but whichever option landlords already have in place or choose to implement must be clearly set out and communicated to tenants and regular inspections should take place to ensure that tenants are aware of and are following the rules. Landlords may wish to use the publication of new

guidance as an opportunity to review their fire risk assessments in common areas to ensure that they are working effectively to reduce risk.

The majority of high-rise domestic buildings currently operate a 'stay-put' policy whereby residents do not need to evacuate if there is a fire in another individual flat. The consultation states that the Scottish Government is currently considering a proposal to equip all new high-rise blocks with a warning system that could be used to alert some or all residents when the stay-put policy has been overruled and evacuation is necessary and that this would be under the exclusive control of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. There are no further details available at this stage but this is something that landlords should potentially be aware of in future.

## CIH Scotland's position

CIH Scotland recognises that fire safety regulations are already stringently applied in Scotland but supports any measures which seek to improve understanding and increase awareness of fire safety for both tenants and landlords.

CIH Scotland is also supportive of an awareness raising campaign to encourage residents to keep common areas clear to help avoid the risk of fires starting and spreading, but any campaign must be clear about the approach taken, whose responsibility it is to keep these areas clear and why this is so important both for them and for other residents in the building.

## Have your say

CIH Scotland will be developing a response to this consultation. If you would like to contribute to the response, please send your feedback to [scotland@cih.org](mailto:scotland@cih.org)

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