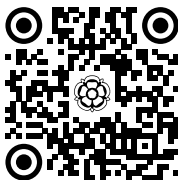
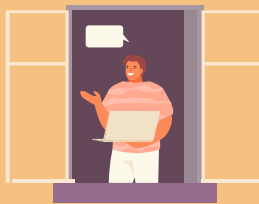


Your Building and Fire Safety Guide



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Introduction

We take the safety of our residents seriously, but fire safety is everyone's responsibility. With that in mind your support in maintaining fire safety is an essential part of keeping everyone safe and secure.

This handbook provides helpful information related to building and fire safety which will hopefully cut through the jargon and get to the key information you need to stay safe in your building.

Whether you live in a converted street property or a purpose-built block of flats, it is important to be aware of fire safety.

How we manage fire safety

We carry out regular fire risk assessments for all our properties that have communal areas such as corridors and stairs.

Within these areas you will find a Fire Action Notice which will tell you how to leave the building in the event of a fire. Along with quarterly checks of the communal fire doors, if your building is over 11 metres high we will inspect your front entrance door every year in line with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. As this is a legal requirement, it is vital that you allow access to your property for this visit.

We also have a duty to provide you with relevant fire safety information about your building. We do this by sending information out to you every year, by sharing up to date information about fire safety on our website and by letting you know how you can contact one of the team if you have any concerns.

All our high-rise buildings have a designated Resident Safety Liaison Officer (RSLO) who are on site regularly to carry out safety checks and to provide a face-to-face point of contact.

If you're not sure who your contacts are, you can contact the team for advice:

Fire Safety Team: **fire-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

Report a building or fire safety issue: **020 8921 8161** or
royalgreenwich.gov.uk/report-fire-or-structural-issue

Resident Safety Liaison Team: **resident.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

Fire safety in the home

In general, fire safety has steadily improved across the UK due to stricter legislation and increased public awareness.

However, in 2023/24 there were still over 23,000 accidental fires in dwellings (*The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Fire Statistics Information*) with cooking, smoking and electrical related fires the main causes.

Many of these fires could have been avoided. The information below explains how you can take precautions within your own home and surroundings to reduce the risk of accidental fires taking place.

Fire safety within the home is vitally important to your own welfare and that of other people living in the building.



You should develop good habits in your home, for example:



Develop an emergency home fire escape plan from each room. You can choose a safe meeting point outside the property for you and your family. Ensure that your fire exits are free from obstructions.



Keep flammable materials away from heat sources that can potentially ignite the materials. Store in approved containers and well-ventilated areas. Try to avoid the use of candles, matches, lighters and other potential fire starters in the home and never leave them unattended when in use.



Avoid keeping any highly flammable substances such as gas canisters, petrol, or paints within your flat.



Practice safe cooking; never leave cooking unattended, especially when using stove tops or ovens. Keep flammable items, such as kitchen towels and curtains, away from heat sources. Make sure to clean your oven and stove top regularly to prevent the build-up of grease.



Avoid overloading electrical sockets and extension cords. Unplug or isolate appliances such as ovens, televisions, irons and washing machines when not in use and inspect cords for damage regularly. Do not charge mobility vehicles, e-scooters or electric bikes in the communal areas.



Do not smoke in bed. Take care if smoking in an armchair or sofa if you are tired or feel like you may fall asleep. It is safer to smoke outside but make sure cigarettes are put out and disposed of safely, particularly if smoking on balconies.



Educate your family members and your friends about the importance of fire safety at home and in the communal spaces. Teach them how fire prevention works and how to respond in the event of a fire.

Smoke alarms

All our council homes are installed with smoke and carbon monoxide detection. It is important that you make sure that the smoke detectors installed within your home are regularly checked for your own safety and protection.

How to test your battery-operated smoke alarm

- Press the test button until the alarm sounds.
- If the alarm does not sound, try cleaning it and test again.
- If the alarm still does not sound, you need to change the battery. If it is still not working, you will need to contact our repairs helpdesk to arrange a replacement.
- If your smoke alarm starts bleeping on a regular basis you must change the battery immediately.

It is vitally important that you do not remove or tamper with the smoke alarms within your home. If you do have any doubts, then contact us for advice.

Remember:

- Test your smoke alarm once a week.
- Change the battery every year.
- Never cover, disconnect or disable your smoke alarm.
- If you have difficulties with your hearing, you may be able to get sensory or visual aids to help.

If you have a missing or damaged smoke or carbon monoxide alarm, get in touch with us at **fire-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** to arrange a repair or replacement.

Are you a leaseholder? No problem!

Our Fire Safety Team are on hand to advise on your fire safety responsibilities, including smoke detection.

Evacuation

It is important for you and your family to know what to do in the event of an emergency. Information on what actions you should take are provided in the communal areas of all our council blocks and buildings in a Fire Action Notice which explains what the evacuation strategy is for your building.

What does that mean?

Your Fire Action Notice will provide the steps you should follow if there is a fire or emergency within your home or building, and what actions you should take to evacuate.

The Fire Action Notice will explain the evacuation strategy for your building, which will be either a 'Stay Put' or a 'Simultaneous Evacuation' strategy.

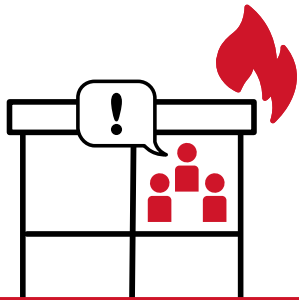
Example of a Fire Action Notice - Stay Put



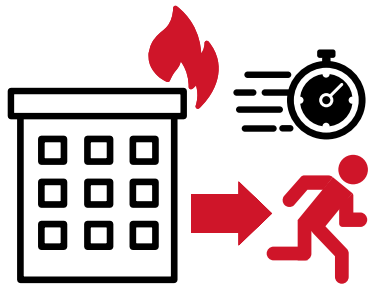
Stay Put

If a fire breaks out in the flat you are in, alert everyone in the flat immediately. Leave the building as quickly as possible and then call the fire brigade.

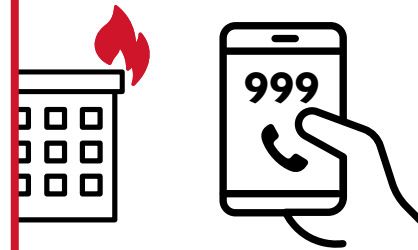
In the unlikely event of an emergency, please familiarise yourself with the following steps:



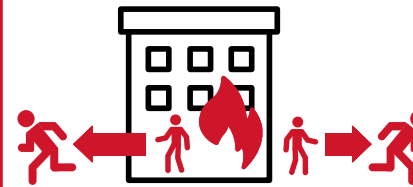
If a fire breaks out in the flat you are in, alert everyone in the flat immediately.



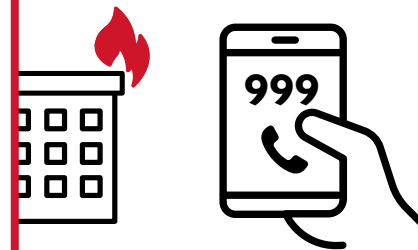
Leave the building as quickly as possible.



Call the fire brigade once you are safely outside.



Only people in the flat directly affected by the fire are expected to leave immediately. Residents in other unaffected flats should remain in their homes unless they feel unsafe or told to leave by the London Fire Brigade (LFB).

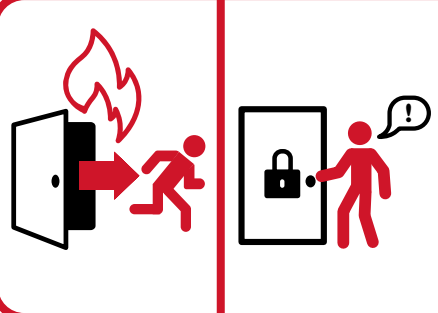


Call the fire brigade once you are safely outside.

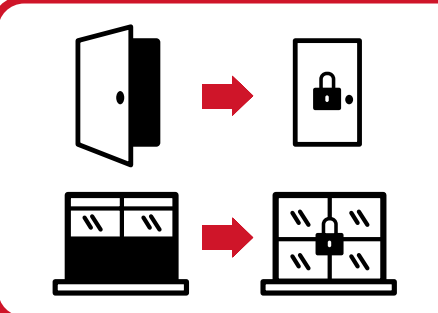
Simultaneous Evacuation

The evacuation plan for a building with this strategy means that if a fire breaks out everyone should go to the assembly point when the communal fire detection and alarm system sounds.

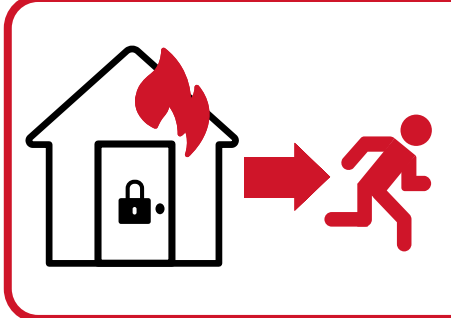
In the unlikely event of an emergency, please familiarise yourself with the following steps:



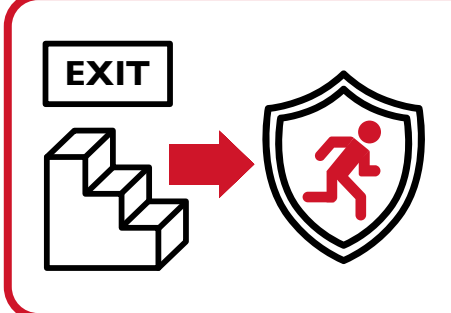
If a fire breaks out within your flat, leave the room where the fire started and close the door behind you, ensuring you alert everyone else within your flat.



If safe to do so, close all doors and windows within the flat.



Leave your flat and close the front door.



Exit via the designated escape route to a place of safety.



Call 999 immediately, ensuring you state clearly the full address and flat number.

Vulnerable or residents with mobility issues

We realise that some residents may have difficulties evacuating the building in the event of an emergency. We have been contacting residents to understand whether they would need assistance or advice to help them self-evacuate.



If you think you may need help to leave your home if a fire was to break out, we can arrange a telephone call with you or visit your home to carry out a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment. We can also help to ensure you have a suitable evacuation plan in place and signpost you to any further support that may be appropriate.

If you feel that you may require assistance, then please contact the team at **resident.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or speak to your designated Resident Safety Liaison Officer.

We will treat all requests in the strictest confidence, and our approach is to ensure your voice is heard and your best interests are respected.

Communal areas, balconies and private balconies

To help make sure you can leave your building safely, we operate a 'sterile area' approach to managing communal areas.

This is explained within your tenancy agreement and contained within our Storage in Communal Areas Policy. If you want further information, you can request a copy of the policy by emailing **resident.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**.

All escape routes and communal areas must be kept clear and free from flammable items. Please make sure you keep the walkways, escape routes and communal areas free from flammable items or any other items which have the potential to block emergency escape routes or contribute to the spread of fire. This would include mobility scooters, e-bikes/scooters and cycles.

Balconies provide a welcome refuge throughout the year but, it is also important to remember that they can present a hazard. Please follow the steps below to make sure you keep yourself and other residents safe when using your balcony.

- Ensure you contact the council if you notice loose or damaged railings or panels.
- Always supervise children or vulnerable people when they are on the balcony.
- Keep furniture or objects away from the railings to prevent anyone from climbing or falling from the railings.
- Do not store anything on your balcony, especially flammable items. If you intend to use balcony furniture it must be of metal or solid wood construction, suitable for the balcony space provided and away from railings.
- Do not use barbecues or any other solid fuel type appliances.
- Do not install any type of netting or screening.
- Do not drop cigarettes from your balcony or windows – these have the potential to blow into nearby homes and can cause fires.

Fire doors

Fire doors are an important safety feature in the event of a fire. Fire doors delay the spread of smoke and fire, which can give the people inside a home crucial time to get to safety should a fire break out.

They can also help to minimise damage to the building by keeping smoke and fire from spreading for a specified period.

It is vitally important that fire doors are not propped open and any damage to a fire door should be reported immediately. You can report a fire door defect to **020 8921 8900** or email **housing.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**.

Depending on the type of building you live in, fire doors can also be found in the communal areas and, if you live in a block of flats or converted house, your flat entrance door should be a fire door. This protects the communal areas from the spread of flame and smoke. Other locations will depend on the risk assessment and fire strategy of the building.

As part of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, we will carry out quarterly communal fire door checks, and we will take all reasonable steps to carry out checks of all flat entrance fire doors every year on all relevant buildings over 11 metres.

To help us keep you and your family safe you **MUST** ensure that:

- Fire doors are kept shut when not in use
- Residents and visitors do not tamper with doors or self-closing devices
- You report any faults or damage immediately to us using the details below

You **MUST NOT**:

- Wedge open or obstruct fire doors at any time
- Alter or change your flat entrance door without prior consent from the Royal Borough of Greenwich

If you are a leaseholder

As a leaseholder and as part of your lease agreement, you are responsible for ensuring you have a suitably fire-rated and certified flat entrance door. You may be asked to provide evidence of this.

Reporting building concerns

If you have a structural or fire safety concern you should let us know.

As part of the new requirements under the new Building Safety Act, the council needs to collect and report relevant fire and structural safety issues, called 'safety occurrences,' to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR).

You can report an issue directly to the Fire Safety Team at **fire.safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or via our website at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/report-fire-or-structural-issue**



Asbestos

Asbestos is a material that was commonly used in buildings in the past because it was strong, fire-resistant and good at insulation. Many homes built before the year 2000 may contain some asbestos-containing materials.

Is asbestos dangerous?

Asbestos is not a risk if it is in good condition and left undisturbed. Problems only arise if asbestos is damaged or disturbed, which can release fibres into the air.

Where might asbestos be found?

In some homes, asbestos may be present in materials such as:

- Textured coatings on ceilings or walls
- Certain types of floor tiles or backing materials
- Roof sheets, garage roofs, or sheds
- Pipe boxing or insulation panels

These materials are usually safe as long as they are intact and not damaged.

What the council does

We have a legal duty to manage asbestos safely and:

- Keep records of known asbestos-containing materials
- Carry out inspections where required
- Arrange specialist removal or repairs if materials become damaged
- Ensure any work involving asbestos is done by trained professionals

What residents should do

To help keep everyone safe, residents should:

- Not drill, sand, cut, or disturb walls, ceilings, floors or other building materials without permission
- Report any damage to walls, ceilings, or other fittings as soon as possible
- Contact us before carrying out any home improvements or DIY work

If you are unsure about a material in your home, always ask before doing any work.

For advice or to report a concern, please email **asbestos@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or call **07970 239 276**.

More information is available on the Health & Safety Executive website at **hse.gov.uk/asbestos/faq.htm**

Gas

We must make sure that gas appliances, flues and fittings we provide for our tenants are safe. Faulty inefficient appliances can be dangerous and cost more money to run.

What the council does

We carry out a gas safety check once a year by fully qualified and trained gas safe engineers. Annual servicing helps reduce breakdowns and ensures the safe operation of gas appliances. This is our legal duty as a landlord.

What residents should do

As a tenant, you must let us in to your property to do the check and any work needed to make your home gas safe. This is a requirement under your tenancy agreement. If you don't allow access to your home for this important check this could result in legal action.

You'll receive a letter from us with an appointment date for your gas safety check shortly before it's due.

Here are some other tips to stay gas safe:

- Always allow the council to service your gas boiler.
- Never buy and install second hand gas appliances.
- New gas cookers must always be fitted by qualified engineers - never fit or attempt to repair them yourself, or any other gas appliance.
- If you smell gas call the emergency gas provider immediately on **0800 111 999**
- Make sure you test carbon monoxide alarms regularly (weekly)
- If your carbon monoxide alarm goes off, please call the emergency gas supplier immediately **0800 111 999**
- If you have any concerns with any gas appliances, please call the council gas section **0800 317 715**

Electrical

Before buying any new electrical appliance, make sure it has the British or European safety marks and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Use only one plug per socket and make sure any chargers you use have the CE mark.

You should also keep an eye out for scorch marks, hot plugs, flickering lights, circuit breakers or fuses that keep blowing - these can be signs of an electrical fault.

If you notice any of these issues call the Contact Centre to arrange a call out on **020 8921 8900**.

Water

Your safety is important to us, and we take water safety in your building very seriously.

Your building's potable water, also known as drinking water, is supplied by the local water company (usually Thames Water) through their street mains pipework network.

In many high-rise buildings we have provided cold-water booster pump sets which push the water either to water storage tanks on the roof or directly into your home.

What the council does

We carry out regular inspections and maintenance of your building's water systems, including annual and twice-yearly checks and risk assessments. We follow all health and safety guidance to ensure we keep you safe, but you also play an important role in helping to keep your water supply clean and safe.

Here are some other tips to stay water safe

To help keep the water supply safe, please:

- Use taps and showers regularly: if an outlet has not been used for a while (for example, after a holiday), run the water for about two minutes before use.
- Keep taps and shower heads clean: this removes limescale regularly, as it can allow bacteria to grow.
- Set hot water temperatures correctly: hot water storage cylinders should be set to 60°C and combination boilers should be set to at least 50°C.

Reporting problems

If you notice any issues with your water supply such as unusual smells, discoloured water, poor pressure, leaks or temperature problems, please report this to us.

You can report it online at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/repairs or you can call **020 8921 8900** (Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5.30pm or Friday 9am to 4.30pm)

If it is the first time you are telling us about it call Freephone **0808 175 6915** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Outside of working hours and in emergencies call **020 8854 8888**.

Damp and mould

In most circumstances, damp within a home is a result of condensation, which usually stems from how we use our home.

Condensation happens when warm, moist air meets a cold surface such as a window or wall. The water vapour in the air turns back into water droplets on the cool surface.

Condensation happens mostly during periods of cold weather and can damage decorations, floor coverings, clothes and bedding and can also form in places where airflow is reduced, such as in cupboards or behind furniture. Given time, the affected damp areas then attract black mould that grows on the surface.

How can you prevent this happening in your home?

Condensation can be reduced by increasing ventilation, reducing the amount of moisture in the air and maintaining heat in your home. By taking some simple steps to reduce condensation, this will help to reduce the likelihood of damp and mould forming.

- Open windows if they become misted up.
- Provide some ventilation if you have to dry clothes indoors.
- Keep the kitchen door closed when cooking or washing and open a window to allow steam to escape.
- Keep the bathroom door closed after having a bath or shower and open a window to let steam out. If you have an extractor fan, the fan should be left on until the steam has cleared.
- Do not overfill cupboards and wardrobes so air cannot circulate. Where possible do not dry washing on radiators or in front of a radiant heater.

If you discover mould in your property, it is important that you let us know promptly by reporting it to our Damp and Mould Team on Freephone **0808 175 6915** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

It is important that we know so that we can identify why you have mould and arrange for repairs to take place. We can also give you advice on how to reduce condensation, if that is found to be the cause.

Take photographs of the mould showing where it is and how much is there. This can help us monitor it should it come back again.

Useful contacts

Royal Borough of Greenwich Contact Centre

020 8921 8900

Repairs team

020 8921 8900 (Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5.30pm or Friday 9am to 4.30pm)

0808 175 6915 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) for first time repairs

020 8854 8888 outside of working hours or in emergencies

Damp and mould

0808 175 6915 Freephone (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

020 8854 8888 outside of working hours or in emergencies

Webpages

Repairs reporting

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/repairs

Damp and mould reporting

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/damp-and-mould

Keeping council homes safe

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/keeping-council-homes-safe

Annual gas safety check

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/gas-safety-check

Preventing fire in your home

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/preventing-fire-council-homes

Report a fire or structural safety issue

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/report-fire-or-structural-issue

Fire evacuation plans

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fire-evacuation-plans

Safety in high-rise buildings

(including BSR registration numbers for each block)

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/safety-in-high-rise-buildings