



Safety First in Housing:

Our shared responsibilities with
residents as Housing Associations

Co-produced with Welsh Government | June 2020



I About this document

This document supports housing associations to achieve and maintain a transparent approach to health and safety matters with their residents. ('Resident' can refer to a tenant, leaseholder or any person to whom the HA provides a home or service).

The document sets out minimum standards for the relationship between residents and their housing association, to voluntarily cement the already high level of transparency and engagement housing associations have with their residents on safety issues. It ensures responsiveness in dealing with safety related concerns from residents and empowering residents to ensure their voices are heard.

Providing safe homes is fundamental to residents' sense of security and enabling happy lives. Providing safe homes is fundamental to residents' sense of security and enabling happy lives. Safety encompasses a wide range of issues beyond what is traditionally considered 'health & safety', including security and wellbeing. Safety First in Housing covers areas of health & safety relating to the fabric and use of the property itself, including but not limited to:

- » **Fire**
- » **Asbestos**
- » **LOLER (lift equipment)**
- » **Falls (low level and from height)**
- » **Radon**
- » **Legionella**
- » **Gas**
- » **Electrical safety**

The above list is non-exhaustive, there may be other headline risks relating to the geography and services delivered by housing associations.

Other safety issues, for example security, are not covered by this document.

This document covers the entire tenancy/residency lifecycle, including pre-sale procedures for sale of leaseholds.

- » **Pre-tenancy/sale engagement & support**
- » **Handover/moving in and related follow ups**
- » **Planned maintenance/upgrades**
- » **Responsive repairs**
- » **Emerging risks**
- » **Emergency situations**

HAs will determine the detailed implementation of the document as appropriate for their stock and residents, through meaningful engagement with residents, in addition to the provision of information.



This document provides a consistent framework for the production of a relationship between landlords and their residents. The principles of the commitments can be adapted to accommodate, for example, residents in specialised housing or those who reside for a very short time period (e.g. those using HA hostels or respite facilities).

Housing associations recognise that the health & safety of residents involves all staff and residents, regardless of role. All residents and staff at all levels should feel confident to report safety issues, and there should be clear processes to raise concerns.

In order to develop this document, engagement with housing associations and residents has taken place across a number of settings. CHC held four working groups in 2019 and 2020 which brought together staff of housing associations with knowledge and skills in health and safety. The document was also discussed at CHC's Safety Strategic Delivery Group (SDG) meeting in October 2019. The document then received resident scrutiny at the TPAS Annual Conference in November 2019.

The Housing Associations involved in the development of this document are as follows:

- » **Bron Afon**
- » **First Choice Housing Association**
- » **Grŵp Cynefin**
- » **Linc Cymru**
- » **Merthyr Valleys Homes**
- » **Monmouthshire Housing Association**
- » **Newport City Homes**
- » **RHA**
- » **Trivallis**
- » **Wales and West Housing**



Housing Association Commitments

To ensure transparency with residents and stakeholders (e.g support providers) on health and safety matters, housing associations will:

1 Establish a process to ensure that relevant and comprehensible health & safety information is consistently issued. For example -

Prior to handover, appropriate and consistent safety information is included or issued in any pre-tenancy or sale support/information.

During handover, safety critical information is provided, for example:

- » **Smoke alarm (position and testing arrangements)**
- » **Key advice and findings on fire safety, informed by fire risk assessment (if applicable)**
- » **The fire evacuation strategy for the building (if applicable)**
- » **Gas safety certificates**
- » **Asbestos information**
- » **Electrical safety information**

Where actions/behaviours are advised against for safety reasons, the safety implications should be explained.



During planned maintenance and inspections/checks...

- » **Access (notice, explaining reasons for need for access, ways of working with residents, trauma informed approach)**
- » **Provide a clear route to raise concerns about HA workers/contractors undertaking work**
- » **Comprehensive explanation of the purpose of the maintenance and process.**
- » **Comprehensive explanation of the use of any new equipment.**
- » **Comprehensive explanation of any changes to the safety of the building following maintenance and implications for resident.**

During responsive repairs...

- » **Effective communication on timescales for response, explaining response and why (safety criticality).**
- » **Take action to mitigate risk if comprehensive action cannot be undertaken in a timely manner**
- » **Explain next steps (what, why, when (with maintained communications if no precise timeframe available)**

When risks emerge...

- » **Provide accurate information on emerging significant risks in a timely manner**
- » **Ensure that updates are provided, where the situation continues**
- » **Provide an explanation of how and when the situation will be dealt with, where known, and information on how residents can minimise risk**
- » **During any emergency situations...**
- » **Provide an explanation of how and when the situation will be dealt with**
- » **If the situation cannot be remediated quickly, alternative accommodation will be provided if necessary**



- 2** Provide details on how to access further information on their property, so that residents can request this in an accessible format.
- 3** Ensure that information and advice issued takes account of residents' differing needs.
- 4** Provide a clear process for raising concerns and complaints, including how to take complaints further if residents or their advocates remain concerned with the landlord's response.
- 5** Ensure that relevant interactions regarding concerns/complaints are assessed, collated and monitored in a central point.
- 6** Nurture awareness of health and safety issues amongst staff and empower them to take action where appropriate.
- 7** Clearly outline to residents their own responsibilities in ensuring the safety of themselves, other residents and their homes.
- 8** Provide the necessary support for residents to understand any information issued, as well as safety features relating to their property and their implications.



Suggested Residents' Commitments

HAs will work in partnership with their residents and stakeholders (e.g support providers) to achieve this, and will benefit from the cooperation of residents who:

- 1** Provide timely access for planned and reactive maintenance, repairs, inspections and testing, and provide a safe working environment during maintenance and repairs (e.g. controlling pets)
- 2** Work with the housing association to maintain their home and the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves and their fellow residents
- 3** Inform HA staff of any concerns in a timely manner
- 4** Refrain from making significant changes to their home without gaining permission (e.g. altering or removing a fire door presents a fire hazard)
- 5** Refer to and comply with additional sources of health & safety information in and around their home e.g. fire safety notices

These commitments can be contained within the tenancy agreement, lease and/or information provided to residents.