

## Task and Finish Project – Fire Safety and Emergency Evacuation plans

### Project Group

### Schedule

1<sup>ST</sup> Meeting –4.3.19  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting – 18.3.19  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting – online, via email feedback w/c 8.4.19

### Background

The Task and Finish group was formed to investigate this subject matter as recommended by the Collective Panel.  
 The topic was suggested as a result of a number of high profile incidents including Grenfell, which many social housing tenants affected publicly stated they felt could have been avoided if the customers voices were listened to .The topic also seemed suitable following recommendations made in the Housing green paper.

### Project Scope

The scope of the project was broadly set as Fire safety and emergency evacuation plans. After initial research the group decided to focus on the customer's view and understanding of NCHAs provision to deal with fire safety.  
 The group found that the Fire Safety group and wider NCHA have a thorough understanding of the legal requirements of the organisation. The group was notably impressed by the fast application of NCHAs thorough procedural undertakings following the Grenfell fire.

### Research

#### Desktop review

Fire Action leaflets  
 Fire Safety group documentation  
 Fire Safety management policy  
 Installation of Smoke alarms –document provided at sign up  
 Customer Handbook  
 Tenancy Agreement  
 Individual Emergency Evacuation Plan document

#### Staff Input

Fact finding research was conducted through various staff members, including :  
 The Fire Safety Group  
 Health and Safety Department  
 Estates Staff from ASH-and IHT  
 Allocations Staff  
 Discussions were also held with Chesterfield Council who were also reviewing their fire safety

approach.

### **Customer Questionnaire**

The project group created a questionnaire to establish customers' views and understandings of the Fire Safety procedures and their individual responsibilities. The questionnaire was offered virtually to Community Voices in blocks of flats and done face to face with customers in Crescent West, Kettering and Radford Boulevard, Nottingham.

### **Findings**

#### **General- Fire Safety Group**

The group wished to note that NCHA does appear to have a robust approach to Fire safety procedures and practice and this should be applauded.

#### **Individual Emergency Evacuation Plans**

The current process for conducting Individual Emergency Evacuation Checklists (IEEC) does not appear to result in comprehensive collection of data. The Estates team reported that successful return rates for IEECs are far below what the project team would consider an acceptable level. These are: 33% in North area, 15% in the central area and 29% in the south.

#### **Stay Put Policy**

The questionnaires demonstrated that some customers were unsure if a stay put policy affected them or not. 42% of survey respondents were not sure if their block had a stay put policy.

#### **The Fire Safety group email**

Feedback suggested that many customers were unaware of the specific fire safety group email. ([firesafe@ncha.org.uk](mailto:firesafe@ncha.org.uk))

#### **Customer Awareness**

22 completed surveys were returned from across 4 estates.

14 % of those surveyed said 'No' when asked if they felt like they knew what they should do in the case of a fire.

14% said they have concerns over the fire safety procedures where they live.

### **Conclusion**

NCHA clearly has a thorough internal process for dealing with fire safety. This does not seem to have been effectively communicated down to its customers successfully with many unaware of steps such as the Fire Safety email address which was created relatively recently. The process of collecting information using the IEEC seems to be inefficient. This is an area which if not completed accurately could be detrimental to NCHAs more vulnerable customers.

The project group feel that historically NCHA has been very poor at explaining to customers the reasons behind changes. It is felt that if changes occur on an estate communication and reassurance concerning the change is essential. The removal of fire alarm points at Kettering has caused unrest amongst customers but could have been avoided if the reasons for the changes were communicated to those who reside there.

### **Recommendations**

1. IEEC - The IEEC in its current paper form is not an efficient way to gather information. The IEEC would benefit from being done in real time with customers; the recommendation would be to do this on a tablet at sign up. This should be a compulsory part of the sign up process as

without this information both the individual and their neighbours could be at risk.

2. IEEC- An annual check for any change in circumstances could be done by email or text if available, or paper form through the post.

3. Improve communication to NCHA customers on the services already in place, including SMART and the option to use the Fire Safety email group.

4. Improve promotion of services using existing channels such as social media, the NCHA website and LINK. The new communications email newsletters could also be used to communicate to those who have registered with the service.

5. Signage – Improve customer awareness with signage. More prominent signs are needed setting out whether evacuation or stay put in the recommended action in each building and signs advising customers not to obstruct fire doors and escapes. This would reassure customers and reduce the need for scheme managers to remove items from communal areas which is a regular occurrence.

5. Signage should be in other languages in areas where English is known to not be the first language of NCHA customers who reside.

#### **Documents attached**

Blank Questionnaire

Email responses

NCHA pdf documents including forms, handbooks, leaflets and policy.

Questionnaire responses