

KENT SHARED LIVES Policies & Procedures

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17 - Code of Practice on Fire Safety for Shared Lives schemes and Shared Lives Host's

Introduction

This Code of Practice on Fire Safety was originally developed in 2004/5 in consultation with:

- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister,
- Department of Health,
- Fire Brigades Union,
- Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (now Chief Fire Officers Association),
- Local Government Employers Association,
- National Care Standards Commission (now Care Quality Commission),
- National Association of Adult Placement Services (now Shared Lives Plus)

This current Code of Practice is a modified version of the original Fire Safety Code of Practice 2005 and takes account of both care regulatory and other regulation changes. The general principles which underpinned the original Code remain intact.

The care regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland do not directly inspect the premises of Shared Lives Host, but it should be noted that should they observe anything of significant concern when visiting a Shared Lives Host, when inspecting a Shared Lives scheme, then they may refer their concern back to the Shared Lives scheme or if necessary the local Fire and Rescue Service.

The Code of Practice supports Shared Lives Plus commitment to ensuring the safety of people in Shared Lives arrangements.

- A Shared Lives Host is someone who offers accommodation and support in their own home to a person requiring support.
- A Shared Lives Host must be approved and supported by a Shared Lives scheme.
- A Shared Lives Host provides care or support up to three individuals at any one time and all Shared Lives Host occupy traditional dwellings'.

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- People living with Shared Lives Host highly value the domesticity and homely nature of the arrangement. Private dwellings that are used for Shared Lives arrangements should not present an additional risk to life from fire when compared to a single-family dwelling. For these reasons there should be no need for fire precautions additional to those taken by a responsible householder.

The following guidance is in two parts:

- 1.1 Guidance to Shared Lives schemes
- 1.2 Guidance to Shared Lives Host

1.1 Guidance to Shared Lives schemes

Shared Lives arrangements in England are excluded from The Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and other houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) (Wales) Regulations 2006.

These treat Shared Lives households as ordinary dwellings and are therefore excluded from regulatory requirements, so long as no more than three people in England and two in Wales are accommodated at any one time.

The Shared Lives scheme and Shared Lives Host should be aware that additional fire precautions may be needed for a 'non-standard house' (ie a house on more than two storeys). The Shared Lives scheme, in such cases, should support the Shared Lives Host to take advice from the local Fire and Rescue Service.

Fire Safety Policy

The Shared Lives scheme manager is responsible for ensuring that scheme workers understand the Fire Safety Code of Practice and provide Shared Lives Host with the scheme policy and procedure on 'Fire Safety' and with any support and learning that they need to put the policy and procedure into practice.

Shared Lives Host assessment

The Shared Lives worker together with the prospective Shared Lives Host will carry out, as part of the assessment process, a health and safety and **fire safety risk assessment** of the prospective Shared Lives Host(s) home.

This will be reviewed by the Shared Lives worker and will be included in the papers presented to the Shared Lives Panel which recommends whether the prospective Shared Lives Host can be approved.

Any decision to approve a prospective Shared Lives Host will be made by the Shared Lives manager and be dependent on them providing a safe environment for any person

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placed with them.

Special Circumstances

The risk assessment carried out by the Shared Lives Host and Shared Lives worker may identify that an individual using or living in a Shared Lives arrangement will need additional fire precautions e.g. where the individual has mobility problems, which may seriously impede their safe evacuation from the house in the case of a fire or if they are inveterate smokers.

In such cases the Shared Lives Host with support from the Shared Lives scheme will seek advice from the local Fire and Rescue Service.

Where the individual's bedroom is in the basement of the house, there must be a direct escape route from the basement.

Pre-Shared Lives arrangement training

- All approved Shared Lives Host will receive information to ensure they understand the relevant legislation and its practice implications including health and safety and fire safety, prior to a Shared Lives arrangement being set up in their home. This might include a home visit and advice from the Fire and Rescue Service
- It is the responsibility of the Shared Lives scheme to ensure that Shared Lives Host understand and adhere to the Code of Practice on fire safety in Shared Lives schemes.

Ongoing training and development

- The Shared Lives scheme and the Shared Lives Host, as part of the annual review of the work of the Shared Lives Host, will together review the health and safety and fire safety risk assessment of the Shared Lives Host's home.

Shared Lives arrangement procedures

- The Shared Lives scheme, with the Shared Lives Host and the individual and/or their representative, will develop a plan and arrangement agreement which describes the services and facilities to be provided by the Shared Lives Host and how these services will meet the individual's changing needs.

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1.2 Guidance for Shared Lives Host

Fire Precautions in Shared Lives Arrangements

Fire Plan

It is important that Shared Lives Host know what to do in the event of a fire and that they make a fire plan. This should include:

- The immediate priority is the safe escape of all members of the household and firefighting should be avoided.
- An evacuation plan with an external assembly point.
- Escape routes that are known, unobstructed and free from trip hazards.
- The means of raising the alarm in the event of fire.
- How to call the Fire and Rescue Service in the event of fire.

Shared Lives Host need to ensure that the fire evacuation plan is explained to individuals so they understand it and how each of the people being supported need supporting.

Escape Routes

- Escape from one or two story dwellings is generally simple. Therefore, it is unlikely that additional provisions will be necessary beyond ensuring that each habitable room either opens directly onto a hallway or stairway leading to the exit of the dwelling or that it has a window or door opening directly to open air through which escape could be made.
- All exits should open easily from the inside, preferably without the use of a key. Shared Lives Hosts are not, however, expected to compromise the security of their homes. Everyone in the household can be safe, as well as secure, provided that they make sure that they can easily open doors and windows. Keys for this purpose should be easily accessible and kept close to the exits. **The evacuation plan should ensure that everyone in the household knows where such keys are kept.** It is preferable that exit doors are not locked and are instead fitted with 'Turnbuckles' and that keys remain in window locks whilst the house is occupied.
- Common areas and escape routes should be kept free from any obstruction and should not be used to store any combustible material.

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fire or if they are inveterate smokers. In such cases the Shared Lives Host with support from the Shared Lives scheme will seek advice from the local Fire and Rescue Service.

- The Shared Lives Host should be aware that additional fire precautions may be needed for a 'non-standard house' (i.e. a house on more than three floors). Where the person living in the Shared Lives arrangement's bedroom is in the basement of the house, there must be a direct escape route out of the house from the basement
- The Shared Lives scheme, in such cases, should support the Shared Lives Host to take advice from the local Fire and Rescue Service

Fire Warning Systems

It is considered sufficient for smoke alarms to be installed in circulation areas only. The recommended minimum is for ten-year smoke alarms with sealed battery units to be fitted. Where premises are fitted with smoke alarms which are battery-powered with short life batteries these should be replaced with ten-year smoke alarms with sealed battery units.

Smoke alarms should be fitted as follows:

- In a dwelling that has people living in Shared Lives arrangements on more than one storey, there should be at least one self-contained smoke alarm at each available storey level. If more than one self-contained smoke alarm is required in the premises; consideration should be given to connecting them together, so that they all operate their warning signal if any one detector activates. The alarm signal must be capable of being heard throughout the building for all persons within the premises to react and take appropriate action required for their safety. This should only be necessary if the building is of such a size or design that the operation of one detector may not give sufficient warning audibility throughout the premises. The manufacturer's instructions about the maximum number of alarms that can be interconnected should be followed.
- Each self-contained smoke alarm should be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Self-contained smoke alarms must be accessible to carry out routine maintenance, such as testing and cleaning, easily and safely. For this reason, a self-contained smoke alarm should not be fixed directly over a stair shaft or any other opening between floors.
- Smoke alarms should be tested weekly by using the test button on each smoke alarm, and be cleaned annually according to the manufacturers' instructions.
- Mains-powered alarms are obviously to be preferred and will automatically be installed in newly-constructed dwellings under the Building Regulations.
- Where a mains-powered system is installed to replace a battery-operated system it should meet British Standard BS5839-6.
- The system should be installed by a competent person who should confirm that the

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system is installed in accordance with the British Standard. You will need a qualified electrician's certificate when battery operated smoke alarms are replaced by a mains operated (hard wired) detection system.

- The wiring installation should conform to the most recent Institution of Electrical Engineering Wiring Regulations (BS EN 7671).

Reducing the Risk from Fire

Fire Fighting Equipment

As Shared Lives arrangements are in an ordinary domestic dwelling firefighting equipment is not required and Shared Lives Host should be reminded that, should a fire occur, their first priority is the safe evacuation of all occupants of the house.

Heating

- The use of portable heating devices having a naked flame should not be used except in emergency circumstances (e.g. power cuts, etc.). Where such devices are used in such circumstances, then they should always conform to the appropriate British Standard. On such occasions, the heater should be securely anchored in a safe and suitable position and away from draughts.
- Where a portable heating device is to be used, Shared Lives Host should carry out an assessment of risk, involving all members of the household, in order to ensure the safety of everybody occupying the home.
- If considered necessary to safeguard the occupants of the dwelling, a substantial guard constructed to BS8423:2002 specification and securely fixed in position should enclose solid fuel fires and open flame heating appliances. No part of the guard should be closer than 200mm from the heat source; otherwise the guard may get dangerously hot.
- Boilers and central heating systems should be serviced annually by a competent professional and in accordance with manufacturers' or British Standards guidance. Gas installations should only be serviced by an engineer registered with the Gas Safe Register. The Health and Safety Executive website has the latest up to date guidance and can be viewed at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/index.htm>. You can also check to whether someone is registered as a gas safe engineer and the types of work they are qualified to undertake at <http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk>

Cooking

- Shared Lives Hosts are strongly advised not to use traditional chip pans, as they are a major contributor to house fires. When deep frying, a thermostatically controlled deep fat fryer should be used.

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Furniture and Furnishings

- When new furniture is purchased, it should be fire retardant and conform to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 as amended. Fire retardancy means that the ease with which the furniture catches light and the speed with which it burns will be reduced. **It does not mean that the furniture will not burn.**
- Shared Lives Host should be aware, however, that if their furniture was made before 1988 (the date when the requirements for fire retardancy came into force) that it could be dangerous in a fire because it could catch light very easily and burn very quickly, and also give off toxic smoke.
- Household members should be asked to take extra care, especially if any of them are smokers, and care should be taken with matches and lighters. Both Shared Lives Host and people living in Shared Lives arrangements should take account of other advice concerning smoking in the household.

Electrical Wiring and power sockets

- Electrical equipment is a significant cause of accidental fires. The main causes include:
 - Overheating cables and equipment due to overloading or loose connections
 - Incorrect installation or use of equipment
 - Damaged or inadequate insulation on cables or wiring
 - Combustible materials e.g. paper being placed close to electrical equipment or sockets which may give off heat (heat may be generated when equipment is operating normally or when equipment becomes hot due to a fault or inadequate ventilation) and arcing or sparking by electrical equipment.

There should be no obvious defects in the electrical wiring system.

- Sockets and switches should be securely fixed to the wall.
- Flex to electrical appliances should not be run under carpets or be positioned to cause a trip hazard.
- The use of multiple adapters should be discouraged. Only correctly fused extension leads should be used and should be positioned to avoid a tripping hazard.
- Fuses should be correctly rated for the appliance in use.

Bedtime Routines

A bedtime routine should be followed ensuring that gas and electrical appliances are turned off and that all smoking materials are safely extinguished. Careless use of cigarettes is a main cause of fire in the home and all ashtrays should be emptied in a non-combustible receptacle. All room doors should be closed at night.

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The landlord status of Shared Lives carers and what it means for you

We have sought advice on the landlord status of Shared Lives carers, so that we can provide clarity on the gas, fire and electrical fire safety in Shared Lives arrangements.

What we found out

All Shared Lives carers who provide live-in Shared Lives arrangements (sometimes referred to as long-term) are classified as landlords because they receive rent from the people they support in Shared Lives.

What does it mean to Shared Lives carers?

Live-in Shared Lives arrangements usually have a license agreement between the Shared Lives carer and the person who lives with them in Shared Lives. This means that legislation requirements for things like deposit protection schemes and landlord licensing schemes would not apply to Shared Lives arrangements with a license agreement.

Shared Lives carers who live in rented accommodation

Any legal requirements for gas, fire or electrical safety in your property are the responsibilities your landlord (whomever you pay your rent to.)

Shared Lives carers who own their own home

Need to meet certain legal requirements regarding fire, gas and electrical safety.

Gas safety: Shared Lives carers who own their own homes need to have a landlord's gas safety check completed every year. If you do not do this you could face a fine of £6000 or potentially face 6 months in prison. There is also a requirement for gas appliances to be safely maintained by a landlord and the The Gas Safe Register recommends that gas appliances, gas pipework and chimney's/ flues are serviced to meet landlord gas maintenance requirements. Many Shared Lives carers will already get an annual gas safety check and gas appliances serviced through their utility provider, but this is not enough to meet your obligations as a landlord under the Gas safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998.

Electrical safety: For electrical installations such as wiring, switches and sockets, Shared Lives carers should carry out regular basic visual checks for broken, damaged or scorched items. For electrical appliances there is no legal requirement for people who provide rented residential accommodation to provide portable appliance test (PAT).

Fire safety: People living in Shared Lives arrangements are defined as being a single household, rather than a house of multiple occupation. This means there is no requirement for Shared Lives carer's homes to meet the requirements of a house of multiple occupation. Generally, the requirements are:

- A smoke alarm is equipped onto each story of a premises on which there is a room which is partly or wholly used for living accommodation
- Carbon monoxide alarms in rooms with appliances which burn, or which can burn solid fuel (we recommend carbon monoxide alarms in all Shared Lives carer homes)

- Ensuring there is an easy means of escape for individuals in the home in the event of a fire
- Ensuring that as far as possible people living in the property understand what they need to do in the event of a fire
- Fire doors are generally not required in a Shared Lives carer's home, so long as the property is a two-storey domestic home. The only time a fire door will be required in a two-storey house, is if there is an internal garage door
- There is no requirement for fire safety blankets or fire extinguishers in Shared Lives carer homes
- The Shared Lives scheme and Shared Lives carer should be aware that additional fire precautions may be needed for a 'non-standard house' (i.e. a house on more than two storeys). The Shared Lives scheme, in such cases, should support the Shared Lives carer to take advice from the local Fire and Rescue Service