

Street Properties

Islington Council & Partners for Islington

Fire Safety Works Information Booklet



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Proposed Fire Safety Works to Islington Council Street Properties

The purpose of this document is to

- ◆ Outline the reasons for these works, and the options open to the Council regarding making all its stock compliant with current fire regulations
- ◆ Explain the responsibility Islington Council has as a landlord towards all residents residing in properties that it is responsible for maintaining.
- ◆ Outline the possible scope of works to ensure the Council is adhering to current fire regulations laid out under the relevant legislation – Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- ◆ Explain the scope of works that will be occurring in street properties and some mansion blocks, and the reason for coming to the decision of adopting the preferred option to provide sufficient fire safety
- ◆ How this will affect leaseholders, and the obligations we have to carry out works on leaseholders' behalf.

Outline of the council's strategy to improve fire safety in its street properties and those managed by Partners for Improvement (PFI).

Islington Councils housing stock includes approximately 7,000 street properties many of which were originally constructed in the late 1800's or early 1900's and were subsequently converted into flats. Due to the period and style of construction employed at this time (e.g. suspended timber floors, lathe and plaster ceilings) it is likely that many of those properties will not comply with modern fire safety standards.

Islington Council has considered two options in improving fire safety to its street property housing stock:

1. Upgrade or replace existing ceilings, floors and/or separating walls between individual dwellings within street property blocks to provide a minimum of 60mins fire resistance, effectively supporting a stay-put fire strategy.
2. Install a mains powered communal early warning fire detection system. This will consist of detectors in the communal areas and within each flat. All detectors will be radio (wireless) interlinked to one another. In the event of fire, in either the communal area or a flat, all detector alarms will be triggered within the building/block, in order to facilitate a simultaneous evacuation.

Any existing 'standalone' fire detection system in individual flats will remain in place and these will **not** be interlinked to the new communal system to avoid nuisance activations.

The Council has decided to opt for the second option, to install communal detectors; emergency lighting; and where appropriate new flat entrance doors to individual dwellings. Option 1 would be prohibitively expensive, disruptive and take far longer to achieve as every street property flat would need extensive refurbishment. We will now explain each element of fire safety that we intend to introduce.

Flat Entrance Doors

The requirement for flat entrance doors to be to an FD30S, which means the door is able to withstand fire for 30 minutes. Having done a number of inspections of front doors to street properties we have found the majority are both sturdy and robust and would be able to withstand fire for 30 minutes. We envisage therefore that the majority of work to front doors will be upgrades, i.e. the door will require a self-closing device, to ensure the door closes and remains shut in the event of fire, an internal thumb turn operated lock, allowing easy exit in the case of a fire.

If a new door is required, a brochure of new doors available to residents will be sent to them.

Emergency Lighting

Replacement programmes for lighting and power within the communal areas will include the installation of emergency lighting. Emergency lighting looks the same as standard lighting however it has a battery back up function which will light communal escape routes – stairwell/corridor areas were there to be a fault with the electrical supply due to the failure of the primary lighting circuit.

To allow for orderly evacuation strategy alongside the emergency lighting in the common areas to aid the safe escape of occupants in the event of a fire there will need to be signage placed strategically in communal areas showing the main exit routes. An example of the emergency lighting is provided here.



Example of emergency lighting used in communal areas of street property blocks

Whilst emergency light fittings come in a variety of styles, we have opted for one particular fitting as agreed with and approved by Historic England so it can be used in our listed buildings.

In addition to the emergency lighting, we may need to install some directional signage to assist residents and visitors for an orderly evacuation.

Multi-sensor Detectors

The proposed fire detectors will be 'multi-sensor' detectors, that combined heat and smoke detection. These will be situated within each flat to ensure that the detector alarm can be heard in all bedrooms and additional detectors may be required dependent upon the layout of the flat, subject to survey. These will generally be connected to and powered from a local light fitting via a short length of mini-trunking.



An example of a typical multi-sensor.

Multi sensors will also be installed in the communal areas, on each floor level as a minimum, subject to survey. They will be run off the landlord's electrical supply. If no landlord's supply is present we will install one.

Communal early warning fire detection system initial installation and programming

We will need to gain access to all flats within a block to install multi sensor detectors. The number of sensor detectors installed will depend on the size and layout of the flat. All individual communal system detectors will be programmed to interlink with both the communal and all flat detectors together, so that should a fire occur in any individual property, or the communal area **all** communal detector alarms will sound.

Maintenance of the communal early warning fire detection system

All the communal heat detectors will be clearly labelled 'Communal' to make sure you know what they are. Islington Council will regularly check test the communal system. You **must not** try to test the communal fire detection system.

The council would like to gain access to the street property blocks in question through a master key that would mean residents need not be disturbed. We could look to introduce this on staged basis as the blocks in question are brought up to standard and fire safety works are completed. In some circumstance the intake cupboard housing fuse boards and meters are external to the building and so maintenance is easier. (See Key safe section below.)

Communal Fire Detection Alarm

Below is an example of the current proposed communal fire detection alarm notice that will be issued to all residents, upon completion for the works to your property.

Fire - what to do

Your block is protected by a communal fire detection system that links the communal detectors in all flats and the stairwell/communal area. If any communal detector is activated, alarms will sound in all flats and stairwell, until reset by the London Fire Brigade or Islington Council Repairs Team (tel: 0800 694 3344).

If you hear the communal fire alarms, you must leave the block immediately and not re-enter until directed to do so by the London Fire Brigade. Please refer to the fire action notice displayed in the communal entrance.

False alarms are very rare. So if you hear the communal alarms please treat it as an emergency.

You should always call the **Fire Brigade on 999** to report a fire, as the communal system does not do this automatically.

Keeping the communal alarms in good working order

Please do NOT cover or interfere with any communal detectors in your flat or communal area or try to test them. They will be regularly checked by Islington Council and you will be told when they are being tested.

If your flat has a long hallway, corridors or is on more than one level, there may be more than one communal system detector installed in your home. This is to ensure the alarm can be heard easily in all bedrooms. They are clearly labelled "Communal Detector" to help you differentiate them from any other detectors in the flat.

NOTE

You may also have a totally separate 'standalone' system of a heat detector in your kitchen and smoke detectors in your hallway/ corridors. These will only sound in your flat in case of fire – and will not provide any warning to your neighbours.

You should continue to test your 'standalone' detectors weekly.

Fire Hazards and their Elimination or Control as part of the Street Property programme

Our surveyors will comment on overall health and safety issues that can compromise fire safety measures that the council on behalf of resident will be undertaking. These will include:

- ◆ The security of the blocks main entrance doors to prevent unauthorised access, that may lead to arson.
- ◆ Refuse skips and/or bins are located externally and clear of the block and are secured.
- ◆ Remove and prevent the build-up of lumber in the common areas, such as discarded household possessions.
- ◆ Good housekeeping in common parts to a block such as gas and electrical intake cupboards adequately secured. A zero tolerance to the storage of combustible materials. Prohibiting residents' possessions being stored along common escape routes.
- ◆ Maintaining and/or introducing health and safety signage in the common parts reminding residents of the above issues and showing escape routes. In particular, 'FIRE EXIT' signs in the common escape routes, as appropriate.
- ◆ Annual maintenance of any fire extinguishers in common parts.

Key Safe

So that access can be guaranteed to the communal areas of street properties we would like to install a key safe outside street property addresses so that maintenance for the communal fire detection and emergency lighting systems can be undertaken without disturbing residents living in their individual flats



Example of a typical key safe.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the council taking this action now?

To comply current new guidance, which is the standard the council has signed up to and would be measured against in the event of a serious fire incident in one of its multi-occupied street properties.

2. The action the council can take as landlord.

The council can install emergency lighting and fire detection in all communal areas. It can also insist on upgrading or renewal, of flat front entrance doors to all tenanted properties and advise leaseholders of their options regarding upgrading, including renewal, of their current front doors. Consultation in the form of mail outs and drop-in surgeries will occur.

3. What are the main requirements for residents?

To ensure that you have a suitable flat front entrance door to your flat, and that you have within your flat and in the communal areas the appropriate alarms and lighting to ensure safe means of escape for you and other residents in the block.

We will also offer to carry out the recommended works to leaseholder flats regarding any front door installation or they can use their own contractor, subject to prior approval and proof of compliance.

4. Will all front doors need to be replaced?

No, we anticipate that there may be a need to replace up to 10% of the current housing stock, but that will depend upon its location, condition and closeness to the means of escape.

5. What is the current 'benchmark' standard for fire-resistant doors?

Any new or replacement front doors within an existing property must meet current standards for fire-resisting doors, which are: BS476, Part 22, 1987 or BS EN1634 parts 1, 2 and 3.

6. How will I know if my existing door is fire resistant?

Depending on the age of your door, there may be markings on the side or the top of the door which should tell you what the level of fire protection is.

7. Can I upgrade my existing flat entrance door to meet the current standard?

Yes, this may be possible depending upon the door and frame construction and condition. Providing you upgrade the door to an FD30S standard, this includes installing a self-closing device, intumescent strips (which swell when exposed to heat) and smoke seals.

8. If I upgrade my door, will I be fully covered?

Whilst an upgraded door may perform adequately in a fire, the only way to fully protect yourself (and discharge any potential legal duty) is to install a certified, replacement door set (which includes the door, frame and all associated ironmongery etc.)

9. What happens if I don't upgrade or change my door?

It is important that all residents understand that their flat front entrance door needs to meet the appropriate standard, failure to comply may result in the Council taking legal action to ensure all of Islington Council's residents are fully protected.

10. What do I need to do now? (for leaseholders only)

If you are considering replacing your flat front entrance door now or at any point in the future, you must upgrade to the current benchmark standard and obtain a copy of the fire test certificate to demonstrate the replacement door and frame meets the required standard.

It is likely that we will request a copy of your certificate when we're working on your property.

As changing a front entrance door affects the means of escape, you must consult with Islington Council's Building Control service on 020 7527 5999 or building.control@islington.gov.uk.

11. How has Islington Council planned its programme of works.

Those flats that are considered a priority with regard to future possible fire risk will be identified and they will be addressed first.

12. How was the contractor selected

Islington Council's FRA Fire prevention works to street properties contract is delivered under a framework agreement which was awarded in 2010, and will run until 2017. Prior to the award of that contract, Islington Council consulted with leaseholders on the selection of the contractors. This was a competitive tendering exercise. The exercise was carried out in line with public contracts regulations in order to ensure best value, was secured in an open and transparent manner.

Breyer Group won the contract to progress fire safety works in the south of the borough and ENGIE Regeneration in the north of the borough.

Your property falls in the **north** of the borough.

Useful contact numbers

Islington Council

Project Liaison Officer Kim Farrelly 020 7527 7430

Senior Project Manager Jeremy Do 020 7527 4308

**The two contractor delivering the programme are:
ENGIE Regeneration
AD Construction**

You can call Kim Farrelly on 020 7527 7430 or email kim.farrelly@islington.gov.uk if you have any matters of concern you wish to enquire about

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