

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE FOR RESIDENTIAL CARE PROVIDERS DURING THE COVID-19 PERIOD



Advice 2: circulated 05/05/20

As the UK follows Government guidance to respond to the Coronavirus Pandemic, it is possible that building owners, managers and staff are making changes to how premises are used, staffed and managed which could, if not fully balanced and considered, adversely impact on fire safety.

The following information, **supplements advice sheet 1** which is also enclosed. Whilst not fully comprehensive it is intended to provide further support and guidance to ensure residents, staff and premises remain safe throughout this challenging and rapidly evolving period and enhance the previous advice issued.

Whilst control measures to protect against Covid-19 are crucial, fire safety should also remain a priority. With careful consideration it is possible to balance both hazards. Detailed guidance documents for different building uses are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-law-and-guidance-documents-for-business>

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

National trends indicate the use of temporary staff accommodation at residential care home premises. Whilst this assists with infection control, it is vital this is robustly reviewed within your fire risk assessment. Any such accommodation falls within the remit of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and therefore general fire precautions must ensure the safety of staff. Please consider within your risk assessment;

- Caravans should be at least 6m away from any building and also separated from each other by 6m.
- Smoke detection should be provided within all temporary accommodation.

For any more advice on temporary accommodation please contact us using the details at the bottom of this advice sheet.

FIRE MAINTENANCE CONTRACTORS - KEY WORKER STATUS

Fire contractors responsible for the maintenance and repair of systems fundamental to the safe occupation of a premises (including fire alarm, emergency lighting and automatic suppression system engineers) are considered Critical Workers. Many continue to operate and support businesses while following Government guidelines.

EVACUATION PLAN – GUIDANCE FOR REDUCED STAFFING LEVELS

To assist your review of your fire risk assessment, the points below are a non-exhaustive list of areas of importance to consider during times of reduced staffing levels. All temporary or agency staff should be made fully aware of the evacuation plan for the premises.

- Review location of all residents e.g. Severe evacuation difficulties on ground floor near final exit. Update Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPS).
- Consider relocating residents to ensure minimum numbers in each protected area.
- Have appropriate extinguishers immediately available, along with mobile phone to call 999, even if the fire alarm is monitored.
- Frequent inspection of premises minimising all ignition sources and flammable material, especially in residents' rooms.
- Ensure no combustible materials within 6m of perimeter.
- Strict night-time closedown procedure particularly the kitchen.
- More frequent fire door inspection.
- Consider if evacuation methods are practical with current staffing levels.
- Ensure that oxygen use and storage is appropriate and minimised.

It is important you carry out a robust review of your risk assessment before implementing any compensatory measures for reduced staffing levels.

GET IN TOUCH

We would like to reinforce the 24/7 availability of the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Protection department for guidance and support particularly in times of reduced staffing levels below minimum numbers.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has implemented its business continuity planning arrangements and many staff are now working remotely, however will be picking up emails. If you wish to raise a concern or raise a question with our Fire Safety Protection team you can email businessfiresafety@shropshirefire.gov.uk or call 01743 260200.