

Customer Scrutiny and Audit Report

Service scrutinised	Customer Understanding of Fire Risk Assessments
Business area	Compliance Team
Scrutiny duration	2 Months
Service lead	Kathryn Ing
Scrutineers	Anne Thornley, Malcolm Mullet, Angela Du Preez

Introduction

The scrutiny group have been asked by Tim Sheail Director of Housing to complete a review of how our customers understand and interpret the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) linked to the scheme where they live. This was requested due to a fire taking place at Burnwood Court in June 2022 and the main fire alarms not being activated by breaking the glass. The aim of this scrutiny is to ensure that our customers fully understand what is expected of them in the event of a fire at their scheme.

For this exercise we visited Burnwood Court, Pioneer Court, Sandpiper Court, and Oliver Lodge. We spoke to 23 people who lived within these schemes and asked them questions around the FRA and their understanding of it.

As a separate exercise the customer engagement team also spoke with 3 residents at Regent Road a house of multi occupancy – under the Concrete umbrella, the fire information was raised by residents there and so has been added to this report.

Activities undertaken

As part of the scrutiny the group carried out the following activities:

- Reading the residents version of the fire risk assessments for the schemes we attended
- Speaking to customers face to face at their homes about the fire risk assessment
- Raising any other points not already covered in the fire risk assessment

Findings and Evidence

Communications and accessibility

Positive findings

We found that of the 23 customers spoken to, 17 confirmed they had received and read the FRA and only 6 could not definitely say that they had received and read the FRA document. This shows that 74% of the customers spoken to had received the FRA and read it. The residents reported that layout was easy to understand with the text, colours and graphics.

All residents spoken to confirmed that they knew what to do in the event of a fire. They knew the policies of stay put or evacuate

At the Concrete property there are staff on site 24hrs a day so any safety information needed by residents can be accessed easily.

Areas to Consider

Some residents couldn't remember receiving the document and asked for it to be sent again. There were some comments from residents at Pioneer Court who questioned fire extinguishers not being available. It was explained to them that as there are so many different types of extinguishers available it is no longer advised that they are available for use as they can make a fire worse. The Fire and Rescue Service also recommend leaving the building rather than trying to tackle a fire.

Recommendations

To make certain that all residents receive and read these important documents. Where possible hand delivery would be best or sending at the same time as the rent statements. When scheme visits or coffee mornings take place staff attending should have copies of the FRA for that scheme to hand out to those who are not sure they have received one.

For all up to date communications about fire extinguishers and equipment to be added in the FRA where applicable.

Equality and diversity

Positive findings

The FRA's are very comprehensive with a lot of text and graphics, which for most would be ok. The colours stood out and all documents were easy to read.

Areas to improve

There is nothing on any of the documents that would suggest that they are available in large font, different languages, or audio files.

Some residents spoken to were deaf which led to a discussion around visual and physical devices rather than just audible alarms.

Recommendations

Adding a line on the bottom of the document that highlights that each document is available in different formats.

As part of the EDI strategy and data cleansing those with any hearing impairments to be spoken to directly and asked what additional support/devices they may need.

Quality service and value for money

Positive findings

These documents are given to new customers as part of their new tenancy packs this enables us to know who has received the documents.

Areas to improve

To ensure all customers get a copy of these important documents these could be given out again at customer events/scheme visits.

Recommendations

When staff are on scheme visits or at customer events, they should check in with a few residents to make sure they have seen the FRA document and understand it.

When a change is made to an FRA for them to be given out in person at events/scheme visits to ensure they are received.

Customer engagement

Positive findings

The trial of the new FRA reports at Oliver Lodge before they were introduced, received positive feedback when our staff spoke to residents to make sure they had read and understood it. This then led to the roll out of the new FRA document at other schemes.

Areas to improve

Following conversations with residents at Regent Road 'Concrete', they have said that more input around fire safety and what is expected of them is important. A notice board with all first aid and fire safety related information would be of benefit to them.

Customer data cleansing is important to ensure we have up to date information about someone, especially if they have been diagnosed as blind/deaf and they may need extra support in such situations.

Recommendations

More work with the Concrete and Glow properties is required, to see what is in place with the FRA's and current procedures.

As part of the EDI strategy, data checks should take place to highlight any change to conditions/disabilities that may require a customer to alter their evacuation plan.

Follow up

The recommendations and related actions will be monitored by the Customer Assurances Group.