



Keeping you safe in your home

A building safety guide for residents

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What is building safety?

The safety of the homes we manage and people who live in them is a priority for the housing management service at Brent Council. We deliver a programme of regular safety and compliance checks in homes and shared spaces of blocks and estates, which means we can find and fix any safety risks quickly.

Building safety includes:

- Preventing and managing the risk of fire;
- Checking and maintaining gas appliances;
- Installing and inspecting electrical wiring;
- Identifying and removing harmful asbestos if needed;
- Reducing the risk of unsafe water causing diseases like Legionnaires; and
- Making sure lifts in shared areas are working properly.

We take safety concerns from tenants and leaseholders seriously and follow these up with checks and fixes as needed. We also expect tenants and leaseholders to take responsibility for helping us to keep their home, and areas around their home, safe.

This policy explains the work we do and what's expected of you as tenants and leaseholders to keep your homes and the buildings you live in safe.

Building safety engagement

Understanding the needs of tenants living in our high-risk buildings

The Building Safety Act 2022 defines a building as high-risk if:

- It is at least 18 metres tall **or** has 7 or more floors; and
- Contains at least two residential dwellings.

It's important for us to know who lives in the homes we manage, especially in our high-risk buildings, so we can support people who might need help to evacuate in an emergency.

To do this, we:

- Collect information about the needs of new tenants and their household when they move in to one of our high-risk buildings; and
- Contact tenants living in our high-risk buildings once a year to check and update household information.

There are secure information boxes stored in all our high-risk buildings, as well as some others. These boxes hold things like floorplans, flat numbers and information about people who might need help to leave the building in an emergency. Only our housing teams and emergency services, like the London Fire Brigade, can access these boxes.

How we share building safety information with you

We want you to feel safe in your home and it's important that you have access to the right information to help you feel that way.

To keep you informed about safety in your home and building, we:

- Give building safety information to new tenants when they move in;
- Provide you with updated safety certificates for your home when needed;
- Share safety details on our website and safety reminders in our e-newsletter;
- Post safety information and evacuation plans on noticeboards and in shared spaces.

If you live in a high-risk building, we will hold a meeting once a year to:

- Tell you about the safety checks we've done in your building;
- Talk about any problems we found and what has been done to fix them;
- Remind you of your responsibilities to help keep the building safe; and
- Give you a chance to share your thoughts or concerns about building safety.

If you can't make it to the meeting, we will also share this information with you by email or post.

How you can talk to us about safety in your home or building

You can talk to us anytime if you have worries about safety in your home or building by:

- Calling us on 020 8937 2400 to report a health and safety repair
- Emailing us at BHMBuildingSafety@Brent.gov.uk; or
- Speaking to your Area Tenancy Manager or any other Brent Council housing management staff member when you see them out and about in your neighbourhood.

We will also pro-actively engage with you on any changes that impact building safety in your home or shared spaces, including:

- Any major repair work to the building or shared spaces, including the materials being used;
- Changes to policies that impact building safety; and
- How we should listen and talk to you about building safety.

Fire safety

Fire safety in shared spaces

We carry out fire risk assessments (FRA's) for all buildings we manage that have shared spaces e.g. hallways or landings. Fire risk assessments are done by an experienced, qualified specialist and will include things like:

- Looking for possible fire hazards in shared spaces, on balconies or on the outside of the building;
- Checking if alarms and firefighting equipment are available where needed; and
- Checking for fire safety and evacuation information signs in shared spaces.

A completed FRA report provides us with a set of recommendations for preventing and reducing the risk of fire and we then action these recommendations based on the level of risk identified. We aim to complete actions in line with the timeframes below:

Risk level	Timeframe
Intolerable	Immediately

High	3 months
Medium	6 months
Low	1 year

FRA's are renewed on a rolling basis, as follows:

Building type	Frequency of FRA
High-risk blocks and supported living accommodation	Annual
Gypsy and traveller sites	Annual
All other blocks with a common area	Every 3 years

If you would like to see a copy of the most recent fire risk assessment for your building, you can email us at BHMBuildingSafety@brent.gov.uk.

Keeping shared spaces clear and safe

Keeping shared spaces clear of any obstructions is important for reducing the risk of fire and for safe evacuation in the event of an emergency.

All shared spaces in Brent Council blocks (including hallways, landings, stairwells, caretaking cupboards, bin stores and any communal balcony areas) should always be kept clear of personal items (including bicycles, scooters, pushchairs, doormats, plants or picture frames etc) and rubbish.

We take a zero-tolerance approach to items being stored or left in shared spaces, even temporarily. If we find an item left in a shared space, we reserve the right to remove the item and charge you for its removal, storage or disposal as appropriate. If we notice a resident who is continuously leaving items in shared spaces, we will take enforcement action against them as a breach of their tenancy or lease. It is a risk to the safety of you and all residents in your block to store items or use sockets in communal areas to charge electrical items or vehicles (e.g. e-scooters).

You must dispose of any household waste in the allocated bin areas. Bulky items should be disposed of through the Council's [bulky waste collection service](#) or through an alternative private waste collection contractor of your choice. If you leave bulky waste in a shared space then this is classed as fly-tipping and enforcement action will be taken.

Fire safety in your home

We install, test and replace, when broken, smoke alarms in all homes we manage where required, but maintaining fire safety inside your home is your responsibility.

It is important that you test the smoke detectors in your home on a monthly basis and let us know if they aren't working.

The London Fire Brigade share [lots of useful information about how you can keep your home safe from fire](#) and we recommend our tenants and leaseholders follow their guidelines.

Fire door inspections

Fire doors are an important part of preventing or slowing down the spread of smoke, heat and fire in an emergency, so we need to make sure that they aren't damaged and are working as they should be. We carry out a programme of fire door inspections and maintenance to all buildings over 11 metres in height and supported living accommodation, as follows:

Type of door	Frequency of inspection
Communal door in a shared space	Every 3 months
Individual flat entrance door that opens into an internal shared space	Annual

Evacuation plans

We operate various approaches to evacuation across the buildings we own and manage. These are:

- **Stay put** – stay in your home unless directly affected by fire, smoke or told to leave
- **Simultaneous evacuation** – everyone leaves the building at the same time when an alarm sounds or they are instructed to do so
- **Phased evacuation** – people leave in stages, following alarms or instructions
- **Progressive evacuation** – people move to a safer area inside the building first before evacuating further

We'll make it clear to you which evacuation plan is in place when you first move into your home and if there are any changes to this, we'll write to you and let you know. If you have any questions about the evacuation plan in place for your block, you can email BHMBuildingSafety@brent.gov.uk or speak to your Area Tenancy Manager.

Whatever evacuation plan is in place for your block, if there is fire or smoke inside your home, you should always leave and contact emergency services immediately.

Supporting people who need help to evacuate in an emergency

If you live in one of our high-risk buildings and would need help to get out of the building in an emergency (e.g. you have a disability which affects your mobility or you are visually impaired), we will work with you to develop a personal emergency evacuation plan. You will get a copy of this, and a copy will also be stored in a secure information box within your building that emergency services can access during an evacuation.

If you think you might need a personal evacuation plan, please speak to your area tenancy manager or email BHMBuildingSafety@brent.gov.uk.

Gas safety

Gas safety in your home

Your home will receive a gas safety check at least once every 12 months, based on the date of the most recent landlord gas safety record (LGSR). A gas safety check will mean a qualified Gas Safe engineer will visit your home and:

- Check that any gas appliances, fittings and flues are working properly;
- Remove any open flue gas appliances found in rooms being used as bedrooms;
- Test, and replace if needed, any smoke alarms;
- Install, test, and replace if needed, a carbon monoxide detector; and
- Do a visual inspection of the gas cooker and disconnect it if it is faulty or unsafe.

Following your annual gas safety check, we will provide you with a copy of the updated LGSR, which is proof that your gas system has been checked by a qualified engineer and is working properly. If we are carrying out a gas safety check that is relevant for more than one home, we will provide a copy of the LGSR in a shared space.

We encourage all residents to test carbon monoxide detectors, alongside smoke alarms, monthly. If there is an issue with either alarm please contact us.

We will carry out a gas safety check following any repair or refurbishment work we do in your home where the work may have affected gas fittings, appliances or flues and provide you with an updated LGSR.

We do not provide gas safety checks inside leaseholder homes. Leaseholders should make sure they are scheduling appropriate gas safety checks for any gas appliances, fittings and flues in their home.

What to do if you smell gas or suspect a leak

If you smell or suspect a leak call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999, turn off the gas supply if safe to do so, open windows/doors, do not use naked flames or electrical switches, and leave the property.

Gas safety in empty properties

If a property is empty because it has been newly built or because a tenant has recently moved out, we will cap off and prevent gas supply to that property until a tenant moves in. When we re-instate gas supply to the property, a gas safety check will take place and an updated LGSR will be shared with the new tenant.

If you move home through a transfer or mutual exchange, we will also carry out a gas safety check as part of the moving process and provide the incoming tenant with an updated LGSR.

Solid fuel appliances

We do not permit tenants to install solid fuel appliances (any heater that uses wood, wood pellets, coal etc. as fuel) in their homes and will reject any requests to install them.

If we come across a solid fuel appliance that has been installed, we will work with the tenant to arrange its removal. If a property becomes empty and we find a solid fuel appliance in place, we will remove it before re-letting the property.

How we manage homes that aren't using a gas supply

If gas can be supplied to your home, but you have chosen not to use gas **capped**, then we will still visit you at least every 12 months to check that the supply has not been reconnected and that the condition of the property, as well as your health and wellbeing, is not being negatively affected by the lack of gas heating.

Electrical safety

Electrical safety in your home

Your home will receive an electrical safety inspection at least once every 5 years, based on the date of the most recent electrical installation condition report (EICR). An electrical safety inspection will mean a qualified electrical engineer will visit your home and:

- Do a visual assessment of switches, sockets, power outlets, light fittings and the main fuse board to identify damage or faults that could be a safety risk;
- Carry out tests to the electrics in your home (they might need to turn the power in your home off for a short period of time to do this); and
- Check that protection and prevention against fire hazards and electric shocks (earthing and bonding) is in place and working properly.

We will do an electrical safety inspection following any repairs or refurbishment work we do in your home where the work may have affected the electrical installation.

Electrical safety in empty properties

When a property becomes empty because a tenant has moved out, a power supply will still be needed so we can carry out repair and refurbishment work to get the property ready to re-let. During this work while the property is empty, we will carry out an electrical safety inspection and an updated EICR will be shared with the new tenant when they move in.

We will also carry out electrical safety inspections as part of a transfer or mutual exchange and provide the new tenant with an updated EICR.

Electrical safety in shared spaces

We make sure that electrics in shared spaces within the buildings we manage are well maintained and working properly. To do this we carry out routine tests to electrical fittings in shared spaces as follows:

Compliance Area	Frequency
Communal Electric	5 yearly
Emergency lighting	Annually
Electric powered gates	6-monthly
Lightning protection systems	Annually
Fire Alarms	6-monthly

Any equipment owned and used by Brent Council employees in shared spaces e.g. by our caretaking staff is also checked once a year to make sure it is safe and working properly.

Our communal electrical sockets are locked so they cannot be used by residents and cause potential risk of fire. You must not use electrical outlets in the shared spaces of your building, this includes for charging electric scooters or mobility vehicles.

Asbestos safety

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring material that is found in rocks around the world. It is strong and heat resistant, and so was used in the construction of homes and other buildings before it was banned in the United Kingdom in 1999. Asbestos can be found in multiple places around older homes e.g. under floor tiles, around water tanks or as part of insulation.

Asbestos is not a danger to your health if it is in good condition and left undisturbed. Worn or damaged asbestos may release fibres into the air which can cause damage to your lungs if you breathe them in.

How we identify asbestos

We identify asbestos through either:

- An **asbestos management survey** which provides basic information about the location, amount and condition of asbestos across a whole property; or
- A **refurbishment and demolition survey** which is carried out before any refurbishment or major repair work to a property and provides full detail of any asbestos within the specific area being worked on.

We have carried out asbestos management surveys for all shared spaces in Brent Council owned blocks. Where asbestos has been identified in shared spaces, this is re-inspected on either an annual or two-yearly basis depending on the risk priority given in the survey report.

We carry out asbestos management surveys to all individual properties when they become empty (unless an existing asbestos survey is already available). This means we can identify any asbestos in homes so it can be monitored, and the new tenant can be informed.

How we manage asbestos

Our policy is to leave materials containing asbestos in place whilst they remain in good condition and are not likely to be disturbed as, in these circumstances, they do not present a health and safety risk.

If we become aware of asbestos that has been damaged or disturbed, we will remove it.

We keep a register of the location, condition, extent and nature of any confirmed or presumed asbestos across the homes and buildings we manage. This is available to our staff and contractors so it can be checked before any repair or refurbishment works happen on a property, and the appropriate safety measures and/or removal of asbestos can be arranged.

Water safety

Water safety and legionnaires disease

Legionnaires disease is a type of pneumonia caused by bacteria (*Legionella*) which can live in water. If water storage systems aren't cleaned or maintained properly then this can

increase the risk of this bacteria developing and people becoming ill if they come into contact with it.

However, with some simple safety checks and ongoing maintenance, the risk of legionnaires is very low.

How we identify and manage risks to water safety

We have risk assessments in place for all our blocks, and these are reviewed based on risk. A new risk assessment will be completed on a high-risk block on a risk based frequency or when there have been material changes to the block that might have impacted the water storage system.

The risk assessment will set out a hygiene strategy such as tank cleaning, servicing arrangements and flushing regimes.

Inspections will generally include one or more of the following activities:

- Checking the cleanliness of the tank;
- Making sure any pipes and valves are in good working order;
- Making sure risks of contamination are being reduced by a well-fitting lid and insect screen;
- A temperature check (hot water should reach 50°C after one minute and cold water should be 20°C or under within two minutes);
- Water sampling.

We do not regularly inspect water storage systems inside individual homes. General water safety within individual homes is the responsibility of the tenant or leaseholder who lives there. See the tenant and leaseholder responsibility section of this policy for what you need to do to help maintain water safety in your home.

Water safety in empty properties

Where a property is empty because a tenant has recently moved out, weekly flushing will take place to ensure water safety is maintained. Where refurbishment work required to the property means that it will be empty for more than one month, we will drain down any water storage system. Checks carried out to empty properties before a tenant moves in will also include cleaning of water tanks, as well as making sure it has a lid and is properly supported.

Refurbishment work to empty properties will include the replacement of water storage systems with a combination boiler where possible.

What happens if we identify legionella bacteria?

If legionella bacteria is identified or an outbreak of legionnaires disease happens in your home or building, we will let you know straight away. We will also notify the Council's Health and Safety Manager.

The affected water storage system will be drained, cleaned and disinfected. The water will be tested again before the system is brought back in to use.

If needed, we can support you to move into alternative accommodation on a temporary basis whilst the work is carried out.

Lift safety

We make sure that the passenger lifts in the buildings we own and manage, as well as domestic lifts and personal lifting equipment e.g. stair lifts and hoists etc in homes, are well-maintained and working properly through a programme of inspections as follows:

Lift type	Inspection and servicing programme
Passenger lifts in shared spaces	Monthly service 6-monthly LOLER inspection
Domestic lifts and personal lifting equipment e.g. stairlifts, hoists etc.	6-monthly service

Any lift found to be faulty or unsafe will be taken out of service immediately until it is repaired.

Tenant and leaseholder responsibilities

It's important that you, as a tenant or leaseholder, take responsibility for helping us to keep your home and areas around your home as safe as possible. To do this, you:

- **Must** allow access to your home for servicing and safety checks when needed (we will take legal action if we are unable to access);
- **Must** report repairs and safety concerns in your home or a shared space to us as soon as possible and/or notify emergency services if it is an emergency;
- **Must** request permission before making any major improvements or alterations to your home (tenants only);
- **Must not** store, use or create any materials that can burn or cause explosion in your home, on a balcony or in any shared space.
- **Must not** leave or store items (including, but not limited to: pushchairs, mobility scooters, plants, clothes drying facilities, rubbish, etc.) in shared spaces.
- **Must not** lock, fasten or block an emergency door;
- **Must not** use electrical outlets in shared spaces (including for the charging of electrical bikes and scooters or batteries);
- **Must not** make any changes to shared spaces in their buildings e.g. painting or other decoration;
- **Must** let us know about any changes to your, or anyone in your households, needs (including if anyone requires medical oxygen) which mean they might need help to evacuate the building in an emergency
- **Must** make sure to run water through taps and showerheads in your home when you come back from being away from your home for several days.

Staff training

All housing management service staff who spend time out and about on estates or in tenants' homes receive building safety awareness training. This provides them with an overview of building safety legislation and equips them with the skills and knowledge to identify and properly manage or report any safety concerns they come across.

Council staff responsible for building safety

Chief Executive of Brent Council

Duty holder with overall accountability for building safety in Council homes.

Director of Housing Services

Delegated duty holder and responsible for making sure that building safety is appropriately resourced in budgets submitted for full Council approval.

Head of Property Services

Responsible for overseeing the implementation and effective delivery of the building safety policy, as well as the ongoing monitoring of our approach to building safety and making sure non-compliance is reported to the Councils' corporate management team as needed.

Strategic Compliance Manager

The health and safety lead as defined under the Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023 and responsible person, as defined in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and extended through the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Responsible for the operational delivery of, and adherence to, the building safety policy and raising any concerns or issues in doing this to the Head of Property Services.

Data storage and information sharing

A 'golden thread' of information

The Building Safety Act 2022 requires us to keep a 'golden thread' of information for each of our high-risk buildings. This means that we hold a digital record of important building information, starting from the design of the building before it is built, throughout construction and right through to the ongoing repair and maintenance of the building.

Sharing information with the Building Safety Regulator

We have registered all our existing high-risk buildings with the Building Safety Regulator and do this for any new developments that are covered by the 'high-risk' definition.

We submit building safety case reports to the Regulator when requested as part of the Building Assessment Certification application. Building safety cases include information about risks identified and how we manage them, plans in place for emergency evacuations and details of any structural work due to take place that might impact building safety. If you live in one of our high-risk block and would like to see a copy of the building safety case report for your building, you can email BHMBuildingSafety@brent.gov.uk.

We also report any safety incidents or problems in the high-risk buildings we manage to the Building Safety Regulator within 10 calendar days of the issue being identified. This is called Mandatory Occurrence Reporting (MOR). Issues we report will involve, or create a risk of,

structural failure of the building or the spread of fire or smoke which could lead to injury or death to a significant number of people. This makes sure that we are investigating and resolving any safety issues we find properly and also means that the Building Safety Regulator can check we have done what we should, and do their own investigation if they feel it's necessary.

Sharing information with the London Fire Brigade

We have registered all of our high-risk buildings on the London Fire Brigade (LFB) portal. We share information with the LFB about building orientation plans, floor layouts, the locations of lifts, electrical intakes, information boxes, fire hydrants and any other important details that support effective fire safety and will help them to act quickly and efficiently in the event of an emergency in one of our blocks.

We also update information on the LFB portal if there are any building faults that might impact fire safety, or the safe evacuation of residents in the event of an emergency, if the fault cannot be fixed within 24 hours.

Information concerning residents who may need assistance during the event of a fire is also shared. This is so they can support the evacuation of some residents if required.