

Title: Partners management of fire safety

Evidence from: John Venning, Head of Asset Management

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides a summary of how Partners for Improvement in Islington (Partners) manages fire safety risks at the PFI street properties.

1.2 The report also summarises how Partners works with the Council and the Fire Brigade and how we communicate with residents.

2. Property overview

2.1 Partners manages and maintains 6,373 dwellings in 2,834 street properties located in Islington. The properties are mostly Victorian but the stock also includes some Georgian houses. Approximately 600 are Listed Buildings and many are located in Conservation Areas.

2.2 The properties are traditional brick construction with timber floors and lath and plaster/plasterboard partition walls and ceilings. None of the properties have external cladding.

2.3 Details on tenure type and the number of blocks with internal communal hallways and stairs are set out in Table 1.

2.4 Partners has categorised blocks with internal communal areas into higher and lower risk. This is based on the number of communal stair flights as this reflects the height of the building, the number of dwellings and number of residents.

Table 1: Property details

Blocks	2,834
Dwellings	6,339
Tenanted dwellings	4,469
Leasehold dwellings	1,870
Blocks with internal communal areas	1,576
Higher risk blocks (3+ stair flights)	404
Lower risk blocks (0,1 & 2 stair flights)	1,172

3. Partners Fire Safety Policy and Procedures

- 3.1 Partners has commissioned regular independent auditing of its Fire Safety Policy and Procedures. Details of this are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Details of fire safety audits

Fire safety audit completed by consultants	2013
Fire safety policy & procedures revised	2014
Fire safety audit completed by consultants	February 2017
Fire safety audit actions:	
Fire risk assessment forms revised and training completed	July 2017

4. Partners monitoring management of fire safety risks

- 4.1 Partners reviews its management of fire safety risks at monthly contract performance monitoring meetings, at quarterly health and safety meetings and at quarterly Board meetings. Details of these meetings are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Partners meetings which discuss fire safety

Repairs contract meeting	Monthly
Gas servicing contract meeting	Monthly
Housing management contract meeting	Monthly
Repairs/Housing Services no access meeting	Fortnightly
Health and Safety Working Group	Quarterly
Partners Board meeting	Quarterly

5. Fire risk assessments

- 5.1 Partners carries out Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) every three years in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The risk assessments were last completed in 2014/2015 and a new programme will be completed in 2017/2018.
- 5.2 The main recommendation arising from the fire risk assessments is to install fire detection and warning systems and emergency lighting to the internal communal areas linked to each flat and to upgrade flat doors leading onto the communal areas.
- 5.3 Islington Council is responsible for delivering the work and it is programmed to be completed between 2018 and 2020.

6. Communal Area Risk Assessments

- 6.1 Partners carries out regular Communal Area Risk Assessments (CARA) of all communal areas to identify health and safety risks including fire safety risks. The CARA inspector refers repairs to the Repairs Team and housing management issues to Housing Services to action. These referrals are monitored at a fortnightly no access meeting and at monthly contract meetings.

6.2 The frequency of the CARA inspections is set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Communal area risk assessments frequency:

Higher risk properties (404)	Six monthly
Lower risk properties (1,172)	Annual/biennial

7. Planned preventative maintenance

7.1 Partners planned preventative maintenance (PPM) programmes contribute to the management of fire safety risks. Details of these programmes are set out in Table 5.

7.2 All tenanted dwellings were fitted with hard wired smoke detectors when they were refurbished between 2003 and 2012 except for 108 dwellings. Partners plans to install hard wired smoke alarms to these 108 non-refurbished dwellings by the end of October 2017.

Table 5: Planned preventative maintenance

Electrical testing	5 yearly
Gas servicing	Annual
Emergency lighting testing to 130 properties	Annual
Fire detection systems testing to 5 properties	Annual
Installation of smoke alarms to 108 non-refurbished dwellings	July - Oct 2017

8. Housing Management

8.1 Partners Housing Services Team plays a significant role in managing fire safety at the properties. This includes enforcing Partners Communal Areas Policy to ensure that communal hallway and stairs are free from obstruction and combustible materials.

8.2 Partners has reintroduced a zero tolerance policy to the internal communal areas and will be writing to all residents asking them to remove possessions that previously had been allowed under the 'managed use' policy.

8.3 Housing Services has attended the Council's Hoarders Panel when required and works with Social Services and other agencies to ensure that vulnerable residents are properly supported and any risks are effectively managed.

8.4 The Fire Brigade's Home Fire Safety Visits are promoted particularly for vulnerable residents and the referral forms are included in the void sign up pack.

8.5 Housing Services will be visiting all vulnerable residents living in non-refurbished dwellings over the next six months to see if any residents need additional support.

8.6 Housing Services and the Repairs Team meet fortnightly to agree actions for repair no access cases that pose a health and safety risk.

9. Resident communication

- 9.1 Partners communicates with residents on fire safety on a regular basis by letter, newsletter and through the website. Details of this are set out in Table 6.
- 9.2 All resident queries on fire safety are logged and responded by Partners Asset Management Team.

Table 6: Resident communication on fire safety

Letter on evacuation guidelines : (See Appendix A)
Letter to all residents sent by IC - June 2017 (See Appendix B)
Fire action plan to be posted in all internal communal areas
Advice on home fire safety visits
Resident newsletter items: (See Appendix C)
Website: information in line with IC/LFB guidelines

10. Working with the Council, Fire Brigade and other agencies

- 10.1 Partners works closely with the Council's PFI Clienting Team on all health and safety matters including fire safety and liaises regularly with the Council's Construction and Fire Safety Team.
- 10.2 Partners management of fire safety is monitored by the PFI Clienting Team at monthly Contract Review Meetings for both the Repairs and Housing Management services.
- 10.3 Partners attends the Council's Homes and Estate Safety Board which is also attended by the Fire Brigade. Partners also attends the Council's meeting with responsibility for overseeing delivery of the programme to install fire detection systems and emergency lighting to the internal communal areas.
- 10.4 Details of these meetings are set out in Table 7

Table 7: Working with the Council, Fire Brigade & other agencies

Housing Management Contract Review Meeting with Council	Monthly
Repairs Contract Review Meeting with Council	Monthly
H & S meeting with Council also attended by Fire Brigade	Quarterly
Fire detection installation programme meetings with Council	Quarterly
Hoarders panel/Social Services and other agencies	When required