

Building & Resident Safety Policies & Procedures



Building Safety Policy

1.	Policy objectives
1.1	This policy sets out Watford Community Housing’s approach to ensuring that all buildings managed by WCHT are safe and legally compliant, and effectively managed to protect residents, staff and visitors. This policy aligns with the Building Safety Act 2022, The Fire safety Act 2021, and other applicable regulations.
1.2	<p>Key Commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing High-Risk Buildings (HRBs): Ensure compliance across our two newly built and two 1960s buildings undergoing remediation. • Future Acquisitions: Integrate any new HRBs into WCH’s compliance framework. • Resident Safety & Engagement: Strengthen communication and involvement in building safety matters. • Clear Governance & Accountability: Establish a structured framework from Board level to operational teams and residents. • Proactive Risk Management: Implement rigorous compliance monitoring and reporting. • Enforcement & Escalation Measures: Define clear actions for non-compliance and safety concerns.
2.	Legislative or regulatory requirement
2.1	<p><u>Legislative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Safety Act 2022 • Fire Safety Act 2021 • Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 • The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 • The Higher-Risk Buildings (Keeping and Provision of Information etc.) (England) Regulations 2023 • Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 • Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 • Defective Premises Act 1972 • Building Act 1984
2.2	<p><u>Regulatory:</u></p> <p>The Building Safety Regulator (BSR), part of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), oversees compliance with the Building Safety Act and related regulations. WCH will fully cooperate with regulatory requirements, inspections, and enforcement actions as required.</p>

3.	Scope and definitions
3.1	<p>Scope</p> <p>This Policy applies to all employees of WCH and is applicable to all high-rise blocks as defined in the Building Safety Act 2022(BSA) which currently defines high-rise (also referred to as higher risk) buildings as those of 18m+ in height, or 7 storeys and above.</p> <p>This includes all tenures including leasehold, and social rent.</p> <p>It is anticipated that in future years the buildings that are within the scope of the BSA. may change (for example to include buildings over 11m+ in height) and this policy will. be reviewed and updated should these changes fall within the scope of future changes to the BSA to ensure this policy remains fit for purpose.</p>
3.2	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher-Risk Building (HRB): Any residential building 18m+ or 7 storeys and above. • Principal Accountable Person (PAP): The legal duty holder responsible for HRB compliance. • Building Safety Case (BSC): A formal document outlining how fire and structural risks are managed. • Golden Thread: The structured storage, management, and sharing of building safety information. • Resident Engagement Strategy: A legally required document detailing how residents are informed and involved in building safety decisions. <p>Risk Register: A compliance tracking document that categorizes fire, structural, and operational risks, including mitigation plans and escalation protocols.</p>

4.	Roles and responsibilities
4.1	<p data-bbox="316 232 823 264">WCH Group Board / Chief Executive</p> <p data-bbox="316 309 1422 371">The Board has ultimate governance responsibility for ensuring regulatory compliance and risk management. The Board must:</p> <ul data-bbox="363 416 1390 613" style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve key building safety policies and risk controls. • Oversee performance monitoring frameworks. • Ensure financial resources and competencies are available for compliance. • Ensure resident feedback is considered in safety decisions. • Review safety performance reports quarterly and intervene in cases of escalating risks. <p data-bbox="316 651 579 683">4.2 Executive Team</p> <p data-bbox="316 728 1337 790">The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is accountable for ensuring operational compliance and must:</p> <ul data-bbox="363 835 1326 965" style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement building safety policies. • Report compliance performance and risks to the Board. • Ensure competent personnel and contractors are in place. • Oversee remediation plans and compliance with statutory timeframes. <p data-bbox="316 1003 847 1034">4.3 Principal Accountable Person (PAP)</p> <ul data-bbox="363 1079 1342 1276" style="list-style-type: none"> • Registers all HRBs with the Building Safety Regulator. • Maintains the Building Safety Case and Safety Case Report. • Ensures safety risks are managed and mitigated. • Develops resident engagement strategies. • Reports compliance performance and significant risks to the Board and Regulator. <p data-bbox="316 1314 826 1346">4.4 Head of Resident & Building Safety</p> <ul data-bbox="363 1357 1422 1946" style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting PAP in fulfilling legal responsibilities under the Building Safety Act 2022. • Ensuring compliance with Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and wider landlord H&S obligations. • Leading engagement with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) ensuring information and documentation is prepared for regulatory inspection and reporting. • Developing a resident engagement strategy to ensure residents are well informed about building safety measures. • Provide Clear and accessible information about safety procedures, emergency plans and resident responsibilities. • Act as senior technical advisor for building safety across housing, compliance and operational teams. • Support wider Senior Leadership Team in understanding and implementing building safety responsibilities across departments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure external contractors and consultants engaged in building safety work meet regulatory and contractual standards. <p>4.5 Senior Leadership Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion a safety-first culture, ensuring building safety is embedded in operational decision making. • Escalate risks to the Executive Team when significant safety concerns, or policy failures arise. • Ensure their teams understand their role in maintaining safe buildings. • Work with the Head of Resident & Building safety to align compliance, resident experience and investment priorities. • Ensuring that safety critical works(such as FRA Actions) are adequately resourced and not delayed due to operational pressures/ budget constraints. <p>4.6 Building Safety Manager (BSM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures fire and structural risk management is effective. • Maintains up-to-date safety case reports. • Oversees contractor compliance and audits. • Conducts safety inspections, FRA reviews, and compliance audits. <p>4.7 All Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report Safety concerns promptly via the designated reporting process. • Follow fire and building safety procedures, adhering to evacuation plans, fire door protocols and any required safety measures. • Engage with residents on safety matters, being proactive in explaining safety measures or signposting residents to information. • Participate in mandatory training related to building and fire safety and emergency response procedures. <p>4.8 Residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with fire safety rules (e.g., keeping escape routes clear). • Engage with WCH on safety matters. • Report safety concerns promptly. <p>Allow access for essential safety inspections.</p>
5.	Key Policy Areas
5.1	<p>Resident Engagement & Communication</p> <p>Our organisation is committed to ensuring that building safety is not a one-time exercise but an ongoing process that adapts to regulatory changes, lessons learned, and resident feedback. To achieve this, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Reviews & Updates: The Safety Case will be reviewed and updated at least annually, incorporating new risk assessments, remedial actions, and changes in legislation or best practice guidance.

- Proactive Risk Monitoring: We will integrate lessons learned from Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs), incident investigations, and audit findings into the Safety Case, ensuring a dynamic and responsive approach.
- Stakeholder Engagement: We will engage with contractors, building safety managers, compliance leads, and operational teams to ensure that the document reflects real-world conditions and practical delivery.
- Board & Executive Oversight: The Safety Case will form part of the regular board and executive governance framework, ensuring strategic oversight and leadership in maintaining building safety standards. Data Integration & Reporting: We will align the Safety Case with compliance tracking systems (e.g., MRI, Keystone) to ensure consistency in reporting and ongoing assurance to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR)

Resident Engagement & Transparency

We recognise that resident confidence in building safety is just as important as technical compliance. To ensure transparency and ongoing engagement, we will:

- Provide Accessible Information:
 - Develop a resident-friendly summary of the Safety Case that explains key risks, safety measures in place, and emergency procedures in plain language.
 - Make key building safety information available online and in printed formats at key locations within the building.
- Regular Resident Communications:
 - Include building safety updates in resident newsletters, emails, and app notifications, where applicable.
 - Provide clear contact points for residents to raise safety concerns or ask questions about their building's safety measures.
- Resident Involvement in Building Safety Decisions:
 - Conduct resident surveys to gather feedback on fire safety procedures, emergency preparedness, and overall confidence in the measures being implemented.
- Emergency & Incident Communication:
 - Ensure that any serious safety risks identified in the Safety Case are promptly communicated to residents, along with actions being taken to mitigate them.
 - Provide clear guidance on what to do in case of fire or other emergencies, ensuring residents understand evacuation plans and safety measures in place

5.2

Embedding a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Building safety is an ongoing responsibility, and this policy will be actively embedded across our operations. We will:

- Train all relevant staff on their roles and responsibilities in maintaining compliance with the Building Safety Act.
- Use internal and external audits to assess whether the Safety Case remains up to date and effective.
- Ensure that any significant building changes (e.g., refurbishments, system upgrades, or new safety concerns) trigger a formal review of the Safety Case to reflect new risks and controls.

5.3	<p>Risk Management & Compliance Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an HRB Risk Register tracking fire, structural, and operational risks. • Establish quarterly compliance reporting to the Board. • Implement a Regulatory Compliance Dashboard to monitor KPIs.
5.4	<p>Fire Safety & Compliance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) annually for HRBs. • Ensure fire door inspections comply with Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. • Implement Mandatory Occurrence Reporting (MOR) for serious fire and structural risks.
5.5	<p>Safety Case Development & Assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain documented Safety Case Reports for each HRB. • Establish regular internal reviews and updates. • Use external audits for quality assurance.
5.6	<p>Enforcement & Escalation Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a three-tier escalation framework for compliance failures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tier 1 – Operational Response: Safety concerns addressed at site level. 2. Tier 2 – Management Review: Executive-level intervention for repeated or serious issues. 3. Tier 3 – Regulatory Engagement: Formal reporting to BSR in cases of systemic failures.
5.7	<p>Compliance Monitoring & Performance review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if legislative changes occur. • Quarterly compliance audits will be conducted to assess effectiveness. • Board and Regulator reporting will be aligned to statutory and best practice guidance.
6.	Diversity and Inclusion Considerations
6.1	<p>WCH will act fairly and consistently in the application of this Policy and will not discriminate against any person on the grounds of their age, race, ethnicity/nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy status or disability.</p>
7.	Related documents
7.1	<p>Fire Safety Policy</p>
7.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Safety Management System (WIP) • Resident Engagement Strategies for each HRB (WIP) • HRB Building Specific Risk Assessment (WIP) • Mandatory Occurrence Reporting System Procedure (WIP) • 'Building Work' Gateway Application Procedure (WIP)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Safety Management Plan (WIP) • Fire Risk Assessment Management Plan (WIP) • Building Safety Cases (WIP)
8.	Appendices
8.1	<i>n/a</i>
9.	Approval
	Approved by: EMT – March 2025
	Date of approval: March 2025
	Review date: March 2030
	Policy 'owner': Head of Building & Resident Safety