

# Information pack



## Housing Services

# Safety in your home

## Information pack

### Introduction

**This booklet has been created to provide advice and guidance regarding safety in your home and in shared communal areas.**

To help us deliver a housing service that meets the needs of a diverse community it is important that we understand any additional needs that our customers may have.

If you or any member of your household have additional needs or are vulnerable in some way that we need to consider when delivering our services to you then please let us know. You can tell us about anything that you think is important. For example, if you or any member of your household has a disability, a long-term illness, has learning or communication difficulty, or is vulnerable due to some form of abuse such as domestic abuse.

### How to let us know

You can let us know by completing the information in My Dudley, you can visit one of our Housing Hubs, or you can call us on **0300 555 2345**. You can also discuss this with your Community Housing Officer during visits or phone calls.

### How we will use the information

We will store the information that you tell us in a secure way. We will put an 'alert' on our IT system so that officers will be aware of the information that you have given us. We will sometimes pass the information on to contractors who do work on our behalf. By giving us the information we will be able to decide or discuss with you whether we need to make any changes to our normal services to make it suitable to you or your household. We will review the information regularly and update it when you tell us about changes.

Please note that you will not automatically get additional priority/preference for any of our services by disclosing this information to us.

# **Safety** **in your home**

## **Information pack**

### **Contents**

- 1 Annual gas safety check**
- 2 Electrical safety check - EICR**
- 3 Carbon monoxide (CO)**
- 4 Asbestos in your home: how to stay safe**
- 5 Water hygiene (Legionnaires' Disease)**
- 6 Lifts**
- 7 Damp, condensation and mould**
- 8 Fire safety**
- 9 Contacts**



# **1 Annual gas safety check**

**Unsafe gas appliances can put you at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning, gas leaks, fires and explosions.**

Dudley Council provides customers with an annual gas safety check and service that also includes the testing of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms.

This service is a legal requirement and is there to help make sure you and your family are safe in your home.

The annual gas safety check also allows us to ensure your appliances are working as efficiently as possible to help with the cost of fuel prices.

Sometimes it is necessary for a faulty appliance to be disconnected until repairs have been carried out or the appliance replaced. This is done for your own safety as your health could be endangered by continued use.

It is therefore essential for your own safety that you allow our engineers access to your property to carry out the gas safety check.

If you fail to allow our engineers access to your property to carry out the gas safety check the council can take steps to gain access for the gas safety check to be undertaken.

Missed appointments and customers not allowing access to carry out the gas safety checks (that are required by law and which keep everybody in your home safe) is currently costing Dudley Council an extra £750,000 per year. This is money that could be spent on other essential services that the council needs to deliver. There will be a recharge of £165 to customers for failed access attempts.

Emergency gas telephone number: **0800 111 999**



## 2 Electrical safety check - EICR

**As your landlord the council is responsible for making sure your home is electrically safe and we carry out an Electrical Installation Condition Report - EICR every 5 years.**

As part of your tenancy agreement with the council you are responsible for allowing access for our appointed contractor to undertake these statutory compliance works.

If defects are found, where possible the contractor will aim to repair these immediately. Alternatively, an appointment is booked and the works are completed within 28 days.

What is included in an Electrical Installation Condition Report - EICR

- a thorough visual inspection of all accessible parts of the electrical installation including the consumer unit, all accessible sockets, switches and pendant lights, as well as the earthing and bonding arrangements.
- after the visual inspection our engineers will apply certain tests to all the circuits within the fixed wiring of your home - this will confirm the reliability of your home's wiring.
- our engineers will also check and test your smoke alarms.

These works must be completed by a Dudley Council appointed contractor who will be electrically skilled persons as defined by the latest edition of the IET Wiring Regulations BS7671.

We will contact you to arrange an appointment when our electrical contractor will carry out the Electrical Installation Condition Report - EICR.

Please ensure that you allow Dudley Council appointed electrical contractors access to your home at the agreed appointment date and time.

Missed appointments and customers not allowing access to carry out the electrical safety checks (which keep everybody in your home safe) is currently costing Dudley Council unnecessary expenditure each year. This is money that could be spent on other essential services that the council needs to deliver. There will be a recharge of £165 to customers for failed access attempts.

**Note:** Many problems that our contractors find relate to unauthorised DIY electrical works. DIY works are classed as any addition or alteration to any part of the electrical system that does not have the relevant electrical certification from an electrically skilled person who is registered with a governing body. These DIY works can put you and your family at risk of electric shock and fire.

Please contact your Community Housing Officer or the Electrical Team from Housing Services for authorisation to electrical additions and alterations.



### 3 Carbon monoxide (CO)

**Carbon monoxide (CO) fumes are silent, highly poisonous fumes that are produced by the incomplete burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, gas, oil wood. CO is difficult to detect because you cannot taste, see or smell it.**

Carbon monoxide (CO) fumes can be produced when appliances such as boilers, cookers, heaters, gas fires and solid fuel burners are faulty, have been incorrectly fitted, or are not regularly serviced. It can also occur if flues, chimneys or vents are blocked or poorly maintained.

With the recent changes to legislation Carbon Monoxide Alarms need to be fitted in every home that has a fossil fuel burning appliance such as gas. Where required these alarms are fitted as part of the annual gas safety check.

The fitting of a carbon monoxide alarm is not an alternative to the annual gas safety check.

#### **What to do if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning**

If your carbon monoxide alarm sounds or you believe there to be a gas leak\*

- stop using all appliances and evacuate the property immediately (try to stay calm and avoid raising your heart rate).
- leave the property immediately.
- if someone is showing signs of poisoning or has collapsed get them outside, call **999** and ask for an ambulance.

- if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning always seek immediate medical advice. See your doctor or go to hospital - let them know that you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning - they can do a blood or breath test to check.
  - before you return to your home it is very important to call the 24-hour gas emergency number on **0800 111 999** and tell them what has happened and receive safety advice (even if the suspected source of the carbon monoxide is not a gas appliance).
  - do not re-enter the home until the source of the carbon monoxide has been fixed by a qualified professional.
- \*\* Carbon monoxide is produced by the incomplete burning of fossil fuels. Unignited gas does not contain carbon monoxide and therefore will not be detected by carbon monoxide alarm. However, gas in your home does give off a smell (like sulphur or rotten eggs).

Operating a 3D printer at home is generally safe if proper precautions are taken. Ensure adequate ventilation, use quality materials, follow manufacturer guidelines and supervise the printer during operation.





## 4 Asbestos in your home: how to stay safe

**Our priority is to keep you and any of our contractors who may work at your home safe. Before any refurbishment works are done we ensure that an asbestos survey is carried out. If required we will arrange for the asbestos to be removed.**

Please read the following information about the possibility of asbestos in your home. If you have any concerns regarding potential asbestos in your home contact the council on **0300 555 2345**.

### What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a general name given to several naturally occurring fibrous minerals that form fibres. Asbestos fibres are strong and resistant to heat and chemicals, and this is why it has been used in the past in a wide range of building materials.

Asbestos in the home is not a problem as long as it isn't disturbed and is in good condition. Even so, contact with asbestos fibres should be avoided.

When asbestos deteriorates, becomes damaged or is disturbed, for example by drilling or sanding, fibres can be released into the air. If you breathe these fibres in you are at risk of developing an asbestos related disease.

If asbestos is in a position where it might be damaged easily it may be better for it to be removed. Removal of any asbestos material needs to be carried out by a licensed contractor. We will advise you if this is the case and will arrange to have the work done for you.

## **Where asbestos is used**

Asbestos was once used in many common materials, including:

- roofing materials such as corrugated sheets
- decorative coatings such as Artex and other similar products
- plastic and vinyl floor tiles
- ceiling tiles
- toilet cisterns and seats
- some components of heating systems, including hot water boilers, gas fires, electric storage heaters
- insulating board used for fire protection
- ducting covering service pipes
- bath panels, soffit boards, fire surroundings, flue pipes, cold water tanks, guttering and drainpipes

## **Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos**

Dudley Council has a database with information about the properties we own and manage, with specific asbestos information recorded against communal areas and some individual addresses. This information is used to monitor and manage any materials that contain asbestos. This may involve us revisiting selected properties regularly to carry out checks or to carry out specialist surveys to make sure our records are kept up-to-date.

The law does not require the council to remove materials that contain asbestos from your home, but if a suspect material becomes damaged and is reported to us or noted on a routine inspection visit, we will arrange the necessary repair or removal work.

We will also visit homes to survey them prior to any major works, such as installing a new bathroom or kitchen. If asbestos needs to be removed the council will pay for this work.

## **What can I do about asbestos?**

If you have asbestos materials in your home extra care should be taken when carrying out DIY, and special precautions are required if this work is absolutely necessary.

**DO NOT** do any work that involves drilling, cutting or disturbing materials that may contain asbestos.

**DO NOT** scrape or sand suspected asbestos materials before painting or decorating. Some asbestos materials are very soft and can release large numbers of fibres if rubbed or scraped.

Please contact the council on **0300 555 2345** for further advice before starting any works.

You must not attempt to remove any asbestos yourself. Asbestos must be removed and disposed of in an approved manner in line with the Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005 and Dudley Council procedures. Please contact the council for further advice.



## 5 Water hygiene (Legionnaires' Disease)

**Wherever there is a water supply there is the chance that Legionella bacteria are present. Legionella bacteria can cause pneumonia-like illnesses, including Legionnaires' Disease, which is uncommon but can be very serious.**

Legionella cannot be caught by drinking contaminated water. To be harmful the bacteria need to be inhaled. So, while the risk of contracting the Legionella bacteria is very rare some people are at higher risk including:

- people over 45 years of age
- people who smoke
- people suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease
- anyone with an impaired immune system

### Where Legionella bacteria are found

Legionella bacteria can be found in natural water sources like rivers, lakes and ponds. They are also present in the artificial water systems in our homes and gardens such as:

- hot and cold water systems
- drinking water systems
- storage tanks
- pipes
- baths, taps and showers
- humidifiers
- firefighting sprinklers and hoses
- garden hosepipes
- lawn sprinklers or watering systems

## Reduce Legionella risk

The risk of Legionella is small; however, you should take the following actions in your home:

- run your shower or bath continuously for a minimum of 5 minutes at least once a week. This may already happen when someone is bathing, but, if you mostly use either the bath or the shower, remember to run the other one which is used less often.
- keep your water cistern covered, insulated, clean and free of debris.
- ensure that your pipe work is insulated. If it isn't, ask the council to do it for you.
- maintain hot water temperatures at a minimum of 55°C - but remember, while raising the temperature of the water can control Legionella growth it also increases the risk of burns and scalds. So, please take care, especially if you have children.



## 6 Lifts

**Dudley Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that lifts in our blocks of flats are inspected and that they are safe to use.**

We work with a specialist contractor who is a member of the Lift and Escalator Industry Association to regularly service and maintain the lifts within the council's housing stock.

The proper operation of lifts requires both preventative maintenance and corrective repairs. These activities help maintain the safe operation of equipment for customers and public.

Preventative maintenance typically includes services such as component adjustments, oil changes, equipment cleaning and parts replacement. These procedures increase elevator uptime and extend the life of equipment.

The council also receives reports every six months from a different specialist contractor who examines all lifts and looks to identify defects which either do present or could present a serious risk of injury to persons.





## 7 Damp, condensation and mould

### Types of dampness

There are four main types of dampness that could affect your home, and it's important to understand the difference between them so that the problem can be effectively treated.

**1. Rising damp** This is caused by water rising from the ground into the home where water gets through or around a broken damp proof course (DPC) or passes through the brickwork if the property was built without a DPC.

Rising damp will only affect basements and ground floor rooms, usually rising no more than 12 to 24 inches above ground level (300mm to 600mm). Rising damp will be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. If left untreated it may cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area.

**Note:** Black mould is rarely seen where there is rising damp because of the presence of ground salts which prevent the growth of black mould.

**2. Penetrating dampness** This type of dampness will only be found on external walls or on ceilings if the roof leaks. It is caused by a defect outside the home, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering, leaking guttering and down-pipes, or missing or broken roof tiles. Penetrating dampness is more noticeable after a period of rainfall.

**Note:** Black mould is rarely seen on areas of penetrating dampness because the affected area is usually too wet and contains salts picked up when passing through the wall, which prevent the growth of black mould.

**3. Defective plumbing** Leaks from water and waste pipes, especially in bathrooms and kitchens, are relatively common, and can affect both external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to the touch and remains damp whatever the weather conditions outside. An inspection of the water and waste pipes and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks will usually find the source of the problem.

**Note:** Black mould will rarely be seen on this type of dampness because the area is usually too wet and the chemicals in a waste water leak will prevent mould growth.

**4. Condensation** This is the most common cause of dampness and is caused by water vapour or moisture from inside the dwelling coming into contact with a colder surface, such as a window or wall. This produces water drops (condensation) which may then soak into the wallpaper or paintwork or even plasterwork. In time the affected areas can attract black mould that grows on its surface. Condensation mainly occurs during the colder months, whether it is rainy or dry outside. It is usually found in the corners of rooms, on north facing walls and on or near windows. It is also found in areas of little air circulation such as behind wardrobes and beds, especially when they are pushed up against external walls.

**Note:** Black mould is frequently seen on this type of dampness.

## **Condensation and mould growth**

**Most homes will be affected by condensation at some point but by making a few simple changes condensation can be reduced or even remedied.**

Our everyday activities such as taking a bath or shower, cooking, or washing dishes, all add extra moisture to the air inside our homes. This water vapour can only be seen when tiny drops of water (condensation) appear on colder surfaces such as walls, windows, ceilings or mirrors.



The amount of condensation in a home depends on three factors: how much water vapour is produced by the actions of its residents; how cold or warm the property is; and how much air circulation (ventilation) there is. All three factors may need to be looked at to reduce the problem.

The first sign of a problem is water vapour condensing on windows and other cold surfaces which takes a long time to disappear, allowing surfaces to become damp. The second indication is black mould patches growing on these damp areas.

## **Reducing condensation and black mould growth**

**The following steps can help reduce condensation and black mould growth in your home.**

**Produce less moisture** Ordinary daily activities produce moisture. To reduce this remove excess moisture by wiping the windows and window sills of your home to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen - just opening the window is not enough.

**Dry washing outside where possible** If you have to dry indoors use a clothes airer in the bathroom with the door closed and either an extractor fan on or a window slightly open. b) Vent tumble driers to the outside (never into the home) or buy a condensing type. c) Cover pans when cooking and do not leave kettles boiling. d) Do not use paraffin or liquid petroleum (bottled) gas heaters. They produce large amounts of water vapour and are very expensive to run.

**Ventilate to remove moisture** Ventilating rooms will help to remove condensation and excess moisture. To do this you may only need to open the window slightly or use the trickle vent that can often be found on new UPVC windows. This allows warm (but moist) air to escape to the outside and let in cool (but dry) air.

Always use an extractor fan or open a window when using the kitchen or the bathroom and close the doors to prevent moisture in the air from spreading to other parts of the house. Continue to ventilate these rooms for a short time after a shower, a bath or cooking, and keep the door closed.

Open bedroom windows as soon as you get up and throw back the sheets or duvets to air the bed and bedding.

Leave space between the back of furniture and cold walls.

Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and avoid overfilling them as this prevents air circulating.

**Do not block chimneys, flues or air vents.**

**Heat your home a little more in cold weather** The best way to keep rooms warm and avoid condensation is to keep low background heat on all day rather than short bursts of high heat when you are in the house. Good heating controls on your radiators, room thermostats and a timer will help control the heating throughout your house and manage costs.

**Insulate your home** The following home improvements can help to keep your home warm and save money on your heating bills.

- insulate the loft up to a depth of 12 inches (30cm).
- install secondary or double glazing.
- install cavity wall insulation.
- draught-proof windows and external doors (when draughtproofing, do not block permanent ventilators or rooms requiring ventilation).

To find out if you are eligible for a grant for insulating your home - contact Dudley Energy Advice Line (DEAL) on **01384 817086** Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm, or email: **winterwarmth@dudley.gov.uk**

## **Black mould**

**Black mould can grow on walls, ceilings, furnishings and even on clothes and toys. The following can be used to kill and remove the mould:**

- a) Carefully remove excess mould with a damp cloth and throw the cloth away after use. Alternatively, use a vacuum cleaner and empty it afterwards. Do not brush mould as this releases spores into the air.
- b) Wipe down affected areas using a fungicidal wash or diluted bleach. Always use rubber gloves and wear safety glasses.
- c) Tea tree oil is a natural antiseptic and disinfectant and can be used to clean black mould. Dilute three to four drops of tea tree oil in two litres of water (hot or cold) and soak items affected by black mould in the solution or spray on to trouble spots using a plant mister - wipe and then rinse off. You can also buy fungicidal wash and mould cleaners from DIY stores.

Always carry out a test on small area of the fabric/material/surface beforehand.

- d) After treatment redecorate using a fungicidal paint or wallpaper paste - do not paint over using ordinary paint.
- e) Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets.

## **Warmth versus ventilation**

Striking the right balance between warmth and ventilation is important. By opening windows or ventilating your home it may appear that you are losing some heat, but what you are doing is allowing warm moisture-laden air to escape and permitting cool dry air to enter your home. Dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than warm moist air.

Many people who have double-glazing installed experience problems with condensation that they never had with their old draughty window frames. This is because all the natural draughts around the poorly fitted windows have been sealed. However, by using trickle vents or opening windows slightly the necessary ventilation can be achieved.

Remember - the advice is to ventilate for an appropriate period of time, not to leave the windows open all day.

## Contact

Dudley Energy Advice Line (DEAL)/Winter Warmth Support Service  
**01384 817086**

Offers all residents in the borough of Dudley free impartial energy efficiency information to keep homes warm and reduce the cost of energy bills. Trained advisers provide information on:

- The causes of condensation and how to reduce it
- Energy saving tips to help to lower bills
- Applying for energy discounts
- Finding the cheapest tariff and support with making the switch
- Accessing grants for insulation and boilers for qualifying households

The helpline also highlights the importance of keeping homes warm in winter to stay healthy and well and to avoid cold related illnesses.

Calls are charged at standard national rates and the helpline is open Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm and Friday 9am to 4.30pm.

**Dudley Council's Home Improvement Service 01384 817086**

Assists homeowners to continue to live independently in warm, safe, secure and well-maintained homes. Grants are available to qualifying households to carry out essential repairs such as boilers, windows, roofs etc.

**Should you have any concerns regarding damp, mould or condensation within your home please contact the Repairs Management Centre on 0300 555 8283.**

Our customer services representatives will discuss your concerns and determine an appropriate course of action. During the call our representatives will ask a range of questions to allow us to determine the most appropriate course of action. It is a condition of your tenancy that you allow access to your home to allow us to undertake essential repairs.



## 8 Fire Safety

**The following information contains valuable information about the fire safety measures found in both your block of flats and your individual flat.**

### **Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)**

Dudley Council has appointed a contractor to carry out fire risk assessments. The Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) involves auditing buildings and recording any fire safety deficiencies in a document form. The form is detailed, so a list of issues does not necessarily mean the building is unsafe. The FRA covers the communal areas of the buildings only and not inside the flats. An FRA is carried out as often as required depending on the level of risk. The FRA is a legal document and where necessary will be updated to reflect any major issues that may arise before a new assessment is due.

### **Keeping safe**

The council's main priority is to keep customers as safe as possible in their home. The information below provides you with advice on fire safety and the importance of fire doors.

If you discover a fire in your home (flat)

- leave your flat and allow the door to close behind you.
- when it's safe to do so telephone **999** and report the fire, giving the address and flat number.
- make your way to the nearest exit and leave the building.
- in the event of fire do not use the lift.
- do not return to your flat until you have been told it is safe to do so by the Fire and Rescue Service.

If you are inside your home and you suspect a fire is somewhere else in the building

If the building has a Stay Put fire policy (see the Fire Action Notice in your building) it means that if you are in your home (flat) the safest option is to stay in your home (flat) until the Fire and Rescue Service tells you to leave. Make sure your doors and windows are shut and telephone **999** to report the fire.

Evacuate immediately if you are told to do so by the Fire and Rescue Service, if you feel unsafe, or if your home is affected by fire or smoke.

If you suspect a fire and you are not in your flat - for example, you are in the corridor, staircase or any other area of the building

- make your way to the nearest emergency exit route and leave the building.
- telephone **999** and report the fire. Give the address where you are and the location where you believe the fire has broken out.
- in the event of fire, do not use the lift.
- do not return to your flat to collect your belongings.
- do not return to your flat until you have been told it is safe to do so by the Fire and Rescue Service.

### **In an emergency:**

**DO** If in the communal area, raise the alarm by shouting “*fire, fire*” and leave the building. **Call 999.**

**DO** **Close** all doors/fire doors, including your front door, if you must evacuate your flat due to a fire. **Call 999.**

**DO** **Leave** the building if you are in the communal area and there is a fire there and/or you are told to do so by the Fire & Rescue Service.

**DO NOT** use the lifts.

**DO NOT** stop to collect personal belongings.

**DO NOT** try to put the fire out yourself.

## **Examples of bad practice:**

- Blocked escape routes
- Fire doors that have been propped open (fire doors should be kept closed at all times) and trips hazards such as door mats.

## **Fire safety features of your building:**

### **Detection and warning**

The smoke detection devices may be battery operated or mains connected. Mains connected alarms have a separate battery backup which not replaceable and have a ten-year operational life span. It is important to test them weekly. These will be replaced when required during the annual gas inspection or 5 yearly electrical inspection undertaken by Dudley Council's contractors.

Carbon monoxide (CO) and heat detectors, rather than smoke detectors, are installed in kitchens to reduce the number of 'false alarms' caused by cooking. Smoke detectors are installed in the lounge, hallways, bedrooms and other areas considered a potential risk.

If any device is activated it will make a high-pitched tone to warn you of a potential incident.

### **Flat entrance door**

The entrance door to your flat is a fire door. It is self-closing and may have strips and seals that help prevent smoke and flames from entering the escape route if either your neighbour's flat or your flat is on fire.

The door will also help prevent smoke and flames from entering your flat. It is therefore vital that you ensure the door is properly shut behind you if you must leave your flat because of a fire. Do not tamper with the self-closing device which guarantees that the door shuts if working properly.

You must not damage the door or door frame or make alterations such as fitting security grilles, extra locks or cat flaps, as doing so could compromise your safety.

Also do not place any additional items on the door or frame (such as Christmas or Halloween decorations, ring doorbells etc.).

## **Internal doors**

Some of the internal doors to rooms in your flat will also have some fire resistance. These doors do not necessarily need intumescent strips, cold smoke seals or self-closing devices (as found on fire doors). It is therefore important that you close all your doors at night. Doing so will give you as much time as possible to escape from a fire in your flat, particularly if your fire alarm goes off whilst you are asleep. You must not alter your door by adding things like extra locks or cat flaps, as this will compromise your safety.

## **In communal areas of your building**

Your block contains many safety measures introduced both when the block was built and added in the years after. This section explains those measures and the role they would play in protecting you from the effects of fire and smoke.

## **Protected escape routes**

These are designed to enable customers from every part of the building to reach the outside without passing through a higher fire risk area. The routes are constructed with materials that will provide protection from fire and smoke, enabling customers and visitors to reach safety if a fire occurs in the block.

It is vital that the protected routes are kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials so that anyone evacuating the building does not find that their escape route is unusable.

Dudley Council takes a zero tolerance on items stored in communal areas and will warn customers to remove items such as door mats from communal areas if they are perceived to be a fire safety risk and may recharge customers if items are not removed.

## **Fire exit signs and fire action notices**

Fire exit signs are designed to identify the means of escape in the event of a fire. They have been positioned throughout the communal areas of your building to help identify the way out in the event of an emergency. Fire exit signs are green and white in colour and often contain directional arrows to indicate which direction to go.



Fire action notices are designed to inform customers of the building what to do in the event of a fire. They are positioned in the common areas of the building.

Read the fire action notice in your block to ensure you are familiar with the instructions.

## **Emergency lighting**

You will find these lights in the protected escape routes. In the event of the electricity failing they will stay lit to guide you along the escape route. There are two types of emergency lighting:

- the first type will not normally be lit but will have a small green or red light that indicates that they are working. If the electricity fails they will illuminate;
- the other type remains lit and are on a protected circuit. That means even if the electricity is cut they will stay on.

## **Fire doors**

When a fire door is closed it is designed to resist the passage of fire and smoke. When closed, fire doors protect the escape route which enables customers to evacuate the building.

You will find fire doors on entrances to all flats, across corridors and stairs on the escape route, and on electrical cupboards. They are there to protect your means of escape and should never be wedged or propped open. Fire doors are designed to contain a fire and to protect the means of escape. Fire doors should not be tampered with or damaged in any way.

In line with new legislative requirements Dudley Council is undertaking quarterly checks on all communal fire doors and annual checks on flat entrance doors in multi-occupied residential buildings over 11 meters in height.

The main functions of fire doors are:

- to allow a means of access from a space and to close automatically once released.
- protect escape routes from the effects of fire (smoke, gases and flames).

- to contain a fire.
- to protect the route.
- to enable the means of escape to be used safely if required.
- to enhance the safety of other customers and to support the Stay Put strategy.

## **Lifts**

If a fire breaks out in your block and the Fire and Rescue Service is called, it is possible that the electricity to the block will be switched off when they arrive. This means that the lift will not operate. You must never use a lift if you are aware of a fire in the building as you may become trapped in it.

The Fire & Rescue Service can however control the lift for their own firefighting purposes.

## **Preventing fires**

### **Top tips for preventing fires**

- ensure a smoke alarm is fitted in the room in your home that opens onto your escape route. Council customers without a smoke alarm in that position should contact us so we can install one for you.
- avoid having gas bottles, paraffin or electric bar fires in your home wherever possible. Use plug-in radiators with safety electric plugs instead.
- keep the communal areas and the escape route in your flat clear of obstructions.
- ensure that all the doors in your flat are shut at night.
- do not smoke in the communal areas or escape routes. Anyone smoking on their balconies must put out cigarettes completely and dispose of them carefully. Never throw lit cigarettes or butts over the edge of your balcony.
- do not cover heating appliances or leave lit candles, incense or heaters unattended close to flammable materials like curtains and furniture.

- make sure you don't overload electrical sockets, and do not leave phones and tablets to charge on potentially flammable surfaces like bedding.
- ensure electrical equipment is regularly inspected and serviced.
- do not store and use white goods such as fridges, freezers or tumble dryers in your lobby or hall in your flat.
- don't use BBQs on balconies.
- never leave cooking unattended. If an oil pan fire starts turn off the heat (if safe to do so) and cover the pan with a lid or damp cloth.

### **If you are considered to be 'at risk' or 'vulnerable'**

People with disabilities should be aware of the special devices and help that is available, such as:

- smoke alarms with vibrating pads or flashing lights for people with hearing impairments.
- smoke alarms with a strobe light outside the house to catch the attention of neighbours or passers-by.
- emergency call or alarm systems for calling help, like the Council's Telecare Service.

If you require assistance in the event of a full evacuation of the building (by the Fire and Rescue Service) or if you use medical oxygen please inform the council's housing department. Also inform the council of any change in circumstances. **For information contact Dudley Council Plus on 0300 555 2345.**

You can find out more about the devices by contacting the Council's Fire Safety Team or the Fire and Rescue Service using the details on the next page.



## 9 Contacts

**If you have any queries or concerns relating to fire safety, help is available.**

If you see something within your block that you feel is not safe, please let us know as soon as possible via the contact details below or through your Community Housing Officer.

If you are not happy with a service you have the right to complain. We will do all we can to resolve your complaint promptly and effectively. Dudley's complaints policy and procedure is available on the website.

### **Dudley Council**

Smoke alarm/fire door repairs **0300 555 2345** (office hours)

Fire Safety Team **fire.team@dudley.gov.uk**

General enquiries **0300 555 2345** (office hours)

Out of Hours Tel: **0300 555 8283**

(5pm - 8.30am weekday evenings, weekends and Bank Holidays)

### **Fire and Rescue Service**

General enquiries **03300 589 000**

Home fire safety visits **0800 389 5525**

**homesafetycentre@wmfs.net**

For further information on general fire safety please go to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service website: **www.wmfs.net**

# Information pack



December 2024