



Setting Standards for  
Retirement Communities

# Fire Safety Commitment

The View from the Sector



### About ARCO

ARCO (the Associated Retirement Community Operators) is the trade association for operators of housing-with-care developments for older people. ARCO was founded in 2012 and comprises over 30 private and not-for-profit operators of Retirement Communities, representing approximately 50% of this sector which includes retirement villages.

ARCO sets high standards and members must adhere to the externally assessed ARCO Consumer Code. The sector sits between traditional retirement houses (which have less extensive staffing and leisure facilities) and care homes.

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The Retirement Community sector is committed to providing **250,000** people in the UK with the option of living in Retirement Communities by **2030**. To make this vision a reality, we will need to focus on 10 priority areas for our sector.



A clear customer proposition



Effective self-regulation



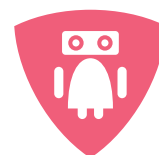
Flexible models of tenure



Sustainable funding streams



Enhanced health and wellbeing



Intelligent use of technology



Clarity in the planning system



Sector-specific legislation



A highly trained workforce



Comprehensive and robust data

# Our Vision: 'The Safest Living Option in the UK for Older People'



In October 2019, the ARCO Board agreed the ambition for Housing with Care to become the 'Safest Living Option for Older People in the UK'. We did not imagine how quickly and intensely relevant that objective would become.

Bringing together ARCO Members from across the private, charitable and affordable sectors to form a dedicated Fire Safety Working Group (FSWG), we shared resources, passion and expertise to work on bringing this vision to life.

This document sets out our commitment to achieving the vision of the 'Safest Living Option' for older people in the UK. In the following pages, we also set out some of the collective insight into examples of good practice taking place across the ARCO Membership.

While the situation for everyone has changed with the arrival of coronavirus, our members' critical work on fire safety has continued.

We stand with all our colleagues across the Adult Social Care sector who have worked so hard to keep residents, colleagues and the public safe.

**Michael Voges** Executive Director



# Key Principles



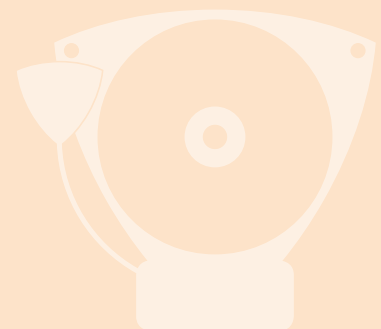
In the working group, we discussed the key considerations for operators in creating and operating safe places for residents.

Critical focus on achieving key strategic support and embedding risk management throughout organisations was key:

- **Depth of understanding of government and expert guidance** - a key theme of our work was the importance of keeping knowledge and implementation up-to-date with the latest official guidance and findings
- **Robust compliance systems** - all of our Members highlighted the crucial factor of robust reporting and compliance auditing systems as well as making best use of new technologies
- **Resident engagement** - essential when implementing change and making decisions as part of community life (see Person-Centred Risk Assessment Approach on pg. 4)
- **Senior buy-in and frequent reporting** - fire safety is non-negotiable; audit reporting as frequently as other management information reporting processes to a senior level was seen by the group, as vitally important

## What does the ARCO Fire Safety Group do?

- Share resources amongst ARCO Members
- Provide a focal point for information relevant to fire safety within Retirement Communities
- Increase collaboration and cooperation across the Retirement Community sector
- Support ARCO in increasing awareness of the Retirement Community model amongst stakeholders and policymakers through engagement and consultation





# Sector Leaders for Fire Safety



The Fire Safety Working Group is open to Full ARCO Members<sup>1</sup>, Prospective/Provisional Members<sup>2</sup>, and Accelerators<sup>3</sup>. The working group brought together the following sector leaders for fire safety from across the ARCO Members.



**Karen Dalby**

Operations Manager,  
Riverstone Living



**Gemma Duggan**

Director of Governance and Compliance,  
The ExtraCare Charitable Trust



**Ged Doyle**

Wadswick Green Facilities Manager,  
Rangeford



**Richard Higgins**

Head of Health and Safety,  
Inspired Villages



**Ian Maxwell**

Group Health and Safety Manager,  
Audley Group



**Emma Smith**

Fire Safety Manager,  
Anchor Hanover



<sup>1</sup>ARCO Full Members are those operators who have fully completed all aspects of assessment and have been approved by the ARCO Board of Directors.

<sup>2</sup>Prospective/Provisional Members are Retirement Community Operators who are currently going through the assessment process, either before 'opening their doors' for a new community, or by registering and electing for self-assessment of an already operational community.

<sup>3</sup>The ARCO Accelerator Programme is a structured package of information and support for organisations planning their entry into the UK housing-with-care market.

# Person-Centred Risk Assessment Approach



Members of the Working Group agree on the importance and principles of a person-centred approach within Retirement Communities.

According to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), in their cornerstone 'Fire Safety in Specialised Housing' guide, a person-centred approach for both risk assessment and evacuation helps identify residents who are most vulnerable and at higher risk from fire.

This approach considers the characteristics of residents, identifies fire hazards, and the potential outcomes in the event of a fire. A suitable action plan is then developed, ensuring a reasonable standard of fire safety to improve the safety of vulnerable residents. For some operators, this is where a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (or PEEP) comes into action. This is an individual escape plan for people who need extra assistance to exit a building in the case of emergency.

There are multiple factors which feed into a person-centred risk assessment and evacuation plans; lifestyle, care needs and mobility, medical items and equipment, and capacity are all relevant and change over time.

## Why Person-Centred Risk Assessment?

- The assessment considers the residents' characteristics which might impact on the chances of a fire occurring and the physical and/or mental ability of a person to recognise and respond appropriately to fire alarm signals or signs of fire
- The result of the assessment determines any additional preventive and protective measures that may be required
- Although the person-centred risk assessment is generally outside the scope of fire safety legislation, it is strongly recommended as good practice as outlined by the NFCC
- The person-centred fire risk assessment is intended only as a simple means for non-specialists who have suitable understanding of relevant fire risks to determine whether additional fire precautions might be needed

# Good Practice and Innovation

## Approach 1



**To provide a safe and secure environment for residents, staff and visitors, Members have developed good practice and innovative approaches.**

In promoting a health and safety culture, The ExtraCare Charitable Trust (ExtraCare) has acknowledged the value of working in partnership with residents.

ExtraCare is committed to involving employees and residents in the process of risk reduction. As part of their fire safety strategy, ExtraCare developed a pilot scheme to train residents to undertake Health and Safety audits, which include fire safety. This presents an important opportunity for residents to be involved in creating a safety-aware culture and shared enterprise in keeping the community safe. Volunteer residents identify risks or issues within their village or scheme and are active partners in highlighting possible concerns to managers.

Regular Health and Safety audits provide an opportunity to rectify identified issues that could result in a breach in fire regulations.

Gemma Duggan, Director of Governance and Compliance from ExtraCare Charitable Trust, said of the pilot;



*Volunteering is part of our identity at ExtraCare and we want our residents to feel at the heart of our communities. We all have our part to play in ensuring fire safety standards. Involving residents in the audit processes has brought many benefits including a greater depth of collaboration in safety priorities. We hope to roll this out to all our locations over the next 18 months.*

## Approach 2



**Members of the working group discussed the importance of establishing a fire safety culture focused on prevention and fire protection. One thing was clear; the critical importance of buy-in from the top of the organisation.**

The importance of developing a culture of fire safety and prevention within an organisation is based on shared perceptions, knowledge and values.

At Rangeford Villages, the CEO and Senior management team commit to a fire safety culture through achieving IOSH<sup>4</sup> accreditation.

IOSH Fire Safety training is encouraged to ensure everyone knows how to act safely reducing the risk of injury or fatality in the event of a fire.

Howard Nankivell, Rangeford Villages CEO, has shown his commitment and the value he places on fire safety by undertaking IOSH training himself. Howard said;



*By going beyond the basic level of required safety training for CEOs, I make sure I'm prioritising questions of safety through all my business decision-making. It also lets my teams know how important safety concerns are and how much I value their effort and dedication with regards to fire safety.*

Fire safety training, regularly reviewed and updated, provides the knowledge and tools required to tackle fire safety issues and helps an organisation:

- Improve fire safety culture
- Minimise risk
- Creating organisational resilience at all levels & securing colleague buy-in

<sup>4</sup>IOSH - The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health is a global organisation for health and safety professionals.

## Approach 3



### **The use of technology in management has proven to be a significant contributing factor to fire prevention.**

With 2000 owners, 20 villages and counting, utilising real-time accurate management information systems (MIS) on audits, actions, and outcomes, is a priority for Audley.

Audley Group are certified under the ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management Standard and audit to obtain good management of fire safety information, which is critical to identifying risks and acting upon those in a timely way. Risk patterns and trends can also be identified in real time, ahead of any potential harm occurring. Accurate, timely data means fire risk is more likely to be controlled and contained adequately and safely.

With a prominent management system in place, Audley makes use of realtime audit compliance systems to ensure documentation is accurate and complete, putting audit information in the hands of senior management and facilities staff wherever they are, in real-time.

This allows to quickly and efficiently monitor key aspects of managing fire safety, administering a structured path for steady improvement towards best practice.

Ian Maxwell, Group Health and Safety Manager, Audley Group, said:



*At Audley, we use innovative technology to reduce risks and to ensure appropriate emergency planning is in place. Providing a safe environment for owners and staff is our priority, and by employing real-time, best-in-class management information systems, we can do so effectively.*

## Approach 4



### **Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments enable Members to work collaboratively with vulnerable residents so fire prevention measures are tailored to individual needs.**

As England's largest provider of housing and care to older people, it's crucial for Anchor Hanover to work closely with residents to ensure their safety.

A comprehensive risk assessment tool within Anchor Hanover's compliance monitoring and recording system, Compliance 365, helps them to identify key fire risks related to residents' lifestyle and health, as well as their physical and cognitive agility. Working together to mitigate these risks enables residents to maintain their independence and remain in their home with less risk to themselves and others in the building.

By monitoring resident risk within the buildings, Anchor Hanover are able to make informed lettings choices to ensure that the risk profile is manageable. Analysing the data the organisation collates through risk assessments and control measures may support in the design of future developments.

Bob Stevens, Head of Health and Safety at Anchor Hanover said:



*The safety of our residents is our number one priority. With an ageing population and associated increasing levels of vulnerability, the most effective way to keep residents safe is to focus on individual need. With support from our residents, Anchor Hanover's comprehensive approach to person centred fire risk assessment will help ensure that adequate protection is in place in the event of a fire emergency.*



## Approach 5



### The importance of robust fire safety strategies in the development and operation of retirement communities.

At Inspired Villages, residents are at the forefront of everything they do, and fire safety is no exception. The importance of the fire safety policy is recognised and supported by a robust fire safety strategy, developed in collaboration with RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents).

The fire strategy at Inspired Villages is implemented at the development stage, detailing specific guidance to all the designers and contractors to be adopted during the design and construction of their villages during the build phase.

Inspired Villages' fire strategy goes beyond current fire safety legislation and includes good practice as outlined by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) code of practice. A range of fire safety policies and procedures have been developed and implemented to protect residents, colleagues and visitors within all Inspired Villages.

This approach includes regular third party fire risk assessments; strengthened by additional independent third-party fully invasive fire risk assessment to ensure the integrity of compartmentation and fire stopping.

Inspired Villages have also implemented a person-centred risk assessment approach to ensure all residents are considered in the fire strategy.

Tom Lord, Chief Operating Officer, Inspired Villages, said:



*Safety and security is one of the compelling reasons for residents choosing to live in a retirement community. Fire safety plays an important part in this; it should be at the forefront of all operators' strategies.*

## Approach 6



The life you want to live

### The importance of fire safety training design and tools in a retirement residence cannot be underestimated.

The use of a custom-made training programme available online to all team members will be at the centre of Riverstone's learning programme, helping to make the process and approach to health and fire safety engaging and accessible.

One of Riverstone's core tenets is the health, safety and security of residents, visitors, and colleagues. New colleagues will be invited to complete online learning ahead of their first day, and at the top of this list is fire safety. Team members will complete this training module, giving them a good understanding of the systems and procedures we will use to minimise the risks to anyone in a Riverstone residence.

Learning at Riverstone will be continuous, as all colleagues will have to complete regular refresher training throughout their journey.

Every member of Riverstone staff will be empowered to take action and generate ideas for improvement. Residents will also be encouraged to do the same through Riverstone's open dialogue and the creation of resident groups where fire, health and safety will be on the agenda for discussion.

Karen Dalby, Operations Manager, Riverstone Living, said:



*At Riverstone, we know that great businesses have, at their core, great teams. Great teams have at their core a great attitude, where the provision of some great learning provides and promotes a safe and healthy place to live and work. It's the life we want to live.*

# Further Reading

ARCO always recommends seeking expert advice on fire safety. The following are key texts and useful, reliable resources for further reading.

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## **2017. Fire Safety In Specialised Housing. 1st ed. [ebook] National Fire Chiefs Council.**

Available at: <[https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/NFCC%20Guidance%20publications/NFCC\\_Specialised\\_Housing\\_Guidance\\_-\\_Copy.pdf](https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/NFCC%20Guidance%20publications/NFCC_Specialised_Housing_Guidance_-_Copy.pdf)> [Accessed 8 June 2020].

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## **Firesafe.org.uk. 2020. Firesafe.Org.Uk. [online]**

Available at: <<https://www.firesafe.org.uk/>> [Accessed 8 June 2020].

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## **GOV.UK. 2020. Grenfell Tower. [online]**

Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/grenfell-tower>> [Accessed 8 June 2020].

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## **Hackitt DBE FREng, D., 2017. Building A Safer Future: Independent Review Of Building Regulations & Fire Safety. 1st ed. [ebook] London: Gov.uk.**

Available at: <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/668831/Independent\\_Review\\_of\\_Building\\_Regulations\\_and\\_Fire\\_Safety\\_web\\_accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/668831/Independent_Review_of_Building_Regulations_and_Fire_Safety_web_accessible.pdf)> [Accessed 8 June 2020].

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## **Hse.gov.uk. 2020. Common Topic 4: Safety Culture. [online] Available at:**

<<https://www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/common4.pdf>> [Accessed 8 June 2020].

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## **Nationalfirechiefs.org.uk. 2020. National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). [online]**

Available at: <<https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/>> [Accessed 8 June 2020].

# Fire Safety Glossary

This glossary sets out definitions to assist readers in understanding some of the technical terms used in this document and in fire safety. These are just some 'entry level' terms required to think more about the essential topic of fire safety. In-depth and advanced glossaries relevant to Retirement Communities can be found in the National Fire Chief Council's Fire Safety in Specialised Housing in particular.

### **Fire Risk Assessment**

An organised and methodical look at your premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises.

### **Fire Safety Audit**

An examination of the premises and relevant documents to ascertain how the premises are being managed with regards to fire safety.

### **Fire Safety Manager**

A nominated person with responsibility for carrying out day-to-day management of fire safety. (This may or may not be the same as the 'Responsible Person'.)

### **Fire Safety Strategy**

A number of planned and co-ordinated arrangements designed to reduce the risk of fire and to ensure the safety of people if there is a fire.

### **IOSH**

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health is a global organisation for health and safety professionals.

### **Management Information System (MIS)**

An information system used for decision-making, and for the coordination, control, analysis, and visualization of information in an organisation.

### **Real-time Audit**

Auditing in real time where an auditor is present during the course of the audit and shares information in real time.

### **Safety Culture**

*"The safety culture of an organisation is the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies, and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation's health and safety management. Organisations with a positive safety culture are characterised by communications founded on mutual trust, by shared perceptions of the importance of safety and by confidence in the efficacy of preventive measures."* (Common topic 4: Safety culture, 2020) **Health and Safety Executive**

# Retirement Community Glossary

## Accelerators

Members of the ARCO Accelerator Programme, a structured package of information and support for organisations planning their entry into the UK Housing with Care market. New entrants to the sector might be backed by institutional investors or may be experienced care home operators moving down the acuity scale, equally they may be housing associations or registered providers expanding their offer to the community.

## Full Members

ARCO Full Members are those operators who have fully completed all aspects of assessment and have been approved by the ARCO Board of Directors.

## Operators

Organisations managing the day-to-day operation of a Retirement Community. Communities are frequently built, designed and managed by one overarching operator who runs the community for the long term.

## Prospective/Provisional Member

ARCO Prospective/Provisional Members are Retirement Community Operators who are currently going through the assessment process, either before 'opening their doors' for a new community, or by registering and electing for self-assessment of an already operational community.

## Retirement Communities

Retirement Communities combine high quality housing options for older people with tailored support services. They allow residents to rent or own a property and to maintain their privacy and independence with the reassurance of 24-hour on-site staff, communal facilities, and optional care and support as needed. Retirement Communities may also be referred to as retirement villages, extra care housing, housing-with-care, assisted living, close care apartments, or independent living settings.

# Thank you to everyone who took part

If you are interested in taking forward these ideas,  
please contact: [members@arcouk.org](mailto:members@arcouk.org)



**Associated Retirement  
Community Operators (ARCO)**

The Heals Building, Suites A&B, 3rd Floor  
22-24 Torrington Place, London WC1E 7HJ

**Phone:** 020 3697 1204

**Email:** [members@arcouk.org](mailto:members@arcouk.org)

**Twitter:** @ARCOTweets

For more information on ARCO, visit:

**[www.arcouk.org](http://www.arcouk.org)**