

Neighbourhoods & Housing – Serious Incident Policy

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Neighbourhoods & Housing – (Serious Incidents Policy)

1. Introduction

What is the Purpose of this Policy

- 1.1 The purpose of the Serious Incidents Policy is to ensure that there is a systematic process for reporting, managing, and learning from serious incidents that occur in Hull City Council's, Neighbourhoods and Housing (N&H) owned and managed stock. The aim is to ensure that all serious incidents occurring within the N&H service area are managed in a structured and timely manner, to ensure that lessons are learned and that risks are identified and understood. Without an agreed framework, the response to any N&H serious incident could be disjointed, unfocused, slow, or less effective than needed.
- 1.2 Serious incidents share three broad characteristics that the Policy and Procedures are looking to mitigate the impact of:
1. They usually happen without warning or with little warning
 2. They put significant pressure on decision makers to act quickly, possibly with imperfect or incomplete information in a situation where the consequences of poor decisions can be significant
 3. There is potential for significant harm to the reputation, financial sustainability or long-term success of the organisation affected where poor decisions are made
- 1.3 Serious incidents have the potential to impact upon many people and because of their often-dynamic nature can start affecting one person but end up affecting a tower block full of people, so anywhere up to 500 people.

Roles in N&H Serious Incidents

- 1.4 No two serious incidents are the same and this Policy covers those roles held by staff in N&H. These roles are separate from those held and performed by the emergency services, who may or may not have been called to attend a serious incident. N&H will work closely with and will where appropriate follow the lead of the emergency services during and after a N&H serious incident.

Declaring a Major Incident

- 1.5 The emergency services have the authority to declare a major incident and a cohort of officers within Hull City Council have the authority to advise Hull City Council / Humber Emergency Forum that they believe a co-ordinated response to an incident is needed or that they cannot deal with a serious incident within their own resources, or that the serious incident has the potential to become a major incident.
- 1.6 Declaring a major incident alerts N&H staff that other staff in Hull City Council will be able to support N&H in any way that is needed.
- 1.7 There is no definition of a N&H serious incident, but certain events can be or become one, such as:

- A fire in a terraced block / block of flats
 - An explosion
 - A flood in a block of flats
 - A flood from a river or due to a storm or storm surge
 - An environmental issue that impacts air quality
 - The need to evacuate a property, properties in an emergency
- 1.8 There is no definition of a major incident, however some N&H serious incidents have a greater potential to become a major incident due to the type of property and the number of people involved.
- 1.9 All buildings where there are communal entrances / exits in addition to individual property entrances and exits prevent a greater risk if evacuation is needed, regardless of the reasons for evacuation, but particularly in the event of fire.
- 1.10 Where the number of people in such building's increases (so the taller a block of flats, or a sheltered scheme centred on one building, for example), the number of people at risk and that may need to be evacuated increases.
- 1.11 Sheltered housing schemes provide specialist accommodation and the characteristics of those who live in this accommodation increases the evacuation risk
- 1.12 The greater the number of people who are evacuated or may need evacuation and therefore the greater the number of people who may require alternative accommodation, the greater the likelihood that a serious incident could become a major incident during or after the cause of the incident is managed
- 1.13 N&Hs Serious Incident Manager will therefore advise the Hull City Council Incident Manager on duty/ Humber Emergency Planning Service that they believe a co-ordinated response to a N&H serious incident may be needed and that the serious incident has the potential to become a major incident when certain properties and a certain number of people may be affected. This will place on alert those services who can provide resources that may be needed. The table below indicates where N&H will advise Hull City Council / Humber Emergency Forum of a N&H serious incident.
- 1.14 N&H will also, where necessary and as appropriate, contact the Call Centre to add a Stop Press note and the Corporate Communications Team to advise them of the potential for the serious incident withing N&H has the potential to become a major incident

	Fire	Flood	Explosion	Environment / Biohazard
Individual Property / Person affected but has the potential to affect others – i.e. terraced property / low rise flats/ or an individual property in a high rise	X	X	X	X
More than one property / individual affected (not high-rise flats)	X	X	X	X
More than one property / individual affected (high rise)	X	X	X	X

The Grenfell Tower Fire

- 1.15 The Grenfell Tower fire on 14th June 2017, resulted in seventy-two people losing their lives. A public enquiry into the tragedy produced two reports.
- 1.16 The Phase 1 report set out in detail the course of events on the night of the fire, and the recommendations have led to significant changes within N&H that are still ongoing.
- 1.17 The Phase 2 report published in 2024 did not include any new recommendations for social housing providers as Parliament has already enacted the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. This enables the Regulator of Social Housing to play a more active role in setting standards and ensuring these are met.
- 1.18 The Phase 1 and 2 reports impact this Policy as far as they are being implemented by Hull City Council. A fire in a “high-risk building” that falls under the Building Safety Act 2022 would still be dealt with by the emergency services and N&H.

Local Lessons Learnt

- 1.19 In November 2024 there was a major water leak in N&H stock that highlighted the need to review its Serious Incidents Policy and associated Procedures.
- 1.20 A number of lessons were learnt in terms of the need to strengthen roles and responsibilities and to ensure a more structured and documented approach that reflected the nature of the incident and the Grenfell Fire Phase 1 and 2 recommendations.
- 1.21 N&H current mission statement is *“Delivering neighbourhood and housing services which meet the changing needs of residents and strengthen their local communities”*.
- 1.22 This Policy fits with N&Hs values as described in its Business Plan of:
- **People first** - We strive to improve the quality of life for all people and families
 - **Respect** - We treat everyone with respect, integrity, honesty, and fairness

- **Learning** - We are curious and open to different ideas, we value feedback and constructive challenge
- **Ambition** - We are ambitious for our city and push the boundaries of what we can achieve
- **Partnership** - We work closely together across communities, the council and with our partners

1.23 This Policy fits with the People theme in N&H's Housing Strategy:

- Support vulnerable residents across different housing and non-housing services including through supported accommodation, tenancy sustainment and a best-in-class adaptations service

2. Scope

2.1 What is a N&H Serious Incident

A serious incident is defined as, a quickly developing situation or event that will, or could, have a significant negative impact on:

- Tenants and / or Leaseholders
- Property
- The environment
- N&H's reputation
- The ability of services to continue to operate

2.2 The cause of a serious incident can vary and include but is not limited to:

- Fire
- Flood
- Explosion
- Power failure
- Incidents outside a property that means the property becomes uninhabitable (a biohazard caused by an incident at a factory for example)

2.3 This Policy and the associated procedures are to be followed for all serious incidents within Hull City Council's owned and managed housing stock and immediate surrounds.

2.4 Any N&H serious incident has the potential to become a major incident, and, in such cases, there are guidelines that are followed in N&H that would lead to the declaration of a major incident and would invoke Hull CC's Major Incident procedures.

2.5 This Policy and the associated procedures reflect this distinction and do not cover Hull CC's major incident procedures but reflect that this could be invoked. As such the procedures are designed, should this be needed, to inform decision making about if Hull CC's major incident procedure does need to be invoked.

3. Legislative and Service Delivery Context

- Allocations Policy
- Asset Management Strategy

- Building Safety Act 2022
- Building Safety Policy
- Cluster Properties / Fire Damage / Flooded Properties / Structural Damaged (Empty Properties Not Arising from the Routine Process)
- Decanting for Repairs
- Demolition Procedure
- Compensation Guidelines
- Fire Safety Management Plan
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- The Fire Safety (Residential Evacuation Plans) (England) Regulations 2025
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 – As amended
- Health and Safety Warning Alerts
- High Risk Building Safety Policy
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Fire Management Plan
- Knowledge and Information Strategy
- Leasehold Management Protocol
- Mobility Scooter Policy
- Person Information Alerts
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children
- Vulnerability Strategy

4. Relevant Consumer Standards

4.1 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 came into effect on 1 April 2024. The Act aims to improve the quality of life of tenants living in Social Housing and brought in four consumer standards to raise the level of service which tenants receive and promoting a positive culture of putting tenants front and centre. The Consumer Standards which are relevant for the purpose of this Policy are:

- Neighbourhood and Community
- Safety and Quality
- Tenancy
- Transparency Influence and Accountability

5. Definitions and Terminology

Serious Incident	An incident that can be managed utilising the resources in Neighbourhoods and Housing, these resources may cover staff in all or some areas of Neighbourhoods and Housing. This will be dependant both on the type of incident and the number of people affected.
Major Incident	An incident that Neighbourhoods and Housing believe cannot be managed utilising its own resources and a Neighbourhoods and Housing Incident Manager believes that a Serious

	<p>Incident has the Potential to become a Major Incident and that other Hull City Council and partner resources are needed / need to be put on standby to help manage the incident. This will be dependant both on the type of incident and the number of people affected.</p>
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6. Key Principles

6.1 N&H are committed to the following principles:

- Work with the emergency services to ensure an effective response to the serious incident
- Ensure the safety of the public, team members and contractors are always protected
- Ensure appropriate, timely and effective communication throughout the serious incident with people within N&H, contractors, other Hull CC staff and others outside the Council
- Ensure communication with and use of appropriate corporate communication channels and procedures regarding N&H serious incidents that are/may become major incidents
- Ensure appropriate communication with the Corporate Strategy Team regarding N&H serious incidents that are/ may become major incidents
- Ensure all managers and staff understand their role in responding to a serious incident, and are comfortable with that role
- Protect our reputation by acting ethically and in line with our values
- Ensure lessons are learned from real incidents and potentially near misses

Types of Serious Incident

6.2 It is expected that there will be deviations within the Serious Incident Procedures, because no two situations are identical, tenants, leaseholders, residents, and their family needs vary and will require different levels of support which may involve other services both within and external to the Council.

6.3 It is anticipated that a scaled approach to serious incidents will therefore be required, examples being:

- A serious incident effecting a single property may be handled by an individual team member focusing on incident resolution and person-centred support
- A serious incident effecting a terrace will need more than one team and / or team members to work together each focussing on their role and liaising with other team members to ensure incident resolution and person-centred support
- A serious incident effecting a group of high-rise flats will need more than one team and / or team members to work together each focussing on their role and liaising with other team members to ensure incident resolution and person-centred support

6.4 Examples of serious incidents would include but is not limited to:

- Major loss of utilities affecting a significant proportion of the building, including electrics, drinking water or prolonged loss of hot water
- Loss of a passenger lift in a high-rise block for more than 4 hours

- Fire within blocks of flats in a communal space / flat but not in a bin room which can be extinguished without affecting residents
- Flood which affects more than one single property
- Where there has been loss of life, limb, or serious injury because of the occupier's behaviour. This would activate elements of the procedure requiring robust communication and follow up

6.5 The purpose of the above is to give examples of what is a serious incident, however it is not exhaustive. Equally the process can be followed for lesser incidents, if an officer is not certain, they should follow the serious incidents procedure until management are available to offer support / guidance.

6.6 Vulnerability and Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs). Hull CC will ask residents to self-refer disabilities, impairments and vulnerabilities relating to the ability to self-evacuate a higher risk building if required to do so. Where HCC are informed that a resident may have difficulty in safely evacuating their home, HCC will complete a PEEP. These PEEPs help to identify residents who are at higher risk from fire in their own home due to their ability to respond and escape from a fire, for example a resident with disabilities. Any person residing within a building in scope of the Building Safety Act whom self-referred a disability, impairment or vulnerability relating to the ability to self-evacuate is entitled to:

- An emergency evacuation statement of what the resident should do in the event of a fire.
- Information shared with Humberside Fire & Rescue Service, so they know where those residents requiring evacuation assistance are in an emergency
- An ongoing duty to review the person-centred fire risk assessment/ emergency evacuation statement and the building emergency evacuation plan.

Information Boxes

6.7 It is a requirement that all of the buildings that are in scope of the Building Safety Act have an Information Box fitted, Hull CC have installed these boxes to the ground floor of each of the buildings within scope of the Building Safety Act to enable access to Humberside Fire & Rescue Service upon attendance. Hull CC review and update information stored within these boxes on 5-week cycle.

7. Compliance, Monitoring, and Impact Assessment of the Change

Lessons Learnt

7.1 The use of a Serious Incident Report Form will allow N&H to undertake a Lessons Learnt exercise following a Serious Incident. All documents relating to a Serious Incident will be stored in a Teams Channel developed for the Serious Incident.

7.2 This Lessons Learnt exercise will include if the Procedures have been followed correctly and that the Serious Incident Reporting Form is working as envisaged.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.3 This Policy will be applied in a way which ensures equality of treatment for all residents without discrimination, or victimisation on account of any protected characteristic as defined within the Equality Act 2010. In drafting this policy Hull CC has had regard to its public sector equality duties under s149 of the Equality Act 2010, namely the need to:
- 2.1 Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act
 - 2.2 Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - 2.3 Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.4 The policy pays regard to diversities around access to and delivery of any services. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken on this policy, and a copy of the EIA is available upon request.

Complaints

- 7.5 Tenants who believe that this Policy has not been applied correctly should raise a complaint. Any such complaint will be dealt with in line with Hull City Councils Customer Feedback Policy and Procedure and any lessons learnt are fed back to the relevant service area for review.
- 7.6 Complaints can be made in the following ways:
- Online, by completing and submitting the customer feedback form on the HCC website [Customer Feedback - Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments](#)
 - By telephoning the Council's Contact Centre on 01482 300 300
 - By visiting one of the Council's Customer Service Centres
 - By writing to: FREEPOST RSJC-KKBE-ABXZ, Customer Feedback Team, PO Box 15, HU1 2AB
 - By providing information to a Hull City Council officer in person, in writing or over the telephone
- 7.7 This policy will be reviewed every five years unless there are significant changes to legislation or regulation or, where there are changes to best practice identified. If this occurs, an immediate review will be initiated.
- 7.8 This policy will be communicated internally to staff. Key stakeholders and key staff where this policy has specific impact will be briefed individually or collectively as required.
- 7.9 Performance will be reported to SIB, SMT and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission to demonstrate the progress against the various projects that are currently being delivered.

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