

Frequently Asked Questions – Fire Risk Assessment and External Wall surveys

Why are you carrying out these surveys now and what type of surveys will you be doing?

The Group are legally required to complete a fire risk assessment survey on your building. The Group is committed to providing safe homes with a priority on fire and structural safety to ensure that we have the correct building fire strategy.

The Group are inspecting all blocks to review the internal structures to ensure that the building compartmentation and relevant fire equipment is in place in line with the buildings fire strategy. The compartment review will include both the common parts of a building and flats.

As part of the fire risk assessment, the Group will also be inspecting the external wall materials of your building. This will help the Group provide the relevant information to money lenders that is currently holding up house sales.

All these works will be carried out in conjunction with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005).

1) Type 4 intrusive fire risk assessments (to include roof spaces, plant rooms, bin store locations) surveys to enable SHG to confirm compartmentation between floors is 60 minutes.

- Consideration of the suitability of the evacuation plan with regards to any vulnerable residents.
- Review of all fire safety equipment (automatic opening vents, emergency lighting, fire alarm systems etc.) and documentation
- Specific consideration as to whether Southern Housing Group shall need to retrospectively fit sprinklers.

2) Individual Type 4 intrusive fire risk assessment surveys for flats. We will only inspect 10% of flats in the building.

3) The creation of floor plans for each block.

4) The external wall survey / building materials used in the construction of the block for future enquiry purposes.

5) A catalogue of photographs of the block, externally and internally.

How long does the work take?

The entire phase two contract will take around one year to complete, but the surveys should take around one to two weeks to complete for each block. The inspection of your building will be included in a planned programme. The order of the programme will be complete on a risk-based approach.

When will the inspections take place?

The nominated consultant and contractor doing the surveys will only work on weekdays and between normal working hours of 8am – 5pm. When the consultant and contractor are on site, they will aim to create as minimal disruption as possible.

Are you planning to do work at my home?

Not necessarily. As part of the Type 4 intrusive fire risk assessment process the consultant / contractor will need access into 10% of the flats. These visits will be completed by appointment only and will be planned with residents. We will initially look to inspect properties that are vacant prior to contacting occupied flats.

Why do I have to pay for these works?

In simple terms, we are required to collect a charge for all services from residents. These works are just one of the services that are chargeable and will be charged in line with the lease agreement.

How much do I have to pay?

There is a process to follow and the notice of estimates stage letter will provide you with the estimated costs and the notice of reason stage letter will set out the agreed cost of these surveys.

Who will approve the new contract?

The new contract will be approved and signed off by Southern Housing Group Board following a Section 20 consultation.

What if I plan to sell my property before the works are complete and/or billed?

As part of the standard pre-assignment process, the solicitor of the prospective buyer would usually contact the seller's solicitor asking for certain information regarding the property. This would include whether there were any known works planned.

Assuming the sale completes prior to billing, the new homeowner would be responsible for settling any outstanding charges.

A retention fee may be set aside between the two sets of solicitors to cover this amount. However, this is not a matter for Southern Housing Group, and we will expect any amounts to be settled by the owner at the time

I only bought my flat after the works were completed. Am I still liable for the costs?

Yes, the owner at the time of the demand will be responsible. These potential costs should have been taken into account by the two sets of solicitors during the sales process.