

Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality analysis for introducing a provision for all new care homes to include Sprinkler systems

This document records the analysis undertaken by The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires the department to pay due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics which should be considered are:

- age
- disability
- sex
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation.

Please note that in relation to the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnerships the department is required to have due regard only to the first point in the first paragraph above.

The template below should be used when carrying out work on policies and services. This might include any new or existing policy, strategies, functions, work programmes, projects, decisions about budgets and other issues, procurement, commissioning or de-commissioning of services, allocating resources, and service design and implementation. The aim is for policies and services to be accessible and to meet different people's needs.

You should consider PSED before and during policy or service formation, and to monitor how the policy or service is working once a decision is implemented. Considering equality in this way should be part of normal day-to-day activity and not a one off exercise.

SECTION 1

1.1 Policy/Service

The policy introduces a new provision in the statutory guidance, Approved Document B, which deals with Fire Safety, to the building regulations for all new care homes, irrespective of height to be provided with sprinklers. The new provision will enhance fire protection in care homes where residents may be vulnerable and may be reliant on others for evacuation.

The policy proposes a shift from the current approach that allows care homes developers to decide whether a care home is designed and built without sprinklers. The change aligns with the support outlined within the consultation responses and reflect current industry practice where sprinklers are included within the majority of new build care homes.

SECTION 2

2.1 Summary of the evidence considered in demonstrating due regard to PSED

Research identified potential benefits of including sprinklers in the design of care homes among other fire safety provisions. Evidence from a number of sources such as: consultation responses from industry, stakeholder engagement with a range of industry groups and government bodies, market analysis, research and viability modelling were considered. It was identified that most organisations have already transitioned to providing sprinklers in new care homes, and only a few outlier organisations remain. Overall, it is assessed that this policy will have a positive impact on people in all categories with protected characteristics.

Age

This characteristic will benefit directly from the provision of sprinklers within care homes by increasing the level of protection. This is through the additional time care home residents will have to escape in the event of a fire due to the suppression of a fire via a sprinkler system. The removal of the allowances will also limit the compartment sizes and ensure self-closing devices are installed on bedroom doors further reducing the risk of smoke spread and ensuring escape routes remain tenable for longer.

Disability

This characteristic will benefit directly from the provision of sprinklers within care homes by increasing the level of protection. This is through the additional time care home residents will have to escape in the event of a fire due to the suppression of a fire via a sprinkler system. The removal of the allowances will also limit the compartment sizes and ensure self-closing devices are installed on bedroom doors further reducing the risk of smoke spread and ensuring escape routes remain tenable for longer.

Sex

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

Gender reassignment

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

Marriage or Civil Partnership

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

Pregnancy and Maternity

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

Race

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

Religion or belief

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

Sexual orientation

The Ministry does not consider this characteristic to be negatively impacted by the provision of sprinklers.

2.2 Assess the impact

The Ministry does not believe that there will be any negative impact of the intervention based on sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

There will be positive benefits across all sectors of society as sprinklers will increase the level of protections for care home residents, care home staff, and provide peace of mind for residents' families and friends.

Vulnerable groups within the protected categories of age and disability will be better served with an additional time to exit a building in an emergency. Removal of the allowances will also reduce the risk of smoke entering common areas which could impact these vulnerable groups more severely than others.

2.3 Summary of the Analysis

Introducing the provision for sprinklers in all new care homes, irrespective of height, as a fire safety measure within Approved Document B primarily benefits those who reside within care homes, with the primary benefit being for people with age and disability characteristics.

There may be further benefits of all groups, as care homes are important community assets. Sprinklers may provide some benefit in enhancing property protection when installed, which could reduce the likelihood of extensive fire spread. This improved protection of the community asset may reduce the chances of residents having to be relocated in the event of a fire.

SECTION 3

3.1 Decision Making

This analysis supports a decision to proceed as planned with the intervention as there is improved safety for all residents and visitors of care homes when the new standards are implemented, with these new standards being more beneficial to people in vulnerable groups than the current regime.

3.2 Monitoring arrangements

The impact on equalities will be reviewed regularly following an analysis of relevant data and regular stakeholder communications.

(The sign-off is for internal accountability and not publication. We recommend getting SCS sign-off.)

3.3 Sign-off by the decision-maker

Name:

Job Title:

Date: