



Protecting local
communities

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PRESS RELEASE

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FIRE FATALITY HIGHLIGHTS NEED TO INSPECT HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Fire safety in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is to be addressed in a joint approach between Cleveland Fire Brigade and Hartlepool Borough Council. These premises include properties that are occupied by three or more tenants who are not members of the same family and share some or all of the living accommodation or amenities. Some of these properties are required to be licensed by Hartlepool Borough Council if there are five or more tenants and the property is three or more storeys in size.

The recent fire fatality in Hartlepool has highlighted the need to identify and inspect HMOs throughout the town. These inspections will be a partnership approach and will focus on key safety issues relevant to these premises. These include;

- Suitable fire risk assessment being carried out for the premises
- Means of escape from these premises is via a protected route
- Suitable fire alarm and detection system
- Suitable emergency lighting system
- Full maintenance system in place and a robust logging and recording system.

The programme will begin on the first of April dealing initially with HMOs that are already licensed. The Fire Brigade will then begin a programme of visiting all HMOs in the Hartlepool area to check that they comply with requirements. It is important to note that the unlicensed HMOs are still covered by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order which states that there must be a responsible person for fire safety and as such the same standards are required.

People who are involved with HMOs such as landlords, lettings agents etc must be fully aware of their responsibility in ensuring the safety of people living in these premises. Further information on the fire safety order and its implications can be accessed by contacting the Cleveland Fire Brigades helpdesk on 01429 874109.

Barry Waller, Head of Fire Engineering for Cleveland Fire Brigade said: "We are here to offer help and support to all housing providers and landlords so please do not hesitate to contact us. We do however have a duty to enforce the Fire Safety Order and will not hesitate to do so as evidenced in our recent success in prosecuting a local hotelier with regards to a defective fire detection system. It is far better to speak to us before a fire occurs than face the consequences after a fire."

Councilor Robbie Payne said: "Cleveland Fire Authority and Hartlepool Borough Council are determined to do everything in their power to ensure the safety of all of our residents. We are also determined to ensure that all Landlords fulfill their responsibilities in helping to achieve this aim."

Joanne Burnley, Senior Environmental Health Officer for Hartlepool Borough Council said: "We are committed to bringing about improvements in this section of the private rented sector and welcome the opportunity to work closely with our colleagues in the Fire Brigade."

Further guidance on HMOs and the requirement to be licensed is available by contacting the Council on 01429 284024. For further information and PICTURE OPPORTUNITY please contact Rachel Morrow.

Press release issued by Rachel Morrow, Public Relations Assistant. Contact on 01429 872311.