



Inner Rooms FAQs

What is an Inner Room?

An Inner Room is simply a room, such as a bedroom, that is reached through a living room. Inner rooms are acceptable on the ground floor, as long as the room has an emergency egress window that is compliant with Building Regulations.

What are the concerns around Inner Rooms?

The design of inner rooms was very common for older social housing. But latest government regulations provide clear rules that inner rooms should be avoided in properties which are above the ground floor. The occupant of an inner room property could become trapped in the inner bedrooms if a fire breaks out in the adjacent access rooms, which could prevent them from escaping from the property. In Adur Homes stock which have Inner Rooms the access rooms are kitchens and living rooms, which are also higher risk rooms for fires.

What actions have the Council taken to mitigate these concerns?

A three stage process was identified to mitigate the risk to our tenants. In December 2019 Adur Homes started a smoke detector installation programme to provide enhanced smoke detection within the affected tenanted flats.

1) Stage 1 - Install a smoke detector in every room and hallway with a heat detector in the kitchen. The smoke detection is interlinked and will give tenants very early warning of a fire to give them the best chance of escaping unharmed. EICR reports and remedial works to the electrical installations have also been completed.

2) Stage 2 - Write to all affected tenants and arrange a home visit to talk through any concerns and identify any other factors Adur Homes may need to consider. As part of the communication process we will provide tenants with information and guidance on fire safety in the home to reduce the likelihood of a fire starting accidentally.

3) Stage 3 - Carry out works within flats to install a partition wall in the living room to create a hallway to the bedrooms. In ground floor flats ensure there is an emergency escape window in the bedrooms and ensure the door to the kitchen is a fire door.

What properties are affected?

A comprehensive review has been undertaken by Adur Homes. It has identified a small percentage of its properties have inner rooms. These properties are spread over the whole district, with the majority in the Fishersgate and Southwick estate area.

What if I live in the Southwick Estate?

If you live in the Southwick Estate you will know that conversations have begun to look at options for the future of the estate. No decisions have been made yet and the residents will be guiding the chosen solution. For the 'Phase One' Inner Room properties required work will be completed before a decision is made. It will be made clear to you in communication if your property falls within this first group. Once the outcome of the consultation is known, a decision can then be taken on the subsequent Inner Room properties. A home visit will still be carried out in your property to assess any risks and begin planning, however once the consultation is completed we can then determine the works required and share a timeline with you. If you would like to read more about the Southwick Estate consultation please visit the website, or contact community@thesouthwickestate.co.uk.

What are the Council's Legal Requirements?

The safety of our tenants is our top priority which is why we have undertaken a range of fire safety improvements in recent years. With Inner Rooms specifically, under health and safety legislation Adur Homes must ensure our homes provide a 'safe and ready means of escape'. For those on the first floor or above, this may mean some internal changes to the layout of properties to ensure those in the property have a safe escape route from their bedrooms to the front door in the unlikely event of a fire.

What does this mean for my property?

All properties affected by the inner room's layout have received an enhanced smoke detection system which provides very early warning of a fire. We will also be carrying out home visits to all affected households to talk through your concerns and any specific needs to your family. The works in the flats affected will be prioritised based on three criteria, floor level in the building, layout of the flat and the type of room used to access the rear bedrooms. This means not all flats in a block will be done at the same time.

What should I do in the event of a Fire within my flat or Building?

This information around Inner Rooms does not change our general fire safety advice. If fire breaks out in your home:

- Leave the room where the fire is immediately, then close the door
- Get everyone out of your flat, then close the front door behind you
- Do not stop to collect belongings
- Do not attempt to fight the fire
- Leave the building by the nearest fire exit
- Call the Fire Service
- Wait outside, away from the building
- Do not return to the building until the Fire and Rescue Service confirms that it is safe to do so

If you see or hear a fire in another part of the building:

- The building is designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere
- You must leave immediately if smoke or heat affects your home, or if you are told to do so by the Fire and Rescue Service
- If you are in any doubt, get out and stay out

To call the fire and rescue service:

- Dial 999 or 112 from a landline or mobile phone
- When the operator answers, give your telephone number and ask for FIRE
- When the Fire and Rescue Service reply, give the address of where the fire is
- Do not end the call until the Fire and Rescue Service has repeated the address correctly

How will the work to change the layout affect the space in the flat?

Until we visit individual properties we will not know what specific works are required. Following the visit and review, the measures which will be taken in your property will be communicated to you.

How long will it take the Council to carry out works on all affected flats?

The programme is being prioritised over other works and will be spread over 3 to 4 years and properties will be prioritised based on risk (floor level and type of access room). A more defined timeline in terms of works to individual properties will be shared as soon as possible, however please use the home visit (or the contact details provided) to share information about any dates which would be problematic for you and need to be avoided.

How does this affect Leaseholders?

Our responsibility to leaseholders is different to tenants. The Council is working to identify any leasehold flats it believes may be affected by an inner room layout.

Letters will be sent to all leaseholders who may be affected informing them of their responsibilities.

What happens next?

Please see the process diagram below which sets out how you will be communicated with throughout this process. Given the importance of this project we have a manager overseeing this work (Jemma Seaton, Fire Safety Manager). The Inner Rooms team have already begun contacting residents to make appointments to carry out a home visit and to start discussing with you any concerns you may have.

Any queries we will either answer on a detailed FAQs on the Adur Homes website:

- www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/capital-works-inner-rooms

Detailed individual questions will be followed up individually.

The contact details for this work are:

inner.rooms@adur-worthing.gov.uk

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