

## Community Care Homes & Houses

This change is intended to apply where a house or apartment is provided by a residential support provider and the people being supported cannot freely escape on their own – because they:

- Cannot understand what the fire alarm is and what to do in response. A 'care in the community home' where the people being supported have a significant learning disability could fit in this category.
- Cannot physically reach the place of safety. A 'care in the community home' where the people being supported have physical impairments that prevent them from getting out of bed unaided at night, or where they are unable to use the stairs and the lift is not suitable for use in a fire, would come under this category. If the people being supported require assistance from staff to evacuate, then this reflects a level of support that is necessary for their safety. So this puts them in the 'care and detention' risk group addressed in C/AS3. This is of major significance - a normal dwelling will not comply as it will require fire-rated walls between living and sleeping areas, smoke stop doors and a comprehensive commercial (not residential domestic) fire sprinkler system, as well as wall coverings such as painted finishes (not wood [as in a Lockwood home] or most types of wall-paper). As such, these houses would probably not be able to be sourced from normal residential rental stock, while existing housing stock would be difficult and expensive to modify. Even existing homes may be required to upgrade to comply with the new regulations and this will trigger other requirements set out in the Building Act that formerly only applied to institutions such as hospitals.

The consequences of these new regulations are far-reaching. As applying commercial grade / hospital building level requirements (where the cost is spread across tens to hundreds of people) to houses (where the cost is spread to only 1 – 6 people), will mean that it is just not economically viable for residential providers to have small group homes for people where they cannot self-evacuate.

We are working with MBIE which is responsible for the Building Code fire safety requirements, and other stakeholders including social house providers, Ministry of Health, Office of Disability Issues, and the Disabled Person's Assembly (DPA) to gain a better understanding of the repercussions. We are working towards finding alternatives that will protect the safety of people and ensure community living remains a viable option for all people.

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