



Safe Use of Oxygen Therapy in Accommodation-based Services

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1. Procedural Context

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to colleagues on their role in promoting the safe use of Oxygen Therapy equipment in Riverside's Care & Support services.

The document provides guidance on:

- The definition of Oxygen Therapy.
- The potential risks resulting from use of Oxygen Therapy equipment.
- The precautions that should be taken when customers at a service are using Oxygen Therapy equipment in their homes.
- What documentation should be completed and how to complete it.

2. Application

This procedure applies to all Care and Support Services. All colleagues should read and understand this procedure for information and guidance on the use of oxygen.

3. What is Oxygen Therapy?

'Oxygen Therapy' means using an oxygen cylinder or a machine to breathe in air that contains more oxygen than normal. It increases the amount of oxygen in the lungs and in the bloodstream. It may be prescribed for a person with a heart or lung disease in circumstances where they have low oxygen levels in their blood. Oxygen therapy is only prescribed for this specific purpose – it is not a treatment for breathlessness.

Home oxygen therapy can be prescribed in several different forms and only after an assessment by a health professional. It is often prescribed for a short period of time, for example, after a hospital stay and does not mean that a person will always need to use oxygen.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Area Manager (or equivalent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring that all risk assessments are completed correctly in their area and that regular reviews take place.
Service Manager (or equivalent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring risk assessments are completed in their service (s) on time and that they are reviewed on a monthly basis.• Ensuring all colleagues who are asked to complete a risk assessment for the use of oxygen with customers understand how to complete them correctly and have any relevant training.• Engaging with the Health, Safety and Environment Team for support in completing risk assessments where necessary.• Ensuring all checks for appropriate signage are complete.• Ensuring accurate and up to date recording of who is using Oxygen Therapy at their services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the relevant fire safety records are up to date and the Customer Service Centre and Fire Compliance Officers have up to date information on who is using oxygen in the service.
Frontline Colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking any necessary training in relation to the Use of Oxygen Therapy • Carrying out risk assessments as required with customers and highlighting any risks to the Service Manager. • Keeping accurate records of who is using Oxygen Therapy at the service. • Carrying out checks for the appropriate signage in the service.

5. How Should Oxygen Therapy Equipment be Used Safely?

When a person is prescribed oxygen by a health professional, they will be issued with information on how to use it safely.

Advice on the safe use of oxygen is as follows and should be reiterated to the customer:

- Never smoke or let anyone smoke while Oxygen Therapy equipment is being used
- Keep oxygen at least six feet (two meters) away from flames or other heat sources
- Do not use flammable products, such as cleaning fluid, paint thinner, petroleum-based creams or aerosols, whilst Oxygen Therapy equipment is in use
- Keep oxygen cylinders upright
- Make sure oxygen cylinders do not fall over and get damaged
- Ensure that smoke/fire alarms within the home are in working order

The customer will also be asked to sign a ***'Patient Agreement for the Supply of Oxygen at Home'*** - ***Appendix Four*** which sets out the conditions on which the oxygen will be supplied, by the supplier.

Local Fire and Rescue Service

The customer should inform the local fire and rescue service that they have Oxygen in their home. The Fire and Rescue Service will usually undertake a 'Home Fire Safety Visit' to discuss fire safety with the customer. Some medical suppliers of Oxygen do already maintain a customer register and notify the local fire authorities, although this may be inconsistent depending on the fire authority.

Where the customer or oxygen supplier has not informed the local Fire and Rescue Service that oxygen is being used in the property, the Service Manager should ensure that they are informed as soon as possible.

Where there is an external care provider other than Riverside, they would usually inform the Fire and Rescue Service and inform Riverside via the Customer's Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) of which Riverside would be given a copy.

Fire extinguishers should be available in schemes where there are staff 24 hours a day who are trained in the use of fire extinguishers. The Fire Risk Assessment in buildings with shared means of access will make any further required recommendations.

6. Key Risks Associated with the Use of Oxygen Therapy Equipment

The key risks associated with the use of oxygen are fire and explosion. The main causes of fire and explosion when using oxygen include:

1. Oxygen enrichment from leaking equipment
2. The incorrect or careless use of oxygen therapy equipment

'Oxygen enrichment' is the term used to describe a situation where the oxygen level is greater than air. The air we breathe contains approximately 21% oxygen. Even a small increase in the oxygen level of the air (for example, to 24%) can create a dangerous situation where it is easier to start a fire, and the fire will burn hotter and more fiercely.

Colleagues should be aware of the potential for oxygen enrichment in circumstances where a customer is using oxygen therapy equipment. The **'Use of Oxygen Therapy Risk Assessment Form' in Appendix Two** should always be completed when a customer is using Oxygen Therapy equipment in one of our services.

Oxygen is colourless, odourless and tasteless so the presence of an oxygen rich atmosphere is difficult to detect. A leaking valve or hose in a confined space can quickly increase the oxygen concentration to such a dangerous level.

Oxygen enrichment is often caused by:

- Leaks from damaged or poorly maintained hoses, valves and pipes
- Leaks from poor connections
- Users opening valves accidentally or not closing valves properly after use
- Poor ventilation where oxygen is being used

Where oxygen enrichment has occurred, the main danger is then from any source of ignition; hazards include smoking or exposure to naked flames, for example, from gas fires, cooking appliances or candles.

In an oxygen enriched environment people's clothes and hair can catch fire easily, as can their curtains, bedclothes and soft furnishings. There have been cases where people have died or been seriously injured as a result of setting fire to their clothes or bed clothes while smoking whilst using oxygen therapy equipment.

Colleagues should be aware that the main ways to prevent oxygen enrichment are for users to keep their oxygen equipment in good condition, take care when using it and ensure good ventilation of their room/flat. The **'Use of Oxygen Therapy Risk Assessment Form' in Appendix Two** should be completed to identify and mitigate any potential oxygen enrichment risks.

‘The NHS guidelines for safe use of Oxygen’ are detailed in **Appendix Three**. Service Managers should ensure that all colleagues working in the service understand these guidelines.

Any customer using Oxygen in our services should be given a copy of these guidelines and they should be explained to the customer.

Colleagues should strongly recommend that smoking, and other naked flames, should therefore be avoided where oxygen is in use.

Colleagues should also be aware of the need to take care with oxygen cylinders and equipment. Oxygen cylinders should always be handled carefully. If they need to be moved, a purpose-built trolley should be used.

7. The Management of Oxygen Therapy Equipment Use in a Service

Where a Service Manager becomes aware that a customer has been prescribed oxygen therapy, the **‘Use of Oxygen Therapy Risk Assessment Form’** in **Appendix 1** must be completed as soon as possible, and ideally within 2 working days.

Completing the Risk Assessment

Colleagues should complete the risk assessment with the customer and should explain the reasons for doing so, which include:

- The potential hazards of the use of oxygen (e.g. fire & explosion) in relation to the customer and their neighbours
- The organisation, as landlord, needs to ensure that the oxygen will be used safely, and potential hazards are controlled, as far as possible.

The second section of the risk assessment template focuses on the key hazards and risks associated with the use of oxygen, along with identifying the people at risk and the control measures that should be in place to mitigate the identified risks.

Hazards	Risks	People at Risk
Smoking	Fire Burns	Customers Staff members Other customers within the service
Exposure to naked flames from gas fires, cooking appliances, candles etc.	Explosion Fire	Customers Staff members Other customers within the service
Tubing	Trips Falls	Customers Staff members Other customers within the service
Storage of equipment	Trips Falls	Customers Staff members Other customers within the service

The risk assessment highlights the control measures (things we can do to prevent hazards from becoming dangerous) that should be in place in relation to each of the four hazards identified. These control measures are reproduced in the table below:

Hazards	Control Measures
Smoking	a) Instruct customers and visitors not to smoke in the flat b) Fire breaks must never be removed from the tubing supplied by the oxygen supplier c) Ensure smoke detectors are fitted and in working order
Exposure to naked flames from gas fires, cooking appliances, candles etc.	a) Advise the customer to maintain a safe distance from fires and naked flame appliances b) Oxygen must be positioned and stored as directed by the oxygen supplier
Tubing	a) Advise customers to check the positioning of the tubing daily to minimise risk from falls, particularly if the customer uses a walking aid. b) Current tubing must be an appropriate length to meet the needs of the customer, if necessary, the customer should contact the supplier to alter the length.
Storage of equipment	a) Equipment must be stored in a safe manner to ensure no trip/fall hazard is present

Colleagues should discuss the identified hazards / risks / people at risk with the customer and then ensure that all the identified control measures are in place to mitigate against the risks.

Risk Ratings

Following these discussions, colleagues should assess the overall 'risk rating' in respect of each of the four hazards in terms of high / medium / low. In circumstances where all the control measures are in place, the 'risk rating' should be 'low'.

An example of further action might be that the Service Manager will test the operation of the smoke detectors on a monthly basis. This regular testing of the smoke alarm would also present an opportunity for the Service Manager to check that the equipment is continuing to be stored correctly and the tubing does not constitute a trip hazard.

If colleagues wish to make further comments related to the customer's situation or the risk assessment, they can do so by adding notes at the end of the risk assessment.

Signing the Risk Assessment

The customer should be asked to sign the risk assessment if they have the capacity, otherwise this should be signed by an Advocate. The Service Manager should also sign the form. If the Area Manager is not present when the risk assessment is

undertaken, the Service Manager should ensure that they read the risk assessment when they next visit the service.

The customer should then be issued with a copy of the risk assessment for their own records.

Updating the Risk Assessment

Colleagues should review the risk assessment every three months to ensure that the oxygen is still being used and stored safely. A new risk assessment form should be used for each review and the old one placed on the customer's file.

Oxygen therapy is often prescribed for relatively short periods of time and where the Service Manager becomes aware that the prescription has ended, they should ensure that:

- The oxygen supplier / health professional has removed all remaining cylinders from the property
- Advise the Customer Service Centre (or other monitoring provider) that oxygen is no longer on use in the property
- Remove oxygen use warning stickers from the customer's front door and fire panel (as appropriate)
- Update the customer list to indicate that oxygen is no longer being stored or used at the property.

Signage

When a customer is using oxygen in their home, the oxygen suppliers should affix a sign to the customer's front door which indicates oxygen is in use on delivery of the oxygen. The oxygen supplier should also display this sign on the building's fire panel – the sign is below:

Colleagues should check that this signage has been displayed.



If the oxygen supplier has not fixed the signs as described above, they should be asked to return to fix the signs as soon as possible. Where this is not possible, a sign can be obtained on request from the Group Health & Safety Team.

Updating the Fire Risk Assessment

When the oxygen provision is within a flat/ room within a building which has a shared means of escape (e.g. retirement living/ extra care/ shared house), the Service Manager should maintain a record in the fire safety log book/ health and safety file on site, and update information held within the premises information box (also known as Gerda box) accessible by the fire and rescue service. The Service Manager should also share information with the fire risk assessor during the fire risk assessment review, regarding the provision of oxygen supplies.

Updating the Customer Service Centre (CSC)

The Service Manager should also ensure that the information held by the Customer Service Centre has been updated so that they are aware that oxygen is being used and stored in a particular property. At some services, this might include updating the **Key Safe Customer Information form** in the service safe. See Retirement Living Handbook for more information.

If colleagues are unsure of how to class the overall risk rating or what further action they may need to take to mitigate against identified risks, they should seek further advice from the Group Health, Safety & Environment Team

Appendix One - Use of Oxygen Therapy Checklist

Where a customer has Oxygen Therapy Equipment in their home, please use the below checklist to ensure safety. Service Managers should ensure that the following takes place as soon as the oxygen is installed:

1. Risk Assessment

- a. Check the oxygen supplier has conducted a risk assessment with the customer and given safety advice.
- b. Complete a Riverside 'Use of Oxygen Therapy Risk Assessment Form' (Appendix Two) and place on customer file.

2. Signage – check the customer has the 'oxygen' signage attached to their front door.

3. Records – ensure that where an individual uses Oxygen Therapy a log is created on SAW-IT for recording purposes. Following on from this create a Warning Marker on the customer's records on Open Housing (the SAW-IT reference number should be added to this) and a note on any other case management system, e.g. SP Provider.

4. Local Fire Safety Team – check the customer has informed the Local Fire Safety Team that they are using oxygen in their home and contact the Local Fire Safety team if the customer has not.

5. Fire Risk Assessments

- a) Ensure a record in the fire safety logbook and health and safety file on site has been made (Extra Care)
- b) Ensure information held within the premises information box (also known as Gerda box) is updated, which is accessible by the fire & rescue service.
- c) Ensure the 'Key Safe Customer Information Sheet' in Retirement Living services has been updated, this is located in the safe at every service. Inform Helpline of the changes.
- d) Ensure information is shared with the fire risk assessor during the fire risk assessment review, regarding the provision of oxygen supplies.

6. Safe use of Oxygen Therapy – ensure all colleagues working at the service read and understand this procedure.

Use of Oxygen Therapy Risk Assessment - Appendix Two

Use of Oxygen Therapy Risk Assessment Form



Customer Name & Address	Activity/Area	Use of Oxygen
Date:	Review Period:	Date of Next Review:
Assessors Name:		Signature:
Customer Signature:		Date:
Service Manager Signature:		

Hazard	Potential Injury	Existing Controls Comments	People Affected (In relation to the work activity)	Assessment of Risk (In relation to the work activity) Likelihood level x consequence level – risk	Additional risk controls required to further reduce the risk	Current Risk Level
Smoking	Fire Burns	a) Instruct customers and visitors not to smoke in the flat b) Fire breaks must never be removed from the tubing supplied by the oxygen supplier	Customers Staff members Other customers and visitors within the service			

Hazard	Potential Injury	Existing Controls Comments	People Affected (In relation to the work activity)	Assessment of Risk (In relation to the work activity) Likelihood level x consequence level – risk			Additional risk controls required to further reduce the risk	Current Risk Level
		c) Ensure smoke detectors are fitted and in working order						
Exposure to naked flames from gas fires, cooking appliances, candles etc.	Explosion Fire	a) Advise the customer to maintain a safe distance from fires and naked flame appliances b) Oxygen must be positioned and stored as directed by the oxygen supplier	Customers Staff members Other customers and visitors within the service					
Tubing	Trips Falls	a) Advise customers to check the positioning of the tubing daily to minimize risk from falls, particularly if the customer uses a walking aid b) Current tubing must be an appropriate length to meet the needs of the customer, if necessary, the customer should.	Customers Staff members Other customers and visitors within the service					

Hazard	Potential Injury	Existing Controls Comments	People Affected (In relation to the work activity)	Assessment of Risk (In relation to the work activity) Likelihood level x consequence level – risk			Additional risk controls required to further reduce the risk	Current Risk Level
Storage of equipment	Trips Falls	a) Equipment must be stored in a safe manner to ensure no trip/fall hazard is present contact the supplier to alter the length	Customers Staff members Other customers and visitors within the service					

Appendix Three – ‘The NHS guidelines for Safe Use of Oxygen’

Do

- install fire alarms and smoke detectors in your home and make sure they're working
- tell your local fire brigade that you have oxygen at home
- keep your device at least 3 metres away from any appliances that use an open flame, such as a gas cooker or gas fire
- keep your device at least 1.5 metres away from other electrical appliances, such as a television, hair dryer or electrical heater

Don't

- do not smoke, or let anyone smoke near you, when using your device – also smoking will make your oxygen therapy far less effective
- do not use flammable liquids, such as cleaning fluid, paint thinner or aerosols when using your device
- do not use oil-based emollients, such as Vaseline, when using your device

Appendix Four – Patient Agreement for the Supply of Oxygen at Home

Standard conditions within this agreement include the following:

- They will not share their oxygen with another person
- They will safeguard their oxygen from loss or theft
- They agree that their health professional will inform the Fire Service that they are a home oxygen user for safety purposes
- They will allow the oxygen supplier access to their home to maintain equipment or change prescribed oxygen rates
- They will allow access to their home for the removal of the equipment once the health professional has decided it is no longer necessary.

This guidance is intended to allow colleagues to build on and re-enforce the safety advice that the person using oxygen should have received from their health professional.

Version	Date	Changes Made	By Who	Authorised
3.1	17.11.21	<p>Appendix 1 – added in that where an individual uses Oxygen Therapy a log must be created on SAW-IT for recording purposes. Following on from this a Warning Marker must be added onto the customer's records on Open Housing (the SAW-IT reference number should be added to this) and a note added onto any other case management system, e.g. SP Provider.</p>	Mark McKean	Stella Hughes