

Fire Alarm accessories/alerts for deaf people

August 2023

1. Fire alarm accessories/alerts for deaf people

1.1 Introduction

One in five of the Scottish population are deaf, and may not be woken up by a conventional fire alarm system in their home. Deafness refers to people who are deaf, Deaf, deafblind, deafened, or hard of hearing, including d/Deaf BSL users. Due to people becoming deaf as they age, many people who are deaf are also living with sight loss and other disabilities.

Under new legislation, every home in Scotland must have a **standard** interlinked fire alarm systems fitted to alert people to any potential danger. The legislation specifies the type, and required location of these.

Specialist fire alarm accessories/alerts are available for those who may not hear a standard alarm. This includes flashing strobe lights, vibrating pads, vibrating pager alerts and mobile phone alerts, which will alert a person should there be a fire. This ensures that deaf people and those with hearing loss have the same protection from fire as everyone else.

Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and local organisations across Scotland provide specialist fire alarm accessories/alerts for deaf people. You can contact [your local HSCP](#) for more information.

If you are a BSL user, you can use [Contact Scotland BSL](#) to make a call to your local Health and Social Care Partnership.

2. Changes to the law on fire and smoke alarms

The law on fire alarms has changed, meaning all homes in Scotland need **standard** interlinked smoke and heat alarm systems (which make audible alerts) **from February 2022**.

You can read the changes in the law on the Scottish Government website at [Fire and smoke alarms: changes to the law - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/resources/publications/2021/08/210801_fire_and_smoke_alarms_changes_to_the_law.pdf) (www.gov.scot)

For film clips with BSL (British Sign Language) and subtitles (captions), please see the links below:

Scottish Government new Fire Alarms Standards advert, includes voice-over (30 seconds; August 2021)

<https://youtu.be/10fgET7-2k>

Scottish Government Fire Alarms leaflet (nine minutes; August 2021)

<https://youtu.be/aXQ9fOfcK9s>

2.1 What does this mean?

Every home in Scotland must have interlinked **standard** fire alarms since February 2022. These can be either mains-wired or tamper-proof sealed battery alarms. Being interlinked means if one alarm goes off, they all go off. The legislation is intended to improve fire safety by alerting an occupant more quickly to a fire in another part of their home.

If an existing fire alarm system is not interlinked or doesn't have alarms in all the prescribed areas, it will not meet the new rules.

3. Specialist Fire Alarm Accessories/Alerts for Deaf People

Choosing an interlinked system that will work with your existing specialist deaf accessories/alerts is essential. This will avoid having two separate systems and ensure that you are protected. Many existing deaf alerts like strobe lights, vibrating pads and pager alerts will not work with the new interlinked **standard** alarm systems as these are not compatible. Existing pagers will work if a new interface device is used to connect them with the new main fire alert system.

If you own your own home and have existing **specialist** fire alarm accessories/alerts, before purchasing a new **standard** alarm system, please check with your HSCP that it will be fully compatible with the functional requirements of new specialist accessories/alerts e.g. strobe, vibrating pads, and can link to pagers and other relevant devices. This will ensure that one single fire detection system can operate in the property and old devices can safely be removed once the new accessories/alerts are in place.

Your HSCP can advise you which type of alarm system you should install, to ensure that the deaf accessories/alerts you may be entitled to, are compatible.

There are companies who manufacture the new standard systems, along with compatible specialist deaf accessories/alerts e.g. strobe light, vibrating pads, and can link to pagers and other devices such as mobile phones.

Please see information for homeowners, tenants and those in new build homes at [Make sure your home is fire safe - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/guidance/make-sure-your-home-is-fire-safe)

4. Who is responsible for providing specialist fire alerts/accessories?

Under the Equality Act 2010, tenants (local authority, housing association and private) can ask their landlord to make specific changes to the property that are needed to avoid the disabled person being at a disadvantage. Appropriate fire alarm alerts/accessories for people who have deafness or hearing loss fit into that category.

4.1 Local Authority (Council) Tenant:

The local authority is responsible for installing specialist fire alarm alerts/accessories for deaf or hard of hearing tenants. The tenant does not cover the costs, although some tenants may wish to pay for an upgrade or additional specialist equipment.

4.2 Housing Association Tenant:

A housing association is responsible for installing specialist fire alarm alerts/accessories for deaf or hard of hearing tenants. The tenant does not cover the costs, although some tenants may wish to pay for an upgrade or additional specialist equipment.

4.3 Private Tenant:

A private landlord is responsible for installing specialist fire alarm alerts/accessories for deaf or hard of hearing tenants. The tenant does not cover the costs, although some tenants may wish to pay for an upgrade or additional specialist equipment.

4.4 Homeowner:

A deaf homeowner living in their own home, is responsible and liable to install the new interlinked **standard** fire alarms. The HSCP is not responsible for fitting standard fire alarms.

If they already have **specialist** fire alarm accessories/alerts, they will be able to receive support from their local HSCP services to advise them on which **standard** system to buy, which will then allow the local services to provide new compatible **specialist** deaf accessories/alerts, and then remove the old (non-compatible) specialist deaf accessories/alerts.

If they do not currently have specialist deaf accessories/alerts, they will still be able to receive advice from their local services, and clarification if they are eligible for support with the provision of any, or some of the deaf accessories/alerts.

5. Household using telecare:

Smoke detection is provided as part of telecare services across Scotland by Health and Social Care Partnerships or Local Authorities. The Scottish Government is currently testing a single system approach for smoke detection for deaf people who use Telecare services. You can contact your Telecare provider for more information.

5.1 Who is responsible for fitting standard fire alarm systems?

For tenants, your landlord should pay for and fit a **standard** fire alarm system.

Homeowners are responsible for the cost of obtaining and fitting a **standard** interlinked fire alarm system. This can be either tamper-proof sealed battery type or mains-wired. Disabled and older homeowners can get advice from their local [Care and Repair](#) organisation.

6. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – Home Fire Safety Visit

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) can, through a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) provide fire safety advice which includes information about smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms. These visits are available to everyone, however, SFRS will look to prioritise someone who is deemed as vulnerable or at high risk of fire

People are assessed on a case by case basis by SFRS, and deafness does not automatically mean you will be provided with this equipment.

For advice on fire safety or to request a Home Fire Safety Visit, please get in touch with The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on 0800 0731 999, or visit the website at [Scottish Fire and Rescue service website](#). BSL users can call the number using [Contact Scotland BSL](#).

7. Example images of deaf alerts/accessories for information



Vibrating
under pillow pad

Strobe light

Date: 4 May 2023



© Crown copyright 2023



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-063-5 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, August 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1303922 (08/23)

W W W . g o v . s c o t