



Making Cheshire Safer

HIGH-RISE BRIEFING

July 2017

Protection & Organisational Performance



www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

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Introduction

This briefing document has been prepared to provide details of the protection, prevention, operational planning and reassurance work that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) is undertaking in the aftermath of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in Kensington on 14th June 2017.

There are 21 residential high-rise¹ tower blocks across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington (the Service Area).

¹ 'High-rise' is classified as blocks of 6 floors or above and generally associated with heights of 18m or above.

The response to the Grenfell Tower fire

Sector response

A cross-departmental team has been established to co-ordinate and facilitate the Service's internal and external response to the Grenfell Tower fire. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are liaising with central government and are co-ordinating the sector's response with daily updates/actions for each fire and rescue service.

Operational planning

During the first week following the Grenfell Tower fire, protection officers and operational crews completed joint Site-Specific Risk Information visits to review, and where necessary update, the risk information the Service holds in relation to high-rise blocks in the Service Area.

Public reassurance and engagement

Fire crews and prevention officers are revisiting each of the high-rise blocks to offer advice and support to residents, including the offer of a home safety assessment. Fire officers are also working with housing providers and attending residents' meetings to answer specific questions relating to fire safety.

A number of press releases, statements and radio interviews have provided further information regarding the Service's activities in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Fire protection activities

Fire protection staff have completed fire safety audits on each of the high-rise blocks. The main focus of the audits was around compartmentation (including fire doors), emergency escape routes and cladding systems.

Please note that due to limitations with the scope of the Service's legislative powers it has not been possible to inspect all areas of each high-rise block. The housing providers/duty holders have been asked to carry out fire door and compartmentation surveys with the aim of ensuring that all fire safety measures are of the correct standard and support the evacuation strategy that the housing providers/duty holders have adopted.

On a few occasions it has been found that the entrance doors to flats have been changed by the owner or occupier and are not of the required fire rating standard. This situation is being addressed by the housing providers/duty holders and in some cases we understand that they will bear the cost of upgrading the doors to the required standard.

Of the 21 high-rise blocks in the Service Area, we have been informed that some have cladding systems as detailed in Table 1 below. These range from fully-clad buildings to those with small areas of cladding around entrances, foyers, stairwells, landings etc. We have been informed that none of the high-rise blocks have the Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding system used at Grenfell Tower, which has been the main focus for the sector's response nationally.

Table 1 – details of information obtained about cladding systems on residential high-rise blocks in the Service Area

Unitary Area	Location	Property	Cladding System
Cheshire West & Chester	Blacon, Chester	Glyn Garth Flats	Rockwool - EcoRock system
		Nant Peris Flats	
		Plas Dinas Flats	
	Newtown, Chester	St George's Flats	Alsecco - Ecomin 400 system utilising dense mineral wool insulation with brick slip covering with rockwool core
		St Oswald's Flats	
		St Anne's Flats	
		Rowlands Heights	
		Thackeray Towers	Insuletics - Insul-Sil M™ system
		Haygarth Heights	
	Ellesmere Port	Joseph Groome Towers Block 1	None
		Joseph Groome Towers Block 2	
		Joseph Groome Towers Block 3	
Warrington	Orford	Peninsula House	None
	Latchford	Kingsway House	None
Halton	Runcorn	Churchill Mansions	Rockwool, rendered over and pebble dashed
Cheshire East	Crewe	Waverley Court	None
	Macclesfield	Pennine Court	Rockpanel - Chameleon
		Range Court	Rockpanel - Chameleon
	Handforth, Wilmslow	Jubilee Court	FunderMax - partial cladding around stairwell & landings - 1st -12th floor
		Stanley Park Grange	FunderMax - partial cladding around stairwell & landings - 1st -12th floor

	Woodstock Court	FunderMax - partial cladding around stairwell & landings - 1st -12th floor
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Sanctuary Group have removed the cladding from three premises (Thackery Towers, Haygarth Heights and Rowland Heights) as it was identified as having a combustible polystyrene core. This cladding was only situated at ground floor level, but has been removed from all three buildings.

From the information we have received to date, the protection audits have not identified any significant concerns regarding the fire precautions and existing cladding systems. However, protection staff will continue to work closely with housing providers/duty holders and other stakeholders to remedy any issues identified in due course. It is the responsibility of the housing provider/duty holder to ensure that the premises meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Whilst the current focus is on ACM cladding systems there may be further work and testing required of other cladding systems as matters develop following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The Service's Sprinkler Campaign

The Service have been campaigning for the installation/retro-fitting of sprinkler systems in high-rise premises across the Service Area for a number of years. As part of its campaign Cheshire Fire Authority set aside £160,000 to offer to housing providers/duty holders to part-fund the retro-fitting of sprinkler systems in high-rise blocks across the Service Area. To date approximately 60% of the flats in Joseph Groome Towers, Ellesmere Port and 20% of the flats in Rowland Heights, Chester have had residential sprinklers retrofitted. Since the Grenfell Tower fire a number of housing providers have shown a renewed interest in the campaign. Going forward the protection team will continue to liaise with these stakeholders to encourage the fitting of sprinklers.

Fires in high-rise

In just over three years there have only been seven Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) in the residential high-rise tower blocks across the Service Area. Five of these were bin fires and two cooking related incidents (which were confined to the room of origin). There have also only been four Secondary Fires (SEC), which are generally small fires (accidental or deliberate), not involving people or property, e.g. refuse, grass fires etc.

Table 2 provides an overview of these incidents:

Table 2 – ADFs and SECs during the period 01/04/14 to 30/06/17 for each high-rise

Unitary Area	Location	Property	Storeys	ADF	SEC
Cheshire West & Chester	Blacon, Chester	Glyn Garth Flats	13	0	0
		Nant Peris Flats	13	2	0
		Plas Dinas Flats	13	1	0
	Newtown, Chester	St George's Flats	11	0	0
		St Oswald's Flats	13	0	0
		St Anne's Flats	11	0	0
		Rowlands Heights	11	0	1
		Thackeray Towers	11	0	0
		Haygarth Heights	11	0	0
		Ellesmere Port	Joseph Groome Towers Block 1	13	0
Joseph Groome Towers Block 2	13	0	0		
Joseph Groome Towers Block 3	13	0	0		
Warrington	Orford	Peninsula House	12	0	0
	Latchford	Kingsway House	9	0	0
		Jubilee Court	13	1	0
Halton	Runcorn	Churchill Mansions	11	0	1
Cheshire East	Crewe	Waverley Court	12	0	0
	Macclesfield	Pennine Court	16	0	2
		Range Court	16	0	0
	Wilmslow	Stanley Park Grange	13	3	0
		Woodstock Court	13	0	0

Other premises

Whilst the focus is currently on high-rise (above six floors) the Service has included the Decks six-storey development in Runcorn as part of its post-Grenfell prevention and protection activities. We are informed that this development features a fire retardant cladding system fitted directly to the timber frame structure.

The protection team will continue to work on the information provided by the NFCC with regards to other categories of buildings which may require Building Research Establishment (BRE) testing, or require the protection team's involvement if they are identified as having ACM cladding systems installed. The team are working with the duty holders of hospitals/other public buildings to establish whether ACM cladding systems have been utilised in their construction.