



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

12 November 2020

Post Grenfell Tower: Actions Update

Report of the Area Manager, Community Risk Management

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides members with an update on actions taken within County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) in response to national recommendations following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017.

Background

2. Following the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017, a range of recommendations and national actions have driven change in the Fire and Rescue Service and other sectors, such as Local Authority Building Control, in relation to emergency response, building safety and regulation to improve the safety of our communities.
3. Dame Judith Hackitt conducted an Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety with a particular focus on their application to high-rise residential buildings (HRRBs) but also included other complex buildings. Her final report was published on 17 May 2018 and a paper was presented to members at the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) meeting on 17 July 2018, outlining the potential implications for the Service.
4. On 30 October 2019, the Rt Hon Sir Martin Moore-Bick published his Phase 1 report of the public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower. A report was presented to members at the CFA meeting on 25 February 2020 providing an overview of the contents and recommendations and associated implications for the Service.

5. More recently, the government have conducted consultation on proposed changes to fire safety legislation and how it intends to implement the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. There have also been three separate sources of grant funding provided to Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) to support fire protection activities. Two papers were presented to members at the CFA meeting on 21 September 2020 to cover these matters.
6. This report will outline some of the actions taken by the Service either proactively or in response to the recommendations made that impact on CDDFRS and public safety.

Actions implemented by the Service.

7. Prior to the recommendation from Dame Judith Hackitt being made, the Service commenced a comprehensive training programme to formally qualify staff to conduct fire safety audits and comply with the revised version of the 'Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators'. All new wholetime recruits and apprentices must complete the fire safety apprenticeship which qualifies them to a Level 3 certificate in business fire safety. In addition to this, two cohorts of crew and watch managers (CM/WM) have undergone or are ongoing with training to qualify them to Level 3 or Level 4 certificate. Below is the current position in October 2020, for fire safety qualifications and training:

Central Business Fire Safety Team (7 personnel)

- 1 x Level 4 certificate (qualified)
- 3 x Level 4 diploma (qualified)
- 2 x Level 4 diploma ongoing, will be completed by December 2020
- 1 x Level 5 in Fire Engineering and L4 diploma (qualified)

Emergency Response

- 11 x Level 3 certificate (qualified)
- 23 x Level 4 certificate (qualified)

Training ongoing

- 32 x CM/WM - Level 3 certificate due to qualify by April 2021
- 18 x wholetime trainees (courses 169 & 170) – Level 3 certificate due to qualify on various dates up to August 2023
- 26 x apprentices (cohorts 2, 3 & 4) - Level 3 certificate due to qualify on various dates up to June 2024

8. Some of the grant funding for protection has been used to partially cover costs for this training, it has also been used to cleanse the Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS) database which is used to identify premises as part of the Service's risk based inspection programme for business fire safety audits.
9. Following the publication of the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 report by the Rt Hon Sir Martin Moore-Bick, a subgroup was formed to address the recommendations in the report. The group produced a 46-point action plan to ensure each of the recommendations were addressed. It's worth noting that in many cases, CDDFRS required no further action or the action required further national guidance to be produced before action could be taken. The following are some examples of actions which have been implemented.
10. A recommendation was made that all FRSs should be equipped with smoke hoods to assist in the evacuation of occupants through smoke filled exit routes. At the time of the recommendation, CDDFRS were already in the process of procuring smoke hoods which have now been issued to fire appliances. A smoke hood was recently used (October 2020) during an incident in High Northgate, Darlington involving a fire in flats where crews used a smoke hood to safely escort a resident from the property.
11. The action plan contains several recommendations aimed at improving co-operation between emergency services (ES) control rooms, including the need for each ES to communicate the declaration of a major incident to other category 1 responders as soon as possible. This requires clear lines of communications between ES control rooms and a single point of contact (SPOC) designated in each ES control room to facilitate this. CDDFRS Control procedures have been updated to establish this procedure and the Fire Control Manager is the designated SPOC during normal working hours with the duty control room OiC designated out of hours. An Airwave radio hailing channel is used for additional communications between ES control rooms.
12. CDDFRS have no high-rise residential buildings within the Service area, however multiple exercises were arranged during 2019 to improve interoperability and learning in relation to fires in high-rise residential buildings with neighbouring FRSs. Simulated exercises (no fire or water used) were conducted in premises in Sunderland with Tyne and Wear FRS and real fire exercises were conducted in derelict premises in a high-rise block of flats in Middlesbrough with Cleveland Fire Brigade. These exercises involved Flexible Duty Officers and Emergency Response crews from several stations with fire appliances and aerial ladder platforms from CDDFRS.

Future Impact and Next Steps

13. Due to the far reaching recommendations made by Dame Judith Hackitt and Sir Martin Moore-Bick, some are still under consideration by the Government, while others are in the process of being addressed through changes in legislation proposed in the Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Bill.

14. The full impact of future changes in the FRS's legislative duties and workloads is still not fully known, however the Service will continue to monitor proposed legislation to ensure we remain flexible and responsive to fulfil any new duties.

Recommendations

15. CFA members are requested to:

- a. **note** the content of the report;
- b. **agree** to receive further updates as appropriate.

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