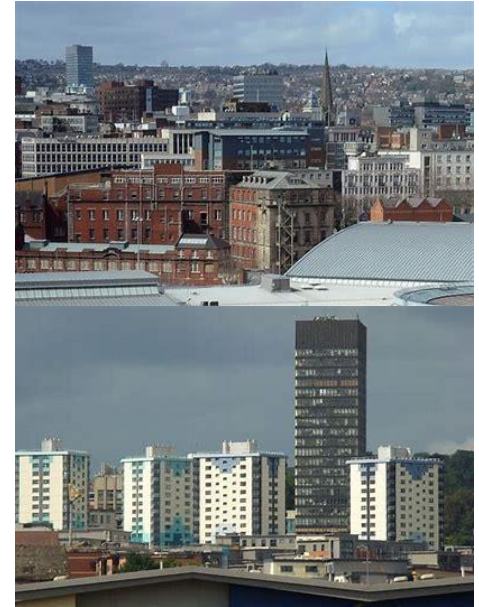


Implementing thorough fire safety inspections through a partnership working model

Janet Sharpe

Director of Housing, Housing & Neighbourhood Service
Sheffield City Council



Today...

- Key insights into identifying fire hazards in high-risk buildings
- Approaching building owners and enforcing fire safety regulations to achieve safer environments for residents
- Establishing a joint inspection programme with fire & rescue services through a multi-agency approach
- Information sharing: overcoming common obstacles to continuous data sharing
- Progress regarding putting in place the arrangements to manage the new regulations to ensure compliance and resident safety



Sheffield in 2017...

- Good relations with regulatory services
- Limited data sharing
- Over-reliance on de-regulated building inspector sign-off
- Limited contact with private management companies, owners and leaseholders
- Up to date information and knowledge of high-rise had gaps



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Sheffield 2017-2020

- Established regulatory Council Fire Board with clarity of purpose, governance and membership –driving city Fire Strategy and Work Programme
- Senior leaders in attendance from SY Fire Service, Housing, Planning, Building Control, Repairs, Corporate Asset Teams, Health & Safety and Housing
- Comprehensive stocktake of buildings over 18m
- Review of planning and building regulation data
- Sharing of Council/ Fire Service enforcement information
- Established data base, single source/ list
- Tenant and resident engagement to reassure residents of Council's involvement
- Regular reporting to MCHLG (now DLUHC)
- Review of position on buildings over 11m
- Creation of performance dashboard



Sheffield 2022

- Over 200 blocks in scope
- Increase in planning and building applications in system
- 24 of these Council-owned, rest in private sector
- Resources targeted on most 'at risk' blocks
- SCC and SYFRS working together and sharing resources and joint visit information
- New High-Rise Forum established for residents
- Leaseholder webpage to increase resident engagement
- Waking Watch Fund to support building with cladding and poor fire protection and website (including other help available)
- Close working arrangements with Government/national working groups, sharing information and funding available to private sector support remediation costs
- Working closely with tenants, leaseholders, elected members and MP's



Regulating high-rise in the City

- **SYFRS – The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005**

Fire safety in non-domestic premises, but extends to common areas, including hallways and means of escape staircases, in high rise

- **Private Housing Standards – Housing Act 2004**

Enforcement in domestic dwellings of 29 hazards, which includes fire, and common areas in shared properties

- **SCC Planning – Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

This shared legislative responsibility has promoted joint working between SCC and SYFRS to ensure enforcement action is taken.



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Council Approach (1)

- **SCC Planning and Building Control** – responsible for the regulation of residential buildings and commercial assets, planning and building control, enforcement
- **Council Housing Asset Management** - responsible for supporting tenants, leaseholders and addressing any landlord issues
- **Neighbourhood Management Teams, Corporate Services** - responsible for interface with residents, management companies, day to day resident support and access to universal support services
- Again, joint-working essential to join the dots



Council Approach (2)

- Early case conferences to ensure SYFRS and SCC take appropriate steps not just with regard to enforcement
- Duty of care to leaseholders / resident
- Addressing poor management practice
- Working with building managers / owners to signpost to potential funding streams to reduce bills
- Periodic joint inspections – need to inspect the whole building and identify all potential hazards that require remediation
- Impact on City and residents when buildings are not safe to occupy – where do residents go (fire safety, disrepair)?
- Pulling together and advising on the new regulatory changes, MHCLG funding and working with building owners and managers



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Council Approach (3)

- Conducting a programme of checks to ensure all high-rise and high-risk buildings in Sheffield are safe for their residents regardless of tenure
- Close working with SYFRS in relation to share enforcement role and single data source – one version of the truth
- Created single database of blocks in scope
- Working with DLUHC Delivery of the Waking Watch Relief Fund and, Future Regulations Policy Working Arrangements
- Launched leaseholder webpage to support private leaseholders and information will be uploaded for all blocks over time, starting with ACM and High Risk Buildings



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Private Sector High-Rise Fire Safety

Overall ACM Position	
Total Private Sector High-Risk High Rise (ACM, no ACM, and unknown)	225
Blocks with ACM of concern (or suspected)	13
Blocks where ACM has been removed	6
Blocks with ACM 'of no concern'	9
Blocks where testing has confirmed cladding is not ACM as previously thought	3
SYFR Enforcement Position	
Blocks being investigated re EWS issues	73
Blocks being investigated re compartmentation issues	13
Formal Enforcement Action	2
Blocks classed as 'satisfactory' by SYFR	35



High-rise in the private sector

High rise block of flats evacuated as firefighters tackle blaze in Sheffield city centre

A high rise block of flats in Sheffield city centre was evacuated while firefighters tackled a kitchen blaze.

By Claire Lewis

Friday, 26th February 2021, 11:05 am



Sheffield flats evacuated over fire safety failure

12 December 2020



Paul Wood, from Sheffield City Council, said: "We are appalled that despite advice this building has fire safety issues that puts at risk residents and we are working closely with SYFRS."

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Case study 1- Riverside

- Recently built, five storey block consisting of 127 apartments
- October 2019 complaint about fire detector control panel faults
- SYFR investigation on site led to SCC being informed as other issues as well including intermittent electrical power to the apartment block.
- SCC visit site to work but repairs could not be completed on same day, safety could not be ensured, so SCC Prohibition Order served
- Assumed student block so worked closely with University and Homeless Services to work together to identify alternative accommodation
- Upon inspection discovered building used to house families / professionals and Air BnB – provided access



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What we learned...

- Importance of establishing use, student blocks not always occupied by students!
- Ability of LA to ensure support is in place to find accommodation for those impacted
- Early discussions between SYFR and SCC could have enabled joint inspection to take holistic view of issues in this block
- Collaboration enabled SCC to better organise response with regard to alternative accommodation for those impacted – non student use would have been identified earlier
- LA to ensure that occupation of blocks is recorded to improve knowledge in private sector
- Council contact details provided to residents and students if they are worried about returning home

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Another example – Wicker Riverside

- SYFR identified a range of serious fire safety concerns within a large high-rise block including;
 - Compartmentalisation issues
 - Flammable material in the external wall systems
 - Excessive travel distances (in dead-end conditions)
 - Smoke vents disconnected
- SYFR took decision to prohibit part of building but allowed main part of the building to remain with Waking Watch in place
- Council provided support for SYFRS to evacuate and provide support for residents, access to accommodation, addressed other building (not fire related) issues with buildings
- Council emergency response teams provided on site emergency support



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And what we learned...

- Collaboration and joint working worked well, more planning could have helped enabled speed of evacuation to take place
- This enabled LA to explore options for accommodation for those affected.
- Shared information on action taken support LA ability to work with Government on financial support need in private sector buildings (and introduction commenced on Waking Watch Fund)
- Joint inspection during COVID would have helped to address all hazards in this block – fire safety is key but chance to fully assess building in one inspection when conducted jointly



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Benefits of collaboration

- Clarity of information and standards
- Risk Management
- Communication
 - early case conference when potential issues are identified would help LA to prepare necessary support
 - Referrals made during inspections cause delays in ability to respond
- Assisting with comms with building owners / managers and occupants.
- Avoids duplicated visits



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Further benefits...

- Holistic approach
 - Getting back to joint inspections to ensure buildings are assessed fully at first visit – fire safety and other potential regulatory and resident issues
 - Continuing to map who is living in high rise, ownership and management arrangements and single source of data information that can be shared on Council website and SYFRS websites to make it easier for tenants and residents and professional help available from universal and support services
- Ability to support Leaseholders who are affected by any required works – financially and by signposting to support services
- Ongoing support to building owners / managers to ensure compliance



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Ongoing challenges and risks

- Implementation of the structure
- Government has committed to assess burdens
- No funding has been provided to landlords
- SCC revenue cost £600k pa (so plans to recharge)
- Lack of qualified BSM nationally making recruitment difficult
- BSM competency standard
- Market cost of BSM could increase
- Collation of historic information to complete the golden thread
- Potential change for buildings in scope to 11m and over would be a major additional burden rise from 25 to over 400 blocks



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Any Questions?

