



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Community Safety Committee

ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 18 January 2013

Purpose of Report:

To inform and update Members on the programme of engagement with Social Housing Providers.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have always had a loose relationship with the major housing providers in the City and the County, mostly through Fire Protection, although Community Safety have had some involvement.
- 1.2 In early 2011 the Service began to work with Nottingham City Homes (NCH) to share incident data, this was developed through the Knowledge Transfer Programme with Nottingham Trent University by the KTP Associate (now an NFRS employee). It involved the matching of NFRS incidents to NCH properties with NCH also providing information on incidents that were not attended by NFRS (approximately 15%).
- 1.3 In order to provide sufficient data to establish trend patterns, the initial analysis looked at dwelling fires over a 5 year period. The findings showed that although properties managed by NCH account for approximately 25% of all households within the City of Nottingham, they were responsible for 36% of dwelling fires and 38% of all casualties.
- 1.4 Nottingham City Homes, as a Social Landlord, also gathered far more personal information on their tenants than was collected through IRS, this enabled us to identify more detailed trend patterns on individuals that had experienced fires, their domestic circumstances and the type of dwelling that they lived in.
- 1.5 Following the recent restructure, it was felt that a dedicated post was needed within the newly formed Engagement and Partnerships Team to co-ordinate this work with NCH and continue with this approach across all the major Social Housing Providers in the City and County.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The post of Housing Liaison Officer was duly created in May 2012 with a remit of extending the work started with Nottingham City Homes to other providers and also of co-ordinating NFRS' engagement with Housing Providers across the Service so that it responded to providers with a consistent and corporate message.
- 2.2 The work plan of the Housing Liaison officer was to work across the County starting with the larger providers, those that had taken on Social Housing from Local Authority control, then work down through National providers to the smaller charities. The format would remain the same, introductory meeting, information exchange, memoranda of understanding then action planning based on analysis of the data.
- 2.3 Although not expecting to start in earnest until the New Year, the Service now has data sharing agreements in place with City Homes and A1 Housing and

we have had initial meetings with Metropolitan Housing, Gedling and Ashfield Homes and Nottingham Community Housing Association. Each of the providers approached to date have shown a keenness to work with us and have no issue with sharing personal data.

- 2.4 A practitioners forum has now been established with the first meeting later this month, giving providers the opportunity to share good practice on Fire Safety with on going support from NFRS, the meeting will be chaired by the NFRS Housing Liaison Officer and new providers will be invited to join once they have had the initial meeting.
- 2.5 An internal Housing Liaison Group will be re-established that will involve representation from Fire Protection, Delivery and Prevention to ensure that the Service is maintaining the same message in its communications with providers and that the Service has a corporate line on particular areas of risk.
- 2.6 After extensive negotiations, Nottingham City Homes have agreed to the fitment of Sprinkler Systems in their properties. In February 2012, the Service sponsored a trip to the All-Party Parliamentary Fire and Rescue Group Parliamentary Seminar (held in association with The National Fire Sprinkler Network) for the Assistant Director of Asset Management of Nottingham City Homes. Following this, NCH agreed to retro fit sprinkler systems to Stepney Court, a sheltered housing scheme in Aspley, NFRS have agreed to part fund this project and after further discussions NCH have also agreed to include the fitment of sprinklers in the tender for all their new build homes planned over the next 4 years.
- 2.7 As part of the agreement for NFRS funding Stepney Court, NCH have agreed to provide a test bed for the demonstration of the benefits of Automatic Fire Suppression Systems (sprinklers) which the Service will then be able to showcase to other providers. Currently, A1 Housing in Bassetlaw are considering this as an option for some of their sheltered accommodation.
- 2.8 The fitment of Automatic Fire Suppression Systems (AFSS) is part of the new approach that the Service taking in developing technological solutions to fire prevention and we are currently working with A1 Housing and others to provide Tunstall linked alarm systems for those most vulnerable. A multi-agency working group will be established to consider other devices that prevent, amongst other things, the large number of cooking fires amongst the elderly.
- 2.9 In conclusion, the engagement work that the team is conducting with Social Housing Providers is producing benefits on many levels;
 - Data sharing is enabling us to conduct much more detailed trend analysis of those most at risk.
 - Joint problem solving brings together the resources of both organisations
 - Performance management systems enabled us to compare one provider with another.

- Provider's network of housing patch manager, maintenance and other support workers enables us to better monitor those most at risk.
- The use of risk data and cost benefits provide a compelling argument for the fitment of AFSS, Tunstall alarms and other preventative measures.
- The ability to influence the fitment of fire prevention measures at the planning stage of new builds will greatly enhance fire safety for the future.

2.10 The Service recognises the growth in the rented sector over the last 5 years and the forecast is for this to continue, it has therefore set several objectives for this project that will ensure a safer future for those in the community living in the socially rented sector;

- A target of 100% smoke alarm coverage across the sector.
- The identification of all those most at risk and the fitment of appropriate preventative measures.
- The retro fitting of AFSS in all high risk sheltered properties.
- The inclusion of AFSS in the tender for all new build properties.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Service has so far committed £37,700 towards the retro fitment of sprinkler systems to Stepney Court.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The current procedure will identify the most vulnerable living in Social Housing properties.
- 5.2 Another member of the team has a remit for working with new and existing migrants to the County, these will be identified through the data supplied by Social housing Providers.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There is an opportunity to link this work with ASB and secondary fires through the CDP/CSPs.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Information sharing protocols being drawn up with providers will require legal scrutiny as will the Service Level Agreement for the funding of the Sprinkler Systems.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is a risk of professional embarrassment should a large scale incident occur in a providers property that we are working closely with. We will mitigate that risk through the internal Housing Liaison Group scrutinising messages and advice going out to providers.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 9.1 Members endorse the approach being taken by Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in engaging with Social Housing Providers.
- 9.2 Members agree to receive reports from the Chief Fire Officer as to the progress of the arrangements.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

- 10.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) and Nottingham City Homes (NCH) Information Sharing
Accidental dwelling fire incidents: 01/04/2009 – 30/06/2012
- 10.2 Process Map – Housing Liaison.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER