

# **1. THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY PHASE 2 REPORT**

1.1 As widely publicised, the final (Phase2) report was published on September 4th The following is an extract from Volume 7 of the report.

## **2. SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS**

2.1 113.46 In Parts 4 and 5 of the report we have discussed the TMO, its relationship with its residents and its management of fire safety at Grenfell Tower. We make a number of criticisms of the way in which it carried out its responsibilities, including in relation to handling complaints, remedying defects identified in fire risk assessments, installing and maintaining fire protection systems and routine inspection and maintenance of fire doors. Others responsible for the management of social housing should give them careful consideration and take appropriate action accordingly.

2.2 113.47 In other circumstances shortcomings of those kinds would probably have led us to make a number of recommendations directed to ensuring that they were rectified and not repeated. However, since the fire Parliament has enacted the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which enables the Regulator of Social Housing to play a more active role in setting appropriate standards and ensuring that they are met. The regulator also has the power to set standards on the competence and conduct of those involved in the provision of services relating to the management of social housing and to require providers of social housing to make information available both to tenants and the regulator. The Act also makes safety a priority and imposes a duty on landlords to investigate and remedy within a specified time of being reported defects that may adversely affect health.

2.3 113.48 In those circumstances, we do not consider it necessary to make any additional recommendations in relation to the matters that we have uncovered.

2.4 Whilst no specific formal recommendations were made relating to Social Housing Providers, as stated above, we have been urged to reflect on the findings in Parts 4 & 5 of the report, which we have now done.

2.5 Those recommendations made in the report relate to Government and the construction industry, which if enacted would bring changes that would impact on social landlords, particularly the following:

2.5.1 The establishment of a single construction regulator to take control of overall regulation of the construction industry.

2.5.2 An 'urgent' review of the definition of a higher-risk building, which takes into account factors such as vulnerability of residents, and not just the 18-metre height threshold that exists currently.

- 2.5.3 A review of the building regulations guidance covering fire safety – and a revised version as soon as possible. This should include a reconsideration of the total reliance on ‘stay put’ advice.
- 2.5.4 The fire engineering profession be recognised and protected by law, with an independent body set up to regulate it.
- 2.5.5 A licensing scheme for principal contractors wishing to undertake the construction or refurbishment of higher risk buildings
- 2.6 The report’s publication provides the opportunity to reflect on the measures in place to provide safe places to live for SHG customers:
  - 2.6.1 SHG is required by the Regulator of Social Housing to comply with “all known law” which includes these. They have a specialist Compliance Team with expertise in the requirements of the legislation and ensuring that it is followed.
  - 2.6.2 All HRA tower blocks had the highest level (level 4) fire risk assessments undertaken circa 2010-12, which went beyond the level required by legislation and very rare in the sector.
  - 2.6.3 Post Grenfell, full sprinkler systems were installed in all tower blocks – at a total cost circa £10m.
  - 2.6.4 SHG have been recognised as a leader across GMHP in responding to the requirements of the Building Safety Act.
  - 2.6.5 SHG is registered with the Building Safety Regulator and the Council’s Director of Place Management is the Principal Accountable Person with the Regulator in respect of the Council’s high-rise buildings.
  - 2.6.6 None of the Blocks have Aluminum Composite Cladding (ACM) - the type used at Grenfell.
  - 2.6.7 The Fire Service is working through a process of assessing Fire Risk Appraisal Reports of External Walls (FRAEW) we have submitted for each tower block with the final five blocks awaiting sign-off.
  - 2.6.8 We have consistently and regularly carried out Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) on a two-year cycle and prioritise our budgeting to accommodate any recommended actions to be taken arising from them. This year we will spend £500,000+ on fire doors, compartmentation and escape route works recommended as a result of recent FRAs.
  - 2.6.9 SHG commissioned a 100% Stock Condition Survey which is currently halfway through which would highlight any Breaches of the Housing Health and Safety Risk system including fire safety. No such failing has been reported in the 5000+ homes surveyed to date.

2.6.10 All homes have smoke detectors fitted, meeting regulatory requirements. Where these are battery operated, they are replaced with hard wired detectors when the property becomes empty. We are currently spending £25,000 per month doing so.

2.6.11 We have a dedicated team in place to manage Building Safety across the high-rise blocks in Stockport. During 2023-24, all blocks that require a registration with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR), have been successfully registered. SHG has also prepared its first draft Safety Case Report for when that is required to be submitted to the Building Safety Regulator.

2.6.12 The Building Safety Team has a number of Building Safety Officers whose whole remit is to consult, advise and assist residents in Tower Blocks understand the fire safety measures active in their building, how to take fire precautions and remind them of the means of escape. They do so through a range of routine inspections and home visits.

2.6.13 A Building Safety Residents Panel is in place, and they meet regularly and can raise concerns and issues being faced by high-rise residents directly with Stockport Homes

2.7 There is a wide range of information on the SHG website to provide information and assurance on fire safety for customers including a “Home Safety” section:

2.8 <https://www.stockporthomes.org/my-home/home-safety/>

2.8.1 This includes information about:

- Gas safety checks
- Electrical safety checks
- Fire safety.

2.9 Performance data is provided online:

2.9.1 <https://www.stockporthomes.org/my-home/home-safety/keeping-customers-safe-at-home/>

2.10 A section dedicated to high-rise living:

2.10.1 <https://www.stockporthomes.org/my-home/high-rise-living/>

2.11 The Fire Safety section includes links to every Fire Risk Assessment undertaken at a block:

2.11.1 <https://www.stockporthomes.org/my-home/home-safety/fire-safety/fire-risk-assessments/>

2.12 There are also a number of fire safety leaflets available:

2.12.1 <https://www.stockporthomes.org/my-home/home-safety/fire-safety/>

- 2.13 SHG has complied with all the regulatory requirements to inform residents in tower blocks on what to do in the event of a fire. This has included written instructions, signage, face to face discussions and group meetings. The Building Safety Team hold regular drop-in surgeries and have supplied residents with leaflets and videos.
- 2.14 SHG works closely with the Fire Service to help them with campaigns on fire safety for all its customers, both at a local level and as part of a Greater Manchester Housing provider level.

