

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY		
DATE:	12 TH APRIL 2018	REPORT NO:	CFO/015/18
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AM GUY KEEN	REPORT AUTHOR:	KEVIN JOHNSON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	GM MARK THOMAS; KEVIN JOHNSON		
TITLE OF REPORT:	MULTI-AGENCY HOARDING AND SELF-NEGLECT PROTOCOL PROGRESS REPORT		

APPENDICES:	
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Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members of the progress made in relation to the Multi-Agency Hoarding and Self-Neglect Protocol (MHSP) developed following a double fatality at a fire in a single private dwelling where hoarding was identified as a contributory factor in relation to the loss of life.

Recommendation

2. That Members;
 - a. Note the effective progress of the MHSP.
 - b. Note the significance of this progress in light of the double fatality fire incident and the consequential regulation 28 letter from the Coroner to the Secretary of State for the Home Office.
 - c. Note the intention to share the learning from this progress with safeguarding partners and the wider Fire and Rescue Service.
 - d. Note the recent success in obtaining a warrant of entry in order to conduct a hoarding intervention to safeguard vulnerable occupants.
 - e. Note the intention to write to the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner and Secretary of State for the Home Office to update them on the progress following their previous involvement.

Introduction and Background

3. Members will be aware of Report CFO/018/17 Regulation 28 Coroners Letter: Hoarding Fire Fatality that was directed to the Rt. Hon. Amber Rudd, Secretary of State for the Home Office by the Senior Coroner for Liverpool and Wirral following the double fatality at a fire in a single private dwelling where hoarding was identified as a contributory factor in relation to the loss of life.

4. Members will recall that following the incident which occurred on 23rd October 2016 at 268 Mather Avenue, Liverpool, the Coroner wrote to the Secretary of State for the Home Office requesting that she review the law and the powers afforded to Fire and Rescue Authorities to gain entry to single private dwellings in order to effect interventions to address fire safety risk to vulnerable occupants.
5. Members will also recall that the response of Rt. Hon. Amber Rudd made the following key points:
 - a. Current legislation does not address the risk of fire caused by the behaviour of occupants in domestic dwellings and that to do so would place an onerous and unjustifiable burden on individuals.
 - b. Where the behaviours of vulnerable people are challenging and complex a more holistic approach should be taken by all relevant agencies to safeguard the safety of these people;
 - c. Strongly supported the recommendation from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) to strengthen local partnerships in order to reduce the risk of such a tragedy from reoccurring.
6. Finally Members will recall that the report provided an update on the Safeguarding Adult Review Group proposing an MHSP. Whilst this was initially rejected it is now adopted in Liverpool and Sefton and as part of the Practice, Procedure and Process Sub-group which will be expanded to include Knowsley and Wirral.
7. As a consequence of the adoption in Liverpool, the MHSP has achieved its first landmark ruling through the granting of a warrant of entry into an owner occupied property in order to address a high risk hoarding safeguarding concern.
8. This safeguarding incident was brought to MFRA attention following North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) attendance at the property on 16th December 2017.
9. The occupier was found in the hallway with his son and daughter who refused paramedics access any further into the property stating that they live in squalor. The father at the occupancy was found to have an untreated 10 inch ulcerated wound and gangrene on his right leg. The son and daughter advised NWAS that their mother was bedbound on the first floor of the property. The property was in poor condition with high fire loading and hoarding throughout.
10. An emergency strategy meeting was convened at Cunard Building on 28th January 2018 as the occupier had been expected to pass away due to sepsis and other associated complications (which fortunately did not materialise). The family are owner occupiers and made it clear that despite this incident, they wanted no assistance and would not allow access to any agency.
11. Environmental Health made an application under the Housing Act to obtain a warrant of entry due to the hoarding and safeguarding concerns which were bolstered by a submission from MFRA officers citing distinct similarities with the Mather Avenue incident.

12. On 6th February the warrant of entry was granted and on 7th February 2018 MFRA Officers attended the property and entered with Liverpool City Council Housing, Environmental Health Officers and Adult Social Care despite reluctance from the family.
13. During the intervention, significant high fire loading was moved in order to reduce fire risk and improve means of escape, and a number of additional smoke alarms were fitted in order to provide the occupants with early warning in the event of any fire.
14. This is an important case study as it demonstrates the effectiveness of the proposals made by MFRA and supported by the Secretary of State for the Home Office in overcoming obstacles where in the past serious fire risk from hoarding to vulnerable persons in owner occupier residences had been prevented due to occupier resistance to safeguarding interventions.
15. Officers within Community Risk Management will share the learning from this case study via professional networks with partners and Fire and Rescue Authorities, including:
 - a. A post on the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Communities of Practice; and
 - b. The case study to be presented to the next NFCC Home Safety Committee on 2nd May 2018.
16. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer will be writing to the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner and Secretary of State for the Home Office to update them on the progress following their previous involvement.

Equality and Diversity Implications

17. It is likely that a significant proportion of vulnerable hoarders will be older persons (though not exclusive to this group). There is no current intelligence to suggest that other groups with protected characteristics will be disproportionately affected by hoarding.
18. The main points of this report have been shared at Safeguarding Adult Boards and with key partners to disseminate internally. This is expected to improve the safety of vulnerable hoarders, their co-habitants and neighbours, therefore there are no envisaged detrimental impacts.

Staff Implications

19. Effective multi-agency working to reduce the incidents of hoarding will result in reduced risks for operational firefighters and other frontline staff by reducing the

frequency and severity accidental dwelling fires where hoarding would otherwise have been a contributory factor.

Legal Implications

20. There are no legal implications that arise directly in relation to this report.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

21. There are no additional costs arising from this report.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

22. Actions arising from this report will result in reduced risks for operational firefighters and the community.

23. Any specific actions arising from this report will be covered by existing Health and Safety policies and procedures. Where appropriate, this will involve dynamic and analytical risk assessments.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

24. This directly contributes to the Authority mission as it reduces high fire risk to vulnerable residents and assists in preventing a serious fire which would pose a significant risk to firefighters due to high fire loading and congestion affecting access and egress.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CFO 018/17/ SMG report: Regulation 28 Coroners Letter: Hoarding Fire Fatality

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MFRS	M erseyside F ire and R escue S ervice is the service provided by MFRA. When writing reports MFRS is the “action”
MHSP	M ulti-Agency H oarding and S elf-Neglect P rotocol
NFCC	N ational F ire C hief’s C ouncil.
NWAS	N orth W est A mbulance S ervice