

# **GREATER MANCHESTER HIGH RISE RESIDENTS SURVEY**

## **SUMMARY REPORT**



# HIGH RISE TASK FORCE PARTNERS



GREATER MANCHESTER  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

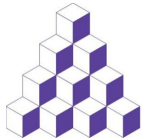


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# **GREATER MANCHESTER HIGH RISE RESIDENTS SURVEY**

Following the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force was established to ensure Greater Manchester was prepared to respond in the event of a major incident, that all high rise buildings are safe from fire, and residents feel safe.

To support the work of the Task Force, research was commissioned to gather and analyse information about experiences and perceptions of fire risk amongst residents living in high rise buildings. While it is methodologically complex to identify whether perceptions and experiences have changed as a direct consequence of the Grenfell Tower fire, it is possible to gain an understanding of the retrospective impact of such a tragedy.

The research was undertaken to inform the future work of the High Rise Task Force and provide a clear evidence base of the issues and concerns faced by residents living in high rise buildings across Greater Manchester.

At the time of the survey 57 high rise residential buildings had adopted interim measures to support a change in the evacuation strategy. Since the survey closed there has been an increase in the number of buildings affected and this reflects the increasing scale of fire safety defects being identified following invasive surveys and specialist reports which is not restricted to the risk of external fire spread posed by certain cladding systems. Although the number of buildings affected fluctuates it is now consistently in the region of 80 high rise buildings at any one time.

The High Rise Task Force ran this survey from July 2019 until September 2019. Responses received in the first few weeks were used as part of the High Rise Task Force response to the Government's Building a Safer Future consultation to ensure the experiences and views of residents were included.

172 residents responded to the survey from 95 buildings. Just over 50% were received from leaseholders. 27% of responses were from residents who rent their flat from a housing association or the council. A further 17% were from residents who rent from a private landlord.

# METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research was to understand residents' views on fire safety in the building where they live, and understand whether residents had experienced any problems, issues or concerns in their building following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The survey was focused on the following areas:

- How do residents perceive risk and what has influenced these perceptions?
- Have residents' perception of fire risk and safety changed following the Grenfell Tower tragedy?
- Do residents feel that issues around fire safety are communicated to them in an appropriate and timely fashion?
- Have residents experienced any health or financial impact following the Grenfell Tower and remedial activities that have been ongoing since then?



Online surveys were used as the method of collecting information. Online surveys are an easy and cost effective method of capturing information.

However it is recognised that it can be difficult to capture qualitative information from residents using online surveys. Residents were asked some open questions in the online survey, which allowed them to provide feedback in their own words.

The online survey was hosted on Citizen Space, which is the system used by Greater Manchester Combined Authority for online surveys. Electronic submissions were able to be made between Monday 8th July and Sunday 15th September 2019.



# FIRE SAFETY

In this section residents responding to the survey were asked about their concerns around and understanding of fire safety in their building.

**65%**

of residents responding to the survey said they were concerned about having a fire in their home.

Residents who owned their flats were more concerned about having a fire than those who rent their property from a housing association or from a private landlord.

When asked about their concerns regarding risk of fire in their building

**77%**

of residents who lived in a building where cladding was identified as a risk were concerned.

This compared to...

**48%**

of residents living in a building where the cladding has not been identified as a risk were concerned.

Although residents were concerned about having a fire, generally they felt confident that they were putting measures in place to prevent a fire happening in their own flat.

**70%**

of residents thought they were either 'not very likely' or 'not at all likely' to have a fire

They were concerned that others living in the building may not take similar precautions, making them worried about a fire happening in their building.

# FIRE SAFETY



**98%**

of residents responding to the survey have working smoke alarms fitted in their flat.

However the frequency that residents tested their smoke alarms varied. Just over a quarter of residents responding to the survey said they test their smoke alarms either monthly or weekly.

**30%**

of residents responding to the survey said they test their smoke alarms less frequently or never test their smoke alarms.

**80%**

of residents responding to the survey said their building is fitted with a fire alarm system.

However, almost 12% of residents responding said they were unsure whether their building was fitted with a fire alarm system.

# INFORMATION ABOUT EVACUATION

Some residents commented that they had forgotten their evacuation procedure and others incorrectly stated the evacuation strategy for their building. This was followed up immediately for affected buildings.

**1/3**

When asked to comment on the evacuation procedures for their building, 1/3 of residents responding to this question didn't know the evacuation strategy for their building.

When this was analysed by tenure, approximately;

**2/3**

of residents who incorrectly stated their buildings' evacuation procedures were owner occupiers. The other third rent from a social landlord.

This suggests that there is proportion of residents in these buildings who believe they know the correct procedures, but do not, whereas residents in privately rented properties are more likely not to know the evacuation procedures at all.

Some residents commented that they had forgotten their evacuation procedure and others incorrectly stated the evacuation strategy for their building.

**60%**

of residents responding to the survey said they would be able to evacuate safely in the event of a fire.

However, almost 20% said they would not be able to evacuate safely and a further 20% were unsure whether they would be able to evacuate safely.



# FIRE SAFETY ADVICE

Residents were asked whether they have ever sought advice about fire safety.

**40%**

had previously sought advice.

**96.5%**

said they would trust GMFRS to provide advice

Residents were asked which formats they would prefer to use to access fire safety advice...



Almost 65% of residents said they would prefer face to face visits.



63% of residents said they would like to access fire safety content on the internet.



50% of residents said they would like to receive fire safety information via leaflets



Accessing information about fire safety via newspapers, TV and the radio were less popular formats.

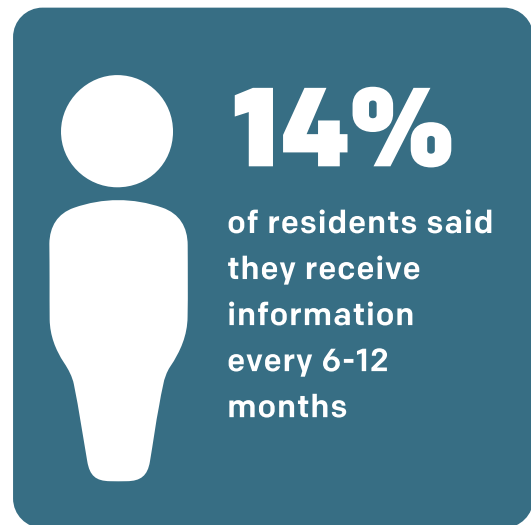


Other residents said they would like to receive information via emails, text messages, meetings, online videos and social media.



# FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION

Residents were asked how frequently they receive information from their landlord or managing agent about fire safety procedures in their block.

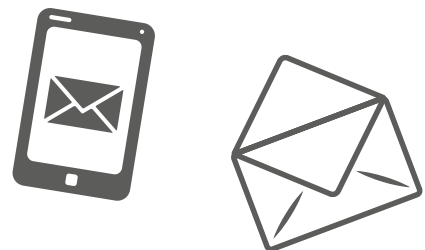


**55%**

of residents said they receive information less frequently or never receive information from their landlord or managing agent about fire safety procedures in their block.

Those renting their property from a housing association felt more informed about the fire safety procedures within their building.

- 43% said they receive information at least every few months.



# HEALTH IMPACTS

Some residents commented that the fire safety of their home environment and the associated financial costs have had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

- Some residents commented that this worry and stress is preventing them from sleeping properly.
- Other residents said they are worried about being able to sell their flat because of cladding and fire safety issues.

Residents were asked if they were able to keep their flat comfortably warm during the cold winter months.

**83%**

of residents stated that they were able to keep their flat comfortably warm.

The majority of residents (72%) stated that they noticed no difference in indoor temperature last winter compared with the winter before.

However, approximately 12% of residents found their flats harder to heat.



“...we have now been told that our property is worth zero which has had a very damaging effect on our relationship and mental health.”

# FUTURE COST CONCERNS

Residents were asked whether actions had been taken in response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

**36%** of residents said their building has used a waking watch over the past 18 months

**12%** of residents said there has been removal or replacement of cladding on their building over the past 18 months

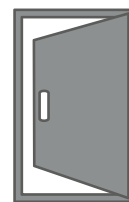
**9%** said fire doors have been replaced in their building over the past 18 months

**5%** said sprinklers have been installed in their building over the past 18 months.

In addition, residents also commented on additional remedial works that have occurred in their building.

These include:

- Installation of fire alarms systems
- Fire extinguishers
- Removal of car parking spaces directly under the building
- Works related to internal compartmentation of flats.



# FINANCIAL IMPACT FOR LEASEHOLDERS

Analysis of the free text responses provided showed what problems and concerns were faced by residents living in high rise properties.

The analysis showed that residents living in their own flats were most concerned about the financial impact related to fire safety works.

Residents commented that increasing service charges to cover the costs of fire safety remedial work and replacement of cladding was causing significant problems.

## 400%

Some residents commented on an increase in service charges of over 400%.

Other residents commented that they have been presented with significant bills to cover the costs of remedial works

"I've been charged  
£10,000 for works"

"My service charge has  
increased from £90 per  
month to £480 per  
month to cover cladding  
replacement"

# FUTURE COST CONCERNS

Some residents commented that they have not experienced increased costs yet, but were anticipating costs increasing in the future:

"The work to my building has not started, but the management company has proposed the costs of works to be added to our maintenance charge. This will be approximately £1,000 extra per month."

"Each flat might have to pay £30,000 to have the cladding removed"

Residents also explained other impacts as a results of increased costs.

"We are having to cut back to be able to afford increased costs, and I can't afford to save to buy a house because of increased costs"



# FINANCIAL IMPACT

Some residents commented on the perception of paying for a service they do not receive.

**"We pay for a service we do not get, for example, we pay for 24/7 onsite security, but we're lucky if we get them a few days per week and our security gates are often broken"**

Finally, residents were asked if they had tried to sell or remortgage their home within the past 18 months.

- Approximately 17% of residents responding to the survey said they have tried to sell or remortgage their home.
- A number of these residents said they experienced problems or issues when trying to sell or remortgage.
- Others commented that they would like to sell their flat, but they are aware that others have experienced problems, therefore have deliberately not perused this until there is more clarity on what documentation is required for any potential buyers to secure a mortgage.
- A significant number of residents commented that they were unable to sell or remortgage without proof that the cladding on their building was non-combustible.

**"Applied for additional borrowing to cover cost of S20... This was denied on the basis of not having a fire safety certificate"**

**"Our buyer is not able to proceed without a building certificate"**



# FINANCIAL IMPACT

Other residents commented that the sale of their flats have fallen through because lenders are unwilling to offer mortgages, or will not offer a mortgage until there is a guarantee on what type of cladding is on the building.

"I have been trying to sell my apartment for the past 15 months. Two buyers have backed out of the sale as there was no cladding report...I'm still finding it hard to sell my apartment and move on."

"I was unable to sell due to a large number of fire safety issues. I only discovered this after having an offer accepted on a house and having found a buyer for the flat."

"The sale fell through as we didn't have a fire safety certificate. We have now been told that our property is worth zero."

