

On Thursday the 13th of March, Leicester City Council were kind enough to host the 2019 CIH East Midlands Fire Safety Event. Before I begin writing I would like to thank Rob (Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service), Ian Rabett (Nottingham City Homes) and Nick Griffiths (Leicester City Council) for taking the time to present at the event.

Let me set the scene, it was a windy and rainy day in Leicester, a city in the process of being ravaged by the malevolent Storm Gareth. But a group of hardy Fire Safety Professionals made the trek through adverse conditions to Leicester City Councils' Ian Marlow Centre. Upon arrival we were greeted by the fantastic team from LCC who directed us to hot coffee and biscuits (the cure for every weary traveler).

The event began with a brief introduction from Nick Griffiths (LCC), where the plan for the day was outlined. Nick took the first shift of the day to tell us about the Leicester Approach to fire safety. It was a great opportunity for all attending to gain first hand insight to a Fire Safety plan that is well thought out and has been implemented successfully. What really resonated with a number of people I spoke to was not just how prepared LCC seem to be, but also how aware they were of work that still needs to be done. Thanks again Nick for sharing your work with us!

Next up was Ian Rabett (Nottingham City Homes), who was going to speak about What's Next for the Hackitt Review. This was interesting as it gave us an opportunity to compare and contrast what two different Housing providers in the East Midlands have done/are doing in the wake of Grenfell. One thing which really stood out for me is the work which they have done on improving their high-rises intercom systems. This enables them to be able to communicate with their residents on a large scale via an upgraded video intercom system. Something like this enables instructions to be given in case of fire, as well as allowing NCH to contact tenants regarding repairs, water/electrical testing etc.

Something that became clear from both Ian and Nick was how educating residents is crucial. But this in itself can be difficult as, two years on from the Grenfell Fire, Resident engagement has become harder to maintain. Ian spoke of specialist events which NCH have hosted for their residents to ensure fire safety is still at the forefront of their mind. Further to this they have also recruited "Block Champions" to work with their neighbours to raise issues they have and present them to NCH. Personally, I think that resident engagement is crucial to improving Fire Safety. At the end of the day if residents are not on board or do not understand a housing provider's fire safety policy, then how are we expected to be able to implement a successful fire safety model?

Topping off our trifecta of speakers was Rob from the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, who stepped in at the last minute for John Haynes. This was an intriguing segment as it gave us the opportunity to hear from an independent body. Rob took us through the many different paths and procedures that should be taken for a variety of different builds, including new build and pre-owned building. He ended with a fantastic guide on evacuation and the multitude of risks that need to be considered, from expected evacuation times to evacuating vulnerable and disabled residents.

An excellent point was raised after Robs' talk regarding the Primary Authority Scheme. Surely if we want the same standards of fire safety to be met across the country, all Fire and Rescue Services should be making the same provisions for more consistent and coordinated regulatory enforcement? This would be a surefire way of ensuring matching levels of fire safety were hit across the country.

In summary, this event was an excellent showcase of what is being achieved in the improvement of fire safety, whilst ensuring that we are fully aware of what still needs to be done. I would like to thank all the speakers again, as well as LCC for hosting the event!