

3081/12



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

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Title of Report: Response to the Inquest into the Death of Julie Ann Camm
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Date of Report: 27th February 2014
Reference: DH/EPS/3081/12



Background, Investigation & Inquest

“Julie Ann Camm was a single lady aged 49 years, who suffered with schizophrenia causing her to have frequent auditory hallucinations. There was no reference in her history to self-harm or suicide.

On Tuesday 13th November 2012 at approx. 03:45 hours, Julie was found in her smoke logged flat, 121 Latchmere Drive, Leeds 16. She had deliberately started a fire in the bedroom of her home and had also inflicted life threatening incised wounds upon herself with an electric knife. Her death was confirmed by Paramedics at 04:20 hours on 13th November 2012.

The evidence does not support a view that Julie has deliberately taken her own life and nor was her death an accident. It is more likely that at the time her mental health had declined and she was responding to auditory hallucinations arising from her condition.”

Extract from the Coroner’s Report into the death of Julie Ann Camm.

On 17th January 2014 Housing Leeds received notification from David Hinchcliff, Senior Coroner, West Yorkshire (Eastern) inclusive of a Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths in respect of the above case. The Report was made under paragraph 7, Schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.

A full copy of the Report can be found in *Appendix A* of this report.

Coroner’s Concerns

The coroner has reported that there is a risk of future deaths owing to the fact that there were no smoke detectors fitted to the property. A partial re-wire had taken place in 2008, but no hard wired detection equipment installed, as per the existing Electrical Specification (in which hard-wired smoke detectors are only required to be installed as part of a *full* re-wire).

The coroner reported that the absence of smoke detectors to be a matter of ‘grave concern’ that no smoke detectors were fitted to the property, making specific reference to the vulnerability of Ms Camm. In the view of the coroner, had smoke detectors been installed it is likely that neighbours and

members of the public in the vicinity would have been alerted to the fire in sufficient time for Ms Camm to be rescued and her death could have been avoided.

Coroner's Recommendations

"...I recommend that the owner of this property inspect all their housing stock and arrange for either hard-wired detector's to be fitted at the earliest opportunity. Until this can be achieved I further recommend that the landlord contact the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service for home assessment teams to carry out the necessary assessment and, where appropriate, fit battery operated smoke detectors until such time as permanent hard-wired detectors can be installed."

Stock Condition

Housing Leeds manages 52,441 properties in its role within Leeds City Council (LCC). Analysis of the LCC asset management system, Keystone has drawn the following data in relation to smoke detection equipment:

Type of Detection	No. of Properties	% of Housing Stock
Hard-Wired	36,108	68.85%
Battery	6,130	11.69%
Other*	352	0.67%
None	9,851	18.78%
Total	52,441	100.00%

**'Other' types of detection equipment primarily in sheltered accommodation and includes Warden Call.*

From the above data and in direct reference to the safety of our customers and the coroners concerns, the key statistic from this data is the fact that some 18.78% of Housing Leeds properties do not contain any smoke detection equipment. It should be noted that this represents a 'worst case' in regard to this volume of properties with no smoke detection equipment as this does not account for smoke detection equipment installed by tenants or battery detection installed by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and these installation are not recorded on the Keystone system.

Battery detection installation schemes have already been completed in 2013 in the West of the city, specifically targeting sheltered accommodation whereby battery detection and carbon monoxide detection equipment (where applicable) was installed in all sheltered dwellings with no existing detection equipment. Additionally, following a fire to a privately owned Caspon-type property in 2012, all properties of this construction type owned by LCC have had battery detection installed (where existing not present) in addition to the 'hot strike' completed by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service following this fire. Both these programmes have been accounted for in the above data and recorded on Keystone.

Planned Programmes / Response to Recommendations

Leeds City Council and Housing Leeds are wholly committed installing hard-wired smoke detection equipment to 100% its properties.

A close, effective partnership has been forged between the former ALMO's (now merged together as Housing Leeds) via our Fire Safety Team and West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service. This partnership continues to grow with extensive consultation on matters such as the installation of a full sprinkler system in Marsden Court, Leeds 28; the first retro-fit sprinkler system of its kind in the Yorkshire Region. Additionally, West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service are currently delivering a training programme to all Housing Managers and Sheltered Scheme Managers across Housing Leeds to raise awareness and allow for informed identification of hazards and risks, particularly in relation to vulnerable people. This training also provides further detail on West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Services web-based referral process for vulnerable customers. The training is expected to be completed by end March 2014 with a view to expanding this programme to other front line Officers in FY2014/15.

Over the forthcoming 18 month period, hard-wired smoke detection equipment will be installed to all properties subject to a fire risk assessment. Detection will be installed in high & low rise properties and will consist of a mains powered optical smoke alarm with rechargeable lithium cells in the hallway and mains powered heat alarm with rechargeable lithium cells in the kitchen. This equates to some 1200 properties in the Housing Leeds region with a programme value of c.£200k. 4300 dwellings in Sheltered Housing Complexes and Sheltered Housing Dispersed Schemes citywide are also to receive smoke detection equipment via the CareRing system in FY2014/15 in £1.3m project.

Additionally, £2.55m has been allocated to full re-wire of dwellings in the Housing Leeds for FY 2014/15. This equates to the re-wiring of around 1100 properties and will include the installation of hard-wired smoke detection equipment in all cases. Additional funding programmes of this nature are also secured for the other regions of Housing Leeds.

The properties have been selected for inclusion in the re-wire programme based on the findings of the latest Electrical Periodic Inspection. As a result, the overwhelming majority of these properties will not have existing hard-wired detection, owing to the age of the installation. The programme is set to run from April 2014 to March 2015 and follows a similar programme in FY 2013/14.

Furthermore, an additional £100k of funding has been ring-fenced for full rewires between March 2014 and April 2014. Housing Leeds is currently identifying which properties will benefit from this programme, anticipated to be in the region of 40 properties. Again, this work will include the installation of hard wired smoke detection equipment in all cases.

Of the remaining properties with no smoke detection equipment, Housing Leeds plan to install, as a minimum, battery detection equipment over the next 12 month period. This will be done in consultation with West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service to produce an efficient, coherent and targeted plan.

It is anticipated that current trajectory and level of funding will remain largely consistent in these areas for the next 3-5 years, at which point Housing Leeds anticipate in excess of 95% of its properties will benefit from hard-wired smoke detection equipment, the remaining being protected by battery detectors.

The Electrical Specification issued to contractors operating for and on behalf of Housing Leeds is presently being fully reviewed and, where applicable, updated. I can confirm that part of this updates includes for the installation of hard-wired smoke detection in the event that any major electrical works are completed within the dwelling. This replaces the existing document which specifies the installation of hard-wired detection equipment as part of a full re-wire only.

As part of its commitment to delivering a customer focused service, Housing Leeds targets to visit 100% of customers in their homes on an annual basis. This visit is known as the Annual Tenancy Visit and focusses on a number of areas, including vulnerability, safeguarding and compliancy with statutory inspections (for example the annual gas safety visit). With effect 1st April 2014, the Annual Tenancy Visit will now include the identification of smoke detection equipment. In cases where smoke detection is not present, these properties will be referred to West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service for provision of smoke detectors until such time that hard wired detection equipment is provided.