

Area Coroner N Persaud  
East London  
124 Queens Road  
Walthamstow  
E17 8QP

The London Fire Commissioner is the  
fire and rescue authority for London

Date 29 November 2024  
Ref: [REDACTED]

Dear Coroner

## **Response to Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths**

I write in response to the Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths, which you issued following the inquest touching the death of Mrs Gabrielle Steel.

### **London Fire Brigade ('LFB') actions to address concerns following the inquest.**

- 2. The findings of the home fire safety visit were shared only with Mrs Steel – a vulnerable, elderly lady. The findings were not conveyed to those with responsibility for caring for her.**

Existing LFB policy, which follows national best practice, does not authorise staff to share findings with any other person. Providing staff are satisfied that the individual recipient is able to understand and retain the advice given, they share advice and observations face to face. During the booking of Mrs Steel's Home Fire Safety Visit it was confirmed that Mrs Steel was able to understand, process and retain the information provided – this was noted on our records and therefore the crews followed the correct process as outlined in the policy.

Noting HM Coroner's observations, we have started to review our processes and have engaged with our Information Management Team to discuss the data protection issues around sharing information with third parties where the resident has full mental capacity. LFB are reviewing the data protection privacy impact assessment and consulting the Information Commissioner to fully scope how we can best meet this need while ensuring privacy for the resident.

LFB are reviewing the questions asked at the point of booking the visit to ensure that information is gained regarding whether there is the provision of care in the home and recommend that the carer attends the visit. LFB are also considering the best ways of communicating with the carer or family member if they are not present, for example leaving guidance in the property including information about flame retardant bedding where appropriate.

Following this review LFB will where necessary update the policy, guidance, and training to ensure all staff carrying out Home Fire Safety Visits fully understand this process.

**3. A written risk assessment/risk assessment plan was completed by the London Fire Brigade. This was not left in the property or shared with Mrs Steel, her family, her carers, or the agency who requested the fire safety check.**

The Fire Service's statutory role does not include responsibility for a resident's care plan or for making or contributing to a personalised risk management plan for an individual resident. The purpose of a Home Fire Safety Visit is to provide advice and guidance to help keep the resident safe. At a Home Fire Safety Visit, LFB staff record advice given on a data collection form which is then uploaded into a database. In most cases this information is recorded using a tablet which will populate the database automatically. Existing LFB policy, which follows national best practice, does not authorise staff to share findings with any other person and currently no functionality to be able to leave a copy of the findings with the resident.

The policy currently states that a Home Fire Safety Visit guide with generic advice will be left with the resident, however this would not contain bespoke advice given for example around flame retardant bedding and the importance of always keeping it on the bed.

LFB are scoping options for being able to leave bespoke information with the resident, and with family members or a carer where appropriate. This includes engagement with the National Fire Chiefs Council and other Fire and Rescue Services to identify any areas of best practice. Following this review LFB will where necessary update the policy, guidance, and training to ensure all staff carrying out Home Fire Safety Visits fully understand this process.

**4. As a result of the poor communication from the LFB, there was no risk management plan in place to reduce the risk of fire harm to Mrs Steel. Had the findings of the fire assessor been communicated, carers would have been aware of the need to re-iterate the importance of stubbing out cigarettes in an ashtray and not leaving cigarettes to burn out; the need to dispose of all non-flame retardant bedding, to ensure that safe bedding was in place at all times; the importance of keeping extraneous flammable materials away from the bed; as much as possible.**

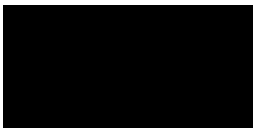
The Fire Service's statutory role does not include responsibility for a resident's care plan or for making or contributing to a personalised risk management plan for an individual resident. Home Fire Safety Visits are not intended to be personal risk assessments but to be provision of fire safety advice to the resident. Care providers are regulated to plan and deliver care based on risk assessments, and this should include assessing risk from fire. A care provider should not need a HFSV to prompt attention on any of the points raised above. However, we accept that there is learning around communication with the carer about identified fire risk within the limitations of UK GDPR/Data Protection A 2018 and for the HFSV process to reinforce the need for care providers to have regard to fire safety. We have set out above that we are taking steps to explore improvements.

LFB has been working to educate carers on a local and pan-London level for several years. There is information for carers on the LFB website and an intranet page with resources for staff to use. LFB have an established relationship with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The NFCC Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment form is a tool for carers to use to identify and mitigate fire risk for the people they care for. This form is in the process of being updated. The CQC are committed to sharing this information with the care industry.

LFB will engage with Local Authorities to share the learning from this report and reiterate the role of the carer in reducing fire risk. LFB will also share the learning from this report, and our subsequent actions to improve our processes, with other Fire and Rescue Services through the NFCC National Organisational Learning process.

LFB is committed to improving fire safety provisions for vulnerable people who may be in receipt of care across London, with the aim of reducing the number of fires that result in death or serious injury.

Yours sincerely



Deputy Commissioner