

[REDACTED]
Strategic Director
Climate, Homes & Economy
Hackney Service Centre
1 Hillman Street
London, E8 1DY
[REDACTED]

19 December 2024

Dear HM Senior Coroner,

Sarah Margaret Mary McGreevy (died 16.06.24)

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths following the Inquest into the sad death of Sarah McGreevy.

The role of the London Borough of Hackney

The role of the London Borough of Hackney as a London Borough has responsibilities, amongst other things, for social housing. The Borough is responsible for a variety of dwellings including tower blocks. The Borough is the freeholder of Macbeth House which is an eight storey concrete framed residential block of flats with a communal walk way balcony to the front and private balconies to each dwelling to the rear.

Prevent of Further Deaths Report

In the Regulation 28 Report you asked the Borough to consider the following concern:

- 1 Several residents reported a practice of climbing onto their balconies in order to clear blocked drainpipes. This practice carries a clear risk of falls.
- 2 The Leaseholder of Flat [REDACTED] informed me that he was not aware of any work being undertaken to the guttering or drainpipes to the block following Ms McGreevy's death.
- 3 In the absence of remedial works the practice of the residents unblocking pipes themselves is likely to continue.

Response

The Borough had no knowledge of the inquest hearing, was not requested to provide any evidence to support the inquest nor were we invited to attend and give evidence, the first notification was the Prevention of Future Deaths report from HM Coroner.

The Borough is the freeholder of Macbeth House and is responsible for the structure. N & S Arden are the Tenant's Management Organisation (TMO) and they are responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the common areas and grounds of the Estate.

Each flat has a private cantilever concrete balcony to the rear which is accessed via a separate UPVC glazed door from the living room and are finished with asphalt with a kerbed sole gutter to the outer edge of the balcony floor which is laid to falls and discharges into a gully outlet through the balcony into a UPVC 75mm surface water drainage stack. At the base where the gully passes through the slab a branch is installed directing the drainage to the vertical 75mm stack. This accommodates a screw on end rodding eye access cap. The balconies are provided with metal framed balustrading consisting of the frame, replacement sheet infill panels to the front and original Georgian wire glass to the sides. A replacement handrail is fixed above the panels at a height of 1165mm above the finished floor level. A number of balconies have been provided with pigeon netting.

Following receipt of the Prevention of Future Deaths Report a search was conducted on the housing repairs system to identify any reports of blockages or defects in relation to the balcony surface water drainage stack. A search was conducted in respect of the block as a whole and individual flats. No reports had been received for any Works Orders. Enquiries were further undertaken with the TMO and they have confirmed no reports of any defects or request for repairs were made. At no point are tenants / leaseholders expected to undertake repairs to, or unblocking of gutters / fall pipes.

A report for repairs can be made directly to the Borough online for non-emergency repairs or via the repairs telephone number 0208 356 3691. Non-emergency repairs are answered during office hours 9am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 9am to 4pm Wednesday. Alternatively, non-emergency repairs can be raised via the TMO as Leasehold tenants may not be aware of the reporting procedure. The tenant's management organisation operates Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm, from an office in the Arden Estate immediately adjacent to Macbeth House.

The repair timescales for a normal repair, namely non-urgent, would be within 21 working days. Surface water drainage systems are not subject to periodic inspection and are reactive in nature.

Action taken

A condition survey was undertaken from ground level on Monday, 25 November 2024 by the Borough's Area Surveying Manager, and the TMO Manager. The survey was to examine the external elements and elevations with particular attention being given to the condition of surface water drainage serving the balconies to the rear of the block.

No defects were noted to the surfaces or elements of the balcony inspected (Flat [REDACTED]), nor of the exposed concrete surfaces of any other balconies. In respect of surface water drainage serving all balconies, except for Flat [REDACTED] (the soffit of Flat [REDACTED]) no defects were noted. At Flat [REDACTED] adhesive tape had been applied to the soffit of Flat [REDACTED]'s balcony from Flat [REDACTED] which is likely to have been placed as a temporary repair to hold the horizontal section in place. To clarify such temporary repair was not undertaken by the Borough nor the TMO.

A works order had been raised following the tragic incident, but access could not be gained to the flat. Plumbers attended following the survey on 27 November 2024 and noted the pipework was secure, free flowing and no repairs were required. It is not clear as to why tape had been applied to the same.

The Borough produces a publication called 'Love Hackney' which is printed 10 times a year and 120,000 copies delivered to homes and businesses in each publication cycle. The magazines are also available at pick up service points across the Borough and is available on the Borough's website. The publication provides information including articles under the title 'Housing Info' which is for council tenants and leaseholders. The January edition will provide a general message regarding keeping residents, families and neighbours safe in their homes and to remind occupiers that if you have a balcony not to use steps, stools or ladders on the balcony and if any repairs need to be carried out, including issues with guttering or pipe works to contact the repairs contact centre.

We hope that this response addresses your concerns. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

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[REDACTED]

Strategic Director Housing

