



South Gloucestershire Council statement in response to the Grenfell Tower fire:

Our hearts go out to those affected by the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, following the devastating fire there. Like all local councils, we are now taking steps to reduce any risk of fire in any of the buildings we own or control and supporting a range of partners, such as schools and housing providers to do the same.

At the outset, it is important to stress that we believe the risks we face as a council are significantly lower than in London and other major urban areas. Notably, we are responsible for a relatively small number of buildings, social housing in South Gloucestershire is managed by Housing Associations and none of our own buildings is more than six storeys high. We regularly review safety standards at our buildings and assessments to date have not flagged up any significant areas of concern. However, incidents like this highlight our obligations and provide an opportunity to review and redouble our efforts to ensure we are doing all we can.

We are continuing to monitor events very closely and will take on board any recommendations that come out as a result of the investigations following the Grenfell Tower fire. Where necessary we will change the way we do things to ensure ongoing fire safety.

What are we doing in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy?

Our property services and health and safety teams (supported, where appropriate, by external expert consultants) are reviewing the fire risk and the protection measures in place at our buildings, including schools, care homes, our offices and other facilities. Further, we are working with partner organisations to support them as they seek to ensure they too have appropriate safety measures in their buildings.

The government has requested lots of information from councils and housing providers to help them assess the extent of any issues around building materials affecting fire safety. We have responded to each of these requests and at this stage have not found any cause for immediate concern in relation to our buildings.

As the scope of the investigations in London grow, so we are also increasing the scope of the buildings and building materials that we want to reassure ourselves and the community about. This work is ongoing and we will continue to support our partners in housing, schools, at leisure centres, aged care facilities, etc, in this work, in addition to providing advice and reassurance to the wider community.

We have also begun to re-inspect all of our school buildings, including those which have been upgraded or refurbished in recent years, as well as older buildings to ensure their fire prevention and evacuation procedures are up to date and follow the best current advice from fire safety experts. To date we have not discovered any issues that give cause for concern, but we appreciate that parents and staff may have concerns and questions, so it is right that we do what we need to in order to provide reassurance.

Emergency Response

We also need to focus on how we might respond to an incident. We have a range of emergency plans and procedures that we test regularly, together with the emergency services and other partner agencies, which key senior officers attend. This is to ensure that should an emergency occur, we can respond in an integrated and coordinated way.

Naturally, we hope that we will never need to put these plans into practice, but incidents like Grenfell Tower provide learning opportunities that help shape our emergency response. As part of this, we are planning to offer further refresher training for senior officers so they are clear about roles and responsibilities in an emergency.

We have no doubt that if a similar incident was to take place in South Gloucestershire, council staff would not hesitate to step up to the mark in volunteering to help out, as would the public and wider community, but we want to ensure that we have greater numbers of people pre-trained to work in rest centres and incident rooms and to attend the scene as local authority incident officers.

What do the public, business owners and landlords need to do?

We encourage everyone, in your homes, schools, businesses and any rental properties that you own, to check for fire safety.

Some basic and easy to follow advice can be found on our website at www.southglos.gov.uk/firesafety, but for more information, guidance and advice, please see the Avon and Somerset Fire and Rescue website, at www.avonfire.gov.uk/safety-advice/fire-safety.

Make sure you know your responsibilities to others as a business or landlord and know what you would do at home in the event of a fire.

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities>

<https://www.gov.uk/renting-out-a-property/landlord-responsibilities>

Remember, if there's a fire in your home or you see a fire in someone else's home call 999 as soon as possible. Don't try to put the fire out, leave that to the fire brigade.