

Submission made by Rachel Dobson, Head of Health & Safety and Fire Safety for Mainstay Group Limited - [racheldobson@mainstaygroup.co.uk](mailto:racheldobson@mainstaygroup.co.uk) - 07875 702607

Evidence is submitted on behalf of Mainstay Group Limited

### **Overview of Mainstay Group Limited**

Mainstay are a successful, independent and privately-owned company wholly dedicated to residential, facilities and mixed-use management.

Within the Mainstay Group Ltd umbrella are:

- Mainstay Commercial Ltd - Management of Commercial property nationally accredited by the RICS
- Mainstay Residential Ltd - Management of Residential property nationally accredited by the ARMA - ARMA-Q
- Mainstay Facilities Management Ltd - Provider of soft services nationally

Mainstay currently manages in excess of 35,500 units across 495 schemes in England and Wales. A further 5,000 are portfolio management ground rent only and commercial property instructions.

Health, Safety and Compliance is always considered a priority at Mainstay to ensure the protection of all stakeholders. It is important to us through the services we deliver to be able to demonstrate that the landlord's obligations are being met or that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure safety on a development.

Within Wales, Mainstay manage 20 developments which range from small apartment blocks of 10 units up to large developments in excess of 500 units.

Within the past 12 months there have been 4 fire safety audits on 4 of our managed developments. 3 of which resulted in Actions Plans and 1 resulted in an Enforcement Notice which expires on 7th September 2019.

### **How has the private sector responded to concerns about fire safety in high rise residential blocks?**

Over the past 3 years Mainstay have formed a close relationship with our Primary Authority Partner, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, who provides assured and tailored advice on compliance with fire safety legislation and codes of practice.

Mainstay work proactively with resident management companies, resident groups, individual leaseholders, freeholders and registered providers.

We also work with Enforcing Authorities with challenges our business faces and how we aim to comply.

## **National Assembly for Wales' inquiry - fire safety in high rise blocks**

Amid complex statutory and regulatory frameworks, in which residential block management operates, we pride ourselves on delivering regulated, accredited and paramount technical service, combined with an original approach to client and customer engagement.

- We are Corporate Members of the British Property Federation ('BPF').
- Mainstay are a regulated corporate member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ('RICS').
- OHSAS18001 - We hold the internationally recognised standard for occupational health and safety management systems.
- ISO 9001 - We hold the world's most established quality framework for quality management systems.
- Corporate member of Association of Residential Managing Agents ('ARMA'),
- Many of our staff / property managers are members of the Institute of Residential Property Management ('IRPM') and qualified at Associate to Fellow level.
- Corporate Member of Association of Retirement Housing Managers ('ARHM'),
- Mainstay has accreditations with both SafeContractor & CHAS Safety Scheme's in Procurement.
- We are Corporate Members of BIFM
- Mainstay is authorised and regulated by the FCA (Reg No: 479886).

Mainstay appointments of qualified/competent risk assessors to undertake Fire Risk Assessments at all of our managed properties. As part of the rigorous interview, assessment, and induction of new staff, we assess competency, knowledge, and experience relevant and deploy work shadowing and group sampling of risk assessments as part of an extended induction and well as CPD.

### **What is the extent of remedial work that needs to be done to meet fire safety standards in Wales, and what arrangements are in place to cover the costs?**

Fire Safety Audits conducted by Enforcing Authorities have been centred around passive fire safety, in particular compartmentation and fire doors. These areas are identified through fire risk assessments.

At 3 of our developments where actions plans were devised in conjunction with the Enforcing Authority, the deficiencies identified were predominately issues with compartmentation and fire doors.

Property 1 - an independent survey was conducted on all passive fire safety throughout the building following on from an inspection by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Costs for the compartmentation issues was recharged through service charge at a cost of £3,639.60

Property 2 - All works completed were in-line with the deficiencies outlined on the action plan by Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the fire risk

## **National Assembly for Wales' inquiry - fire safety in high rise blocks**

assessment. Costs for the fire door deficiencies was £7,034.40 and was recharged through service charge. Compartmentation issues were after negotiation by Mainstay rectified by the developer, resulting in no cost to the Leaseholders.

Property 3 - All works completed were in-line with the deficiencies outlined on the action plan by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Costs for the deficiencies was £1,562.94 and was recharged through service charge.

Property 4 - Enforcement Notice was served in June 2017 by Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Deficiencies identified related to passive fire safety. After negotiation, the Developer took responsibility for the deficiencies, however Mainstay having further concerns of the quality of workmanship throughout the building instructed a Passive and Structural Fire Protection Survey.

The conclusion of the report was that the building is of a sub-standard build and there are various major issues of non-conformance with a large risk to life. The cost to remediate the deficiencies is £3.7 million. On the 27th June 2018 Mainstay received a second enforcement notice pertaining to the further issues identified.

Mainstay have contacted the developer and presented the report and asked that they take accountability for these defects in the same way they took accountability for the first EN deficiencies. At present the developer has not accepted responsibility and a Section 20 consultation is taking place with the residents to make them aware of the issues and potential costs they may incur.

**How are leaseholders / residents in Wales being informed about recent developments and reassured about fire safety measures in their block? More broadly, to what extent are residents' views about fire safety being listened to and addressed.**

With significant deficiencies that are identified either through enforcing authority inspections and/or fire risk assessments which have a significant cost attached to the remedial works, the Property Manager will engage with Leaseholders to provide full details of the deficiencies and remedial costs.

This will be through Leaseholder meetings, letters, via telephone discussions or email. This gives Leaseholders and Mainstay the opportunity to openly discuss the deficiencies present, timeframes for remedial work to be undertaken and ramifications. It also gives Mainstay the opportunity to offer reassurance to Leaseholders that everything is being done to maintain the safety of the building.

During Leaseholder meetings Health and Safety is always an agenda item with prevalent issues highlighted to Leaseholders providing them with an opportunity to discuss collectively.

## **National Assembly for Wales' inquiry - fire safety in high rise blocks**

Following on from the events of 14th June 2017, Mainstay took all measures possible to reassure all of our Leaseholders & residents where there are sub tenants within all our apartment block developments on fire safety measures in place within their building. This included letters being sent out to all Leaseholders & residents on the following (an example template is attached):

- Reiteration on whether the building operates a Stay Put policy or Simultaneous Evacuation policy and measures to take in the event of a fire.
- What, if any, communal fire alarm/detection systems are in place
- Fire safety in their own home
- Communal areas safety

A full statement was posted on our website and Property Managers engaged with Leaseholders & residents throughout this period of uncertainty and gave reassurances on the safety of their buildings.

### **What, if any, additional practical or financial support is needed from the Welsh or UK Governments to help ensure high rise blocks are safe?**

More recourse is required and the power to take action against developers where there is clear evidence that fire safety deficiencies identified are items that existed from build stage.

Greater controls are required by the Government & its Local Authorities at the handover/completion stage of apartment block builds to ensure that the building is in fact completed correctly & fit for use. Therefore avoiding the situation in the future whereby a completed building can be handed over which is of a sub-standard build with various major issues of non-conformance with a large risk to life.

Developers need to be held accountable and take responsibility where this has been identified to rectify the issues at no cost to the leaseholder.

Approved inspectors and local authority building control also need to take responsibility and accountability for deeming a building safe and compliant when it has been proven the building is of a sub-standard build which was present at handover and sign off.

**Customer Reference:** «TenantRef»

«Date»

«TenantName»

«TenAdd1»

«TenAdd2»

«TenAdd3»

«TenAdd4»

«TenPC»

### **Important Reminder Distributed to «Distributed\_to»**

Dear «TenantDear»

#### **Re: Fire policy and systems**

We are writing following the tragic incident at Grenfell Tower last week. First and foremost, we would like to extend our sympathies to all those affected by the incident.

We have received numerous queries from residents of buildings we manage, therefore we are writing to clarify the policies and systems in place at your property.

This is not intended to raise any cause for immediate concern, we are writing to all leaseholders and residents at the buildings we manage to provide this clarification.

### **This building operates a 'Stay Put' policy**

*Modern construction materials have been used throughout the block, which provide protection from the spread of smoke and flame by compartmentation. As such, each apartment is designed to give adequate protection for no less than 30 minutes, should a fire occur.*

#### **If A Fire Breaks Out In Your Home:**

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away, then close the door.
- Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave.
- Close windows, doors and the front door of your flat behind you.
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out.
- Raise the alarm by using a 'break glass' call point (if installed as part of the alarm system)
- Call the fire service.
- Wait outside, away from the building.

#### **If You See Or Hear Of A Fire In Another Part Of The Building:**

- The building is designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere.
- You must leave IMMEDIATELY if smoke or heat affects your home, or if you are told to by the fire service.
- If you are in any doubt, get out of the building.

**To Call The Fire Service:**

- Dial 999 or 112.
- When the operator answers, give your telephone number and ask for FIRE.
- When the fire service reply give the address where the fire is.
- Do not end the call until the fire service has repeated the address correctly.

## Communal Fire Alarm Systems

- The communal areas of this building are installed with smoke detectors to operate automatically opening vents, which keep the common parts, particularly stairways, free from smoke. **This is an AUDIBLE system and alarms will sound.**
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In addition to the clarification on the policy and systems in place, we would also like to re-iterate the following advice:

### Fire safety in your own home

- You must have one or more working smoke alarms in your flat and these must be tested on a regular basis to ensure they will function in the event of an emergency.
- Your front door forms part of the means of escape and it must therefore be a correctly fitted 30 minute fire door that meets current standards

### Communal areas safety

- It is important that all communal fire doors and pedestrian fire doors are kept closed at all times to prevent the spread of smoke and fire, unless on an automatic door closing system, and to ensure that the fire systems operate correctly. **Please report any defects to fire doors to your Property Manager.**
- Please ensure all communal corridors and means of escape are kept free and clear at all times.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact our Regional Customer Support Team on «Regional\_No», who are available between the hours of 8.00 am and 7.00 pm Monday to Friday. Alternatively, you can contact our Regional Customer Support Team via email using «SiteEmail».

Yours «TenantYours»

«PMName»  
«PMRef»