

Grenfell Tower safety works: write-up and Q&A from 27 July event

At our online event on 27 July, we let you know about safety works that would be taking place in the Tower. People who attended the event were able to ask questions of the panel members, who have different roles in managing, carrying out or communicating about the works that are happening. The site management team was represented, as well as one of the external contractors responsible for safety on site.

- Some questions from the community were provided to us in advance and some were asked during the event.
- There were around 45 questions and we have summarised these for you, grouping them into themes below.
- You can also watch a video of the event at: youtu.be/n4hXwsTOV-4.
- We will be holding follow-up events on 21 and 23 September and have provided the details for those at the bottom of this document.
- In early July, [we wrote to bereaved families and former residents of Grenfell Tower about safety works](#) that would begin in the Tower in early September. We also published a [Grenfell Community Update](#) about what this work will entail.
- We have also recently published a [Grenfell Community Update](#) on the environmental checks and the next stage of soil sampling around the Grenfell Tower site.

About the safety works

The fire caused some structural damage to the building. To support the building and to help with the police investigation, temporary 'props' (aluminium supports) were installed. There are currently more than 4,000 props inside the building, and they are monitored and inspected regularly, by specialist engineering contractors. The current props now need to be supplemented so that we can ensure the building's continued safety.

To enable the installation of these props, we began some preparatory works in late July. From this month, specialists will start removing large, heavy and damaged items from individual flats within the Tower, such as white goods and pipework. Later in the autumn, they will remove asbestos, which is mostly in the ceilings of individual flats. This work will enable us to install the additional props.

The event panel

- Matt Hogan: Grenfell Tower site manager working for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Matt and his team manage the day-to-day coordination of activities on site and the safety works, and to reduce the disruption to local residents that can be caused by this work.
- Mary Mullix: director of North Kensington health recovery at the NHS West London clinical commissioning group.
- Cecil Sinclair: a civil servant in the community engagement team at MHCLG.

- Marc Smith: director at DeRisk, an external contractor for MHCLG looking after the health and safety aspects of the tower.
- Laura Williams: a civil servant in the community engagement and communications team at MHCLG.

Questions and answers

Thank you very much to all of you who submitted questions either to the panel or prior to the event. This is a summary of the questions that we received and the answers, which we have grouped into themes.

Timings of works

Q: Why did the works not start while the schools were closed to most of their pupils?

A: Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to start the works earlier and during the period of school closures this spring and summer. The propping system for the Tower, and the associated works, needed to be planned and designed with specialist engineers and this has taken some time. Safety is the priority, so it was important to have a strong plan in place before beginning the work.

Q: Will community members be invited to have oversight of the safety works process?

A: As the work gets underway we will look to establish a regular group for those who are interested, so we can keep you updated on the works, giving you an opportunity to raise any questions or concerns, and to ensure that you are able to access monitoring data. If you would like to hear more about this please contact GrenfellTowerSite@communities.gov.uk

Environmental safety and monitoring

Q: Can these safety works all be done while the children aren't at school, and will more air testing monitors be placed within schools?

A: The works will take several months to complete, which means it will not be possible to carry them all out during school holidays. However, as we do already, we will work with the schools so that any disruption to pupils, parents and school staff is kept to a minimum.

There is on-site monitoring within the two closest schools, Kensington Aldridge Academy and St Francis. We are in discussion with the schools about whether they require anything further, and we will keep the community informed on how that is approached.

Q: Have residents been exposed to the asbestos that's been in the building the past three years?

A: Since the fire, the asbestos within the building has been closely monitored. We've been carrying out routine and robust air monitoring of the site and the surrounding areas to determine if there was any potential for asbestos fibre release. At this stage, there hasn't been any detection of an elevated asbestos fibre count. We also carry out air testing inside the Tower daily. As with the samples taken from outside the Tower, this testing hasn't identified any fibre levels that are of concern, or that would put people at risk. You can read that air testing data in [Public Health England's weekly monitoring reports](#).

A further report contains [Public Health England's evaluation of asbestos air sampling taken at the Grenfell Tower site between November 2018 and June 2019](#). This is the timeframe in which sealed bags, containing material from inside the Tower, were transferred from the Grenfell Tower site garages to secure containers on Grenfell Road. While there is no safe level of asbestos and exposures should be kept as low as possible, it is considered by Public Health England that additional risks to public health from the storage and movement of the bags of material would be low.

Asbestos inside the Tower is contained within the decorative coating used in ceilings. The independent regulator, the [Health and Safety Executive](#), considers it to be very low risk. To minimise the risk to public health and provide more reassurance to the community, we are taking a more cautious approach to asbestos removal from the Tower, going beyond what would typically be seen on a construction site.

Q: When will we have the results from testing inside the Tower?

A: The results from the initial soil sampling undertaken within the Tower cordon were included in the [Stage 1 results of the environmental checks programme](#). There has been no testing inside the Tower as part of the environmental checks. Indoor dust testing would not necessarily provide any information about the health risks, due to uncertainty in exposure and intake of any chemicals in the dust.

The science advisory group examined this issue in detail and asked the multi-agency partnership to investigate. The science advisory group agreed with the multi-agency partnership not to do indoor testing as this, and the analysis of the dust, would be unlikely to provide any contaminant linkage between the fire and indoor dust and exposure. This is because of the mixing of any dust with household dust, for example from cleaning products or pets, and from other sources in the outdoor environment such as road traffic.

Q: We have consistently asked for advanced biomonitoring and in-depth toxicology and contamination testing. When will we receive this?

A: Biomonitoring can identify whether a specific pollutant or set of pollutants are present in the body, but it cannot tell us where these pollutants have come from. We are constantly surrounded by chemicals in our environment, in the air, in the water, in food, products we use and clothes we wear, and biomonitoring results will depend on all of these. It also cannot identify or predict future ill-health. However, the scientific advisory group did consider this request during Stage 1 of the environmental checks and asked the multi-agency partnership to investigate. The scientific advisory group accepted the multi-agency partnership's recommendation that there was no scientific or clinical basis for implementing community biomonitoring.

The future of the Tower and justice

Q: Is it realistic to keep the Tower up in its present form until both the Inquiry and then the criminal investigation is finished?

A: We are not aware of any requirement at this stage from the Inquiry, police or Coroner that the Tower must remain until the end of the Inquiry or the conclusion of any police prosecutions.

We will engage with bereaved family members, survivors, local residents and the North Kensington community, on decisions and activity relating to the Tower. Your concerns, questions and interests are an important part of the evidence that will inform the government's future decision-making. MHCLG has appointed Kaizen, a community engagement specialist, to lead these upcoming discussions about the Tower. Read more about Kaizen and this next phase of discussions in our [21 August Grenfell Community Update](#).

Q. Will the safety works affect justice and the work of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry?

A. No. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the police and the coroner have all advised that they have the evidence they need from the Tower and are content for the works go ahead.

Q: What timeframe are we looking at for the Tower to come down?

A: The government's decisions about the future of the Tower will be informed by evidence and specialist advice. Engagement with the community will happen before any decision is made, and we will be having further discussions with you about this process in the coming months.

Future engagement with the community

Q: The community engagement referred to earlier has not reached all of the community. When will this happen and what format will it take?

A: Kaizen are holding introductory meetings with bereaved family and survivor groups, residents' associations, schools and other community groups. These meetings will help Kaizen to tailor their approach to different needs and preferences, and ensure it's sensitive, transparent and tailored to this specific community.

Kaizen will then continue to hold many 'listening' activities, including surveys, drop-in meetings and face-to-face events (if possible), youth activities, and other engagement by phone and online. There will be on-

street 'outreach' discussions in different locations, including the estates and streets close to the Tower, as well as across North Kensington, to reach people in the areas where they live, work or study. There will be regular promotion of the upcoming opportunities for you to be involved, including by posting leaflets to those who live close to the Tower. Throughout the engagement, Kaizen will review what they are hearing, and will share and test the findings with the community.

Kaizen's engagement approach will be inclusive. They will listen and respond to everyone who wants to be involved. They will make focused efforts to ensure that all groups are heard, such as children and young people, older people and those who don't speak English as a first language.

If you would like to be involved in shaping Kaizen's approach, and have not been contacted by them directly, please get in touch with us (see contact details below). We would welcome your ideas and thoughts.

Q: Isn't 'local community' defined as those residents within 500m of the tower? There does not seem to have been any engagement so far with this catchment.

A: We are currently working with Kaizen to define who direct engagement will be carried out with over the autumn. We began by looking at a 500m radius from the site, which would represent roughly a 10-minute walk from the site. The 500m area is not restrictive, as there will be people outside the 500m radius who live as part of the immediate community. However, the 500m radius gives an indication of where Kaizen's active outreach effort will be focused. This work has just begun, and as mentioned above, please let us know if you have not yet been contacted by Kaizen and would like to be involved.

Health

Q: Is the potential impact on health being taken seriously, including repeat trauma?

A: We take the potential impact on health very seriously. There is a range of mental health and wellbeing services available to specifically support those with any health concerns related to the fire and the forthcoming safety works.

If anyone has concerns about their physical or mental health and wellbeing, we recommend they contact their GP in the first instance. We offer enhanced health checks and extended appointments within the GP practice. As part of our ongoing commitment to the community, we are reviewing what else we can do, and what we can offer within the community setting, due to the reduced face-to-face contact at the moment. The Grenfell Health and Wellbeing Service is available for those with additional concerns and can carry out an assessment. We also have the dedicated service for survivors and bereaved families and individuals.

In our conversations with the community, we are supported by local NHS colleagues as much as possible. We want to ensure that those conversations are supported, particularly when they're taking place with a bereaved family member or survivor. Protecting you is at the forefront of our minds during these sensitive and complex conversations.

Q: How do any of these services relate to Fiona Wilcox and Anna Stec's reports?

A: The response to this question will be shared in the next environmental checks community update and will be published in the ['Soil and environmental checks'](#) section on GOV.UK.

Miscellaneous

Q: Is just anyone allowed to project something onto the Tower? What is the oversight around this? The recent projection caused significant distress and upset locally.

A: We are aware of and empathise with the trauma that this projection onto the Tower caused. We did not receive any prior notification of it, nor did we give permission for it. The image was projected from outside the site boundaries, but we've been working with the council on how to reduce the possibility of that type of event being repeated.

How to get in touch or for more information

This is one of several regular updates that we will provide by email, online and by post about these works as they progress. We will continue to work closely with local groups and organisations to ensure they have the information they need.

We understand that the works might cause distress or discomfort. We are available for conversations with you or your family and to answer any questions you might have.

- **For the site management team:**

Email GrenfellTowerSite@communities.gov.uk or phone **0303 444 0011**

- **Join our next online Q&A event on 21 September, from 6pm–7pm. You can join the event by clicking onto: bit.ly/21sept2020event.** Please email us if you would like us to send the link to you directly, or if you have a specific question that you would like us to answer.

- **Come along to our Lancaster West estate drop-in event on Wednesday 23 September, from 4.30pm–6pm, at the rooftop area of the North Kensington Resource Centre, Whitchurch Road (W11 1WF).** You will be able to speak to our team about the works and ask questions. This event will follow COVID-19 guidance to ensure public safety.

- **Telephone ‘drop-ins’ take place every Wednesdays, 10am–12noon: Phone 0303 444 9086**

We have also sent a leaflet to residents local to the Tower, with further details about how we will approach the asbestos-removal later in the autumn. This leaflet also contains the joining details for the 21 September online event and the 23 September drop-in event.

The digital signs around the site will contain the latest information about the works. You can also read updates and letters about these safety works online at: www.gov.uk/grenfell-community-updates.

For the independent Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission:

Grenfell Tower
Memorial Commission

- Email GTMCSecretariat@communities.gov.uk or phone **0303 444 4831**
- Visit www.grenfelltowermemorial.co.uk and join the mailing list via the [contact](#) page)

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (17 September 2020)