

APPCOG Stakeholder Forum – Minutes

Thursday 1st October 2020

11:00 – 13:00 | Teleconference

Chair: Chris Bielby, *Chair of the Gas Safety Trust*

Attendees

Chris Bielby, GISG (CB) - Chair
Alan Young, HETAS (AY)
Andy Curtis, CoGDEM (AC)
Ashton Martin, RoSPA (AM)
Avril Samuel, KHMT (AV)
Chris Yates, CORGI (CY)
Claire Comber, (CC)
Claire O’Meara, Fire Angle (CM)
Dan Edwards, SGN (DE)
David Goodall, Steve Vick International (DG)
Emily Cheek, Public Health England (EC)
Frank Brehany, Independent Travel Consumer
Campaigner (FB)
Gordon Samuel, KHMT (GS)
Graham Watts, Boat Safety Scheme (GW)
Guy Alexander, LFB (GA)
Hayley Tranter, Cadent (HT)
Howard Cane, NACE (HC)
Ian McCluskey, IGEM (IMc)
Isabella Myers, COMed (IMy)
Jilly Robson, London Fire Brigade (JR)
Kerry Potter, SGN (KP)
Malcolm Greefam, (MG)
Mathew Willis, Policy Connect (MW)
Maureen Nolan, Gas Safe Charity (MN)

Nathaniel Shaugnessy, Policy Connect (NS)
Patrick Meeham, NFCC (PM)
Phil Cleaver, Chimney Skills Training (PC)
Rebecca Scarlett, CO survivor (RS)
Robert McLaren, Policy Connect (RM)
Roland Wessling, CO+SciTech (RW)
Sally Thomas, Wales & West Utilities (STh)
Scott Darroch, Gas Safe Register (SD)
Stephanie Trotter, CO-Gas Safety (STr)
Steve Dacre, NGN (SD)
Trevor Hendes, NACE (TH)

Apologies

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (IF)
Emma Fraser, London Fire Brigade (EF)
Nigel Winnan, Wales & West Utilities (NW)
Phil Burrows, Cadent (PB)
Thomas Bradley, Cadent (TB)

1. Welcome by the Chair, introductions and apologies

CB welcomed members and received apologies.

2. Matters Arising

NS noted no actions arising.

3. Gas Safety Week 2020 Presentation

SD updated members on Gas Safety Week (GSW) 2020. This year has been remarkably successful, despite difficulties. Now the tenth year, the Gas Safe Register (GSR) wanted to build on the pan-industry nature of GSW and everything done in previous years: it is, by design, less about GSR each year. Stakeholders and supporters do a lot. GSR set the theme – community and the importance of networks and neighbourhoods – back in November, this has been more relevant than we could have expected. New community and neighbourhood groups have formed during lockdown, organic networks have sprung up, and people are checking their neighbours are OK. Many people are now seeing more of a role for themselves within their local communities; finding a new importance in looking after each other and seeing how one person's actions affect others. People are getting more used to supporting and helping each other.

GSR looked at the neighbourhood gas watch, the survey work undertaken showed that close to 90% of people who had formed or been involved with those social networking groups planned to continue to do them after COVID. That matters, because when it comes to the sharing of gas safety and CO messages, there is a wealth of research which has shown that personal recommendations (e.g. to get a gas safety check or a CO detector) are powerful. GSR produced a short film for GSW2020, with the support of Neighbourhood Watch. The film, Ripple Effect, shows the impact that a gas incident can have on a street, and so develops the GSW2020 theme of community, networks and neighbourhoods.

To enable and showcase engagement from MPs, GSR produced a video which included a range of APPCOG and other MPs, and a message from the Housing Minister, Rt Hon Chris Pincher MP.

The Sun on Sunday, Star and Daily Metro all ran stories for GSW, British Gas also came out in support of GSW, trade press responded widely.. We had complete buy in from Johnson press group, who published stories in their 150 titles across the UK. Some lifestyle magazines also ran GSW stories. GSR produced an audio package with Gas Safety Superheroes that was used by local radio stations, gaining approx. 370 hits across 170 stations which gives a reach of about 5.7million listeners. This massively over performed our expectations. Social media and LinkedIn engagement and messaging was also really positive. SD thanked members for contributing and supporting GSW, this is what makes it so strong. CB praised the work and reach of all who helped with GSW.

KHMT made two videos for GSW as well, which included a patron who is a member of the House of Lords, this is available on the YouTube channel.

Action: all members to seek opportunities to share this important public messaging from both GSR and KHMT, NS to share. [done]

4. APPCOG Secretariat Update

NS gave some highlights from the secretariat update:

Carer's and CO

The literature review for the report is now complete, this has found that approximately 20% of all UK homes may have dangerous levels of background CO exposure, putting HSCPs at significant risk. Anecdotally, those

in the sector, including the RCN, say awareness of the signs and symptoms of CO poisoning is low. Simon Main from Gas Safe Charity (Think CO) is working with the RCN and NS thanked SM for his support in establishing contact. Gas Safe Charity has funded a program called Think CO run by SM and Hilary Bath, which is providing excellent CO learning tools and resources to HSCPs.

Phase two of the project will look at data collection, we currently intend to seek information on CO practices in employment via Fols to NHS Trusts, with the possibility of surveying some carers and engaging with Royal Colleges. COMed have provided useful feedback on this stage. The forward work plan is currently being approved internally.

Priority Services Register (PSR)

NS is researching the possibility of adding pregnancy specifically as a category of eligibility for the PSR. In theory this is possible, as Ofgem have confirmed that categories of eligibility are centrally administered and pregnancy could be added as a 'transient need code'. NS still waiting info on who holds the needs code.

Kerry Potter mentioned in the chat box: there is customer working group re needs codes

Action: NS to discuss with KP [action rolled over to LF]

Alarms

Andy Speake of AICO has delivered two excellent presentations, firstly for COMed in May 2020, and then at a roundtable meeting in August. The APPCOG is now considering how alarms can be used to collect data and increase home safety.

NS advised that the MHCLG consultation on CO alarms regulations had not yet been announced; it was still expected as part of the publication of the social housing white paper

Action: MW is writing up a short report [Update: action rolled over to LF]

CO Data Gaps Workshop

NS is developing this event, following a similar format used for a cabinet office workshop. Attendees will develop a problem statement. Invitees will include Ofgem, HSE, NICE, DHSC. Details TBC [Update: workshop will now be held 1 April 9:30am]

5. APPCOG Working Groups Update

a. Comms Group

The groups' focus has been CO Awareness Week which will come in November, primarily this will be a digital campaign. GSW has shown the importance of unifying the message, all sharing the same hashtags and videos and core messages. RL has started to work up logo and graphics. It is important to show the community behind individual campaigns. MW will lead on this from Policy Connect side.

b. COMed Group

IM provided an overview of COMed project work:

COMed have met twice since last SHF, and are following the work plan. NS sent round a report in May about the establishment of a pilot the CO and the Brain neurology clinic at St George's which has been enabled by the work of COMed. The clinic has paused it's research due to COVID and, as this is a long term project even when it restarts, there will be a substantial wait before results are available.

The next focus for COMed is the effect of CO in pregnancy and on the foetus. Hilary Wareing, the pregnancy lead discovered that approximately 5% of non-smoking women are blowing readings of CO levels that are above the threshold for intervention by a midwife. Out of 11,216 women 442 above 4ppm, and 57 above 7ppm. This supports greater prevalence of CO exposure than official records show and will link with APPCOG data work going forward.

Kat Hawkins from Surrey University presented to COMed in May 2020, on her work using an Adverse Outcome Pathway (AOP). This examined the initiating event of exposure to CO and the hypoxic response and follow through to look at outcomes for cardiovascular health. KH showed there is a causal link between CO exposure and cardiovascular outcomes. This work will be written up into an academic paper, this is a start of the cardiovascular work that COMed will look at in future and engage with cardiologists on. Surrey University are now interested in setting up further research on CO insult and injury, IM will keep members updated on this.

Normobaric Oxygen therapy (NBOT) is currently the only treatment for CO exposure available in the UK. In 2019, NHSE removed hyperbaric O2 therapy as a treatment. NICE perceive that there is a lack of evidence for hyperbaric therapy. However, there are no peer reviewed guidelines for NBOT, and there are unanswered questions about administration of the therapy – whereas the guidance on hyperbaric treatment was extremely clear. For normobaric oxygen therapy, we need guidance on the type of equipment to be used, as this will differ between settings, for example different equipment may be needed in an ambulance than a hospital. National guidance is needed on many other factors such as flow rates, difference for mask and nasal application, how long O2 should be delivered for, as too much O2 can cause damage to the brain. GST has funded some relevant research, results are anticipated. However, guidance that can be used nationally is needed.

Andy Speake spoke to the COMed group in May, the discussion highlighted the potential for using alarms in research; particularly gaining data on home exposure levels and potential associated health outcomes.

IM gave an update on the Emergency Department CO (EDCO) study at St Georges Hospital Trust. This is a prevalence study looking at people who attend the Emergency Department with raised COHb levels. The study has recruited 5k participants and data has been collected, there is a questionnaire to assess the Public Health England (PHE) algorithm (for CO vs flu), follow up with visits from Cadent and SGN engineers to assess if an appliance is the cause of exposure. IM will give a full update when results are complete. AS wonders if there is an opportunity for KHMT leaflets or posters to be given to hospitals, so people might be more likely to consider CO as a cause for their symptoms. IM agrees more leaflets would be useful, however it is thought that all public health information must go through a formal approvals and clearance process before it can be circulated in NHS services.

Hospitals involved in the EDCO study include St Georges, Epsom St Helier, Frimley and Wrexham Park.

c. CO+ SciTech Group

RW updated that the SciTech group is currently dormant and has not met since the last SHF. SciTech was now considering moving to a once yearly format, where members could come together at an annual showcase/conference type event. CB updated that support for running the group has been offered and gratefully accepted by Steve Vick Intl. David Goodall will take a leading role going forward. DG wants to thank Steve Vick, and members for welcoming him.

Action: CB, DG and RW to meet with Policy Connect to discuss future of the group [done]

6. Update from APPCOG members and stakeholders

IGEM

There have been changes to the Gas Quality UK specification standards driven by IGEM. The industry consultation was extended to August, 3-4 months in total and received over 200 comments on the proposed changes. IGEM will meet to respond in October, and aim to publish the revised standard in Q1 2021. HSE have now got a consultation with industry on the impact assessment of these changes as well. Key changes will include introducing oxygen and removing certain interrelated safety factors for appliances that are no longer relevant for today's appliances. Hydrogen will come in later, so IGEM will be working on that as the next stage.

The Gas Industry Unsafety Situations Group has been working to develop an update to the Unsafe Situations Procedure. Comment stage of the consultation has closed, this will be going through approval in the IGEM committee. Key changes are providing clarity on what is or is not RIDDOR reportable for installers and engineers.

LPG regulations are also being brought to a new category. The IGEM annual conference went well and BEIS gave a keynote speech, HSE also spoke. The Gas Utilisation Conference will be held on 17 November. The CO conference has been postponed to 2021. IMc will keep members updated. [update now received IGEM is holding an IGEM Safety Conference **on 9 June 2021**. One of the strands will focus on CO]

Cadent

HT gave an update: Cadent has been working hard on GSW, focusing on social media activity and videos with Gas Safe, and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue, who have focussed on CO for Gas Safety Week.

Cadent are in the process of developing a new resource for CO education in KS2 – the CO Crew, this will be an interactive website featuring games and videos that is pushed out in addition to the ongoing Safety Seymour campaign.

Boat Safety Scheme

GW informed the group of two tragic deaths that took place on 3 December 2019, these were of two 60 year old men in York whilst on a river. The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is currently investigating and will issue a bulletin with the aim of improving safety. BSS will be supporting this with an accompanying press release.

Action: GW to send update to secretariat for circulation when published [done – awaiting full outcome]

London Fire Brigade – CO Boat Project

As EF is sadly unable to attend the meeting, JR informed the group that the project is currently waiting until it can run for 12 months continuously, this is required to account for seasonal changes. LFB are hoping to re-start as soon as possible.

Action: NS to send LFB details to AS and GS for future engagement [done]

NACE

HC updated the group that NACE has recently joined forces with a cross industry trainer to provide a 'track and trace' approach to CO leakage, carrying out confined space training for gas detector training. This is in an attempt to train and educate the installer and fitter.

Northern Gas Networks

SD gave an overview of NGN's recent activity: NGN have been in discussions with CO-Gas Safety to develop CO messaging and are engaging with the EIC. NGN engineers are continuing with doorstep education and awareness for all customers. NGN are looking for new opportunities and innovations that could help with detection, track exposure and then perhaps provide evidence to medical practitioners. NGN are working with a children's university to educate younger people and create a pass book, where kids work through CO educational materials. NGN are seeking to expand engagement with the Lake District foundation and the leisure industry, and have recently delivered some pop up events in partnership with Community Action Northumberland. In addition, the GND collaborative CO group has been reconvened.

Katie Haines Memorial Trust

GS explained that before losing their daughter, he and his wife had no idea of the risks of CO. GS bought a CO alarm from a gas fitter, but was not properly informed of what it was, how to use it or the risks of exposure. Hence, KHMT tries to raise awareness, because education on CO can save lives. AS and GS updated the group on their charity's work. They are focussing on education and awareness. In celebration of what would have been their beloved daughter Katie's fortieth birthday, Avril and Gordon have made it their goal to give away 40 CO alarms to 40 fire stations. They have also distributed 200 CO alarms and informational leaflets through food banks. KHMT are also working with RL to make another film for CO Awareness Week. GS encouraged all members to watch and share the KHMT videos.

Action: NS to link with members from FRS and LFB [done]

SGN

KP introduced herself as the new CO Awareness Lead for SGN. The collaborative CO working group has been formed. Recent SGN activity includes a youth program, which was partially hindered by COVID but has now move to a digitally focussed format. This week Fire Chief Home Safety Week is highlighting CO alarms, SGN has promoted this campaign through social media in partnership with Chief of Fire Commissioners. Customer Awareness is being built via a CO booklet for doorstep distribution.

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)

PM introduced himself as the new Lead CO Office for NFCC, working for West Midlands Fire Service. PM presented work ST is involved in, where Cumbria FRS are running a trial, taking CO atmospheric readings at every call out to a CO poisoning or exposure incidents they attend. PM is taking a proposal forward through

committees that this should become standard practice, however not all FRS have the equipment they require.

Action: NS to pass on PM email address to AS, GS and ST. [done]

7. Gas Emergency Service CO Testing (Co-Gas Safety)

ST from the charity CO-Gas Safety explained the need for the Gas Emergency Service to test appliances for CO after they are re-lit or re-started. This was a recommendation from the HSE twenty years ago (at that time going under a different name, the Health and Safety Commission). ST explained that, as CO markers dissipate rapidly from the atmosphere and the blood once the exposure has been stopped, it is almost impossible to know at what level exposure has occurred when the appliance is on. This hinders effective diagnosis and treatment. In addition, if appliances are not tested after they are turned back on, then there may still be CO exposure occurring. ST asked the group to support this motion.

RS, a CO survivor shared her experience with the group, explaining the difficulties she has had accessing appropriate treatment; despite having confirmation from a visit by the Gas Emergency Services that she had been exposed to dangerous levels of CO, and finding that all her symptoms stopped as soon as the faulty appliance was turned off. RS was not given evidence of exposure to show medics, who doubted and disbelieved her. Survivors need support from the Gas Emergency Service to engage with healthcare professionals.

IM stated that one of COMed's key areas of interest is establishing effective patient pathways, to include gas engineers. This would also enable effective data collection and develop an evidence base of CO prevalence, which is needed to generate an acknowledgement that scientific work on CO needs to be undertaken. IM will feed this discussion back to the COMed group and thanked both ST and RS.

TH stated that there should be effective training for engineers and installers on CO. ST has curated a course with Roland Johns for registered gas engineers but it has remained under used. All agree that prevention is the most important thing.

AY recommended that whatever type of fuel a CO incident relates to, the case should be forwarded from the initial incident responders to relevant people with the competence and specific expertise to investigate properly and ensure the issue is fully resolved. TH commented that there is no formal competence training for CO in solid fuel, which makes it difficult to identify who is actually a suitable individual to provide such sign off and give CO advice to the public. PC suggested that data from Smart CO Alarms (where present) can be used to add further certainty to such investigations.

8. AOB

Baroness Finlay wished to call the groups attention to the Fire Safety Bill, as there may be an opportunity to highlight gas safety and CO in the second reading. IF will put down an amendment in the Fire Safety Bill to require a CO alarm in every building with a gas supply, whether it be occupied or not.

AS suggests there could be follow up re Chris Anderson (whose daughter also died from CO exposure) for a TEDTalk, would IM or RW consider doing this? Both agree this would be great. [currently on hold]

Action: IM and RW to follow up via NS [action on hold]

GS suggests there could be press at the next SHF

Action: NS - member of the press to be invited to next meeting [done]

KHMT has had great success in getting Amazon to remove Black Spot CO detectors from sale on their site. There were also some alarms which had an Age UK logo on that AS has raised but has had no response. HC: NACE have been policing eBay on this for many years.

Action: NS will collate information for stakeholders to take the approach with eBay forward. [done by LF – letter has been sent from 5 parliamentary officers]

9. Chair's closing remarks

CB thanked members for attending and closed the meeting. He noted that this was NS's last meeting as he was moving from Policy Connect to BEIS, and thanked NS for his contribution.

10. Close of Meeting