

Case study



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Fire Service PAS team supports national evacuation strategy for NatWest Group

NatWest Group has updated its national evacuation strategy following a robust and reliable review by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS).

HIWFRS' Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) team advised moving from a named fire marshal programme to a new last person tag system in response to an increase in the number of employees working from home.

Flexible working arrangements and Covid-19 meant that the NatWest Group was finding it challenging to maintain sufficient numbers to cover the fire marshal roles across their sites.

HIWFRS' PAS team advised the bank to implement a standardised last person tag fire marshal model instead and carried out a review on which NatWest Group buildings the new evacuation strategy would be needed for.

As the bank's data centres, cash and coin and branch locations still have a fixed staff quota, the decision was made to maintain the existing named fire marshal process at those sites. However, all office locations will now switch to the new last person tag system.

Staff training on the new evacuation process is currently underway via an E-learning training pack and the change was implemented across all NatWest Group office sites from 1 March 2021.

HIWFRS' Partnerships and Strategic Inspections Manager, Dean Dixon, said:
"It was a pleasure working with and supporting NatWest Group to successfully resolve the concerns they had around their existing evacuation strategy."

"We are thrilled they now have a solution which not only meets their current business needs but will also help to support their flexible working scheme in the future."

Regional Delivery Manager of Health and Safety at NatWest Group Andy Venables said:
"This pandemic has been a real challenge for businesses across the globe and when we needed a solution to meet changing working practices, our HIWFRS PAS partner used their knowledge and expertise to help us create a new evacuation system to suit our business needs."

“This shows the great value in the Primary Authority partnership we have in place. The advice provided ensures we remain compliant and are able to adapt to the way we use our buildings, as well as keeping our staff, visitors and suppliers safe.

“It also shows the potential impact on a global scale this advice can have - We presented the model to our colleagues in Poland and India, and we are now implementing this new arrangement in these countries, after local legislation checks were also confirmed by the teams. We’re excited to see this new evacuation strategy being rolled out across all our UK office sites thanks to our valued PAS partner.”

National Fire Chief’s Council (NFCC) Lead for Business Engagement Mark Andrews said:

“This is a great example of how the PAS can change ways of working with our partners to develop an innovative approach to site fire safety. This particular partnership also shows how the PAS scheme can help to influence fire safety not only across the UK but even on a global scale. A really remarkable success story.”

HIWFRS have been active in the PAS (Primary Authority Scheme) since it was introduced as a regulated function under the statutory scheme in 2014. They currently hold 38 partnerships which includes partners from a range of sectors including housing, care, retail, waste and recycling and hospitality.

CTAs:

Find out more about the work of our Protection team www.hantsfire.gov.uk

Visit the NFCC Primary Authority webpages www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Primary-Authority

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-product-safety-and-standards

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Notes:

NatWest Group’s “Last Person tag system” in practice:

- With the introduction of flexible working, we are now asking that all employees follow the principles of a Fire Marshal.
- As a result, all staff should encourage their colleagues to evacuate in the event of the emergency alarm sounding, and the last person leaving the zone should take the fire tag (the office is made up of zones, with 1 x tag per zone) allocated to that particular zone, to confirm the zone is clear.
- The tag (located at each zone exit) should be then handed to the Fire Warden at the fire assembly point to confirm the zone is clear.
- If the tag is not taken from the zone, then the assumption is that the zone is not clear, however information can be verbally relayed to the warden.
- We would not ask staff to re-enter the building if a tag is forgotten.

- All staff should ensure orderly evacuation and remind colleagues of all available exits and check common areas including checking toilets, meeting rooms, breakout and refuge areas whilst vacating.
- The Fire Warden will replace the tag when the emergency evacuation is complete.