

Alan Hudson FdSc EngTech FIFireE

Job title: Fire Safety Advisor

Employer: Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Tell us about your career to date.

Following my retirement from Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) I took up the position of Fire Safety Advisor at Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH) in January 2018.

GMMH provides district mental health services in Bolton, Manchester, Salford, Trafford and Wigan; and community substance misuse services in Bolton, Bury, Salford and Trafford.

My role includes supporting the Head of Fire Safety in managing all aspects of fire safety, fire prevention and fire safety training development and delivery to all staff. I also provide professional advice regarding fire codes, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005, building regulations and all other relevant legislation both within the Trust and for other client bodies.

Can you describe a typical working day?

I work closely with Capital, Estates, Facilities, Service Managers, and departmental managers in clinical and non-clinical areas to ensure the provision of a fire safe environment for patients, staff and visitors and to facilitate sustained improved patient care and wellbeing.

I ensure all fire incidents are reported, recorded, investigated and managed on the Trust Risk Management system. I also prepare reports on all such incidents.



My work also involves developing and managing systems and procedures designed to reduce the number of unwanted fire alarms within the Trust, in accordance with the Fire Code and local fire and rescue service guidance.

I monitor annual statistics for all fire alarms to review key performance indicators for the fire safety measures and use these figures for the annual 'Estates Returns Information Collection' and Board Assurance Reports.

Other tasks include assisting the Head of Fire Safety in managing and supervising the adequate provision, siting, and maintenance of all first aid firefighting equipment throughout Trust premises, and liaising with key contractors to ensure all fire equipment is serviced and maintained annually by a competent person in accordance with national guidance.

What is the greatest challenge you face in your job?

One of the biggest challenges I face is reducing the number of unwanted fire calls (UwFS) to GMFRS. To do this, a call hold will be trialled in the Trust's highest generator of unwanted fire signals. This will involve the

signal from the fire panel being held (before transmission to the fire service) for a pre-determined short time to allow an investigation of the alarm to be undertaken by staff. Implementing the call hold procedure reduces the risk to the public and firefighters through emergency fire engine movements and increases the time that is available for fire service training, risk information visits and community safety work, as well as increasing the availability of resources for other emergencies.

Another challenge has been training delivery. With the wider pressures facing GMMH due to the effects of COVID-19, classroom training was postponed, and I had to quickly adapt to and embrace the use of Microsoft Teams. The use of Teams enabled me to deliver fire training to staff across the Trust as required by 'Trusts Training Needs Analysis'.

Finally, I attend various project meetings with stakeholders and provide advice, recommendations, and reports for Capital Schemes. These range from small structural alterations, complete ward and building refurbishments alterations to more complex schemes like a new £105m Mental Health Unit being constructed in North Manchester.



The new build is an ideal opportunity during the design stages to address issues that impact on fire safety that are ongoing in existing mental health buildings such as:

- Siting fire alarm call points and emergency door overrides in staff only accessed areas on the wards, which will prevent misuse and damage by patients. This will also reduce the number of false alarms and ensure electronic doors stay controlled by staff which will prevent patients from absconding.
- Introduce softer alarm sounds. This will help cause less distress as mental health patients can react adversely to loud sounds. This will also impact on the number of violence and aggression incidents on nursing staff.
- Siting portable fire extinguishers in secure non-inpatient areas. This will prevent patient misuse and remove the risk of patients misusing them or using them to cause damage or injury.

What attracted you to gaining professional registration as an EngTech?

As a fire safety advisor, I look to keep the workplace environment free of hazards and risks, certainly as low as reasonably practicable. It is a great confidence boost to be able to state that I am a registered engineer with the Engineering Council through the IFE. This recognition puts me on a level playing field with my peers.

What advice would you give someone considering professional registration as an EngTech?

There are many benefits to having a professional registration! It can improve your career prospects and earning potential, and you will be recognised as a professional

Member Spotlight

with experience, skills and competence. Your status and esteem with colleagues, external partners and agencies are greatly enhanced with the use of the title.

How does your employer benefit from you being professionally registered as an EngTech?

My employer benefits from the learning and networking opportunities that have opened up for me since becoming an EngTech. This has increased my opportunities to share knowledge and resources with other organisations like The National Association of Hospital Fire Officers (NAHFO) of which I am a member.

