

Glasgow City Council Internal Audit Section Committee Summary

Neighbourhoods, Regeneration, and Sustainability – Alarm Receiving Centre: 2025/26 Reviews

1 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the agreed Internal Audit Plan, we have carried out two reviews of the Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) operated by Neighbourhoods, Regeneration, and Sustainability (NRS).
- 1.2 The ARC is responsible for monitoring fire and intruder alarms at over 1,100 sites and deals with over 10,000 alarm activations each year. The ARC is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The ARC is accredited by the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) as a GOLD standard ARC. To maintain this accreditation, the ARC must meet the requirements of British Standards (BS) 5979:2007, 9518:2021 (where relevant), 7858:2019, 8484:2016 Clause 7 and BS EN ISO9001:2015.
- 1.3 The purpose of the audit was to provide an assessment of the ARC's compliance with the standards noted and to gain assurance that, for a sample of the BS requirements, ARC management can provide evidence of compliance.
- 1.4 Internal Audit currently review the ARC's compliance with the requirements of the BS' twice per annum. The scope of the reviews included:
 - BS5979: Section 5 – Construction and Facilities.
 - BS5979: Section 6 – Operation of an ARC.
 - BS5979: Section 7 – Records.
 - BS5979: Section 8 – Contingency Plan.
 - BS7858: Screening of individuals working in a secure environment.
 - ISO9001:2015 – Quality Management Systems.
 - Ensuring that any outstanding audit recommendations have been implemented.
- 1.5 This report outlines the findings from both reviews.

2 Audit Opinion

- 2.1 Based on the audit work carried out, a reasonable level of assurance can be placed upon the control environment. The audit has identified two recommendations and two service improvements which management should address.

3 Main Findings

- 3.1 We are pleased to report that ARC management was able to provide satisfactory evidence of compliance with the sample of BS requirements in the following areas:
- BS5979: Section 5: Construction and Facilities,
 - BS5979: Section 6: Operation of an ARC,
 - BS5979: Section 7: Records, and
 - ISO9001:2015: Quality Management Systems.
- 3.2 Satisfactory evidence was provided for the sample in all but one area of:
- BS5979: Section 8: Contingency Plan, and
 - BS7858:2019 Screening of Individual Working in a Secure Environment.
- 3.3 Some administrative improvements were notified to management as part of the reviews, but these do not affect compliance with the BS requirements.
- 3.4 At the time of our first visit in May 2025, the ARC's generator had developed a fault which meant it could not be used until a part was sourced and replaced. To ensure ongoing compliance with the standard, ARC management obtained a temporary generator, of equal rating and this was connected to the Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) to ensure a seamless transition to the generator in the event of a power outage.
- 3.5 Due to the size of the temporary generator it could not be stored in the generator room or the secure compound; it was, however, held within the ARC grounds which are secured by a locked gate outwith office hours and the generator itself was secured by Heras Fencing and padlock, as well as 24/7 CCTV cameras which are monitored from within the ARC. We are satisfied that the temporary generator was stored as securely as possible and staff were notified both verbally and by briefing note of the temporary arrangements, and to be extra vigilant in monitoring the security of the temporary generator.
- 3.6 We noted that the requisite fire extinguishers (2 x 183b Powder) were not stored with the temporary generator; this was highlighted to management during our visit and promptly

resolved, therefore no recommendation was required. Following our first visit, the existing generator was fully repaired and the temporary generator removed.

- 3.7 BS5979: Section 8: Contingency Plan, states that all staff should be instructed in the location and use of fire equipment in the ARC. We found that, while staff are aware of the location of fire equipment, and that there are enough extinguishers available, they have not been instructed in the use of fire equipment.
- 3.8 BS7858:2019: Screening of Individuals Working in a Secure Environment dictates the retention periods for candidates and/or employees screening records; the retention periods vary based on status (e.g., unsuccessful, current, and former employees). We found that all screening records are being held securely, however, many are being retained in excess of the stated timeframes (former employees).
- 3.9 A new code of practice for alarm processing at ARCs (BS9518) was introduced in 2021; this is used alongside BS5979 and does not fully replace it. ARC management has completed gap analysis to identify where there are changes or conflicts from its accredited standard of BS5979. This information has been used to create an action plan for implementation to ensure that the ARC becomes fully compliant with the new code of practice for alarm processing (no deadline set by NSI yet). During both visits (May and November 2025) we confirmed that work towards full completion of the action plan is progressing well and we will follow this up on our next visit (May 2026).

3.10 We confirmed that all previous Internal Audit recommendations have been implemented and that there are no outstanding NSI actions.

3.11 An action plan is provided at section four outlining our observations, risks, and recommendations. We have made two recommendations and two service improvements. The priority of each recommendation is:

| Priority | Definition | Total |
|---------------------|--|-------|
| High | Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required. | 0 |
| Medium | Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. | 1 |
| Low | Lower-level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. | 1 |
| Service Improvement | Opportunities for business improvement and/or efficiencies have been identified. | 2 |

3.12 The audit has been undertaken in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK public sector.

3.13 We would like to thank officers involved in this audit for their cooperation and assistance.

3.14 It is recommended that the Head of Audit and Inspection submits a further report to Committee on the implementation of the actions contained in the attached Action Plan.

4 Action Plan

| No. | Observation and Risk | Recommendation | Priority | Management Response |
|--|---|--|----------|--|
| Key Control: Arrangements are in place to ensure that ARC management and staff comply with the requirements of BS5979:2007. | | | | |
| 1 | <p>BS5979 Section 8: Contingency Plan states that all staff should be instructed in the location and use of fire equipment in the ARC. We found that, while staff are aware of the location of fire equipment and that enough extinguishers are available, they have not been instructed in the use fire equipment.</p> <p>Management advised that instruction in the use of fire equipment has not been completed as there is no expectation for ARC staff to tackle a fire, and that staff are expected to evacuate and call the emergency services.</p> <p>Failure to comply with BS5979 increases the risk that the ARC does not retain its essential accreditations.</p> | <p>ARC management should provide staff with an overview in the use of fire equipment so that they can confidently use it if they wish.</p> <p>As part of this, management's expectations of staff upon discovery of a fire should be made clear (e.g., only tackle fire if willing and able, evacuate etc.).</p> | Low | <p>Response: Accepted.</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation: Operations Manager</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation: 30 November 2026</p> |

| No. | Observation and Risk | Recommendation | Priority | Management Response |
|--|--|---|----------|---|
| Key Control: Arrangements are in place to ensure that ARC management and staff comply with the requirements of BS7858:2019. | | | | |
| 2 | <p>BS7858:2019 Screening of Individuals Working in a Secure Environment, dictates the retention periods for candidates and employees screening records, the retention periods vary based on status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates with failed screening – retain for 12 months from date of failed screening. • Current employees – retain indefinitely. • Former employees – retain for seven years after date of leaving. <p>We found that all screening records are being held securely, however, due to longstanding staff shortages, a system to ensure retention periods are complied with is not in place, resulting in several screening files being held in excess of the stated timeframes. Management advised that the longstanding vacancy of System Administrator has now been filled, and they will be responsible for introducing a system to ensure compliance with screening records retention periods.</p> <p>Failure to comply with BS7858 increases the risk that the ARC does not retain its essential accreditations and that data protection regulations are not upheld.</p> | A process should be developed and implemented to ensure that screening files are held in compliance with the requirements of BS7858:2019. | Medium | <p>Response: Accepted.</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation: Operations Manager</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation: 31 March 2026</p> |

| No. | Observation and Findings | Service Improvement | Management Response |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 3 | <p>BS5979: Section 6: Operation of an ARC requires all ARC operators to receive training to ensure competence to carry out specified duties before being allowed to handle alarms without direct supervision.</p> <p>From independent review of the training records for new staff, it is unclear at which point the staff were signed off as competent. Management was able to adequately explain the process, and we are satisfied that the three new staff employed during 2025 have been appropriately trained, however the record keeping arrangements require improvement.</p> <p>Through discussion we found that the training records in use are dated, and management agreed that a refresh of the form is required.</p> | <p>ARC management should review and refresh the training logs and records maintained to ensure that they clearly demonstrate the training received and when competency was reached and agreed.</p> | <p>Response: Accepted.</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation: Operations Manager</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation: 31 March 2026</p> |

| No. | Observation and Findings | Service Improvement | Management Response |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 4 | <p>BS5979: Section 8 - Contingency Plan states that contingency plans should be rehearsed at intervals not exceeding six months, that records should be kept of actions taken during the rehearsal, and that the contingency plan should be reviewed and if necessary amended, taking account of the results of the rehearsal.</p> <p>We found that ARC management has complied with these requirements and were able to demonstrate that regular rehearsals have taken place (seven so far in 2025), and in all cases a log and a record of the rehearsal were maintained. However, from review of the records, we found that the level of detail included can vary, with some elements being inferred from the lack of information otherwise (e.g., planned, or unplanned, lessons learned etc.). We also noted that where actions are identified following a rehearsal it is not clear whether these were completed as no action log, or equivalent, is maintained.</p> <p>While the ARC is compliant with the requirements of the standard, improvements to the record keeping will improve consistency and accountability.</p> | <p>Taking note of the comments in the observation, ARC management should review and refresh the proforma used to maintain a record/report of each contingency plan rehearsal.</p> | <p>Response: Accepted.</p> <p>Officer Responsible for Implementation: Operations Manager</p> <p>Timescales for Implementation: 31 March 2026</p> |