



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government

Clive Betts MP
Chair
Housing, Communities
and Local Government Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Clive,

Grenfell Tower and Building Safety

As you know, on 29 November I made a Written Ministerial Statement to the House, providing an update on the work to ensure that the bereaved and survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire and the wider community continue to receive the help and support they need; and the work that the Government continues to do to make sure that people are safe and feel safe. I wrote to you on 13 December to inform you of this announcement.

On 18 December, I provided an update to the House on the work that the Government is committed to delivering in response to Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (the Review, May 2018). I also published the Third Report of the Independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce.

I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you as Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee to set this out in more detail.

Building a Safer Future: an implementation plan

The Government has already agreed with the Review's diagnosis that a fundamental reform of the building safety system is required, and we began work immediately to make the necessary changes, encouraging industry to do the same. In a written statement to the House on 19 July, I outlined the progress that the Government had made and, through our monthly data releases, my Department has kept the House updated on the significant progress that it has made on remediating buildings – the latest release was published on 6 December. In my Written Ministerial Statement last month, I outlined further support for local authorities to take action where remediation plans are not clear, including new guidance on the assessment of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding; and support for local authorities to take enforcement action.

The implementation plan commits the Government to a programme of reform over the next few years. Whilst legislation will take time to implement, the Government is already acting. We recognised the strength of feeling on combustible cladding and last month the Government laid regulations to give effect to a ban on the use of combustible materials on the external walls of new

buildings over 18 metres containing flats, as well as new hospitals, residential care premises, dormitories in boarding schools and student accommodation over that height. This also rules out the use of assessments in lieu of tests (AILETs, also known as desktop studies) for cladding and wall systems of such buildings.

We have now published amended guidance which restricts the use of AILETs following consultation earlier this year. This ensures transparency and applies much tighter and more restrictive conditions; requires that any assessments are properly evidenced on the basis of test data; and restricts who can undertake them.

In the summer, we published a clarified version of the building regulations fire safety guidance in Approved Document B (Fire safety) for consultation when we also committed to undertake a full technical review of Approved Document B. A Call for Evidence, which is the first stage of that review, has also been launched alongside the implementation plan and we will gather expert advice on the full range of fire safety issues within the guidance which need to be reviewed.

My statement and the accompanying implementation plan make very clear the Government's intention to implement a lasting step change in fire safety. We are determined to learn the lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire and bring about a fundamental change that will ensure that residents of high-rise buildings are safe and feel safe, now and in the future.

My reform programme includes:

- **A more effective regulatory and accountability framework:** Addressing Dame Judith Hackitt's finding that the regulatory framework around the construction, maintenance and ongoing use of multi-occupied, high-rise residential buildings was not fit for purpose, the implementation plan outlines how the Government intends to create a **stronger and more effective regulatory framework**. The framework has, at its core, clear responsibility and accountability for keeping people safe, as well as **tougher oversight and stronger, better enforced sanctions** to prevent people flouting the system. We will not wait for legislation to start this work – we will be testing and trialling elements of the new system soon and I intend to establish a Joint Regulators Group to develop and pilot new approaches and, in due course, to assist with the transition to a new regulatory framework.
- **Clearer standards and guidance, and product safety:** The Review identified problems caused by complex and inconsistent standards and guidance, and highlighted the importance of taking a holistic view of building work. The implementation plan provides an update on our work to support **better understanding by those who undertake building work of what is required to ensure that buildings are safe** through clearer standards and guidance. The implementation plan also makes clear my intention to consult in the spring on options for a new governance structure for the oversight of building regulations and guidance.

The Government also intends to provide **greater oversight to ensure products are safe where they are being marketed as safe** to those that provide materials used in construction. The implementation plan sets out my intention to establish, over the next 12 months, a 'standards committee' to advise me on new and existing construction product and system standards; bring forward proposals to establish consistent legislative powers which cover construction products; and consider options for national regulatory oversight of construction products to ensure that construction products are manufactured to the standards they should meet.

- **Putting residents at the heart of the building safety system:** a stronger voice for residents is at the heart of the new system, and the implementation plan sets out how government intends to empower residents through **better engagement** with those managing their buildings, as well as **more effective routes for escalation and redress** when things go wrong. We will also provide reassurance for residents through **better information** about protection measures in place in their buildings. And we are launching a call for evidence on how residents are supported to meet their responsibilities to keep their homes and buildings safe.

In the spring, informed by on-going research and input from the Residents' Reference Panel, the Government will consult on requirements for dutyholders to proactively provide residents with critical safety information about their building, and put in place a resident engagement strategy. We will also consult on options for a **clear and quick escalation route for building safety concerns**, including the relationship with a new regulatory framework for building safety and the interactions with existing regulators and redress schemes.

- **Driving culture change and a more responsible industry:** The implementation plan sets out measures to work with industry to **drive culture change** to increase responsibility for building safety, including by **improving competence** of those undertaking building work. An Industry Safety Steering Group, chaired by Dame Judith Hackitt, has been established to challenge and push the sector to drive forward culture change.

The Government will take action to support industry as it leads the way, championing the efforts of those who are doing the right thing and challenging those who have further to go. The implementation plan includes our commitment to review industry proposals and take a view on whether they deliver a coherent approach to assessing and providing assurance on competence across the construction sector. We will also continue to consider whether legislation is necessary to give effect to a new system of assuring competence.

In addition to this, my Department will continue to build on the achievements of a group of Early Adopters in industry, which I announced in July. Early Adopters working with the Government will commit to signing a new Building Safety Charter on culture change and trial and test the implementation of the recommendations of the Review in advance of legislation.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry continues its work and interim recommendations, which may include improvements to the building safety system, are expected next year. You will also be aware that both the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office have provided position statements to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry that sets out the work that was undertaken in the months following the fire. The Government will be mindful of the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and consider them in the light of our proposed programme of work to ensure that, together, we achieve the intended outcomes.

Beyond the building safety programme, my Department is working to strengthen consumer redress across the housing market, as well as considering options to improve complaints handling and dispute resolution for social housing residents through our Social Housing Green Paper. The Government will ensure that, as a package, our work effectively supports residents across all tenures to feel empowered, included and safe in their homes.

Achieving the systematic overhaul that we are aiming for requires all parties to change, and to put residents' safety at the heart of the system. This Government expects everyone to work together and play their part in creating the right culture and behaviours to prevent another tragedy – like Grenfell – happening again.

I look forward to working in partnership throughout this programme of work on building safety issues and ensuring that residents of high-rise residential buildings are safe and feel safe in them.

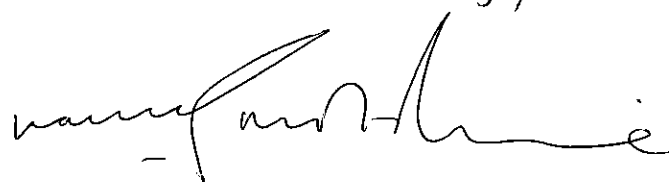
The Third Report of the Independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce

The Independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce continues to provide challenge and advice to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) in their response to the tragedy. I have today published their Third Report at gov.uk.

I was pleased to see that RBKC has made some progress since the Taskforce's second report in March 2018, particularly in relation to important areas such as governance, leadership, and innovative working. I also noted that many council officers have developed a good relationship with the people they are serving.

However, the Taskforce is clear that pace remains an issue and that it was to be expected that RBKC would have been further forward by this point than it currently is. The Taskforce has recommended that RBKC needs to: complete their recovery strategy as soon as possible, as well as ensure they have the capacity and capability to deliver it; continue to repair and improve relationships with their communities; maintain their focus on cultural change; and prioritise the rehousing effort to ensure those made homeless by the fire are resettled in good quality, permanent homes as soon as possible.

I have welcomed the Taskforce's recommendation that, moving forward, they will consider the wider Community Relationships which RBKC are developing. I have also encouraged the Taskforce to continue to challenge and work with RBKC on their business and socio-economic development. I have asked the Taskforce to continue their work, including providing assurance to me; and to report to me again in spring 2019.

Yours sincerely,


RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE MP