



Housing and Communities Working in partnership



Information Pack (work-in-progress)

Lessons from Grenfell Community Think Tank

Monday 30th – Tuesday 31st October 2017
Trafford Hall

LSE Housing & Communities produced this Information Pack for the purpose of the Lessons from Grenfell Community Think Tank taking place at Trafford Hall on 30th -31st October 2017. It provides participants with some statistics, basic fire safety advice and other resources relevant to the topic of the Think Tank. The Pack includes web-based information found between 15th and 27th October 2017. We take full responsibility for any inaccuracies or mistakes we might have made. Please note that this pack is a work in progress as we aim to produce a complete resource pack by the end of the project which will be sent to the think tank participants at a later date.

About the Housing Plus Academy

The Housing Plus Academy is a partnership between 15 leading housing associations and local authorities, the National Housing Federation, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the University of Manchester, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the National Communities Resource Centre at Trafford Hall and LSE Housing and Communities. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation also supports work of the Housing Plus Academy.

The Academy has been developed to promote knowledge exchange and participative learning among frontline staff and tenants of social landlords. The Academy tackles burning problems affecting social landlords today, particularly welfare reform, financial pressure, energy saving, work and skills, community enterprise, and resilience.

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Key statistics on fires¹

Fire Door Safety Week Research 2017

1. Since the Grenfell fire tragedy, almost seven in ten (67%) apartment renters say their landlord hasn't been in touch at all to discuss/reassure them about fire safety measures in their rented accommodation. (Atomik Research 2017²)
2. Since the tragedy, just 17% of landlords have been in touch in person to discuss fire safety measures and 16% got in contact via email or letter. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
3. Those renting through a local authority are significantly less likely to have had face-to-face reassurance (10%) than private renters (23%). (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
4. Over two thirds (69%) of council renters have not had any reassurance from their landlord. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
5. A quarter (24%) of adults surveyed feel more nervous/anxious about living in a rented apartment since the fire and the issues it exposed with regard to fire safety measures. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
6. This rises to a third (33%) of those living in London feel more anxious. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
7. Over half (55%) of those renting a flat do not feel fully prepared on what to do in the event of a fire in their building. This includes 16% of respondents that feel they would make a good guess at what to do but have never been formally told. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
8. One in ten (10%) of those renting in London feel completely under-prepared as they have never been told what to do. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
9. Four in ten (40%) renters say there is not a clear fire escape route displayed somewhere in their building and 9% do not know. Those renting through local authority are most likely to be without these displays or to be unaware of whether they are there (53%). (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
10. Just over one third (39%) of those with fire doors admit they have seen one propped open in their building. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)
11. One fifth (20%) have noticed that there are damaged doors in their building, such as holes, cracks chips, won't open or close fully etc. This includes 12% which reported the damage and 8% that didn't report the problem. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)

¹ <http://firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/101-facts-about-fire-doors-Fire-Door-Safety-Week-2017.pdf>

² Survey of 1001 tenants living in flats was conducted from 23 August – 1 September 2017 by Atomik Research on behalf of Fire Door Safety Week.

12. Almost one fifth (18%) of renters have reported a fire safety infringement or concern to their landlord. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)

13. Three in ten (31%) of those who made a report were left waiting for several weeks before the landlord answered or rectified the issue. Furthermore, 13% said the landlord never even replied or sorted out the issue. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)

14. 12% of renters, rising to 16% of private renters, have contacted their landlord to ask for fire training. Those living in London are the most likely to have requested training (20%).

15. In the majority (88%) - but not all - instances the landlord came back with the training or a date proposed. Six in ten (57%) had to wait up to a week for this, while 13% were left waiting for more than a week. (Source: Atomik Research 2017)

Great Britain

16. In 2015-16, there were 614 dwelling fires per million people in Great Britain³.

17. In 2015, fire accounted for 16% of domestic property insurance claims. (Source: Association of British Insurers⁴)

England

18. There were 303 fire-related fatalities in England during 2015-16. (Source: Home Office⁵)

19. From April 2015 to March 2016 there were 7,661 casualties in fires in England. (Source: Fire Statistics⁶)

20. Dwelling fires are the most common type of primary fire, accounting for 43% of primary fires in 2015-16 and almost a fifth of all fires. (Source: Home Office)

Scotland

21. In 2015-16, the SFRS attended a total of 26,613 fires, an increase of six per cent compared to 2014-15. (Source: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)

22. In 2015-16 there were 45 fatal casualties from fires in Scotland. (Source: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)

23. Just over half of all primary fires were in dwellings (52%) and 23% were in other types of buildings. (Source: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)

³ Fire 0201: Dwelling fires attended by fire and rescue services by nation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

⁴

<https://www.abi.org.uk/globalassets/sitecore/files/documents/publications/public/2016/keyfacts/keyfacts2016.pdf>

⁵ Fire Statistics Monitor: April 2015 to March 2016:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545927/fire-statistics-monitor-1516-hosb0916.pdf

⁶ Fire Statistics: England April 2015 to March 2016:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611182/fire-statistics-england-1516-hosb0517.pdf

Wales

24. There were 19 total fire fatalities in Wales in 2015-16. (Source: Welsh Government⁷).

25. There were 13 fire related fatalities in dwellings in 2015-16. (Source: Welsh Government)

Northern Ireland

26. In 2015-16 there were 843 accidental dwelling fires in Northern Ireland. (Source: NIFRS Annual Report 2015-16¹²)

27. In 2015-16 there were 16 fire fatalities - 12 (Please note: 2 of these deaths are subject to State Pathologist's report to confirm cause of death) of these were in accidental dwelling fires. (Source: NIFRS Annual Report 2015-16)

Basic Fire Safety Advice⁸

Fire safety for tenants

If you live in a purpose-built maisonette or flat your landlord needs to make sure that it is well maintained and fire safe. Landlords must provide you with fire safety information, including an evacuation plan.

If any building refurbishment or redecoration work is done to your flat or building, or defects are identified that could enable fire spread, your landlord must update your evacuation plan, and let you know about any changes.

Under the 2004 Housing Act, landlords must make sure there are adequate escape routes in the property you are renting out.

Depending on the size of the property, they may also have to fit smoke alarms and provide fire extinguishers.

By law, a landlord must:

- Make sure that all the gas appliances provided are maintained in good order and that a Gas Safe engineer carries out a safety check each year
- Maintain all electrical installations (fixed wiring etc.) and any electrical appliances provided (cookers, kettles etc.) and make sure they are safe to use
- Make sure any furniture and furnishings provided meet the fire resistance regulations

Here are some questions to ask your landlord about fire safety:

- Has the electrical wiring in the property been checked lately?
- Are sockets, switches, light fittings and so on checked every year?
- Is there a regular maintenance programme for gas heaters and appliances?
- Are the chimneys and flues cleaned and checked regularly?

⁷ Fire statistics Wales, 2015-16 <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2016/160727-fire-statistics-2015-16-en.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/staying-in-or-going-out.asp>

- Is the house registered with the local authority as being lived in by more than one household (multiple occupation)?

What to look out for in your building?

Fire safety in all buildings is also dependent upon good maintenance and housekeeping.

In maisonettes and blocks of flats:

- all flat front doors and doors on corridors and staircases must be 'self-closing' fire doors
- fire doors must 'self-close' properly, and not be held or wedged open. They are designed to stop the spread of fire
- things aren't stored in corridors or staircases. This can block escape routes and stop firefighters doing their job. They can also feed the fire
- storage on balconies is kept to a minimum
- everyone who lives in the building knows the evacuation plan. Are there signs that show you how to escape fire?
- Emergency vehicle parking areas should be kept clear to allow firefighters access to fire hydrants and the building quickly in the event of fire⁹.

If you're concerned about any of these things, contact your landlord. You may not be able to force your landlord to do the necessary checks but, if you have any concerns, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or your local authority for further advice. Your local authority can give you more details about landlord obligations and can force landlords to provide adequate fire precautions.

What should I do if there's a fire?

If your flat or maisonette is being affected by fire or smoke and your escape route is clear:

- Get everyone out, close all windows and doors and walk calmly out of the building.
- Do not use the lift.
- Don't go looking for the fire.
- Don't open doors if they're warm to touch.
- If there's a lot of smoke, crawl on the floor. The air will be clearer there. Make sure your neighbours know about the fire. Bang on their doors on your way out.
- Call 999, give your address, the number of your flat and state which floor the fire is on.
- If you're trapped, go to the balcony. But don't think about jumping. Wait for the fire and rescue service.

If there is a fire or smoke inside your flat or maisonette but your escape route is NOT clear:

- It may still be safer to stay in your flat or maisonette until the fire brigade arrives.
- Find a safe room close the door and use soft materials to block any gaps to stop the smoke.

⁹ <http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/public-safety/home-fire-safety-advice/high-rise-homes/high-rise-homes>

- Go to a window, shout “HELP, FIRE” and call 999.
- Be ready to describe where you are and the quickest way to reach you.

If there is a fire in another part of the building:

Purpose-built maisonettes or blocks of flats are built to give you some protection from fire. Walls, floors and doors can hold back flames and smoke for 30 to 60 minutes.

- You are usually safer staying put and calling 999.
- Tell the fire brigade where you are and the best way to reach you.
- If you are within the common parts of the building, leave and call 999.

Why is it ‘usually safer to stay put’?

- Our guidance to ‘Stay Put’, unless your flat is being affected by fire or smoke, is based on the fire protection provided in the building and the walls and doors of each flat.
- This has been the case for many decades and, although fires in flats unfortunately occur throughout the country every day, the fire usually only affects the flat on fire.
- However, some smoke may enter corridors when the residents leave the flat on fire, or firefighters enter the flat to extinguish the fire. By ‘staying put’ it will reduce the risk of you entering a smoky corridor unnecessarily and potentially being overcome by smoke. It will also allow our firefighters to tackle the fire safely and quickly without being delayed by many residents evacuating down the stairways.

BBC News: London fire: Why are people told to 'stay put'?¹⁰

By Rachel Schraer and Jack Goodman BBC News 14 June 2017

After the horrendous fire that swept Grenfell Tower in west London, it has emerged that notices in the block instructed people to "stay put". Why is that advice given?

Fire action notices in the tower advised that unless the fire was in or affecting their flat, they should remain in their homes.

Guidance issued to tenants in a newsletter said: "Our longstanding 'stay put policy' stays in force unless you are told otherwise. This means that (unless there is a fire in your flat or in the hallway outside your flat) you should stay inside your flat."

This is fairly standard advice for people living in purpose-built blocks of flats.

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-40273715>

In their general advice, the London Fire Brigade says if a fire breaks out in a block of flats, people living in the block - whose flats are not affected by the smoke or fire - are "usually safer" staying in their homes.

Elfyn Edwards, a fire safety expert and former firefighter, says the stay put policy is designed to stop residents in flats unaffected by fire from unnecessarily evacuating the building and blocking the stairways.

The key factor is how a fire spreads. The principles of fire safety in the UK are based on a fire being able to be contained. Usually the way tower blocks are designed means a fire breaking out in one flat should not spread throughout the rest of a building.

Each flat is designed to be separate and able to contain a fire.

But, Mr Edwards said, the Grenfell Tower blaze - because of the speed at which the fire had engulfed the block - was unprecedented.

Geoff Wilkinson, a fire and building inspector, told the BBC that one of his "major concerns" would be that smoke seems to have spread into escape routes. He also said the system of fire alarms in tower blocks was not exactly as might be assumed.

"The way these buildings work isn't for everyone to escape. With a single staircase, the intention is that the fire is contained within the individual apartment.

"So you don't have to have everyone escaping all at one point. What will happen is the fire service will arrive, they'll take command of it, and they will make a decision as to which floors should evacuate."

Fire safety expert Graham Fieldhouse said a "stay put policy" did not mean residents must remain in all situations.

"There are questions about the stay put policy and people's understanding of the policy," he said.

"If you're affected by fire or smoke, get out."

As an example, guidance issued by Harlow council, in Essex, says: "If you are in doubt - get out."

The Local Government Association, which represents councils, reiterates that message in its 2012 guidance, which says a stay put policy does not imply those who wish to leave a building should be prevented from doing so if they feel "threatened".

One resident of Grenfell Tower, Michael Paramasivan, said that he had been told in the case of fire he must stay in his flat - advice he ignored.

"If we had stayed in that flat, we would have perished," he said.

This is not the first time the advice to stay put has been called into question.

In 2009, six people died after a fire broke out in Lakanal House, a tower block in Camberwell, south-east London.

But, in a report following the 2009 tragedy, the chief fire and rescue adviser, Sir Ken Knight, said the spread of that fire had been unusual.

He said a full understanding of how it had spread was needed to make sure the "stay put" principle was still sound.

Along with many others, that question may now be asked again.

Electrics¹¹

Electrical fires are common: know the limit

If you're having trouble paying your energy bills don't use **candles or naked flames** as a substitute for heating and lighting.

Your electric and gas supplier may be able to provide you with free or subsidised energy efficiency measures, such as insulation, or a discount on your bill. Contact them to find out if you qualify.

Many electrical fires can be avoided by following some simple actions:

- Don't use imitation electrical chargers as they may be unsafe
- Make sure electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them
- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order
- Unplugging appliances and chargers when you are not using them or when you go to bed helps reduce the risk of fire
- Hair straighteners can get extremely hot. Always switch them off and leave them to cool on a heatproof surface
- For plugs that do not come fitted to the appliance, always check you're using the right fuse
- Keep to one plug per socket
- If you use an adaptor, use a fused 'in line' type. The adaptor or extension lead will have a limit of how much power it can safely provide so be careful not to **overload sockets**
- If using a cable drum extension lead, it should be completely unwound to avoid overheating
- Remember: scorch marks, flickering lights, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reasons could be signs of loose or dangerous wiring

¹¹ <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/ElectricalEquipment.asp>

Using an electric blanket

- Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the internal wiring
- Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use
- Never use an electric blanket if you have an air flow pressure relief mattress, or use paraffin based emollient creams. Ask for non-flammable alternatives instead
- Do not buy second-hand electric blankets
- Check regularly for wear and tear and replace your electric blanket every 10 years

What do I do if I have a Hotpoint fridge freezer?¹²

Anyone who has a white Hotpoint fridge freezer model number FF175BP or graphite fridge freezer model number FF175BG should register their appliance with the manufacturer to receive any updates.

Generally, the model number is found on a bar code on a sticker behind the salad container in the fridge.

These models were manufactured between March 2006 and July 2009. About 64,000 were sold but it is not known how many are still in use.

Owners should ring 0800 316 3826 or visit the Hotpoint website.

Fires connected to fridge freezers and other electrical appliances are relatively common.

More general advice on registering an appliance, should there be a recall, and other safety tips are available online on charity Electrical Safety First's page.

Cooking¹³

More fires and fire injuries are caused in the kitchen than anywhere else in the home

Around 60 per cent of accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen. Taking a few simple measures can make all the difference.

How to prevent cooking fires

- Avoid leaving cooking unattended
- Don't cook if you are tired, have been drinking alcohol or taking medication that might make you drowsy
- Take care not to lean over hot hobs and keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob
- Be careful to keep the oven, hob, cooker hood and grill clean to avoid a buildup of fat and grease, which could ignite and cause a fire

¹² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40380584>

¹³ <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/SafetyInTheKitchen.asp>

- Use spark devices to light gas cookers - they are much safer than matches or lighters as they don't have a naked flame
- Double check the cooker and hob are turned off when you've finished cooking
- Check toasters are clean and placed away from anything that can catch fire
- Never put anything metal in the microwave
- Never use a barbecue indoors or on a balcony - burning or smoldering fuel can cause **carbon monoxide poisoning**
- Supervise children and pets in the kitchen at all times and keep matches and saucepan handles out of reach

If a pan catches fire

- Don't tackle the fire yourself and don't attempt to move the pan
- Never throw water over a fire as it could create a fireball
- Turn off the heat, if it is safe to do so
- Leave the room, close the door, shout a warning to others and call 999

Smoke Alarms¹⁴

Smoke alarms provide a vital early warning and can allow extra time to escape if there is a fire in your home.

Sometimes called smoke detectors, you need multiple, linked smoke alarms for your property to be properly covered.

For example, if a smoke alarm is only fitted in the hallway, should a fire start in the bedroom the occupant's life may already be at risk before the alarm would activate.

Since October 2015, **landlords are legally required to install smoke alarms in rental properties** and could face fines of up to £5,000 if they fail to comply.

There are many different types of smoke alarms available including strobe light and vibrating-pad alarms for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, joint smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and mains-powered alarms.

We recommend fitting smoke alarms that come with a 10 year long-lasting sealed battery.

You should fit smoke alarms in every room

As a minimum you should have at least one device fitted on the ceiling of every floor in your home, however, we recommend you fit one in every room you regularly use as well as in the hallway.

Ideal locations for smoke alarms include rooms where electrical equipment is left switched on, such as living rooms or bedrooms.

As well as fitting smoke alarms in your home, you should also fit a heat detector. These are designed for use in the kitchen and go off when a certain temperature is reached.

¹⁴ <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/SmokeAlarms.asp>

Do not place smoke alarms in kitchens or bathrooms as the steam can damage the unit or unintentionally activate it. You should also avoid fitting the devices on walls as this could result in a delay in the alarm activating because of the smoke needing to travel along the ceiling and down the walls.

You'll need a screwdriver and a drill when fitting your smoke alarms.

Always read the instructions that come with the alarm for further fitting information.

Alternatively, you may receive smoke alarms fitted in your home for free, where necessary, when you [request a home fire safety visit](#).

Test your smoke alarms regularly

Most fires in the home start accidentally and ensuring you have working smoke alarms in your home will provide a vital early warning for danger.

That is why it is important and essential to test them every month to make sure they are all in good working order.

- Do not try to replace the battery on a 10 year long-lasting smoke alarm. Dispose of the device and replace it.
- Never disconnect or take the batteries out of your alarms.
- If your smoke alarms beep on a regular basis, change the battery immediately.

Fire Doors¹⁵

What is your responsibility?

Social Landlords (be they Local Authorities or Housing Associations) have a responsibility under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) to ensure that their properties and tenants are safe. The “responsible person” has a legal responsibility under the FSO and can be criminally prosecuted if they do not fulfil their duties. The responsibility extends to the requirement for a fire risk assessment in all non-domestic buildings, including the common parts of flats and houses of multiple occupation.

The state of Fire Doors falls within this and is given specific reference in the FSO. Whilst this legislation has been in place for a number of years, we continue to hear from Landlords who do not understand their responsibilities, tenants who are concerned about their fire doors, [regular prosecutions](#) and sadly deaths that can directly be associated with bad Fire Door management.

In 2015, 58% of all fire door fines (£454,786) were issued to landlords of HMOs in the UK.

Why is a Fire Door Important?

- A fire door ensures that should a fire break out, it can be contained in a “compartment”. This keeps the fire and smoke trapped for a defined period, allowing time for people to get out and make the fire easier to tackle.

¹⁵ <http://firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/council-and-social-housing/>

- It will not fulfil this function if damaged or propped open.

How to identify a fire door?

- Signs that might indicate a fire door include things like a blue 'Fire Door' or 'Keep Closed' sign, door closers, intumescent or smoke seals around the edge of the door or the frame.
- In blocks of flats, the external door to a flat invariably should be a Fire Door, this protects the common areas from spread of flame and smoke. Other locations will depend on the risk assessment and fire plan of the buildings, internal doors could well be fire doors depending on the size of the apartment and distance from the flat entrance door. You can find out more in Approved Document B Volumes 1 (for houses) and 2 Part B (for flats) of the building Regulations.
- All fire doors are fire rated. Some are FD30 (providing 30 minute protection), FD60 (60 minute protection) or higher. There is usually a certification mark (a label or plug) on top of the door if it is a Fire Door – you can find out more in our Best Practice Guide

How to inspect and maintain a fire door?

- Fire doors should be checked regularly, and the more they're used the more frequently they should be checked.
- Anyone can spot a dodgy fire door (do the 5 Step Check today). But if you have legal responsibility for fire safety, call in a professional.
- For professional advice on meeting your responsibilities under the Fire Safety Order, always use a FDIS Certificated Inspector. You can find your local inspector here.
- Create a maintenance checklist and schedule, and check all doors in your building.
- Only ever replace damaged components with like-for-like. Check the fire certificate. A trained person should be responsible for this maintenance work.

Tips for building users

Take action

- Make sure you check that fire doors are fit for purpose, do this [5 Step Fire Door Check](#).
 1. **Check for certification:** Is there a label or plug on top (or occasionally on the side) of the door to show it is a certificated fire door? You can use the selfie function on your camera phone or a mirror to check. If there is, that's good news, otherwise report it to whoever is in charge of your building.
 2. **Check the gaps:** Check the gaps around the top and sides of the door are consistently less than 4mm when closed. You can use a £1 coin to give a feel for scale, this is about 3mm thick. The gap under the door can be slightly larger (up to 8mm is not uncommon), but it does depend on the door - as a rule of thumb, if you can see light under the door, the gap is likely to be too big. It's good news if the door fits the frame and it's not damaged. If not, report it. If the gaps are too big smoke and fire could travel through the cracks.

3. **Check the seals:** Are there any intumescent seals around the door or frame, and are they intact with no sign of damage? These seals are usually vital to the fire door's performance, expanding if in contact with heat to ensure fire (and in some cases smoke) can't move through the cracks. If not, report it - the door may not be properly maintained and in the intensity of a fire may not protect you long enough.
 4. **Check the hinges:** Are the hinges firmly fixed (three or more of them), with no missing or broken screws? If you see problems, report it - the door is obviously not properly maintained and in the intensity of a fire may not perform and hold back the fire for long enough.
 5. **Check the door closes properly:** Open the door about halfway, let go and allow it to close by itself. Does it close firmly onto the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame? If not, report it. A fire door only works when it's closed. A fire door is completely useless if it's wedged open or can't close fully.
- Don't wedge it open and, in particular, keep fire doors closed at night.
 - Seen a dodgy fire door? Report it to your landlord straight away.
 - Refer them to the advice on <http://firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk>.

Tips for Landlords

Regular Inspection

- If you have had a Fire Risk Assessment, make sure doors were covered and the assessor is knowledgeable in this area
- When you do your regular check, identify and include the fire doors, do the 5 Step Fire Door Check.
- If I doubt bring in a professional to carry out a survey – www.fdis.co.uk

How to buy good quality fire doors

- You'll find lots of advice on specifying and buying high quality, third-party certificated fire doors and doorsets from the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme knowledge centre.
- Always use a reputable and competent supplier - many people claim to make fire doors, but only some have got a properly tested product that is proved to work in a fire.
- Ask whether the product has been fire tested and demand to see the documentation that proves it (eg. fire certificate or label).
- It's not just the door itself that matters. The frame and ironmongery is just as important - they all work together. Only buy exact compatible hardware and components.
- Always ask for installation instructions and follow them to the letter.
- Saving a few quid on fire doors isn't worth it. Consider the cost of damage and loss of life if a fire breaks out. Stick to the specification at all times.

Requirements to consider when specifying fire doors

- All rooms should have fire doors which have a self-closing mechanism.
- All fire doors must be durable and combine fire protection with accessibility.

How to install a fire door properly

- Fire doors are not ordinary doors. They're a carefully engineered fire safety device. They must be fitted correctly by a competent installer - if you employ people who install fire doors, make sure they know what they're doing.
- Use our simple [technical checklist](#) to check the installation

Practice checklists for Landlords from the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)¹⁶

✓ Practice checklist: Fire safety for housing organisations

- ✓ nominate a competent person or competent persons to carry out a risk assessment
- ✓ a comprehensive risk assessment should identify fire hazards, identify people at risk, remove, reduce and protect from risk, provide information to plan and train to minimise risk and should be continuously reviewed
- ✓ prioritise action in response to your risk assessment
- ✓ devise a schedule which prioritises remedial work which needs to be done in response to fire risk assessments and set time-scales for improvements to be made
- ✓ the way in which buildings are used and adapted can affect the way in which they are affected by fire: do not assume over the course of its lifetime that a building can withstand fire
- ✓ place fire safety information into all tenancy handbooks or tenancy start-up packs
- ✓ provide fire safety information for leaseholders
- ✓ liaise with your local Fire and Rescue Service to raise awareness of fire safety in the communities with which you work and to offer free home fire safety checks to tenants and residents
- ✓ work in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services to support tenants who want to have a home fire safety check where this is possible
- ✓ in blocks of flats or maisonettes make sure all residents are aware of appropriate action to be taken in the event of fire
- ✓ take particular care to make sure residents whose first language is not English have access to clear and understandable fire safety information
- ✓ take account of the needs of vulnerable residents in relation to fire safety
- ✓ install working smoke alarms in all properties
- ✓ consider installing domestic sprinklers into homes.

¹⁶ http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Marketing%20PDFs/CIH0156-PDF-A_RV_22062017_Fire%20safety%20in%20housing%20final%20for%20public.pdf



Practice checklist: Carrying out a risk assessment

- ✓ landlords have responsibility for carrying out a fire safety risk assessment
- ✓ ensure that all relevant persons in your organisation at all levels and tenants and residents understand and co-operate with the fire risk assessment process and its implementation and review
- ✓ a risk assessment is a dynamic process and it should be regularly reviewed
- ✓ landlords should nominate a competent person or persons to carry out a risk assessment
- ✓ risk assessments should consider that a building may have been subject to alteration and changes over the course of its life which can have an impact on its ability to withstand fire
- ✓ to help you complete a risk assessment, consider using an approved proforma (see proforma contained in the 'Sleeping Accommodation Guidance' for an example)
- ✓ ensure actions are carried out in response to the risk assessment and that defects are remedied.



Practice checklist: The legal framework and following key guidance

- ✓ refer to relevant codes of guidance referenced in this section to make sure your organisation is in compliance with the statutory requirements outlined in the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (or relevant legislation for Scotland outlined in section 2 above)
- ✓ identify a person (persons) in your organisation with responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and for assessing fire risk (or relevant legislation for Scotland outlined in section 2 above)
- ✓ all building work including extensions, provision of services, alterations and insulation, should be fully compliant with the Building Regulations 2010 (see relevant legislation for Scotland in section 2)
- ✓ where gas services are supplied, ensure that your organisation acts in full compliance with Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998: that gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition; and that gas appliances are serviced and subject to an annual safety check
- ✓ make sure that all electrical equipment supplied to tenants is safe and all electrical appliances are supplied and maintained according to the Electrical Equipment (Safety) regulations 1994
- ✓ where furniture and furnishings are provided, make sure they are fully compliant with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998
- ✓ ensure that your organisation is following the correct fire safety guidance for the correct building type.



Practice checklist: Working in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services

- ✓ establish a relationship with your local Fire and Rescue Service
- ✓ with your local Fire and Rescue Service consider developing information sharing protocols
- ✓ help build relationships between your local Fire and Rescue Service with tenants and residents so they can offer, where appropriate, individual home fire safety support e.g. home fire safety checks; and community support such as education and advice.



Practice checklist: Working in partnerships with tenants, residents and communities

- ✓ develop customer insight information to supplement and enhance your fire risk assessment process
- ✓ positively engage with tenants, residents and communities in relation to fire safety
- ✓ liaise with your local Fire and Rescue Service to raise awareness of fire safety in the communities with which you work
- ✓ place fire safety information into all tenancy handbooks or tenancy start-up packs
- ✓ in blocks of flats or maisonettes make sure all residents are aware of appropriate action to be taken in the event of fire
- ✓ take particular care to make sure residents whose first language is not English have access to clear and understandable fire safety information
- ✓ consider the needs of vulnerable residents in relation to fire safety
- ✓ in conversation with your tenants and residents, develop a clear and comprehensive policy on mobility scooters and make sure that tenants, residents and visitors adhere to it
- ✓ consider providing safe and secure storage areas for mobility scooters
- ✓ install smoke alarms in all properties
- ✓ consider installing domestic and residential sprinklers into homes
- ✓ develop strategies for working in partnership with private sector landlords to ensure fire safety.





Practice checklist:
Tackling fire related anti-social behaviour

- ✓ engage with schools and young people in communities to identify the risks of fire related anti-social behaviour and to identify positive alternatives
- ✓ ensure a zero-tolerance approach to fire related anti-social behaviour is communicated to tenants and residents
- ✓ provide smoke alarms to households
- ✓ facilitate or take part in community events in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services around key dates such as Bonfire Night to raise awareness in neighbourhoods of fire safety
- ✓ ensure that within neighbourhoods there are no environmental fire risks such as fly-tipping or un-collected refuse
- ✓ liaise with relevant statutory and voluntary partners in the community such as mental health teams, older person's teams or drug and alcohol teams to identify people who may be at risk of perpetrating or being the victim of fire related anti-social behaviour.

Safety checks following Grenfell Tower fire from Government¹⁷

Annex A: EMERGENCY FIRE SAFETY REVIEW

If it is determined that the insulation within Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) 1 is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the current Building Regulations guidance, it is essential that you immediately implement the following interim mitigating measures to ensure the safety of residents, pending replacement of the cladding.

Interim measures recommended by independent panel of experts

Notify Fire and Rescue Service.

Inform your local fire and rescue service fire safety/protection department. Failure to do so may put fire-fighters as well as residents at risk. The fire and rescue service will carry out an urgent inspection with the 'responsible person' to ensure that they are identifying and introducing appropriate interim measures, as set out below. The fire service will carry out a further inspection once the interim measures have been completed:

- Check that the fire risk assessment has been carried out within the previous 12 months and that the recommendations within the action plan of the assessment have been completed; also, confirm that there have been no material changes (to the building, the fire safety measures or the occupancy) that could, potentially, undermine the validity of the fire risk assessment. If no fire risk assessment has been carried out, you must immediately arrange for a fire risk assessment to be carried out by a competent person (eg by a person who is listed on a register of fire risk assessors operated by a professional body or certification body, or, preferably, by a company that is certificated by a third party certification body, that is, itself, accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service to operate the certification scheme). Guidance on choosing a competent assessor is here <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/19532>
- Engage with residents to ensure they fully understand the emergency fire procedures in the building, particularly the meaning of "stay put". Ensure that fire procedure notices are accurate.
- Check that, at ground level, or on any balconies, there are no combustible materials (eg storage of refuse) in the vicinity of the cladding. Ensure that there are measures to prevent combustible materials in such locations (eg by temporary barriers or instructions to residents). Instruct residents that they must not have any barbeques on any balcony.

¹⁷

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621449/170622_letter_to_LAs_and_HAs.pdf

- Check that all flat entrance doors, and doors that open onto escape corridors and stairways, are fire-resisting and effectively self-closing against any resistance of a latch (or, for example, in the case of plant rooms or cupboards, are kept locked shut.)
- Check all walls that separate flats, plant and store rooms, etc from escape routes to ensure there are no obvious routes for fire or smoke spread (eg, holes where services, such as pipes and cables, pass through walls).
- Check that any smoke control systems, including associated fire detection systems, are operating correctly.
- Check all facilities provided for fire-fighters, including fire-fighting lifts and dry or wet rising mains. If you have ANY concerns you should contact your local fire and rescue service, who will, if they have not already done so, carry out an inspection to ensure functionality.
- Ensure that there is sufficient roadway access and hardstanding for firefighting vehicles attending incidents and to be set up to fight any fire externally.
- Check that insulation or other materials that form the façade meet all relevant standards.

If the building is protected by an automatic sprinkler system (or equivalent fire suppression system) you might not need to take any further interim measures before replacement of the cladding.

If the building is not protected by a suitable suppression system you must consider the need for interim measures. The measures adopted need to be based on an assessment of the risk by a competent person, but the following must, at least, be considered:

- Residents to be advised to ensure all smoke alarms are present and working in their flat; to report concerns about fire safety measures in the building (eg presence of combustible materials in escape routes) to their landlord and, understand the purpose of any interim measures begin taken.
- Closure of car parks in which a vehicle fire could impinge on cladding.
- Provision of a temporary communal fire alarm system, comprising smoke detectors in circulation areas and plant rooms, and fire detectors (possibly heat detectors, rather than smoke detectors) in conjunction with fire alarm sounders in each flat. This will enable the entire block to be evacuated simultaneously in the event of fire. This option is unlikely to be suitable for tall blocks, in which a large number of

people would need to use escape routes at the same time. The system may comprise a wireless system, using radio to link devices.

- Provision of a fire watch by appropriately trained patrolling security officers/wardens.
- In the case of the most serious risk, consideration must be given to moving all residents out of the block until satisfactory remedial work has been done.

Information about Cladding

BBC: The Cladding on Grenfell Tower¹⁸

The cladding - installed on Grenfell Tower in a recent renovation - has come under scrutiny, with experts saying a more fire-resistant type could have been used.

Both the cladding and insulation on the outside of the building failed all preliminary tests by the police. The insulation samples burned more quickly than the cladding tiles.

Documents obtained by the BBC suggest the cladding fitted during its refurbishment **was changed to a cheaper version.**

They show the zinc cladding originally proposed was replaced with an aluminium type, which was less fire resistant, saving nearly £300,000.

Cladding can create cavities which in some cases can cause a chimney effect, drawing flames up the cavity if there are no fire barriers.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) said composite aluminium panels with a polyethylene core should not be used as cladding on buildings over 18m high.

Engineering and manufacturing company Arconic later said one of its products, Reynobond PE (polyethylene) - an aluminium composite material - was "used as one component in the overall cladding system" of Grenfell Tower.

BBC: Why non-combustible stone wool insulation makes sense- Rockwool Cladding¹⁹

Given that most fires occur in domestic dwellings, blocks of flats have a high safety risk potential in the event of a fire. Today's modern multi-storey buildings tend to offer a complex mix of occupation, including offices, hotels, residential, retail and leisure facilities. In this type of building, fire can quickly spread through the material of an external cladding system or through the cavities. Careful consideration of the design and potential fire risk in such buildings is required with particular emphasis on containment to allow safe evacuation, reduce the risk of fire spread to other buildings and to enable access for fire fighters.

Fire safety standards, embodied in Building Regulations Part B Fire Safety and associated Approved Documents, are designed to ensure that adequate fire safety provisions are incorporated in High Rise Buildings of whatever type. Regulation B4 requires the external walls of a building to adequately "resist the spread of fire" with functional requirements given in Approved Documents. In any building, the cladding system and materials must conform or exceed the regulation for limited combustibility defined in BR 135: "Fire Performance of External Insulation for Walls of Multi-Storey Buildings", when tested in accordance with BS 8414-1:2002 and BS 8414-2:2005 for its range of external wall insulation systems. This testing satisfies building regulations in England & Wales and Scotland pertaining to fire for buildings over 18 metres tall. The BR 135 classification is

¹⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-40272168>

¹⁹ <http://www.rockwool.co.uk/advice/fire-safety/fire-safety-in-multi-storey-buildings/>

called for as an alternative guidance to non-combustibility compliance for domestic and commercial applications.

In our view, a much more straightforward route to demonstrating compliance with BR 135 and optimising fire safety performance is to use stone wool insulation that is non-combustible. Non-combustible products will not contribute in any stage of the fire, including a fully developed fire according to the European reaction-to-fire classification standard BS EN 13501-1.

ROCKWOOL stone wool insulation tolerates temperatures of up to 1000°C and has been awarded this highest possible European classification: A1 non-combustible, it provides vital fire protection in buildings, keeping people safe, as well as minimising damage to valuable assets. In the event of a fire, it is designed to remain stable, slow the spread of flames and help protect the building's load-bearing structure, buying valuable time for occupants to safely escape to protect lives and investment

Government and Parliament Statements²⁰

Statement on Grenfell Tower (Excerpt)

From: Department for Communities and Local Government and The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

Published: 5 September 2017

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid provides an update on the government response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

.....Turning now to testing and building safety.

Of course, the issues raised by Grenfell extend well beyond Kensington.

Across England there are 173 social housing buildings that are over 18 metres tall and clad with some form of aluminium composite material, or ACM.

In July, the Building Research Establishment began a series of large-scale fire safety tests on ACM cladding systems, comprising both the visible cladding and the internal insulation.

The aim was to establish whether each system, when properly fitted, complied with the relevant Building Regulations guidance, BR135.

Three of the seven cladding systems that were tested were found to meet the criteria set out in BR135.

The other 4 fell short of what was required.

The cladding systems that passed the test are in use on 8 social housing towers.

Systems that failed are in use on 165.

The owners of affected buildings have been given detailed advice drawn up by our independent expert advisory panel.

This covers steps to ensure the safety of residents including, where necessary, removal of cladding.

We have also been holding weekly update calls with local authorities, housing associations and other building owner groups.

²⁰ Statements are in reverse chronological order.

We have today published further advice that brings together all the results and the views of the expert panel on the implications for building owners.

We will shortly be meeting with local authorities and housing associations to discuss further steps.

This will include the process by which we will ensure that remedial work is carried out.

We have made the BRE tests available to all private residential building owners too.

While 89 private buildings in England have tested their cladding through those facilities, I continue to urge all private owners of similar blocks to submit samples for testing.

I have also asked housing authorities to ensure the same steps are taken for all private sector residential tower blocks in their areas and to collect the data so that we understand the scale of the issue and we can track the remedial action.

Inspections carried out since the fire have also highlighted other safety issues related to building design.

For example, structural engineers studying Southwark's Ledbury Estate said that strengthening work may be needed on blocks constructed using the concrete panel system that, in 1968, failed with devastating effect at Ronan Point.

They also raised concerns about cracks that appeared cosmetic but could compromise fire-safety compartmentation.

We have been in contact with Southwark Council and the engineers to discuss these issues, and have engaged the Standing Committee on Structural Safety to advise on their implications.

Meanwhile, all local authorities that own similar buildings have been advised to review their designs and to check whether any strengthening work was properly carried out.

Separately, the British Board of Agrément has told us that, based on their investigations following incidents in Glasgow, some cladding systems may be designed and installed in such a way that they could fail in strong winds.

We're not aware of any injuries caused by this kind of failure.

However, we are taking advice from the independent expert panel and have written to building control bodies to draw their attention to the issues that have been raised.

The wider issues of competence and certification will also feed into Dame Judith Hackitt's review of building safety, the terms of reference for which were announced last week.

Finally, I have also established an Industry Response Group, which will help the sectors required to improve building safety and to coordinate their efforts.

Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: publication of terms of reference

From: Department for Communities and Local Government and The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

Published: 30 August 2017

The government has published the terms of reference for the independent Review led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

The government has today (30 August 2017) published the terms of reference for the independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety that was commissioned following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy.

This Review will urgently assess the effectiveness of current building and fire safety regulations and related compliance and enforcement issues, with a focus on multi occupancy high rise residential buildings. This will include addressing whether the government's large-scale cladding system testing programme identified any potential systemic failures.

The Review's 2 key priorities are to develop a more robust regulatory system for the future and provide further assurance to residents that the buildings they live in are safe and remain safe. While the Review will cover the regulatory system for all buildings, it will have a specific focus on multi occupancy high rise residential buildings.

Dame Judith Hackitt, a qualified engineer with strong regulatory background, is leading the Review and will draw on the experience of local government, industry, the fire sector, international experts and MPs. She will also engage with residents of multi occupancy residential buildings.

The Review will report jointly to Communities Secretary Sajid Javid and Home Secretary Amber Rudd. An interim report will be submitted in autumn 2017 and a final report submitted in spring 2018. The Review will co-operate fully with the Public Inquiry, and Dame Judith Hackitt will review her recommendations in the light of the findings of the Inquiry.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We must learn the lessons of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and ensure that a fire like this cannot happen again. Following the fire, I commissioned a series of large-scale tests, which have raised the question of whether there have been potential systemic failures within the building regulatory and fire safety system.

This independent Review led by Dame Judith Hackitt will address any potential failures and recommend how we ensure the whole building regulations and fire safety system is robust. I am determined that we do everything possible to make people safe and to ensure that they feel safe.

Review Chair, Dame Judith Hackitt said:

I look forward to working with experts from across different sectors to take an urgent, fresh and comprehensive examination of the regulatory system and related compliance and enforcement issues.

It's right that we consider the whole system together and ensure that everything possible is done to improve the safety of buildings. I will also be speaking to residents of multi occupancy residential buildings who must have a voice about these important issues that affect their safety.

Government completes large-scale fire safety testing programme

From: Department for Communities and Local Government

Published: 25 August 2017

The final wall cladding combination has passed and meets current Building Regulations guidance.

The final wall cladding combination tested as part of the government's series of large-scale fire safety tests has passed and meets current Building Regulations guidance.

This final test was of a wall cladding system consisting of Aluminium Composite material (ACM) cladding with a limited combustibility filler (category 1 in screening tests) with stone wool insulation.

The government's expert panel advises that the results show that this combination of materials can be compliant when installed and maintained properly. While government has not been informed of any tall buildings over 18 metres in England using this particular combination of materials in their wall system, it could offer a possible solution for some buildings with other cladding systems which have been identified as a fire hazard through previous large-scale tests.

The clear advice from the expert panel remains that building owners need to continue to take professional advice regarding remedial work that takes into account the specific circumstances of their building.

The purpose of this testing programme is to develop a better understanding of how different types of cladding panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire. This is so building owners and their professional advisors can make informed decisions. Results of all 7 large-scale tests are available and government will shortly publish consolidated advice to landlords based on all the 7 tests.

The government announced an independent review of building regulations and fire safety on 28 July 2017. This forward-looking review will examine the regulatory system around the design, construction and on-going management of buildings in relation to fire safety as well as related compliance and enforcement issues.

News Story: New industry group to ensure construction sector ready to meet building challenges after Grenfell Tower

From: Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Published: 10 July 2017

A new industry response group made up of government and the construction industry will help ensure the sector can meet the challenges following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The industry response group (IRG) will complement the work of the Independent Expert Advisory Panel (IEAP) established in June 2017 by government to advise on immediate steps to ensure building safety.

After the initial step of offering a service to building owners to identify the type of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding on high rise buildings, the government has commissioned the Building Research Establishment to undertake further tests. These will help establish how different types of ACM panels in combination with different types of insulation behave in a fire.

Once the results are published it may be necessary that quick action is taken.

At a meeting with government, the industry acknowledged that it needs to help coordinate the construction industry's response to the challenges of implementing recommendations from the IEAP and government. To ensure firms can meet these challenges the new group will lead the industry's response and ensure the sector can meet any new demands.

The group, which will be inclusive and cross-industry and led by the sector, will take forward work that will:

- provide essential advice on possible solutions for use in particular types of buildings to ensure homes, offices and public buildings are safe
- provide advice on better ways of building and the latest methods of construction, and ensure access to the necessary technical expertise in industry when required

- help mobilise the UK industry if any major programmes of construction work is needed, by acting as a focal point for government-industry communications
- advise government on the relevant sub-sectors of the construction industry, their expertise and capacity to deliver work at pace

In a joint statement, the Industry Response Group, said:

We understand how concerned people are about the safety of buildings and we would like to reassure the public that the UK construction industry is working with urgency to respond to advice published by the government. This IRG will demonstrate leadership and, acting as a focal point, provide a collective response to government and other stakeholders.

The group will include representatives from three major industry bodies in the UK:

- Build UK – the leading representative organisation for the construction industry
- Construction Industry Council – the representative forum for the professional bodies, research organisations and specialist business associations for professional services providers in the construction industry
- Construction Products Association – the UK’s manufacturers and distributors of construction products and materials.

The 3 organisations will lead and coordinate contributions from across the sector.

Cladding sample testing update

From: Department for Communities and Local Government and The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

Published: 25 June 2017

The number of high rise buildings which have failed a combustibility test is now 60 across 25 local authority areas.

Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, published a statement on Saturday 24 June which detailed the work being undertaken to ensure the safety of residents in high-rise buildings following the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The number of high rise buildings from which cladding samples have failed a combustibility test at the Building Research Establishment is now 60 across 25 local authority areas. All landlords and fire and rescue services for these local authorities have been alerted to the results and we are in touch with all of them to support and monitor follow-up action.

The table below shows the distribution of buildings, naming those areas where we know that the local authority or landlord has informed affected residents that a building’s cladding has failed the test.

	Local authority area	Number of buildings
1	Barnet	3
2	Brent	1
3	Camden	5
4	Doncaster	1
5	Hounslow	1
6	Islington	1
7	Lambeth	1
8	Manchester	4
9	Norwich	1
10	Plymouth	3
11	Portsmouth	2
12	Stockton on Tees	3
13	Sunderland	5
14	Wandsworth	2
15 - 25	In addition 11 other areas where cladding test failed	27
	Total - 25 areas	60

Communities Secretary statement: safety checks following the Grenfell Tower fire
From: Department for Communities and Local Government, The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP,
and Alok Sharma MP

Published: 19 June 2017

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has given the following statement regarding safety checks following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The Grenfell Tower police-led investigation is underway, but it will be some time before it is fully understood how the fire started or why it took hold in the way it did.

In the meantime there is significant anxiety amongst residents about whether their own blocks are safe.

While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to be determined, we have concluded that there are additional tests that can be undertaken with regard to the cladding.

We are therefore asking local authorities and other registered providers of social housing to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM).

More details on how to identify this cladding are being supplied in a technical note, and the Homes and Communities Agency can offer expert support in surveying your properties if necessary.

It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We have asked local authorities and all providers of social housing to identify whether any buildings in their area contain cladding made of aluminium composite material (ACM) by the end of today (Monday 19 June).

We are putting in place a rigorous, government funded testing process for any ACM cladding identified.

Housing Minister Alok Sharma this morning met representatives from across the housing sector including the Home Builders Federation, Local Government Association and the National Housing Federation. They all expressed their support for this work and gave a commitment that they would progress this with all possible haste.

It is clear that a considerable amount of work has already been undertaken. Councils are working closely with fire and rescue services to ensure that the appropriate safety and response measures are in place and talking to their tenants to hear their concerns.

Any landlord who is concerned can contact the department at housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk for further advice about cladding materials – this is a dedicated contact point which has been set up to provide technical support and reassurance.

Our priority is to reassure people that they are safe in their homes - and that is exactly what we are doing.

Statement from the Prime Minister on Grenfell Tower: 17 June 2017

From: Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Published: 17 June 2017

Prime Minister Theresa May earlier today met with victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.



Earlier today I met with victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the volunteers and community leaders who are working so hard to help people rebuild their lives.

I wanted to listen to their concerns and reassure them personally that government is there for them – and that everything possible will be done to help them through the hugely difficult days, weeks, months and years to come.

The response of the emergency services, NHS and the community has been heroic.

But, frankly, the support on the ground for families who needed help or basic information in the initial hours after this appalling disaster was not good enough.

I have heard the concerns and I have ordered immediate action across the board to help victims' relatives and the survivors.

People lost everything in the fire and were left in only the clothes they were wearing.

I can confirm that a £5million emergency fund that I announced yesterday is now being distributed on the ground so people can buy clothes, food and other essentials. If more funding is required, it will be provided.

Residents rightly want to know when new housing will be provided. I have fixed a deadline of three weeks for everybody affected to be found a home nearby. I have today requested daily progress reports.

There have been huge frustrations that people do not know who to talk to, that they can't get through on the council hotlines.

I have ordered that more staff be deployed across the area, wearing high visibility clothing, so they can easily be found, dispense advice and ensure the right support is provided. Phone lines will have more staff.

Victims have concerns their voice will not be heard, that their many questions about this tragedy will not be answered.

That is why I ordered a Public Inquiry, with the costs for providing victims with legal representation met by government.

The inquiry will be open and transparent. Government and ministers will cooperate fully. I anticipate the name of the judge will be announced within the next few days and that an open meeting will be held with residents to help shape the terms of reference.

It has been decided today that the public inquiry will report back to me personally. As Prime Minister, I will be responsible for implementing its findings.

Understandably, those living in similar high rise blocks to Grenfell Tower also want answers.

I have ordered councils to complete urgent safety checks on all these buildings. If any further action is required, it will be taken.

After something this traumatic, many people will be in need of not just financial support, but also counselling. NHS London will provide that support.

I can also announce that NHS London will provide specialist long-term bereavement support for the families who have lost loved ones, and immediate psychological support is being provided by Cruse and Red Cross.

If other issues become apparent – if the victims need more help and support – I will make sure it is forthcoming.

The fire at Grenfell Tower was an unimaginable tragedy for the community, and for our country. My Government will do whatever it takes to help those affected, get justice and keep our people safe.

Support for victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster

From: Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Published: 16 June 2017

Prime Minister Theresa May today promised a comprehensive package of support for victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.



During a meeting with survivors of the fire, she announced a £5 million fund would be made available to pay for emergency supplies, food, clothes and other costs.

The proposals followed a visit by the Prime Minister to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, where people who had escaped the blaze said they had been left with no possessions or money.

The PM then chaired a meeting of a cross-Whitehall group of senior ministers and officials to agree a full range of help, which she set out to a group of residents, victims, volunteers and community leaders during a visit to the Clement James Centre near Grenfell Tower.

The package includes:

- a commitment that victims who lost their homes in the disaster must be rehoused at the earliest possible opportunity and that we should aim to do this within 3 weeks at the latest
- a guarantee to rehouse people as close as practically possible to where they previously lived, meaning they can continue to access the same public services, such as their local school or local GP – this rehousing would be in the same borough and, if not, a neighbouring borough
- until people are rehoused, the cost of temporary accommodation will be met on their behalf
- the government will also provide any necessary financial assistance to families who have been rehoused so children and their parents do not incur any extra costs in travelling to their local school
- the new £5 million Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund, made immediately available and given to the local authority to distribute – this could be used to cover loss of possessions, funerals and emergency supplies

- confirmation the Treasury will work with banks to ensure that those affected by the disaster who lost possessions like bank cards still have access to their accounts
- the Department for Work and Pensions are working with local job centres to ensure that those affected have access to the benefits and pensions they would normally receive

The Prime Minister also gave reassurance to the victims of the fire that they will be consulted on the terms of reference for the upcoming Public Inquiry. This will allow them to help shape the scope of the Inquiry so they can get the answers they are seeking.

The victims and their families will receive state funding for legal representation at the Public Inquiry.

In addition, the PM announced significant central government support to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

It includes sending in a team of experienced central government civil servants from the Department for Communities and Local Government, which has been embedded into the local council to assist with efforts.

The Bellwin scheme has also been activated – meaning that any immediate and uninsurable extra costs incurred by the council in the aftermath of the disaster will be met by the government.

To reassure people living in similar buildings that they are safe in their homes, the PM announced the government is:

- checking at speed with local authorities whether all high-rise buildings in their area have complied with recent fire orders, where work has been deemed required following an inspection
- identifying all high-rise buildings owned or managed by Housing Associations or Local Authorities and conducting a fire safety review of all buildings similar to Grenfell Tower – the government will also work with the devolved administrations on this issue

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

“The individual stories I heard this morning at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital were horrific. I spoke with people who ran from the fire in only the clothes they were wearing.

“They have been left with nothing – no bank cards, no money, no means of caring for their children or relatives. One woman told me she had escaped in only her top and underwear.

“The package of support I’m announcing today is to give the victims the immediate support they need to care for themselves and for loved ones. We will continue to look at what more needs to be done.

“Everyone affected by this tragedy needs reassurance that the Government is there for them at this terrible time - and that is what I am determined to provide.

For further information contact Philippa Meehan, Housing Plus Academy Coordinator Email: p.meehan@traffordhall.co.uk; Telephone: 02144 300246

The Housing Plus Academy reflects the diversity of social housing among our staff, tenants and customers because we believe that diversity gives us access to better ideas, innovation and solutions. Recognising the benefits of diversity means that we would like to invite more people from a wide variety of backgrounds to join us. So, for example, if you have a different thinking style, are from an ethnic minority background, are younger, or perhaps you have a disability, your experience will be invaluable in keeping us current and relevant, and will be welcome.