



Our conversations with local residents on 25 May 2022

A message from Eddie Hughes MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping and Housing

Following the recent five-year anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Greg Clark MP, I wanted to write to you personally.

I want to reassure you that the secretary of state is committed to the clear vision and direction that has been set for the department by Michael Gove MP. This includes reforming the private rented sector, improving social housing conditions, protecting leaseholders from unfair building safety bills and levelling up communities across the United Kingdom. He is also fully aware of the conversations you have recently had with Michael Gove, the department, and me about the future of Grenfell Tower and other concerns and matters of interest to you, such as the implementation of the social housing white paper and the recent fire safety announcements. This includes discussions held during the meeting on Wednesday 25 May at the Museum of Brands. As part of our commitment to let you know what was said at this meeting and to elaborate on responses where possible, please see a summary of the discussion below.

Michael Gove introduced the meeting, reflecting on some of the issues and concerns you have raised in recent conversations with him:

- The Grenfell Tower Inquiry must bring about further action and change. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has been working, and will continue to work, to ensure this happens.
- People must feel safe in their homes and the voices of social housing tenants must be heard. The Building Safety Act 2022 will support DLUHC's work in making sure that unsafe buildings are made safe, and that cladding remediation costs are not incurred by social housing tenants and leaseholders, with costs for non-cladding remediation firmly capped for qualifying leaseholders. The Social Housing Bill will give tenants a stronger voice, prevent injustice and ensure the regulator has strong new powers to take on rogue social landlords.
- DLUHC and ministers will continue to talk to bereaved families, survivors and local residents about any decisions relating to the future of the tower.

In the same meeting on Wednesday 25 May, you raised the following issues and questions. Some responses have been elaborated on to provide further information.

Q: Are you satisfied that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) has changed its culture and will they face accountability for their actions?

In response: There have been changes at the council but there is more work to be done. DLUHC will continue to speak with the council and its leadership team about the concerns that you have.

Q: How can we trust what the government is saying when you have broken so many promises? Recommendations (such as Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans) are not being implemented and tower blocks are still covered in ACM cladding.

In response: 94% of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe ACM cladding in England have been made safe or have work underway. We recognise there is more to do and are working to improve the pace of remediation. Industry will contribute an estimated £5billion to address building safety defects and we plan to reopen the Building Safety Fund for registrations shortly, protecting leaseholders from costs.

The Home Office has responded to a series of recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry on fire safety and explained why it wishes to consult again on the issue of improving the fire safety of disabled residents. The next phase of consultation is to make sure that the Home Office has a robust approach to the safe evacuation of people living with disabilities. This new consultation is running until 10 August, and you can respond to that directly to make sure your views are heard. For more information, please go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) (search for 'Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing') or you can email FireSafetyUnitconsultations@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Q: Why are vulnerable and disabled people still forced to be rehoused in high rise unsafe buildings?

In response: It is important that people are safe in their homes. DLUHC is working hard to make sure that buildings are safe, including through remediation works to remove unsafe cladding. Alongside this, the government is assuring that fire safety regulations make sure that residents are safe in the event of a fire. Under these new regulations, the fire service is responsible for having a clear evacuation plan for all residents and ensuring that people are supported in the event of a fire.

Individual housing requests and decisions are for the relevant council, housing association, or other landlord. Some vulnerable and disabled residents have raised housing concerns with DLUHC and we have been in touch with the council on those matters, although they are not issues around being placed on higher floors.

Q: Have you considered transferring Lancaster West estate into community ownership?

In response: The government has committed to working with the council to make the Lancaster West estate a model of 21st century social housing, co-designed with residents.

The government and the council have been working to ensure that there is sufficient funding on the estate to meet this ambition. We continue to encourage feedback and suggestions from Lancaster West residents, and we also speak regularly with the council about how to improve life on the estate.

Q. How has recovery money been spent?

In response: The council has worked hard to support recovery for the North Kensington community and committed £50million of funding in 2019. They have set out details of what they have done to date in the Grenfell Impact Report, published in February this year and available on the council's website: www.rbkc.gov.uk (search 'Grenfell Impact Report').

More detail on the council's expenditure to date was discussed at the meetings of the council's Audit and Transparency Committee on 25 May 2021 and 22 July 2021. The reports that were discussed at those meetings are published on the council's website. Details of the Council's

Grenfell Recovery budget for this year (2022–23) are also on the website (search ‘Grenfell recovery fund’).

Q: Can you reassure the community that health services will continue to be provided after the fifth anniversary?

In response: Yes. In October 2018, NHS England committed £50million to support the physical and mental health needs of the community from April 2019 to March 2024. The NHS expects that the majority of these services will continue beyond March 2024 and has committed to continue to work with bereaved families, survivors, and residents to ensure services meet the community’s future health needs. DLUHC will continue to work closely with the NHS.

Q: There should be funding for an independent review of mental health and suicides in the community, as mental health support is not sufficient and there is a significant toll on the community in supporting each other through the aftermath.

In response: The local NHS service offers physical and mental health support to members of the community affected by the tragedy, including children and young people. Visit the NHS Grenfell Health and Wellbeing Service website (grenfellwellbeing.cnwl.nhs.uk) or information. If you are feeling anxious or stressed, call them on **020 8637 6279** (from 8am to 8pm) or on their urgent advice line on **0800 0234 650** (24 hours a day).

In 2019, the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) commissioned national suicide expert, Professor Louis Appleby, to review the support services on offer for the Grenfell community, including the suitability of the current Suicide Prevention Strategy for Kensington and Chelsea. The full report is available on the CNWL website: www.cnwl.nhs.uk (search for ‘suicide safety North Kensington’).

If there are further ways in which we can improve, please get in touch with DLUHC using the contact details below.

Q: Why have statutory bodies neglected and excluded the immediate community from support and engagement?

In response: Whether it’s NHS or wellbeing services, support should go to everyone affected by the tragedy who needs it. Please see the response to the question above for more information on the physical health and wellbeing support currently available.

In terms of government communications and engagement, DLUHC tries to strike a balance between reaching as many affected people as possible, while respecting the privacy of those who do not wish to be contacted. Where possible, the ministerial team has been using opportunities, such as the 25 May meeting, to speak directly with the community. In addition, we write letters about significant matters to those most closely affected by the tragedy, including residents who live within approximately 500 metres of the tower. We do not, however, email routine messages, such as information about the site, regular drop-ins, or online meetings, directly to individuals unless they have asked us to. We rely on local networks such as residents’ associations and community groups to circulate these types of messages, as well as publishing regular information on GOV.UK (search for ‘Grenfell Community Updates’) and our digital signs close to the site. If you, or anyone you know, would like to receive our more regular updates, you can join our mailing list by contacting DLUHC on the details below.

Q: What will happen to the tower and what will be done to improve consultation?

In response: A decision about the tower must be approached sensitively and in a way that people feel as comfortable as possible with. This has been a challenging time, with many of you focusing on the ongoing Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the fifth anniversary of the tragedy. Not everyone will agree with whatever decision is taken, however everyone should feel that their views have been heard. DLUHC will continue to work with bereaved families, survivors and

residents, and the independent Grenfell Tower Memorial Commission to make sure voices are heard.

Q: The Conservative Party receives donations from those organisations responsible for the cladding scandal, which leaves the system open to corruption. Why are you taking money from them?

In response: Party donations do not exempt anyone from scrutiny or from the law. They will be made to answer for their actions, as evidenced by the £5billion committed by developers for remediation.

Q: How will justice be served if people have been told that participants in the inquiry have got some protection from prosecution? Bereaved families and survivors have been told that there will be no jail time for those responsible. How could this be considered justice?

In response: It is an unusual situation where the police investigation and the public inquiry are being conducted at the same time. The criminal investigation is independent of the inquiry, but the police have been clear that the criminal investigation must take into account any findings or reports produced by the inquiry.

Once the police have fully examined the findings of the Phase 2 report, they will present evidence to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) so they can consider charging decisions. The police and the CPS have said they are happy to continue to speak to the community to explain how it is taking things forward. For more information on the relationship between the public inquiry and the police investigation visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) (search for 'Attorney General provides undertaking for Grenfell Tower Inquiry.')

There continues to be a range of ways to speak to DLUHC:

- Family and small group conversations. DLUHC's dedicated community engagement team are available to meet with your family individually or in a small group with other families – however you feel most comfortable. You can share concerns that are personal to you and have each of your questions answered. To arrange this, please email grenfelltowersite@levellingup.gov.uk or phone **0303 444 0011**.
- Contact DLUHC directly online. Scan the QR code below and go to 'get in touch', to submit questions or concerns. You can also use this to request a meeting with members of the community engagement team, or to request support (such as an interpreter) to help you participate in this conversation.
- The DLUHC's dedicated community engagement team will also be available for phone conversations every Friday from 3–5pm on **07458 009167**.



This update was provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 22 July.