



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities*

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Our reference: 28440532

Rt Hon Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

By email

6 July 2023

Dear Sadiq,

Thank you for your letter of 13 June, addressed to the Prime Minister, about the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower fire to mark the sixth anniversary of the tragedy. The Prime Minister has asked me to respond as I am responsible for the recovery from the Grenfell tragedy, the Grenfell Tower site, social housing and building safety. Learning from the Grenfell tragedy and bringing about lasting change is a priority for the Government, and I regard it as among my most important responsibilities as Secretary of State. I will continue to listen to the Grenfell community, make progress on the issues that are important to them and work with them to build a lasting legacy.

Driving up standards

The Building Safety Act, which became law in April 2022, made ground-breaking reforms to give residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections – so that homes across the country will be safer. The Act protects qualifying leaseholders from the costs associated with remediating historical building safety defects and provides new tools to hold those responsible to account. It also overhauls the regulatory system to provide stronger oversight: this will create lasting change and, vitally, greater accountability.

The Act established the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) and a Regulator of Construction Products to provide effective oversight of the new regime. Strengthened regulation will mean that in future owners will manage their buildings better, and the home-building industry has the clear, proportionate framework it needs to deliver more, and better, high-quality homes – with the certainty that they will be held to account if they fall short. These changes make clear how higher-risk residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe. The BSR started to register higher-risk residential buildings in April this year and the new regime for higher-risk buildings, at the design and construction stage is expected to commence this autumn. We expect the regime to be fully operational from April next year.

I agree with you entirely that people must be able to have confidence in the competence of people who work on their buildings. We will improve standards in building control by establishing a unified building control profession, overseen by the BSR. Inspectors will need to register with the BSR, and there will be new competence requirements that cover the public and private sector alike. We are also making changes to who can advise on and carry out building control work that will improve competence, transparency and accountability in the building control sector. New regulations will

place a duty of competence on anyone carrying out design or building work to have the relevant skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours for their role. The BSR is also in the process of establishing an Industry Competence Committee to monitor the sector, drive up standards and help guide both people procuring work for, and people living in, a building about how to assess competence.

Regulatory reform alone, however, will not achieve the results we want – we need, through active endeavour, to develop skills across the industry to embed the right standards and behaviours within projects, and reinforce individual and collective responsibility. I look forward to working with those across the industry, and with empowered local leaders, to drive this agenda forward with the urgency the moment demands.

Getting buildings fixed

You have raised concerns about the scrutiny of buildings under 18 metres. As of the start of July, 49 developers have signed the developer remediation contract with the Government, committing to remediate or pay to remediate more than 1,100 buildings over 11 metres in height. This will cost the industry over £2 billion, protecting leaseholders and the general taxpayer from having to pay to fix problems they did not cause and were powerless to prevent. Industry will also contribute an additional c. £3bn where a responsible developer cannot be identified, through the Building Safety Levy. This will fund the remediation of unsafe cladding on buildings over 11 metres. Building owners are responsible for ensuring that buildings are kept safe, and I know that local authorities and other regulatory partners will join us in scrutinising their performance.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations

The Government has accepted the principle of all the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase One report that was published in October 2019. This includes introducing legislation, working closely with the London Fire Brigade to monitor their action plan and overseeing progress by fire and rescue services nationally. The Government publishes detailed updates on its progress on implementing the recommendations from the Phase 1 report, on gov.uk and in an easily accessible format on the Fire England website. The latest update was published on 29 June 2023 and can be found on GOV.UK and on the Fire England website. The latest update reports that the London Fire Brigade has completed 26 out of the 29 recommendations that it is directly responsible for; and fire and rescue services nationally have completed on average 91% of their action plans to deliver the Inquiry recommendations.

There were 15 recommendations directed at the Government, of which 10 are complete and we are working hard to address the remaining five, which all relate to different aspects of evacuation. I share your determination that everyone should be supported in safe and dignified manner. The recommendations relating to PEEPs and broader evacuation plans remain a key priority, and the Home Office is currently considering how best to deliver these recommendations, following recent public consultations. I welcome the helpful contributions of groups who represent those most affected by the issue in helping us to understand how policy can support them. The Home Office will publish the Government's response to the consultation as soon as possible. As you know, the Inquiry's Phase Two hearings concluded on 10 November, and the Inquiry is now focussed on writing its final report and recommendations. In preparing to receive the report, Government

departments are working to develop options for rigorous ministerial oversight of the implementation of the Inquiry's Phase 2 recommendations.

You also called on the Government to implement recommendations from INQUEST and introduce a Hillsborough Law. Public inquiries are an important mechanism to allow the Government to learn lessons for the future, and all Government departments take inquiries' recommendations seriously. Parliament, and in particular its Select Committees, has an important role in scrutinising the delivery of Government policy, including the implementation of Inquiries' recommendations. We recognise the public interest in the outcomes of inquiries and will carefully consider any proposals, such as those put forward by INQUEST. The government is currently considering a recommendation to introduce a duty of candour for public authorities. This will be addressed in full as part of the government's response to the report of the Rt. Revd. James Jones, the former Bishop of Liverpool, on the experiences of the Hillsborough families, which will be published shortly.

Supporting those attending the Inquiry

It is wholly right that the Government has supported many bereaved family members to come to the UK following the fire to support their families, attend funerals and latterly to attend the Inquiry. The Home Office introduced the Grenfell relatives' visa policy initially to provide up to six months leave outside the Immigration Rules. The policy was later updated to allow relatives with Core Participant status to take part in the Inquiry and extend their stay for successive periods of up to six months at a time.

Since Phase 2 of the Inquiry concluded its hearings in November, many of the relatives of those affected by the fire have either opted to return home or have applied for (and been granted) permission to stay in the UK under mainstream immigration routes. It is important that those who wish to participate in Testimony Week – when survivors and bereaved relatives will be invited to provide, and listen to, testimonies of those who have been affected by the tragedy – should be able to do so. The Home Office have invited the few remaining families who continue to be in the UK under the Grenfell relatives' visa policy to extend their leave until the end of April 2024 to enable them to participate in these proceedings.

My Department is continuing to work with the Home Office and others across both central and local Government and in local authorities to support bereaved families to settle in the UK, if that is their wish. Those relatives still being granted permission under the concessionary policy who wish to remain in the UK beyond April 2024, or indeed to settle here permanently, can apply for further leave under the relevant Immigration Rules, with any who are unable to afford their application fee potentially eligible for a fee waiver.

Supporting the health of the Grenfell community

Baroness Scott and I continue to work closely with the NHS, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and other parts of the government on future services to ensure there is long-term physical and mental health support for the community, including for children and young people. NHS England is developing further proposals, following its initial commitment of £50 million to fund Grenfell Health services to 2024. RBKC has committed to providing additional resources for the next phase of its recovery programme for 2024-2028. Both programmes will be developed in partnership with the community.

Baroness Scott and I will also continue to meet with the bereaved, survivors and residents of North Kensington to hear from them directly, and to champion their cause.

I hope that my responses reassure you that the Government is committed to bring about lasting change for all those affected. They will remain my priority for as long as I have the privilege of bearing this responsibility.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

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