

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State,

We were very glad to hear of the government's intention to fully fund replacement of flammable cladding on social housing tower blocks. The announcement (16 May) brought hope to many homes. **However, the commitments made so far are not nearly enough.**

The government's history on this issue is disgraceful.

Eleven months after the Grenfell fire, when this announcement was made, only 7 out of over 300 tower blocks had been re-clad. On a third of the 158 social housing blocks deemed to be in danger, work had not even started. People who were initially told they could move out of dangerous buildings have been denied the opportunity to do so. On private blocks, leaseholders have been told to fund the works themselves - which they cannot afford - or continue to live in a fire-trap. Leaseholders in these blocks often have trouble meeting even their normal heating bills, and many go cold each winter. Nothing had been done, or offered, for people in danger in flammable office blocks, hotels, or other workplaces, or in schools or hospitals.

Then, after months of refusing urgent requests from local authorities, the government promised to fully fund re-cladding costs for social housing, estimated at £400 million, to be taken from housing budgets. Yet BBC research in December 2017 found that the cost of planned post-Grenfell fire safety measures for councils and housing associations alone had already reached at least £600m, a figure said to be likely to be a considerable underestimate. Safety from fire requires both non-combustible exteriors and safe windows, doors, compartmentalisation, and sprinklers. Shelter cites one social landlord that originally estimated £2 million to replace cladding but found it cost £18 million in the end. Meanwhile MHCLG handed back £817 million to the Treasury in unspent cash, money also originally earmarked for housing.

**The government must now fulfill its promise of June 2017: "We cannot and will not ask people to live in unsafe homes." Costs must be met in full, and without delay.**

**Moreover, the health and safety of residents must not be sacrificed during the process that the government now promises to fund.**

**Cold, like fire, kills.** Even in a normal year, thousands die each year when they cannot heat their homes. Residents in many blocks already going through re-cladding know that when cladding is off in the winter, uninsulated flats are places of constant cold, condensation, damp and mould, and astronomical bills. Works can go on for months, with families constantly ill. Some are scheduled for nearly two years.

It is difficult for residents to legally enforce their human rights to decent housing. Nevertheless, **landlords have a duty of care to the residents of their properties. The government must ensure that this duty is fulfilled, and for social housing must provide the necessary funds.**

On 16 May the Prime Minister accepted that paying for re-cladding works "must not undermine" housing providers' "ability to do important maintenance and repair work". Similarly, paying for

residents to keep safe and warm until the works are completed must not undermine local budgets -- either housing budgets, or already devastated budgets for health and social care.

In the light of the appalling history of residents not being listened to, of promises being broken, and work necessary for health and/or safety being delayed, done badly, or not done at all, **we believe it is essential to establish some principles for how the new funding will be implemented in practice.**

1. **For social housing, the government must “fully fund”** replacement of all flammable cladding and insulation, and other necessary fire safety measures, regardless of the £400 million estimated total. No housing provider must be turned away. Both cladding and insulation components must be **non-combustible**.
2. **For private housing, central government must cover the initial costs**, and then seek to recover costs from landlords, developers and contractors. **Student residences** must also be covered.
3. **All residents should be guaranteed that they will not pay more** for using extra energy over the winter. Payments for extra costs should be paid direct to residents, and should be made in time to cover the bills or prepayment meter costs when needed.
4. Where cladding/insulation has been removed **landlords are still responsible** for protecting residents from **cold, damp and mould, and other hazards**.
5. **Residents forced to live temporarily in blocks which still have flammable cladding should be protected**, without cost to themselves, by fire wardens, alarms, and sprinklers. Where it is unsafe for people to remain in their homes, alternative local housing should be offered.
6. **Until cladding and insulation are completely restored, residents should be offered a package of special measures**. These measures should include, as required: approved damp and mould treatment; dehumidifiers; safe space heaters; draught-proofing; immediate repairs to faulty or inadequate boilers, heating controls, windows, and vents; enhanced out-of-hours services; hot meals for those who need them; warm and comfortable places to go in the daytime; and facilities to exercise (e.g. free gym/pool use). Again, where homes cannot be made fit for habitation, alternative local housing should be offered.
7. **Consultation** must ensure that residents are fully informed about options and cladding is replaced in accordance with their wishes. Residents must be **kept informed about progress and timetables**. **Residents Associations** must be supported and must have the opportunity to interrogate any delays or shortfalls and receive answers.
8. All **new developments, and refurbishments**, must be effectively monitored and inspected by **authorities that are independent, and legally accountable**. New and refurbished homes should be safe and well-insulated in practice, not just in theory.
9. Immediate safe, good, **permanent housing** must be offered in the area of their choice for **Grenfell survivors; no deportations** of affected individuals; **criminal charges** against those responsible for the fire.
10. To prevent such disasters in the future there must be **a clear, quick and effective route for residents’ voices to be heard and listened to**, and **responsibility and accountability must rest with clearly identifiable senior individuals**. These principles (recommended in the Hackitt Review), must apply to insulation from cold as well as fire safety.

The standards and practices that led to the Grenfell fire must not go on to cost more lives.  
Yours sincerely,