



**28 May 2021**

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP,  
House of Commons,  
London,  
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Dear Mr Jenrick,

We know from your statements in the House that you are very aware of the acute distress being caused to many families by the uncertain position relating to fire safety requirements and remediation costs in buildings that are below 18 metres in height.

While there has been government financial support for owners of ACM clad buildings over 18 metres and some financial support for leaseholders in taller buildings requiring remediation, there has been no such support for people in buildings below 18 metres, nor any support for non-cladding related fire safety defects. The details of the loan scheme announced as the primary mechanism of support have not been published. In addition, the outcome of consultation exercise launched in January 2020 and closed in February 2020 have not been published.

It was hoped that this consultation might lead, not just to prioritising those buildings most at risk, but to consideration of a more proportionate approach to both remediation and interim measures including waking watches.

Buildings must be safe but safe is not an absolute standard. The current operating environment has inevitably led to an extremely risk-averse approach from professionals carrying out fire risk assessments and external wall system investigations. We believe that the result of this risk aversion is recommendations that are disproportionate to the risk. An example is the proliferation of a waking watch being implemented, with costs which are often ruinous for residents. There is little confidence among residents or building owners that they are actually keeping people safer, but they are still routinely recommended.

We would strongly urge that the consultation outcomes be published without further delay. There can then be an open, honest and reasonable debate about implementing a risk based approach, as articulated by Dame Judith Hackitt in the concept of layers of protection.

We are pleased you have referenced several times in the House the need for a proportionate response to building safety, but are concerned that this is not materialising in practice. Buildings are not being prioritised on an evidential basis. Some buildings are investigated when it is unnecessary, while others which may or not have safety deficiencies wait in the queue for scarce professional resources. This is causing further delays to remediation, and further uncertainty and distress for leaseholders who may face huge bills and in any event are unable to sell their homes. The new RICS guidance has not resolved this problem.

Additionally, it is clear that other factors than height must be considered when assessing risk, as has been demonstrated through the updated guidance from RICS. We therefore urge the government to release the evidence gathered during the consultation on *'Fire safety: risk prioritisation in existing buildings'*. This directly affects our residents and their ability to feel confident that their homes are safe, sell them without inordinate delay and be sure that they are not expected to meet costs that are inflated or for work that is unnecessary. The signatories below urge you to instruct your officials to have an urgent, open, pragmatic and risk-based conversation with all stakeholders to make your objective of a proportionate response a reality.

Yours sincerely



Helen Evans  
Chair of the G15 and Chief Executive of Network Homes

Ritu Saha, UK Cladding Action Group on behalf of  
End Our Cladding Scandal

