



Dear Colleague

Fire Safety in Tower Blocks

The Following the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, you will no doubt have been assessing the implications for your own authority's housing stock and taking action where necessary to respond to residents' concerns. In this fast-developing situation you may find it helpful to know what other ARCH members are doing and share information on responses. You have the opportunity to do this by sending material to info@arch-housing.org.uk so that it can be posted to the Shared Policy Reports area of the ARCH website. Access to this area is restricted to officers, members and tenants of ARCH member authorities who have been authorised by their authority to access it.

We understand that DCLG has so far circulated two requests for information to all local housing authorities. The first went out on Friday 16 June and asked for general information about the number of blocks of flats over 6 stories, details of any recent refurbishment involving external cladding and steps taken to communicate with residents. The second was a letter from Melanie Daws, Permanent Secretary circulated on Sunday 18 June, asking specifically for details of any blocks clad in Aluminium Composite Material. This letter and the response to it has attracted most attention, as a growing number of blocks have been identified with unsafe cladding. However, it would be very helpful if you were to copy me your responses to both requests or, if you are willing to share them with colleagues from other authorities, post them to Shared Policy Reports as described above. Other material that could usefully be shared includes briefings for your local elected members, letters to residents and media releases.

Although attention is currently focused on the cladding used, the causes of the fire at Grenfell Tower and why it spread have not yet been established, so it is impossible to be sure what remedial action may be necessary in relation to other tower blocks. The issues

raised also go wider than cladding, involving broader questions about fire safety and tower block management, procurement of major works and tenant consultation and involvement. As the causes become clearer we will be keen to understand from member authorities the precise implications for member authorities, whether capital works, improved management or the need to rehouse vulnerable residents, and the cost implications as we pursue a discussion with the new government on housing investment and the future of rents policy. We have written, jointly with the National Federation of ALMOs, to the new Housing Minister, Alok Sharma, in the first instance offering our help with the response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, but also looking to initiate a wider dialogue on issues of concern to ARCH members.

With best wishes

Matthew

Matthew Warbuton

ARCH Policy Adviser

Email: matthew.warburton@arch-housing.org.uk

@ARCH_housing

Tel: 07891 105906

www.arch-housing.org.uk

4 Riley Court, Millburn Hill Road, University of Warwick Science Park, CV4 7HP.

Company Reg. No 07970258

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