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Housing

What you need to know about “building a safer future” - the UK government’s response to Dame Judith Hackitt’s independent review of building regulations and fire safety

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Dame Judith Hackitt published her [final report into the review of building regulations](#) on 17 May 2018. The report called for a change in culture and a much stronger regulatory framework. The government has now published its implementation plan in response.

It acknowledges the need for a much stronger regulatory framework and signals a ‘step change’ from the current passive ‘compliance’ based system to a pro-active system where developers and building owners take responsibility for safety – and tenants feel safe and secure in their homes. The government commits to:

- creating a more effective regulatory and accountability framework with a stronger and more effective sanctions and enforcement regime
- facilitating a better understanding of requirements for ensuring building safety by producing clear standards and guidance and improving product labelling and testing
- putting residents at the heart of the new regulatory regime through better engagement between them, building owners and landlords
- working with industry to drive culture change and increase responsibility for building safety

This briefing highlights some of the proposals – the full list can be found in annex A of the implementation plan document.

The government has accepted, in principle, all recommendations made by the independent review into building regulations and fire safety and has committed to consulting on actions across a range of recommendations during spring 2019.

Main points

New regulatory framework

- The government recognises and accepts the need for all buildings of 10 storeys or more (30m) to form the core of the new regulatory framework and will consult on the scope for including other building types
- The government is establishing a Joint Regulators Group (JRG) of key regulatory partners, to develop and test the recommendation to set up a ‘Joint Competent Authority’ (JCA) to maximise the focus on building safety in high-risk residential buildings (HRRBs) – this should comprise local Building Standards, fire and rescue authorities and the Health and Safety Executive – the government will consult on options for the new regulatory framework

Design, construction and refurbishment

- The government accepts, in principle, the recommendation to create a ‘duty holder’ to be responsible and accountable for building safety across the life-cycle – the government will consult on the detailed proposals
- The government will consult on moving to a local authority-led regulator for HRRBs and remove the ability to choose a regulator – they will continue to make use of private sector expertise
- The government accepts, in principle, the need to strengthen and penalties and sanctions regime and will consult further on this in Spring 2019



Occupation and maintenance

- The government has launched a [call for evidence](#) to look at best practice and issues experienced when landlords, building owners and residents work together effectively

Residents' voice

- The government accepts, in principle, the recommendation for 'duty holders' to be required to provide residents with detailed structural and fire safety information related to their homes (unless there is good reason not to e.g. security)
- The government also accepts in principle, the recommendation for 'duty holders' to put in place a resident engagement strategy to support effective communication - it will consult on the detailed proposals for this (and the above)
- There is also commitment to extending this approach to all tenures - in the social sector this will build on responses to the [social housing green paper](#)
- The government is also establishing the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group to develop best practice in engagement and communication in relation to building and fire safety issues

Competence

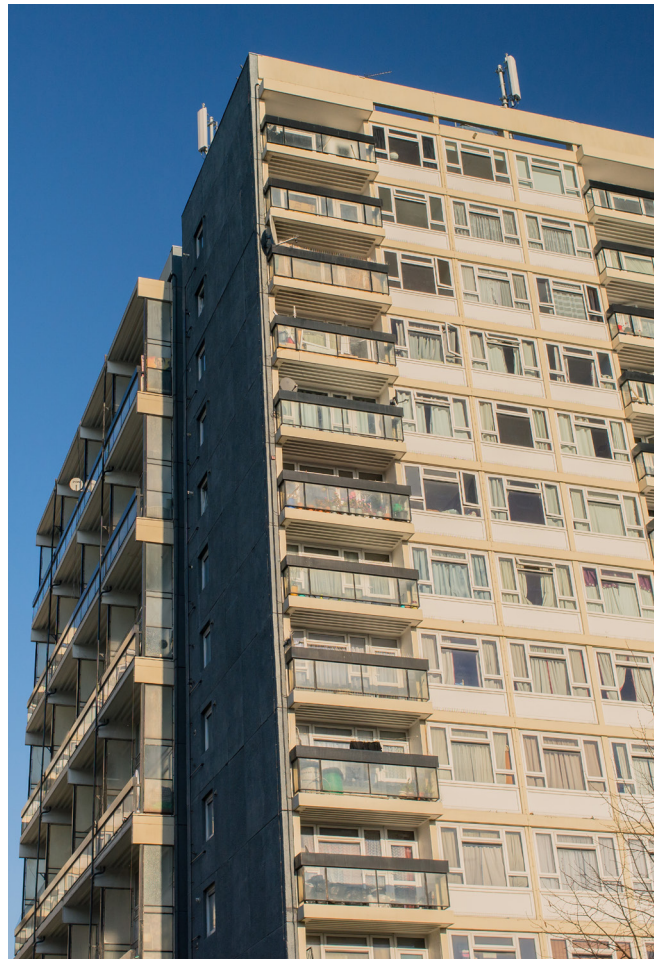
- The government will review the proposals made by the Industry Competence Steering Group (including representation from CIH) and consider whether legislation is required to underpin a new competence framework
- The government will put in place a new structure to validate and assure guidance with the long-term aim that guidance will be owned by the industry - government reserves the right to create guidance should the industry not prove able or are deemed unable to do so

Products

- The government commits to working with industry to improve the testing regime for products relating to building and fire safety
- The government has launched a [call for evidence](#) to inform a full technical review of the Buildings Regulations Fire Safety Guidance

Golden thread of building information

- The government accepts the recommendation for a digital by default 'golden thread' of information in relation to both quality and safety - it is working closely with early adopters, digital experts and other stakeholders to understand how this might work
- There will be a consultation on the 'golden thread' in Spring 2019





Initial CIH response

The Hackitt review rightly recommended a wholesale overhaul of the building regulations and fire safety systems covering high-rise buildings. We have been urging the government to put its recommendations into practice as soon as possible, so we welcome the announcement of the implementation plan. However, there is still a lot of important detail to iron out, with a range of further consultations to be launched in the Spring.

It is absolutely vital that we increase accountability for everyone involved in building and managing homes and make sure that residents have a stronger voice.

Everyone who works in housing must play their part in the new regulatory system and we will be doing everything we can to make sure that our members understand the changes coming their way so they can put them into practice quickly and effectively. We will continue to work closely with government to support the development of a robust competency framework to ensure that everyone involved in building safety has the right level of skills, behaviour and knowledge.

