

# [Press release: £1 million for local charities responding to Grenfell Tower disaster](#)

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid today (26 June 2017) announced that the government is providing £1 million to support the charitable response to the Grenfell Tower disaster.

This recognises the extraordinary efforts made by many smaller charities and not-for-profit organisations following this tragic event.

The money is a significant contribution to the locally-led recovery effort. It will be administered by a consortium of independent trusts and charities, and be co-ordinated by [London Funders](#).

The first payments are in the process of being made to reimburse charities for their immediate response to the disaster, as well as supporting on-going efforts.

The government is providing a further £48,000 to give organisational support for the assistance centre, located at the [Westway Centre](#), and the community groups working most closely with the people affected. This will be administered by voluntary organisation [Locality](#).

The funding announced today is in addition to the £5 million [Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund](#).

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The residents of Grenfell Tower have been through some of the most harrowing experiences imaginable and the response from local charities and volunteers has been remarkable.

This funding will mean that smaller charities and community organisations can continue to make a huge difference.

The first payments are in the process of being made and the government will continue to do everything we can as fast as we can to support those affected by this terrible tragedy.

David Warner, CEO of London Funders, said:

We are delighted that the DCLG has responded with vital funds to provide immediate support to community groups in Kensington and Chelsea who are supporting those directly affected by the Grenfell Fire.

London Funders, along with a consortium of Trusts and Foundations, is making sure the money gets to those groups who can best use it as quickly as possible. We have now put in place the processes to make that happen.

Tony Armstrong, CEO of Locality, said:

Local community organisations have been at the heart of the response to the devastating Grenfell Tower fire, providing relief, shelter and support to the hundreds of individuals and families.

Local people, groups and organisations need to be heard and have more power over what happens in their local area. This funding will help make sure people affected by the disaster continue to receive valuable services, and have access to the local facilities and buildings that have been so crucial in the response to the fire.

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## [Statement to Parliament: Government response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy](#)

With permission Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and our safety inspections of cladding in other buildings.

### **Introduction**

I know I speak for the whole House when I express my heartfelt grief at the Grenfell Tower catastrophe.

Almost a fortnight has passed but the shock has not subsided.

I have visited Kensington and witnessed the terrible anguish of those who have lost so much.

In some cases people will have lost literally everything.

I am sure that, like me, many members have returned from their constituencies this morning with the anger and the fears of residents still ringing in their ears.

Anger that a tragedy on this scale was ever allowed to happen in 21st century Britain, and fear that it could happen again.

It is this fear I want to address first today Mr Speaker.

## Cladding checking process

I know the entire country is anxious to hear what we are doing to reassure residents about fire safety in similar blocks around the country.

My department has contacted all councils and housing associations asking them to identify all tall residential buildings in England that they're responsible for, which have potentially similar cladding.

We estimate this number to be around 600.

On [18 June we wrote to them and asked them to start sending samples](#), and on 21 June our combustibility testing programme for Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding started, run by the Building Research Establishment (BRE).

On [22 June the government provided advice to all these landlords about interim safety measures](#) where a building has ACM cladding that is unlikely to be compliant with Building Regulations.

This advice was recommended by an independent panel of experts and includes advice based on the emerging findings from the Metropolitan Police investigation into Grenfell Tower.

I can inform the House that as of midday today, the cladding from 75 high-rise buildings, in 26 local authority areas, has failed the combustibility test.

I know members will rightly want to know if their local residents are affected, and my department will publish regular updates on [GOV.UK](#).

The combustibility test has 3 categories rated 1 to 3, and it is judged that cladding material in category 2 or 3 does not meet the requirements for limited combustibility in Building Regulations.

I can also confirm to the House that so far, on that basis, all samples of cladding tested have failed.

The fact that all samples so far have failed underlines the value of the testing programme and the vital importance of submitting samples urgently.

The testing facility can analyse 100 samples a day and runs around the clock.

I am concerned about the speed at which samples are being submitted. I would urge all landlords to submit their samples immediately.

In every case of failed tests landlords and local fire and rescue services are alerted, and we are supporting and monitoring all follow-up action, including by a dedicated caseworker in my department.

Landlords for all affected buildings have informed or are informing tenants and implementing the interim safety measures needed, working with fire and rescue services.

At this time the safety of people living in these buildings is our paramount concern.

I am determined residents have as much peace of mind as possible in such worrying times.

Landlords must keep residential buildings safe for their tenants.

Where they cannot satisfy that obligation with appropriate mitigating measures, we expect alternative accommodation to be provided while the remedial work is carried out.

That is exactly what has happened in Camden and I'd like to pay tribute to the residents for their brave response in such a distressing situation.

### **Other residential buildings and public buildings**

Mr Speaker, it is obvious the problem of unsafe cladding may not be a problem unique to social housing, or residential buildings.

We have asked other owners, landlords and managers of private sector residential blocks to consider their own buildings and we have made the testing facility freely available to them.

My department is also working with the [Government Property Unit](#) to oversee checks on wider public sector buildings.

Hospitals are well prepared – each one has a tailored fire safety plan.

But nothing is more important than the safety of patients and staff, so on a precautionary basis we have asked all hospitals to conduct additional checks.

The government will continue to work closely with fire and rescue colleagues to prioritise and conduct checks based on local circumstances.

The [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#) are contacting all bodies responsible for safety in schools instructing them to carry out immediate checks to identify any buildings which require further investigation. We will have more information this week.

Across the wider government estate 15 buildings have been identified as requiring further investigation.

### **Victims and survivors**

Now while that work continues it is vital we offer every assistance to the victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

As of this morning, 79 people have been confirmed dead or listed as missing presumed dead. Sadly, it is believed that this number will increase.

Mr Speaker, as the Prime Minister told the House last week, the initial response of the emergency services was exemplary, but the immediate support

on the ground was simply not good enough.

A remarkable community effort sprung up overnight, while official support was found wanting.

That failure was inexcusable, and it is right that a new team and approach is now in operation.

We have activated the Bellwin Scheme and sent significant central government resource including:

- a single point of access into government provided by the Grenfell Tower Victims Unit, operating from my department
- staff from 6 government departments offering support at the Westway Assistance Centre
- and a family bereavement centre in Holborn

The government has set aside a [£5 million Grenfell Tower Residents' Discretionary Fund](#) and more than £1 million has been distributed.

Each household affected is receiving £5,500 to provide immediate assistance, and so far 111 households have received payments.

The British Red Cross are operating an advice line for anyone affected or in need of support.

They are just one of many charities, faith organisations, and businesses that have provided invaluable assistance to victims.

Mr Speaker, I can announce to the House today that the government will contribute £1 million to support their efforts.

This money will be new money; it will be distributed by the local consortium of charities, trusts and foundations who are working together to respond to this tragic event.

## **Update on re-housing**

Our other priority has been to find survivors a safe and secure place to live.

The Prime Minister made a clear commitment that a good quality temporary home would be offered for every family whose home was destroyed in the fire, within 3 weeks.

Every one of those families will also be offered a permanent social home in the local area.

This work is underway, and the first families moved into their homes over the weekend.

Last week I also [announced](#) that the government had secured 68 homes in a new development in Kensington to rehouse local residents.

We will do everything we can to support the victims of the Grenfell fire now and in the future, and I will regularly update the House on our progress.

## **Building Regulations / Expert Panel/ Public Inquiry**

Mr Speaker, as the Prime Minister said in her statement to the House last week, the disaster at Grenfell Tower should never have happened.

There is an ongoing police investigation, and there will be an independent judge-led, public inquiry, to get to the truth about what happened and who was responsible.

Building Regulations and the system for ensuring fire safety in buildings have been developed over many decades.

Until the Grenfell Fire many experts would have claimed that system has served us well.

But now we have witnessed a catastrophic failure, on a scale many thought impossible in 21st century Britain.

It is clear that this failure must be understood; it must be rectified without delay, and the government is determined to ensure that happens.

As an initial step I can inform the House today that I am establishing an independent expert advisory panel who will advise the government on any steps that should immediately be taken on fire safety.

Further details of the panel including its members will be released shortly.

Mr Speaker, this tragedy must never be forgotten, and it should weigh heavily on the consciousness of every person tasked with making the decisions that ensure it can never, ever happen again.

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## **[News story: UK government publishes proposals on rights of EU citizens](#)**

[Speaking in the House of Commons](#), the Prime Minister said that EU citizens make an invaluable contribution to the UK and the government wants to provide them with certainty about the future of their lives.

Theresa May said a [policy paper](#) published by the government would make clear the UK's 'fair and serious offer' to maintain EU citizens' rights, which will be enshrined in UK law.

The Prime Minister once again made it clear these proposals should be part of a reciprocal agreement for EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in Europe, which the government wants to agree as quickly as possible.

The Prime Minister said:

EU citizens are an integral part of the economic, cultural and social fabric of our country and I have always been clear that I want to protect their rights.

That is why I initially sought an agreement on this before we triggered Article 50. And it is why I am making it an immediate priority at the beginning of the negotiations.

That agreement must be reciprocal because we must protect the rights of UK citizens living in the EU too.

Our offer will give those 3 million EU citizens in the UK certainty about the future of their lives. And a reciprocal agreement will provide the same certainty for the more than 1 million UK citizens who are living in the European Union.

In its policy paper, [Safeguarding the position of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU](#), the government makes clear how EU citizens looking to remain in the UK can do so.

The paper confirms the creation of a new 'settled status' for EU citizens who arrive before a cut-off date, which is yet to be specified and will be agreed as part of the negotiations with the EU.

Applicants who already have 5 years' continuous residence in the UK will be immediately eligible for settled status. Those who arrived before the specified date but do not yet meet the 5 year threshold by exit day will be allowed to stay until they reach that milestone and can also secure settled status.

Those EU citizens who are granted settled status will be treated like a comparable UK national, entitled to broadly the same rights and benefits.

And a grace period of up to 2 years will be in place for all EU citizens, including those who arrive after the cut-off date, allowing them to regularise their status to remain in the country.

All those applying to remain in the UK will undergo full criminality checks.

The paper also confirms:

- family dependants who join a qualifying EU citizen in the UK before the UK's exit will be able to apply for settled status after 5 years
- EU citizens looking to remain in the UK will be asked to apply for documentation under a new streamlined, user friendly scheme
- protection for the existing healthcare arrangements for both EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in the EU. This includes seeking continued participation in the European Health Insurance Card scheme for all UK nationals and EU citizens, including for temporary visits
- the UK intends to provide certainty by continuing to export and uprate the UK State Pension within the EU, as well as offering reassurance that those exporting a benefit at the specified date will be able to do so, subject to ongoing entitlement
- EU citizens who arrived before the specified date should be able to continue to be eligible for Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) student loans and 'home fee' status.
- the UK intends to continue to recognise professional qualifications obtained in the Member States prior to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This would be part of a reciprocal deal which ensures professional qualifications obtained in the UK and EU Member States continue to be mutually recognised.

#### Notes for editors

In addition to the publication of the policy paper, the government has updated its [advice for EU citizens living in the UK](#).

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## [News story: Ofqual statement on alleged exam leaks](#)

Ofqual responds to alleged malpractice in Edexcel (Pearson) exams.

We are continuing to work with Pearson as it investigates and responds to the allegations of exam malpractice or wrongdoing involving its qualifications. We recognise the concerns of students and parents, and are absolutely committed to maintaining public confidence in these qualifications.

Students should continue to prepare for their forthcoming exams as normal, and we will work with Pearson so that students get the result their performance deserves as papers are marked and awarded this summer. We would like to thank all those that have contacted us, and continue to urge anyone who may have relevant information to contact Pearson or us in confidence.

Contact Pearson: [pqsmalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com)

Contact Ofqual: [public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk)



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# Press release: Office of Tax Simplification: Annual Report 2016-17

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS), the independent adviser to government on simplifying the UK tax system publishes its first [annual report](#) today Monday 26 June 2017.

The report, a feature of its new statutory footing, also covers the period since it was set up on an informal basis in July 2010 and looks forward to the full and challenging agenda ahead.

On the publication of the OTS's annual report, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, Mel Stride, said:

The Office of Tax Simplification makes a valuable contribution to the public debate around tax, supporting the creation of a simpler tax code and challenging the government to deliver it.

To date we have implemented over 200 of the OTS's recommendations and will continue to carefully consider its advice.

The tax profession is strongly supportive of tax simplification. The new president of the Chartered Institute of Taxation, John Preston, spoke in his inaugural address of:

... the unquestionable need to simplify the UK tax system.

## **The work of the OTS**

The OTS represents the first endeavour in the world to bring a systematic and thoroughly researched approach to advising government on tax.

To date the OTS has made over 450 recommendations, with over half accepted and another quarter remaining under consideration, improving the user experience of millions of UK tax payers. It has built up a strong reputation with individuals, businesses and professional advisers as well as within government.

The OTS provides:

- reports offering practical recommendations (such as a cash basis for calculating the tax for the smallest unincorporated businesses)
- analysis that shines a light on challenging structural issues (such as its reports on where the key hurdles and costs lie in the options for

- aligning income tax and national insurance contributions)
- insight into wider changes in the economy (such its focus paper on the Gig economy)
- an important conduit into government to raise tax complexity issues

The OTS is in unique position to highlight issues, stimulate debate and act as a catalyst for positive change, being strongly connected within government, having exceptionally wide access to a range of deep expertise from outside government and speaking with an independent voice.

The OTS has developed ground breaking ideas on complexity, put forward ideas that have beneficially affected millions of taxpayers, brought a range of difficult areas into the open for debate and emphasised the importance of simplification being integral to tax policy thinking.

## **Looking ahead**

The OTS's next reports, due out within the next few weeks, will cover routes for simplifying the corporation tax computation and reform of the out of date paper stamping procedures still required for some transactions that attract stamp duty.

The OTS is also currently working on a report on VAT, for publication in the autumn and planning how best to address the full and challenging agenda that lies ahead.

## **Notes for Editors**

The OTS advises the Chancellor on tax simplification; it does not implement changes – these are a matter for government and for Parliament.

The OTS team is led by Chairman Angela Knight CBE and Tax Director Paul Morton and has a small staff drawn from HM Treasury, HM Revenue & Customs and the private sector.

The work of the OTS is rooted in improving the experience of all who interact with the tax system. It aims to reduce the administrative burden – which is what people actually encounter in practice – as well as simplifying the rules. Simplification of the technical and administrative aspects of tax are each important, both to taxpayers and HMRC.

The Office is particularly indebted to John Whiting CBE who led the OTS from the summer of 2010 until March 2017 and to the Rt Hon David Gauke MP (now Secretary of State at the Department for Work and Pensions), whose support helped establish it as a statutory part of the tax landscape in the UK.

Press Enquiries only please contact Ed Rowley, OTS Press Officer Phone: 03000 585 028