

Carl Sargeant outlines steps being taken following Grenfell Tower fire

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement during an update to Assembly Members on the steps being taken in Wales following the Grenfell Tower fire.

The group will include representatives from the social housing and fire sectors and will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser.

Carl Sargeant said:

"Everyone is, of course, horrified by the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in west London last week. My deepest sympathies are with those who have been affected by it."

He said a first round of urgent discussions with all residential social landlords in Wales had been completed.

Carl Sargeant said:

"Between all residential social landlords in Wales, they own 36 blocks of flats of seven or more storeys.

"Social landlords have told us none of those appear to have been fitted with the type of cladding used in the Grenfell Tower. Seven blocks in Wales have been retro-fitted with sprinklers – and of course where any new or converted blocks are developed here, under the changes introduced as part of the Domestic Fire Safety Measure (Wales) 2011, they would be required to include sprinklers. The requirements were introduced for flats and houses on 1 January 2016.

"Installing sprinklers in new housing and as part of refurbishment programmes, which some Welsh councils and housing associations have already done, will go a long way towards minimising the risk of death and injury from fire.

"I hope this gives some immediate reassurance to the residents of those premises."

The Cabinet Secretary added that the expert group will also consider how prepared Wales would be to deal with such an incident as Grenfell if it were to occur.

He said:

"We need to make certain of our capability to do that and learn any lessons that emerge from events in London.

"My officials and I are in regular contact with counterparts in England and Scotland, to ensure that we pool intelligence and share learning.

"This process is at an early stage and it will be some time before the full truth about what happened at Grenfell Tower is known. However, the Welsh Government is completely committed to acting on those findings, while doing all that we can in the meantime to keep the people of Wales safe from fire."