

Joint pledge to continue vital building safety work during pandemic

- Housing Secretary, Mayors and local leaders pledge to ensure vital building safety improvements continue during pandemic
- This will ensure the safety of those living in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding or insufficient fire safety measures is prioritised
- Construction industry guidance published to reduce risk of spread of Covid-19 on site

Essential safety work to replace unsafe cladding on high-rise buildings will continue during the Covid-19 emergency, following a commitment from local leaders to Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick MP.

The Mayors of Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region, London, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands have [pledged their commitment](#) to ensuring vital safety work can continue, where necessary social distancing rules are being followed. This action is to reassure those living in high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding that work to make their homes safe will be prioritised.

Earlier this year the government announced a new £1 billion fund to pay for the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding for high rise buildings.

The Pledge sets out a commitment to improving the safety of residential blocks whilst also ensuring those working on site are given clear information and support to guarantee their own safety as well as limiting the spread of Covid-19.

A number of sites across the country have been leading the way, adapting their procedures in ways that include:

- having decontamination areas on site, enabling workers to hose down overalls before safe disposal
- providing additional toilet and washing facilities, reducing the number of workers gathering together
- splitting up work teams with a view to minimising the risk of infection

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick MP said:

The government is bringing about the biggest change in building safety in a generation. The new building safety regime will put residents' safety at its heart and follows the announcement of the

unprecedented £1 billion fund for removing unsafe cladding from high-rise buildings in the Budget.

However, I have been deeply concerned that vital building safety work has significantly slowed down as a result of the pandemic. I have been clear that work must resume to ensure the safety of residents living in buildings with unsafe cladding or with insufficient fire safety measures, and it is entirely possible for this work to be done safely within health guidelines.

I brought together Mayors and local leaders to find a solution. The agreement that I have reached with them will ensure those working on these vital repair projects can continue to do so safely.

Cllr Peter John, Chair of London Councils, said:

We cannot allow the unprecedented challenge that we have all faced with Covid-19 as an excuse to forget the challenge of making our buildings fire-safe across London and the UK.

Councils in London want to see our residents safe in their homes, so remediation work must continue urgently and building-owners and contractors must treat this work as an absolute priority.

The government has provided sector specific guidance on how to apply social distancing in the workplace in England. This was also reviewed by Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive and includes updated guidance for construction workers making clear that 'work on-site can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible'.

Where work continues on-site, [detailed guidance is available from the Construction Leadership Council](#) on further reducing the risk, including measures for maintaining high standards of hygiene.

In order to support this vital work, the Ministry of Housing has appointed a firm of construction consultants, Faithful & Gould, to advise those planning and doing ACM cladding remediation work, including identifying and increasing awareness of safe practice under current Covid-19 restrictions.

The National Fire Chiefs Council has also published revised guidance on waking watch interim measures, in the context of Covid-19, that reflects higher rates of occupancy and vulnerability due to people staying home for an extended period of time.

This pledge has been agreed by The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) and the following local leaders:

- Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester)

- Dan Jarvis (Mayor of the Sheffield City Region)
- Peter John (Chair of London Councils)
- Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London)
- Steve Rotheram (Mayor of the Liverpool City Region)
- Andy Street (Mayor of the West Midlands)