

# Press release: Response to the Big Brother Watch report

I welcome the publication of the [Big Brother Watch report](#) as in my view it adds value to a much needed debate on a matter of growing public interest, the public interest which demands clear legislation, transparency in governance and approach and a coherent and effective regulatory framework in which they can derive confidence whenever and wherever their civil liberties are at risk from the state. I shall consider the report carefully.

The effective regulation of use of face identification technology (commonly referred to as Automated Face Recognition or AFR) by the police is a priority of the National Surveillance Camera Strategy and a matter which I have been addressing as a priority for some time now, engaging with the National Police Chief's Council, the Home Office, fellow regulators and Ministers alike.

The police have to abide by the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice which I regulate under the terms of Section 33(1) Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. Those familiar with the content of the code will know that it is explicit in that face identification technologies used by the police in England and Wales will be regulated by it. That is not to say that I consider existing or indeed anticipated legislation as being wholly sufficient in these matters. I do not. My fellow regulators, the Biometrics Commissioner and in recent times the Information Commissioner have added welcome contributions to the debate.

I do think that the police are genuinely doing their best with AFR and to work within the current and anticipated legal regulatory framework governing overt surveillance. That framework is far less robust than that which governs covert surveillance, yet arguably the evolving technological capabilities of overt surveillance is the equal in terms of intrusion, to that which is conducted covertly. It is inescapable that AFR capabilities can be an aid to public safety particularly from terrorist threats in crowded or highly populated places. Andrew Parker, the DG of the Security Service rather eloquently set out the threat context to our society only recently. It is understandable that there is an appetite within law enforcement agencies to exploit face identification capabilities, an appetite which is doubtlessly borne out of a duty and determination to keep us safe. This technology already exist in society for our convenience and therefore it is arguable that the public will have something of an expectation that those technologies are so used by agents of the state to keep us safe from serious threats, but only in justifiable circumstances where their use is lawful, ethical, proportionate and transparent.

In the context of safety, the public also need to be safe from unlawful, disproportionate and illegitimate state intrusion, and they must have confidence that those technologies have integrity. In my view, the challenge is arriving at a balance and for that to happen there need to be a clear framework of legitimacy and transparency which guides the state, holds it to account and delivers confidence and security amongst the public. I have yet

to have confidence that government has a satisfactory approach to the issue in delivering a framework upon which the police and others can rely and upon which the public can have confidence, but I do believe that we are on a journey to that destination and a journey is fuelled by constructive and challenging debate.

The commissioner is available for media interview and contactable at [scc@sccommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:scc@sccommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

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## **Press release: Government announces it will fully fund unsafe cladding removal in social housing**

The government will fully fund the removal and replacement of unsafe cladding by councils and housing associations, estimated at £400 million, it was announced today (16 May 2018).

Local authorities and housing associations, which are non-profit making, will be given access to the money to help with reasonable costs of removing and replacing unsafe cladding from buildings which they own to ensure people are safe in their homes.

In the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the government quickly established a comprehensive [building safety programme](#). It made clear that aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding on buildings over 18 metres which was not compliant with building regulations guidance should be remediated by the building owners.

The fund follows the government's offer last year of financial flexibilities to assist local authorities with essential fire safety work. From conversations with social sector landlords, it has become apparent that they are having to take decisions about how to prioritise important services, repairs and maintenance work and investment in new homes.

The government has listened to their concerns, discussed the issue in Cabinet, and decided that, although social landlords have made good progress on replacing unsafe cladding, it is right to provide further support. It is therefore today announcing additional funding for the social sector. It recognises the tough decisions that are being made to carry out fire safety work as well as the potential impact on other services.

The government will also continue to provide financial flexibilities to councils for other essential fire safety measures and is directing local authorities to take cladding-related issues into account when carrying out reviews of housing conditions in their areas.

Social landlords have been working hard to replace unsafe cladding. Interim safety measures are in place in all affected buildings and latest figures from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government show that over 65% (104 out of 158) of social housing buildings with unsafe cladding are currently going through the process of remediation.

The additional money will enable social housing providers to focus on providing safe properties for people to live in.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

People must always feel safe in their own home.

Since the tragic events at Grenfell Tower, we have taken steps to ensure the immediate safety of all high rise buildings.

This money will ensure local authorities and housing associations are being given the support they need to get this work done now as well as removing the uncertainty around funding.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

We have always been clear that unsafe cladding must be removed from tower blocks so that people are safe in their own homes.

But we do not want vital safety work to put at risk our high priority house-building programmes. So we have decided to provide funding to ensure that housing associations and councils can carry out this vital work.

The government is clear that building owners in the private sector must ensure private sector homes are made safe.

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, will meet industry representatives to ensure that remediation work is completed as soon as possible.

The industry roundtable will take place shortly.

## **Further information**

The government will set out further details shortly about how councils and housing associations can apply for funding, including conditions attached to the grant.

## **Office address and general enquiries**

2 Marsham Street

London  
SW1P 4DF

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<http://forms.communiti...>

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# [Press release: Update on fire doors investigation – risk to public safety remains low](#)

Housing Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP today (16 May 2018) updated Parliament on the fire door investigation and confirmed experts advise the risk to public safety remains low.

Earlier this year the Metropolitan Police informed government a fire door installed at Grenfell Tower designed to resist fire for up to 30 minutes – as required by building regulations guidance – failed after approximately 15 minutes when tested by the police.

Government immediately sought advice from its independent expert panel to see what action was required, and have undertaken further testing and investigations focusing on composite flat entrance fire doors manufactured by Manse Masterdor – a company that has not been trading since 2014.

The expert panel has concluded there is a performance issue with these Manse Masterdor fire doors, which do not consistently meet the 30 minute fire resistance standard. Nevertheless, the National Fire Chiefs Council has advised the expert panel the risk to public safety remains low. They point out that fire protection in a building is developed using a range of measures so a failure of one protection measure – such as fire doors – should not significantly change the overall safety of residents. In addition, all doors provide essential protection in a fire if they are properly closed.

Based on this advice, the expert panel advise that owners of buildings with this type of door should review their building's fire risk assessment and consider how quickly these doors should be replaced. The expert panel has published guidance to assist building owners.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is writing to customers of Manse Masterdor identified in the company's records as having been supplied with these doors. It is also looking at the wider fire door market and intends to test fire doors from other door suppliers.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Public safety is paramount. When we were informed about an issue with a Grenfell Tower fire door, we acted quickly to seek independent expert advice and established a wide-ranging investigation.

Based on the results of these investigations to date, the expert panel advise the risk to public safety remains low. However they advise there is a performance issue with Manse Masterdor which is why we are taking the responsible step of writing to relevant building owners setting out clear advice on what they should do.

Fire service advice to residents remains the same. Regularly test your smoke alarms, ensure your front door is properly closed and in the event of a fire follow existing fire procedures for the building.

## **What is the safety advice for residents?**

- The National Fire Chiefs Council has advised that the risk to public safety is low.
- In the event of a fire people should follow existing fire procedures for the building.
- Residents should also test their smoke alarms regularly to ensure they work and ensure that their flat front door is fitted with a working self-closing device.
- All doors provide essential protection in a fire if they are properly closed.
- Fire safety advice for residents is available at:  
[www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/High-Rise-Safety-for-Residents](http://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/High-Rise-Safety-for-Residents)

## How do I know if I need to replace fire doors in the building I own?

- The department is writing to customers of Manse Masterdor identified in the company's records as having been supplied with these doors and is considering what further support building owners may require to assist with taking timely action.
- The expert panel has published [guidance for building owners](#) who are replacing or want to inspect their flat front entrance fire doors.
- The department is now looking at the wider fire door market, and intends to test fire doors from other door suppliers and will provide an update on these tests in due course.

## What is your advice for owners of buildings which have been installed with these fire doors?

- Owners of buildings where Manse Masterdor 30 minute composite fire doors have been installed should review their building fire risk assessments and consider how quickly these doors should be replaced.
- The expert panel's advice is that these doors should be replaced using a risk-based approach, and they have published [advice for building owners](#) who are replacing 30 minute composite front entrance fire doors.
- General advice for building owners on how to ensure the safety of residents in blocks of flats is available at: [www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-purpose-built-flats](http://www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-purpose-built-flats)

## How do I know if my landlords have installed these doors to my flat?

- We are writing to all customers of Manse Masterdor identified in the company's records as having been supplied with these doors, to notify them of the issue.
- Residents should contact their landlords who will be able to advise whether they have been supplied with the affected doors. If there is uncertainty the expert panel advise that a suitably qualified person can inspect the doors and this advice is set out in their [advice note on fire doors](#) which can be accessed from the [building safety programme website](#)

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# [News story: Supporting innovation at work](#)

We told you how we're [transforming Companies House](#). To engage our staff and get them involved, we held an Innovation Day to give them the opportunity to take part in lots of interesting and innovative activities. There was a wide range of creative sessions to get us thinking in new ways and encourage better communication and working together.

There were 'hands on' activities, like interactive puzzle exhibits from [Techniquest](#) and the Escape Room challenge. We invited staff to attend talks by colleagues to learn more about their hobbies and creative skills. There were also opportunities to attend one-on-one coaching sessions, learn more about 'agile working' and watch TED talks introduced by colleagues.

We had 4 keynote seminars from guest speakers. These covered subjects such as creating an innovation culture, how to be happy at work, being creative and taking risks.

### **Denise Hampson, Desire Code**

Denise is a consultant behavioural economist and service designer. During her talk, she told us how human psychology can help us design great experiences,

and how we can use this when we design our services.

### **Steve Dimmock, doopoll**

Steve has started a few companies, so he shared his experience about the highs and lows of running a business. His funny and engaging talk looked at how to start and run a business, and how to deal with problems when things do not run as well as they should.

### **Warren Fauvel, Nudjed**

Warren spoke about how we can all be more creative, feel better about taking risks, and how to learn from failure. He showed us some useful tools for creativity and innovation in his interactive and entertaining session.

### **Marie Edwards, Academi Wales**

Marie's interactive session showed us how to use tools and techniques to apply the principles of positive psychology at work. She told us how practical, daily activities could increase your own happiness, satisfaction and success, and how this positively affects other people.

#### [Companies House Innovation Day 2018](#)

Our Innovation Day let staff try something new and find out how they could work in innovative ways. It was a great way of encouraging a collaborative, creative and supportive work environment.

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## [\*\*News story: New guidance to support staff engagement during insolvencies\*\*](#)

Following responses to a call for evidence, the [government will publish guidance](#) to help insolvency practitioners' and employers consult with staff facing redundancy as a result of their employer's insolvency.

When an employer is proposing to make more than 20 employees redundant within any 90-day period, they have a duty to consult with staff or their representatives over ways to mitigate the impact of the job losses.

The employer must also notify the Secretary of State in writing at least 30 days before the redundancies are made.

To better understand the difficulties employers face when proposing to make many people redundant in an insolvency process, the government launched a call for evidence in March 2015.



Responses were received from a range of groups including lawyers, insolvency practitioners and trade unions and these were captured in a document published in November 2015.

Respondents understood that legislation aims to encourage constructive engagement with employees, as well as ensuring the appropriate support mechanisms are available to staff losing their jobs.

However, it was acknowledged that the legislation around collective redundancy consultation can be difficult to apply in a real-life insolvency situation where decisions need to be made quickly, there is little money available, options are limited and attention is focused on attempts to rescue the business.

Additionally, this may be the first time employers have ever dealt with a collective redundancy situation, which can be daunting while navigating both insolvency and employment law, all while the business is in financial distress.

In response, the government has approved a package of non-legislative measures to help insolvent employers and insolvency practitioners engage with staff when proposing large scale redundancies.

New guidance will set out minimum expectations for insolvency practitioners to:

- notify the government in advanced of collective redundancy proposals
- comply with the requirement to consult when seeking to rescue or wind up a business
- provide information on how to ensure legal compliance when electing employee representatives