



Safety in your building

23 November 2021

Bickleigh House,
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Dear residents,

EWS1 form requirement – what is happening in the sector?

We last wrote to you in August about the government's announcement that EWS1 forms 'should not be requested' for buildings below 18 metres. There has still been no official change, but the Housing Secretary has indicated this could happen soon.

What is the sector waiting for?

Lenders are still being very risk averse towards offering a mortgage on affected buildings below 18 metres. They are saying they will not be able to abide by the government's announcement until RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) alter the requirements of the EWS1 form. RICS designed the form initially, but they are saying that they are unable to alter the form until the government withdraws or alters their Consolidated Advice Note. This is the document released by government in January 2020 which affected buildings below 18 metres. You can read more about the statements from the above organisations in this article: [Cladding crisis stalls again as RICS and lenders await guidance update – Todays Conveyancer](#).

The sector is also waiting for new guidance to be released on fire risk in external wall systems from the British Standards Institution – draft guidance was published earlier in the year. This could also change the situation and we will wait for the guidance to be available to see the impact it may have. You can read a bit more about it here: [What you need to know about the new draft fire risk appraisal specification – Building Design](#).

I know this will come as disappointing news to you as you are having to wait for something to change and this must be quite an uncertain time. We have been calling for the government to show leadership on the building safety crisis and to give clarity to residents affected.

Comments from Housing Secretary Michael Gove

The new housing secretary Michael Gove appeared in front of the Housing Select Committee on 8 November and his comments – if followed through – may change the landscape for buildings below 18 metres further. We've outlined below the key points he made:

- *He will revoke January 2020 advice that brought low rise buildings into the building safety crisis 'by Christmas'*
- *He will 'pause' the plans for a leaseholder loan scheme to cover building safety costs*
- *He will seek a 'polluter pays' approach for covering cladding and other fire safety costs.*

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A summary of this letter

We are still waiting for the sector to make changes following the government's announcement on EWS1 forms in July.

Lenders are waiting for RICS to change the EWS1 form guidance. RICS is waiting for the government to change its January 2020 guidance.

The Housing secretary has said that he will revoke the January 2020 guidance by Christmas, pause the leaseholder loan scheme and seek a polluter pays approach. We need to wait and see if these happen and how they will affect your building and the sector.

We're calling on the government to provide clarity to residents. If you are struggling, please do get support – links are provided in the main text.

At this time, we don't want to speculate further on what this might mean and how the sector will react. We'll keep you updated with any further developments that are made and tell you if/when the above is confirmed.

Here are a couple of articles which you may also wish to read to further understand the situation:

- [Fire safety advice for low-rise blocks to be withdrawn, Gove says – The Guardian](#)
- [Cladding: Why must flat owners pay the bills, asks Gove – BBC News.](#)

As you can see, this is still a very live situation which is constantly changing and evolving. I'd like to thank you for your patience and understanding while we wait for confirmation of what the approach will be.

Mental health support

In the meantime, it has been widely reported that building safety issues can have a negative effect on mental health. We know these delays do not make your situation better, so please, if you feel like you are struggling or just need someone to talk to, there are a lot of organisations who may be able to help you. You can visit the resident-led End Our Cladding Scandal website, which list some useful organisations: <https://endourcladdingscandal.org/get-support/>. We have also listed some on our website: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/buildingsafetyresources/>.

Further support

We work on a three-month update basis, so you can expect to hear from us every three months or sooner if we have something confirmed which we need to tell you. If you need further support, please:

- Go to the London Fire Brigade's website, which is offering a free online tool which guides you through a fire risk assessment of your home (home visits are available for more vulnerable residents): <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/home-fire-safety/>
- Visit our website where we have a building safety section with lots of information and frequently asked questions: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/buildingandfiresafety/>
- View resources which may help: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/buildingsafetyresources/>
- Remind yourself of our top fire safety tips, including not using BBQs on balconies: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/advice/health-and-safety/fire-safety-top-tips/>
- Check our document library for your building's letters and documents – it takes a little while to load: <https://www.networkhomes.org.uk/mybuildingdocuments/>
- Get in touch with us on customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk if you have any questions.

Best wishes

Graeme Manley
Head of Building Safety