

Statement: Greater Manchester Local Remediation Action Plan

Introduction

As part of the Government's plans to accelerate the remediation of residential buildings with unsafe cladding, Greater Manchester (GM) is finalising its local remediation acceleration plan. The objectives of the National Remediation Action Plan are to:

- fix buildings faster – so that those buildings already known to us can be made safe at pace;
- identify all buildings with unsafe cladding – so that every building with unsafe cladding is found and fixed; and
- support residents – so that leaseholders and residents of buildings with unsafe cladding can get the support they deserve throughout the remediation process.

The scale of the building safety problem in our city-region is significant. Within the scope of our plan, there are in excess of 500 affected buildings, with ongoing work to determine the full extent of the remediation work required. The pace of change has been far too slow. We welcome this Government's focus on accelerating remediation and its provision of funds to help drive this work forward.

Summary of GM Local Remediation Action Plan (LRAP)

Overview

The key aim of our plan is to ensure all blocks of flats with serious fire safety deficiencies are remediated as quickly as possible and that residents are supported through this process. In GM we are taking a Housing First approach. Our ambition is for everyone in GM to live in a home they can afford that is safe, secure, healthy, and environmentally sustainable.

In developing our plan we have listened to the views and experiences of residents who are affected by the building safety crisis. We have worked closely with the Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme to identify how we can ensure residents' views and concerns are addressed, and how our joint efforts can support residents through the remediation process.

We worked closely with Homes England to help them develop the Cladding Safety Scheme's National Remediation System and were the first authority to trial the building data portal before its national rollout. We welcome the expansion of this system to provide a National Remediation Register, delivering a single version of the truth accessible by all regulators. We are committed to utilising this and ensuring it is updated with our interactions.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) will lead on the delivery of our LRAP. They will use the funding provided by government to ensure we have the resources in place to inspect

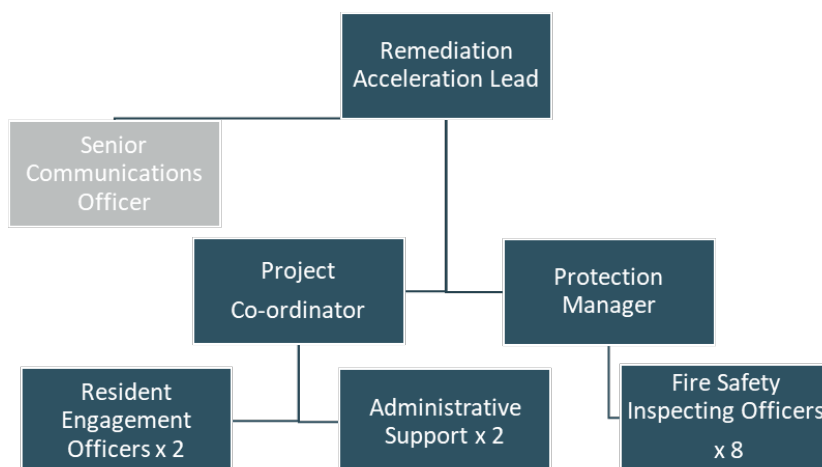
buildings; enforce where necessary; provide support and guidance to Resident Management and Right to Manage Companies; and increase resident engagement.

The plan's delivery will be overseen by the GM High Rise & Building Safety Oversight Group, which includes representation from all key stakeholders including the resident action groups *Manchester Cladiators* and *End Our Cladding Scandal*. An annual progress report will also be taken to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Funding and the new delivery team

Under the previous Government, a key challenge to our response in GM was the availability and accessibility of funding specifically for remediation acceleration, which meant resources were subject to competing and conflicting demands on stakeholders. We are grateful for the dedicated funding provided by the current Government to enable the development and delivery of our plan. To date, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have provided us with a grant totalling £500K. The Government is committed to supporting this activity, and is developing proposals for longer term funding. We look forward to confirmation of this. We are using this funding to create a dedicated delivery team. It will require the recruitment of additional fire safety regulators, administrative and project support, and new roles to enhance resident engagement.

The structure of the GM Remediation Delivery Team (RDT) is set out below.



We also welcome the announcement in the Comprehensive Spending Review that social landlords will be able to access funding and look forward to more detail being provided on this.

Funding for non-cladding defects remains an issue and we believe that leaseholder protections do not go far enough and are difficult for leaseholders to navigate. In GM we have worked closely with Manchester Cladiators and End Our Cladding Scandal. They are asking for a funding solution that provides certainty for all buildings of all heights, with funding made available by the Government and then recovered from those responsible for the problems.

Prioritisation of work

Residents are at the heart of our plan. Thousands of residents in GM are living in buildings which require significant work. The remediation landscape is complex with unsafe buildings in different Government schemes. This means some residents have been waiting for eight years for their building to be remediated. We have included these buildings in our plan, but they require further Government intervention to hold developers to account.

Through our new Remediation Delivery Team (RDT), we will take a twin track approach, working with partners to ensure buildings with newly identified defects move towards remediation quickly, whilst ensuring buildings already subject to significant delays progress towards remediation as a matter of urgency. In relation to high rise residential buildings, we will start with those which have been operating with temporary simultaneous evacuation strategies for the longest period. Our approach will not differ between funding schemes and we will be working to accelerate remediation irrespective of who is responsible for the works.

Working with partners

Immediately after the Grenfell fire, Mayor Andy Burnham established the city region's High Rise and Building Safety Task Force. Chaired by Salford City Mayor Paul Dennett, the Task Force brought together GMFRS, local authorities, landlords, residents and government officials to help make all our buildings safe. The Task Force has been instrumental in supporting residents to lobby for funding, providing evidence of the scale of the problem, and developing approaches to improve safety in the short term whilst residents are waiting for remediation work to begin. The Task Force has now evolved into the High Rise & Building Safety Oversight Group detailed above. This Group is chaired by Deputy Mayor Paul Dennett and attended by Deputy Mayor Kate Green. Although the delivery of our LRAP will be led by GMFRS, it will build on this effective partnership approach.

Residents and resident campaigners

We will:

- Establish a twice-yearly Residents' Forum to provide progress updates and allow residents to feed back any concerns.
- Establish a monthly meeting between the Manchester Cladiators and members of our team as a mechanism for concerns to be raised and improvements suggested.
- Produce and publish guidance in conjunction with Homes England specifically for residents who are Directors of Resident Management Companies and Right to Manage Companies. We will also design and deliver engagement sessions providing an overview of these responsibilities and how to access support.
- Create a dedicated website area as a conduit to wider information and support.
- Undertake further consultation to identify the current barriers and escalate them to national Government.

Homes England

We will:

- Formalise our effective working relationship to agree escalation points for interventions and commit to agreed service level standards.

- Ensure the national remediation system is effectively utilised to capture inspections and interventions and that where escalation is required for enforcement, this is undertaken in a collaborative way. We will agree and formalise a case conferencing procedure, ensuring decisions are made transparently.
- Develop further guidance and information as buildings progress through the Cladding Safety Scheme
- Explore how we can ensure that for buildings under 18m, building control approval minimises risks and ensures there is early consultation before the works start.
- Explore the development of guidance to support a proportionate responses to changes in evacuation strategies for buildings in the Cladding Safety Scheme, reducing the need for Waking Watches.

Local Authorities (LAs)

We will :

- Establish regular review meetings with each LA to track progress on buildings in their area and identify joint working required.
- Work with LA contacts to help unblock barriers to remediation.
- Explore whether any of the existing powers of LAs can be delegated to GMFRS to ensure all residents have working smoke detectors in their homes which may reduce the need for waking watches.
- Explore opportunities for joint training to increase understanding of technical fire safety matters and hazards and ensure there are effective referral mechanisms in place.

Building Safety Regulator (BSR)

We will:

- Work as part of multi-disciplinary teams which support the building control process and the assessment of safety cases. The fire safety inspectors within our RDT will bolster the resources available to BSR and ensure consistency.
- Ensure all relevant information gathered by our RDT is fed into the BSR assessment process to inform decision making and support residents.
- Work with the BSR to identify trends where applications for remediation works are rejected, to raise awareness and improve the quality of applications for other buildings.
- Look at what can be delivered in GM to support the improvements BSR is introducing in building control.
- Work with the BSR to develop information sharing arrangements to reduce duplication and ensure common concerns are built into the information available to residents via our website.
- Share information and coordinate action on specific high rise buildings to collectively reduce risks.
- Seek to engage BSR teams in formal case conferencing arrangements, ensuring decisions are made in a transparent way and minimise costs that residents may incur.

Housing Providers and Managing Agents (HPMAs)

We will:

- Continue to work closely to deliver our plan.
- Establish a regular programme of events under the plan.
- Expect HPMAs to work with us to improve residents' experiences and hold them to account when communications are poor.

Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

We welcome buildings in the MHCLG administered schemes moving into the national remediation system and consider this will be a key success factor in accelerating remediation and improving visibility of progress and delays.

We will:

- Look to replicate the arrangements we are putting in place with Homes England across the other schemes to ensure residents can expect the same standards irrespective of the funding arrangements.
- Seek detailed information from MHCLG officials to inform enforcement decisions and action in cases where there have been extensive delays
- Offer to host workshops and utilise existing and historic cases to 'stress test' any new legislative proposals

Our ask of Government

We fully welcome the new Government's increased focus on accelerating the remediation of unsafe buildings and the dedicated funding they have provided us in GM to help drive this forward. Some barriers still remain that require national action to overcome. Our local plan includes our asks of Government to help address these issues.

- *Urgently assess the current capacity required to accelerate remediation and provide investment to build competency and capacity* - The extent and complexity of the building safety crisis has identified significant gaps in competency across the whole system, from building design, to building management and regulatory awareness and expertise. Urgent and sustained investment in increasing regulatory capacity is needed.
- *Close the regulatory gap* - There have been significant improvements in legislation to improve the safety of high-rise buildings. Similar improvements are needed for buildings below 18m.
- *Ensure the completion of a single and sustainable dataset* - A co-ordinated approach is needed to build on the Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme system and establish a single comprehensive data set of all buildings which may require remediation.
- *Establish clear standards and expectations* - Utilise evidence from high rise buildings to clearly set out reasonable timescales which will provide a benchmark for monitoring progress of all buildings that require remediation.
- *Provide clarity on funding* – Under the previous Government, the complexity and the changing requirements of funding regimes was a key factor in the slow pace of change. The Cladding Safety Scheme offers a more holistic approach to funding works, but there are concerns regarding internal compartmentation works which can be costly and are not effectively funded.
- *Embed leaseholder protections and ensure adequate funding* - The introduction of leaseholder protections is welcomed. However, they could go further, and there needs to be sufficient resource committed to supporting leaseholders to understand and utilise these protections and ensure they deliver on their intent.

Route to publication

In GM we have concluded our engagement with residents and stakeholders and have produced our LRAP for comment via our normal governance framework. The plan will be scrutinised by the

GM Police Fire and Crime Panel on 17th July. It will then go to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority for endorsement on 22nd August, before its launch with residents, who remain at the centre of our approach. We expect to publish the plan on our website in the week commencing 25th August.

Kate Green - Deputy Mayor (Safer and Stronger Communities)

Paul Dennett - Deputy Mayor (Housing First), and Salford City Mayor