



Anne Clarke AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

Sir Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

31 July 2026

Dear Sir Sadiq,

Fire safety in London's social housing

Following the Fire Committee's meeting on 23 June exploring how London Fire Brigade (LFB) and social housing providers are working in partnership to keep residents safe, we are writing to share our concerns and recommendations.

Since the tragic events at Grenfell in 2017, the victims and survivors have shown extraordinary courage, determination and resilience in their pursuit of justice. Their tireless campaigning has ensured that the failures exposed by the tragedy have not been forgotten and has driven the national conversation on building safety. We support your recent calls for accelerated action to deliver the necessary reforms to building fire safety and for those responsible to be held to account for their actions.¹²

However, nine years after the Grenfell Tower fire, we heard compelling evidence that many social housing residents continue to feel unsafe in their homes. As Adam Gabsi, Co-Chair of Inclusion London and a disabled social housing resident, told the Committee: "What are we waiting for, my building, me to burn? What are we waiting for here?"³ Adam's testimony underscored the urgency of

¹ Mayor of London, [Sadiq Khan on X](#), [accessed 26 June 2026]

² Mayor of London, [Mayor backs Government's ambition to end London's cladding crisis](#), 7 May 2025

³ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel One](#), 23 June 2026, p.5

ensuring that every resident can have confidence in the safety of their home. In this letter we set out three areas where we believe there is a need for renewed focus and attention.

Committee guests also raised concerns about the new regulations for Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (RPEEPs). The Committee will be seeking further information on how the regulations are working in practice and plans to attend LFB's community forum later this year to consider these issues further. The Committee may make further recommendations specifically addressing RPEEPs following this engagement.

Good landlord charter

Many social housing landlords are struggling with extensive remedial backlogs, resource constraints, and a complex and evolving regulatory environment. Addressing these challenges is a daunting task. As Karen Doran, Director of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator of Social Housing, emphasised to the Committee, "This is a really complex, complicated area, but that is not a reason for not continuing to make the progress that you need to."⁴

A key area of concern raised with the Committee was around the openness and quality of communication from landlords to social tenants. Pamela Newman, Vice-Chair of the G15 Residents' Group, told the Committee that "landlords are coming and they are talking in technical speech to us, the residents, and it is sometimes really technical. We do not understand, but we want to understand."⁵ Residents themselves were clear that this is just as much about trust as it is about technical compliance, as they "do not make decisions based on fire strategy documents, they make decisions based on whether they trust their building is safe."⁶

Residents also made clear that they want to be involved, not just informed. Pamela Newman told the Committee that residents want to be "part of shaping future fire safety strategies, so that when you make a decision to implement something it is right from the very start, because it has got that lived experience perspective, and that is the bit that is missing at the moment."⁷

Under the *Building Safety Act 2022* residents of higher risk buildings are able to raise building safety concerns directly to the owners and managers of buildings, who have a duty to listen to them.⁸ And if residents feel concerns are being ignored, they can raise them with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) directly. Karen Doran told the Committee about the Regulator of Social Housing's approach to assessing genuine engagement in practice, as opposed to a tick-box compliance exercise. She told us:

"[W]e are really clear that you cannot keep tenants and residents safe unless you have a good level of engagement, unless there is trust there. Our standards not only cover safety and quality, building safety, but also transparency, influence and accountability. When we go in to inspect, we are not just looking at whether works have been carried out, what the extent of risks are in

⁴ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.2

⁵ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel One](#), 23 June 2026, p.1

⁶ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel One](#), 23 June 2026, p.1

⁷ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel One](#), 23 June 2026, p.2

⁸ MHCLG, [The Building Safety Act](#), 25 July 2022

buildings, we are also looking at whether they have resident engagement strategies in place for buildings.”⁹

She later added that residents should be able to expect landlords “to remain accountable and do all they possibly can,” to build an accountable relationship between landlord and tenants.¹⁰ Yet, we were left with the impression that too often housing providers are being driven merely to achieve compliance, rather than demonstrating the initiative, critical scrutiny and ambition needed to continually improve safety for their residents.

Where guests did point to good practice, it was characterised by dedicated, resourced engagement rather than a generic service. Ruth Davison, Group Chief Executive of Newlon Housing Trust, described how her organisation checks in on changed circumstances during routine contact and said that while it “is not perfect”, Newlon has one of its 220 staff working full-time “on making sure that we have got evacuation plans for our residents.”¹¹ Dominic Johnson, Chair of the London Councils Housing Directors Fire Safety Group, similarly pointed to New Burdens funding allowing Southwark to set up “a dedicated team” moving engagement “away from sending a letter” towards face-to-face contact and door-knocking.¹²

While we heard from social housing providers working to address these issues, we remain concerned that the culture change recommended by Grenfell Tower Inquiry – and demanded by survivors, and other social housing tenants at risk – is in desperate need of further action. The Mayor could play an important role here. What we need to see come forward at pace is for residents to be more involved and engaged with these challenges from the outset, not consulted after decisions are made, and a big part of this is about landlords communicating better, more consistently, and in genuinely accessible ways.

Recommendation 1: The GLA should explore how it could develop a Good Landlord Charter, with access to GLA funding, contingent on meeting commitments on fire safety.

LFB’s role

LFB itself was clear that it is operating with constrained resources in responding to a large and growing task. Pamela Oparaocha, Assistant Commissioner for Prevention and Protection at LFB, told the Committee that her inspection and audit function has “a team of not quite 200 inspecting officers, not all of them competent, they are all on a development journey”, and that LFB is “a limited resource in what we can do... less than 200 of us with hundreds of thousands of buildings that fall within the scope of the Fire Safety Order.”¹³

Against these constraints, we heard about how LFB has adopted a deliberately risk-informed approach to reaching residents. Pamela Oparaocha, told us that LFB runs a three-tiered, risk-based intervention programme, with inspecting and auditing teams given a specific list of high-risk buildings which include “residential high-rise buildings, hospitals, hostels, care homes, and sheltered

⁹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.3

¹⁰ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.7

¹¹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.17

¹² London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.19

¹³ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.8

housing.”¹⁴ LFB has a target of at least 40 per cent of inspections each year reaching this cohort, which it consistently exceeds, running at around 50 per cent.¹⁵ Targeting is informed by data, including heatmaps of prior Home Fire Safety Visits, fire incidents and local knowledge from fire stations, and is explicitly weighted towards vulnerable groups: LFB told the Committee it aims to focus on “people with disabilities, on people who have English as a second language, people who are impoverished in London.”¹⁶ The Committee welcomes this approach and recognises that while there are a diversity of experiences and backgrounds across different tenures, social housing tends to cater for some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society.¹⁷

The Committee heard that over a rolling 12 months, LFB carries out over 24,000 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs), with more than 9,000 of these targeted at social housing or higher-risk residents, consistently exceeding its 60 per cent target for higher-risk visits, though the overall number of visits has reduced since its pre-pandemic peak.¹⁸ We welcome the post-pandemic introduction of LFB’s Home Fire Safety Checker, which Pamela Oparaocha said now allows LFB to “reach hundreds of thousands of Londoners rather than reaching a few thousand every year”, freeing up in-person visits to focus on those assessed as highest risk.¹⁹ Given the specific historic and current fire risk vulnerabilities in social housing, we would like to see LFB build on this and expand its outreach to social housing residents.

Recommendation 2: As part of setting an updated Community Risk Management Plan, the Mayor should ensure LFB includes key performance indicators (KPIs) for social housing fire safety visits.

Technical capacity and resourcing

Technical capacity and resourcing remain a significant constraint across the sector, and it is not confined to councils and housing associations, as LFB told the Committee it faces similar competition for skilled staff. Dominic Johnson told the Committee that “a lot of councils know what they need to do and the complexities around this are budget, capacity within the market, technical capacity as well, because everyone is generally fighting over the same staff, contractors, consultants.”²⁰ Pamela Oparaocha made the same point from LFB’s own perspective acknowledging, “we are all fighting for the same people. In the LFB, we are having to pay people a market rate supplement just to keep people working in the LFB.”²¹

We heard differing views on how best to address this. Dominic Johnson supported the idea of a co-funded, pan-London office of Building Safety Officers, telling the Committee this was “a really good idea” that “could be developed and have a big impact”. He noted that London Councils has lobbied

¹⁴ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.14

¹⁵ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.14

¹⁶ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.8

¹⁷ House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, [Housing Conditions in the Social Rented Sector](#), 9 February 2026, p.16

¹⁸ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.12 and p.13

¹⁹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.13

²⁰ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.6

²¹ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing – Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.7

for such a resource because of the lack of capacity in the market.²² Ruth Davison, however, cautioned against pooling Building Safety Officers specifically, arguing that landlords' "first obligation" is to grow that resource themselves, since you cannot build the necessary knowledge of homes and residents through organisations brought in externally.²³ Given this range of views and the requirement for action in this area, we believe there is value in the Mayor exploring the option further.

Recommendation 3: The Mayor should convene London boroughs and LFB to explore if, and how, a pooled technical resource could be established and funded.

We must never lose sight of the 72 victims who lost their lives at Grenfell, as well as those who watched their homes burn fearing for what had happened to their loved ones, and the neighbours and emergency services who bravely responded. Through this investigation, we heard residents and social housing providers calling explicitly for clearer accountability, better resourced technical capacity, and communication that treats residents as partners rather than an afterthought. Nine years on from Grenfell, these actions feel as urgent as ever.

The Committee would welcome a response to this letter by 11 September 2026. Please send your response by email to Diane.Richards@london.gov.uk.

Yours,



Anne Clarke AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

Cc: London Fire Commissioner

²² London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.12

²³ London Assembly Fire Committee, [Fire Safety in Social Housing - Panel Two](#), 23 June 2026, p.14