

Organisations and specialists supporting Disabled people respond to Building Safety Minister's Grenfell PEEPs statement

We are organisations and specialists supporting Disabled people. We welcome the Building Safety Minister's statement to Parliament on 11 September confirming that regulations requiring PEEPs in residential blocks will be introduced as soon as possible.

Her statement followed our Statement welcoming the Prime Minister's commitment to Parliament last week that the new Government will finally address the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase 1 recommendation on 19 October 2019 "that the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to prepare personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents whose ability to escape may be compromised, such as persons with reduced mobility or cognition".

We also welcome the Minister's commitment that "The Government will engage with representative groups as these plans are developed". It answers the call in our Statement, and we stand ready to start working with the Government immediately to develop further proposals on fire safety including fire risk assessments. However, such work must not come at the cost of delaying implementing the express right of Disabled residents to a PEEP. What is required of a PEEP in premises covered by the Fire Safety Order was well understood when the GTI made its recommendation. It simply makes express what is already required of social housing providers under the Equality Act and of all persons responsible for residential blocks under fire safety legislation.

In its Phase 2 Report published last week, the GTI concluded that: "On any view, the Grenfell Tower fire revealed the importance of ensuring that the responsible person collects sufficient information about any vulnerable occupants to enable PEEPs to be prepared, when appropriate, and, in the event of a fire, appropriate measures to be taken to assist their escape. The TMO's failure to collect such information illustrates a basic neglect of its obligations in relation to fire safety".

Shamefully, GTI's recommendation has gone unimplemented for almost five years, undermining existing duties under equality, human rights, and fire safety legislation. There has already been consultation and previous administrations have kicked the can down the road long enough. Our Statement concluded:

"As GTI's Report shows, close to half (43.25%) of Disabled adults present in Grenfell Tower on the night of the fire were killed. None of them had been provided with a PEEP. By the time the TMO supplied its inadequate list of vulnerable residents to the LFB, they were all dead. Only by imposing this duty into regulations in black and white, without delay, will the Government meet the urgency and seriousness of the situation where the PM said [in the House of Commons on 4 September 2024] that Disabled people "are housed in circumstances in which they clearly need an evacuation plan".

The Government now has the opportunity to take action without delay to respect the rights and safety of Disabled people in their homes by implementing the single

regulatory amendment for which we call. We urge the Government to turn the page and do so by 19 October 2024, the 5th anniversary of the GTI making the recommendation.

Signed,

