

“Without more support, the cost of remediating fire safety issues will be felt by those who can least afford it,” says Evolve

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In early January, Michael Gove announced that leaseholders impacted by unsafe cladding will not have to pay for necessary repairs and renovations.

This is good news, and Evolve welcomes any support for people impacted by the housing safety crisis. For many leaseholders trapped in unsellable homes with no means to pay for remediation, the experience has been incredibly upsetting and difficult.

However, we believe there is more to be done. Specifically, support is still needed for housing associations that are paying for costly fire safety remedial works without government support.

For organisations like ours, the safety, security and wellbeing of service users is always our top priority. As such, in light of new guidance in recent years we have invested heavily in enhanced fire safety measures at our services. Four of our buildings have had cladding issues, and by the end of 2021, remedial works on two of them – [Alexandra House](#) and [Fitze Millenium Centre](#) – were complete.

Whilst one of our buildings was eligible for the [Social Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund](#) – which covers the cost of removing and replacing ACM cladding – our others are not, as their issues relate to other types of cladding and fire safety defects caused by installation and construction. This poses a very serious challenge for us.

Organisations like ours provide homes and support to hundreds of vulnerable people who have nowhere

else to go. Yet, due to expenses incurred by the fire safety crisis, the resources we have available to help them have been reduced.

The cost of remediating Alexandra House, an 80-bed service for vulnerable homeless people, has been in excess of £2.5m. Because of costs like this, we have delayed plans to build 60 new units that will house families and single people without homes. The amount of money available for planned renovations and improvements across our existing services has also been reduced.

What's more, we are not alone. **NHF research** suggests that fire safety remediation costs mean many housing associations are cutting plans to construct new homes. It reveals that 1 in 10 new affordable homes to rent or buy in England can no longer be built due to housing associations redirecting funds to remediate buildings – that's nearly 13,000 new homes. Ultimately, this will affect the poorest and most vulnerable people in the UK, many of whom urgently need these homes and services.

Action is needed. We're calling on the government to make funding available to support housing associations with their fire safety work. In doing so, it would allow us to focus on assisting the estimated 1.6m homeless families in need of somewhere affordable to live.

*Written by **Jeremy Gray**, CEO, Evolve Housing and Support for National Housing Federation*

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