

Home Secretary unveils ambitious plans for fire reform

3 years ago



The most comprehensive plans for fire reform in decades have been set out today in the government's [Fire Reform White Paper](#), which will help strengthen the emergency services and seek to ensure people feel safer in their homes.

Today (18 May), the Home Secretary visited Old Kent Road fire station alongside the Minister of State for Building Safety and Fire to announce the package which will build upon changes following the Grenfell Tower fire and findings from independent inspection reports.

The changes announced include the commencement of the [Fire Safety Act 2021](#) which will make sure all blocks of flats are properly assessed for fire safety risks and the [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) which will help ensure people feel safe in their homes.

At the centre of the White Paper are plans to deliver:

- Increased public safety: by improving the professionalism of the fire and rescue service through modern workforce practices and potentially establishing a College of Fire and Rescue.
- Improved accountability: through the proposals to transfer fire governance to a single elected individual, overseeing delivery by operationally independent Chief Fire Officers.
- Better engagement with the public: through the 10-week consultation the government will listen to the views of the public and stakeholders, after which it will finalise its reform programme.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said: “The government’s priority is keeping the public safe and the reforms we’ve set out today will strengthen and support our hard-working fire and rescue services.

“The White Paper will be transformative in how firefighters are trained and will enable fire and rescue

services to build on their strengths and leadership.

“The Grenfell tragedy must never happen again and we are continuing to drive forward progress on putting the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations into law.”

Fire Minister Lord Greenhalgh said: “I am delighted to introduce this comprehensive reform plan for our fire and rescue services and improvements to fire safety.

“The Grenfell Inquiry and independent inspections show reform is needed and we are tackling issues head on with this White Paper.

“Fire professionals step up to protect and serve their communities and it is only right that they have the right tools to do their jobs effectively.”

There has been a legacy of reform to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and culture of fire and rescue services over recent years, such as increased focus on and funding for fire protection and helping services across England to respond to the lessons highlighted by the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Building on this, the Home Secretary also announced the commencement of the Fire Safety Act, and the launch of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. These legislative changes pave the way for meeting many of the remaining [Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations](#) and will deliver fire safety improvements in multi-occupied residential buildings such as ensuring that fire and rescue services have the information they need to plan their response to a fire in a high-rise building and imposing a minimum frequency for checks on all fire doors in mid and high-rise blocks of flats.

Additionally, the government has responded to the [Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans consultation](#) and has launched a new consultation on its alternative package of proposals to support the fire safety of residents whose ability to self-evacuate may be compromised.

This includes a new proposal known as [“Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing”](#) which would require designated “Responsible Persons” – individuals responsible for fire safety in their building – of the highest risk buildings to assess the needs of their most vulnerable residents and consider what might reasonably be done to mitigate any risks to fire safety.

Fire and Rescue Services will also be provided with up-to-date information on where these residents live within the building – this will be used to inform their operational strategy and prioritise resources to further assist and effect the evacuation of these residents

Mark Hardingham, Chair of National Fire Chiefs Council said: “The UK fire and rescue service has much to be proud of and is held in very high regard by the public and the partner organisations we work with.

“Every day, people across the UK draw confidence from the prevention, protection and 999 response services they receive from firefighters and staff.

“The White Paper provides a further opportunity to continuously improve what fire and rescue services do, while building on the fantastic work we see every day.

“The NFCC has an important role to play in advising and delivering on future reform and improvements. We will now carefully consider the paper and respond to the consultation.”