

Fears raised that new building safety regime is not being prioritised and resourced

3 years ago



Welsh Government has prioritised implementing actions following the Grenfell disaster, however much uncertainty remains about how the new scheme will be implemented

In 2017, 72 people died in the Grenfell Tower Fire. Following this tragedy, the UK government commissioned the Hackitt Inquiry, an independent review into Building Regulations and Fire Safety. The Inquiry revealed serious and long-standing issues with the current building safety system. Since this time, both the UK and Welsh Governments have prioritised action to improve the policing of building safety to ensure we avoid another disaster like Grenfell.

The report concludes that while the changes to Building Control and Building Safety are to be welcomed, those responsible for implementing these changes are not well placed to deliver them and are unable to effectively carry out their enhanced roles to ensure buildings in Wales are safe. There remains uncertainty over how some aspects of the new Building Safety regime will be implemented, with some key decisions yet to be decided on. Although most local authorities and fire and rescue services have a good understanding of local building safety risks, they have not outlined how they're planning to deliver the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022.

A spokesperson said: "We found that there are a wide range of problems facing the building control and building safety profession, including significant staffing challenges, with an ageing workforce and poor succession planning. The lack of investment in training and development means services are not resilient or fit for the future, raising concerns that local authorities will struggle to successfully deliver their

responsibilities.

“We have particular concerns over the financial management of building control with some authorities’ current practices potentially being unlawful because they do not operate in line with the regulations and guidance. Although the pandemic helped local authorities to modernise their services, we are concerned that services are not resilient.

“The absence of a national framework for monitoring and evaluating building control and safety, means that local authorities and partners are not working to agreed outcome measures and targets. This weakens scrutiny of services and does not help mitigate risk.

“Our report outlines several recommendations for the Welsh Government and local authorities, including:

- Providing greater clarity on the implementation and expectations of Part 3 of the Building Safety Act
- Ensuring that there’s sufficient resources to deliver the legislative and policy changes for Building Safety to reduce implementation risks
- Increasing oversight and management of building control to ensure there is a robust assurance system in place for building control and safety”

Auditor General, Adrian Crompton, said: “The Grenfell Tower fire was a national tragedy, the impact of which we continue to feel today. My report highlights major concerns with the implementation of the new system for Building Safety. Although it’s heartening to see the passion and commitment from those working in the sector, I am concerned that not enough priority is being given to these services on the ground. The absence of robust plans, clear decision making, and adequate resources raises real fears that the new legislation will not be delivered and the problems it is seeking to address will remain. “