

Act can help construction 'right its wrongs', says building control chief

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The [Building Safety Act](#) will bring about changes to culture on a scale never seen before, according to the CEO of [Local Authority Building Control](#) (LABC) in England and Wales.

Lorna Stimpson told [a podcast](#) hosted by the [Building Engineering Services Association](#) (BESA) that the Act addressed several key areas that would help “put right the wrongs we’ve had for so many years in construction.”

“It is important that all construction professions act with integrity... It’s about doing the right thing, even when people aren’t watching you,” she told BESA chief executive David Frise during the first of a series of podcasts entitled [‘Behind the Built Environment’](#).

Stimpson explained that the Act was fundamentally about cultural change, which is often difficult to quantify. “It’s about people doing the right thing for the right reasons and putting safety first. There will be hard times coming for the whole industry, but we’ve got to be better,” she added.

She said it was also up to the industry to decide on its own definitions of competence and “what good looks like”. However, she stressed that competence was not something you learned from a book.

“It is about skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviours. Have you worked on that type of building before? It is your responsibility as a duty holder to understand where your skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviours lie.”

Responsibility

Stimpson also highlighted that the legislation demanded better evidence of what people should have been doing all along.

“This isn’t meant to be an imposition,” she told Frise. “This is just proving that you’ve done what you should do. In the same way, building control surveyors must now prove their competence and register with the [building safety] regulator.”

However, she added that someone could not claim to be competent because “they passed an exam 30 years ago...the building control profession is no longer about ‘pass an exam once, practice for life’.

“You’ve got to keep up to date. We know that construction products alone change so often. It’s such a massively innovative area, so how can you stand still? Constantly keeping yourself up to date is part of being a built environment professional.”

She urged BESA members to be diligent about gathering evidence of their competence and compliance: “It’s your responsibility to provide that evidence.”

The government has granted an extension to the deadline for registration of building control officers in England and Wales following a letter from Stimpson earlier this year. In England, they still had to register by the original 6 April deadline but now have until 6 July to complete the process. The Welsh government has extended the registration period to 30 September.

Stimpson also explained that more people needed to be recruited into the profession: “We know that building control is an ageing profession and that there are a lot of people at the latter end of their careers. We’ve been very conscious that we must bring in as many new starters and trainees as we possibly can.”

However, she told Frise she was optimistic about her sector’s capacity to support the legislation which would go on to make a significant difference to building safety in the years to come.

The full podcast is available [here](#) and for more information about the Building Safety Act visit [the BESA HUB](#).