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# Roadmap: Improving Safety in High Rise Residential Buildings

Implementation of NI Expert Panel Report

April 2024

Version: v1.0

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# Ministerial Foreword

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The Grenfell fire in London led to the tragic deaths of more than 70 people and many more were injured. The images of the flames enveloping the tower serve as a sobering reminder of just how quickly a fire can spread and the devastating effect it can have on the lives of our citizens. Without question, we must do everything we can to prevent anything like that ever happening again.

In the wake of Grenfell, the Department of Finance convened an Expert Panel to review high-rise residential building safety here in Northern Ireland. The Panel's report, published in December 2023, made recommendations that were consistent with Dame Judith Hackitt's 'Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety' reports in England. The reports concluded that the current regulatory system for ensuring fire safety in high-rise and complex buildings is not fit for purpose.

My Department has agreed to take this very important work forward and address the Expert Panel's recommendations as part of its overall remit for housing. A new Residential Building Safety Division has been established and, as the Minister for Communities, I am pleased at the urgency with which this Roadmap has been developed. It sets out the approach and actions required to start to improve residential building safety here in Northern Ireland. We now have an opportunity to learn from progress in other jurisdictions and become a leader in best practice.

Many of the issues raised in the Expert Panel's report are systemic and will not be addressed overnight, nor can they be solved in isolation. These are complex issues that will ultimately be resolved through collaboration with public sector colleagues and partners in industry. I invite you to join us and put the safety of people first, united by the principle that we must do all we can to protect the lives of our citizens.

**Gordon Lyons**

Minister, Department for Communities



# Introduction

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On 14th June 2017, seventy-two people tragically died in the Grenfell Tower apartment block fire, more than seventy others were injured and many more have endured incalculable suffering. Grenfell was the deadliest fire in the UK since 1988 and the worst UK residential fire since World War II. There were many failings that contributed to the disaster, with the aluminium composite cladding used on the exterior of the building being a key factor in the rapid spread of the fire.

In July 2017, an independent review of fire safety and building regulations in relation to high-rise residential buildings (HRRBs) in England was announced. The review, led by Dame Judith Hackitt, focused on a range of concerns including the regulatory system around design, construction and on-going management, compliance and enforcement associated with high-rise residential buildings. An interim report was issued in December 2017 and called for a ‘universal shift in culture’. The final report, ‘Building a Safer Future, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety’ was published in May 2018, and made recommendations for government to deliver a more robust regulatory system.

Dame Hackitt’s reports concluded that the current regulatory system covering high-rise and complex buildings was deeply flawed and that it was not fit for purpose.

The report expressed a need for a radical rethink of the whole system and highlighted the main issues as:

- Regulations and guidance not being read by those that need to, or misunderstood and misinterpreted.
- Trying to do things as quickly and cheaply as possible, rather than delivering quality homes which are safe for people to live in, and failing to prioritise safety.
- Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities over where accountability lies for fire safety.
- Inadequate regulatory and enforcement tools where enforcement is often not pursued, and penalties are ineffective.

In response to the Grenfell disaster and the Hackitt Review, the UK Government established a Building Safety Programme within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to address the shortcomings within the existing system for the management of building safety across society. This Programme covers a range of aspects including the building regulations, fire safety, the establishment of a building safety regulator and a new homes ombudsman.

# The Northern Ireland Context

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Following the Grenfell disaster and Hackitt reports, the Department of Finance (DoF) for Northern Ireland commissioned an Expert Panel to review the local situation and make recommendations to improve the building safety system in Northern Ireland. The Expert Panel published their report entitled, '**Improving Safety in High Rise Residential Buildings in Northern Ireland**' on **7 December 2023**. It identifies issues with the current system and makes recommendations, many of which are consistent with the Hackitt Review.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency have estimated that over 15,000 citizens in Northern Ireland currently reside in c.280 buildings over 11 metres high. Whilst the overall number of high-rise residential buildings in Northern Ireland is relatively small in comparison to elsewhere in the UK, the standard of safety available to the citizen here is as significant as anywhere else.

To say that the current system is fragmented is an understatement. The existing arrangements for the management of building safety in the region span six central government departments and all eleven local councils. All have a degree of legislative or operational responsibility for various parts of the system.

It has been over six years since the tragedy at Grenfell and other areas of the UK and Ireland are ahead of the progress here.

The opportunity exists now to learn and build on the work already completed in other parts of the UK and lead on this critically important issue.

There is an urgent need for a widespread cultural change for everyone involved in the end-to-end building safety system. This culture change requires leadership: leadership from government; leadership from industry; and leadership from our citizens. However, changing the culture will not, on its own, bring about the transformation that is required. In parallel to culture change, there is an urgent need to overhaul and simplify the currently overcomplex system for the approval, control and regulation of fire and building safety in high-rise residential buildings.

We recognise that this is going to be challenging. Addressing the systemic issues and behaviours created by a system that has evolved over the last century is no easy task. As we further develop and understand roles and responsibilities it will ultimately challenge all those involved. It will challenge the public sector to think differently about long-standing policy, processes, and legislation. It will challenge the construction and development industry to move from minimum standards of compliance to international examples of best practice. It will also challenge residents to think differently about their responsibilities and buildings and how their actions and behaviours can impact on their neighbours.

All stakeholders have a part to play in the solution united by the simple principle that the preventable loss of life is unacceptable and that all can and must do better.

At the very heart of what we do are the residents most affected by these changes. We will ensure that residents are provided with the appropriate forums to contribute to the solutions and ensure that they are provided with the appropriate information and made aware of the likely impacts on their lives, and what their responsibilities are and will be in the future.

Improvements to the system including those related to legislation, policy and processes will be developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. These will include residents of high-rise buildings, industry experts, freeholders, developers, construction companies, professional organisations, landlords, agents, and government. We will build on their experiences and expertise to ensure that the changes focus on life safety and the interests of the residents of high-rise buildings.

## The Immediate Task

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People's safety is potentially at risk. We must move at pace to address the challenges ahead of us recognising that one loss of life is too many. The safety of those residents most affected must and will be our primary focus. They will be at the heart of the changes we make. We are not alone in needing to improve building safety, it is a global concern. However, we are in a strong position to now build on the work and experiences of the other regions that are further advanced in their learning.

The Expert Panel recommended that **“A full-time Building Safety Team should be established to develop further detail and a ‘roadmap’ for the implementation of the recommendations...including the establishment of an ‘Office for Building Safety’.”**

This Roadmap is the starting point of our journey. It is imperative that we act now and work expediently to address safety issues within high-rise residential buildings and establish a system for building safety that is exemplar in the UK and beyond.

# Purpose

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The purpose of this Roadmap is to communicate the proposed approach and actions for the newly formed Residential Building Safety Division's work programme. It will outline how it will address the recommendations of the NI Expert Panel report and consider the wider recommendations of the Hackitt Reports and the work progressed across the UK and in other relevant jurisdictions. Our aim is to move beyond the recommendations into the improvement of a building safety system based on best practice across both local and international jurisdictions to best ensure the safety of our citizens.

It will outline the Residential Building Safety Division's vision and desired outcomes for the future, convey the main workstreams that will be progressed to address the recommendations and provide indicative timeframes for completion. It should be noted that this Roadmap is a 'living' document and if necessary, amended, and updated iterations will be produced and circulated as the work progresses.

# Vision

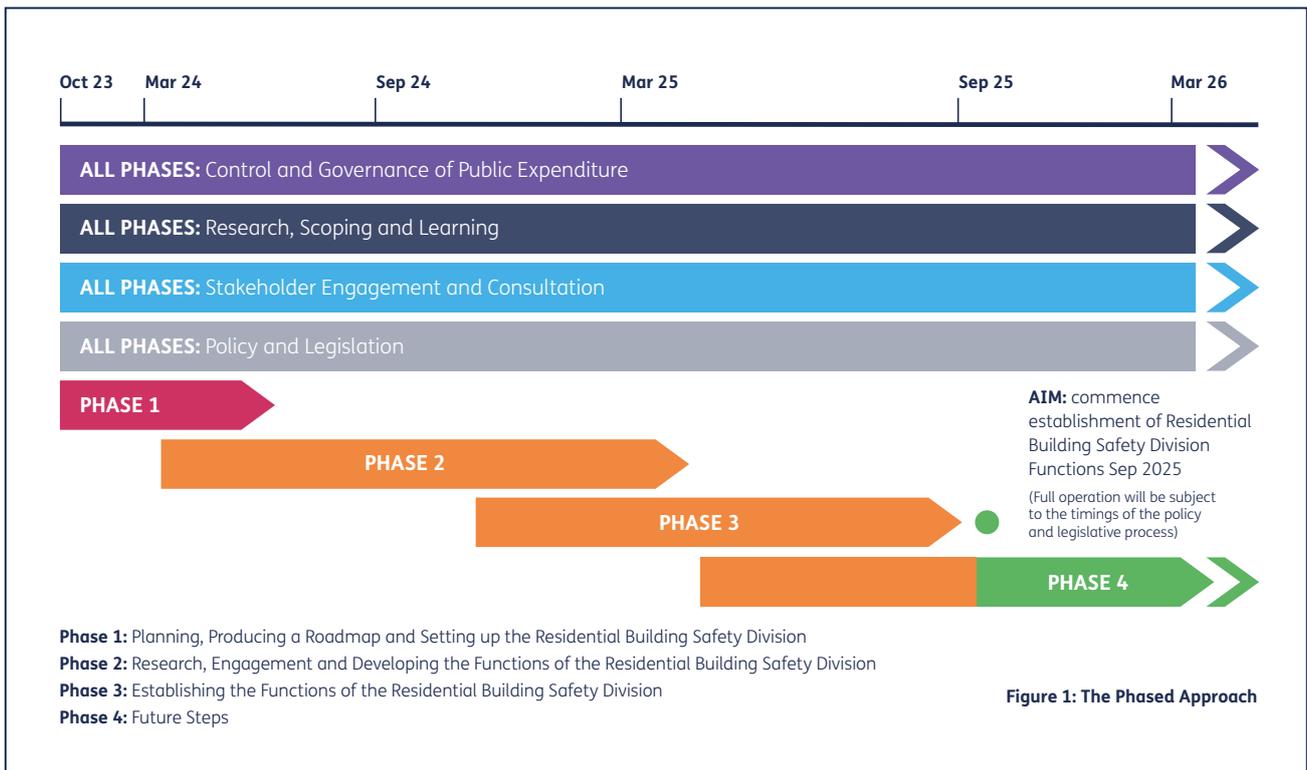
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It is the vision of the Residential Building Safety Division to:

**'Develop, implement and maintain a building safety system founded on sound policy and legislation to manage the lifecycle of residential buildings that promotes a culture of safety.'**

The Residential Building Safety Division will initially concentrate on fire safety and any codependent building safety matters in high-rise residential buildings in scope. The vision is based on the premise that the Residential Building Safety Division will develop its remit after the initial two years to cover a wider spectrum of building safety issues and it may also include other building types found to have a higher risk to life safety. However, is it important for the Residential Building Safety Division to prioritise addressing the fire risks associated with safety within high-rise residential buildings in its work, so that parity with other jurisdictions can be achieved for the citizens of Northern Ireland.

# Section 1: The Phased Approach



## Phased Approach

To progress the work programme of the Residential Building Safety Division, we have developed a 4-phase approach:

### **Phase 1: Planning, Producing a Roadmap and Setting up the Residential Building Safety Division**

Phase 1 will address recommendations of the Expert Panel that require urgent action, namely 1, 2, and 10-14. Work on these recommendations is already underway, as detailed later in the Roadmap.

### **Phase 2: Research, Engagement and Developing the Functions of the Residential Building Safety Division**

Phase 2 will overlap with the later part of Phase 1, as extensive stakeholder engagement and research gets underway that will then inform change and shape the development of the Residential Building Safety Division functions.

### **Phase 3: Developing the Functions of the Residential Building Safety Division**

Work carried out in Phase 3 will lay the foundation for new and amended policy, which will generate a significant legislative programme for Northern Ireland and inform the functions of the Residential Building Safety Division that will support an improved building safety system for high-rise residential buildings in Northern Ireland.

**During Phases 2 and 3**, the Expert Panel's recommendations 3-9 will be addressed.

### **Phase 4: Next Steps**

Informed by the work of the earlier phases, we will consider future requirements and the anticipated evolution of the scope and remit of the Residential Building Safety Division.

Some fundamental work themes will run throughout, underpinning and strengthening the rationale for the direction of the Residential Building Safety Division. These work themes are governance, research, scoping, stakeholder engagement, communication and consultation, and policy and legislation development. Whilst the phases will broadly run consecutively, there is considerable overlap between them, and many activities will take place concurrently. Some activities may also continue indefinitely and become part of the ongoing remit, such as the work of advisory panels.

## Section 2: Key Workstreams

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In drafting this Roadmap, we have been mindful of not only addressing the Expert Panel’s recommendations, but we will also draw on the wider recommendations of the Hackitt Reports and the work progressed across the UK, especially in relation to the formation of the Building Safety Act 2022. Building safety related best practice and lessons learnt in other jurisdictions will inform our work. It is important that we learn from the knowledge and experience of those that are ahead of Northern Ireland on the journey of building safety reform.

Having considered the work programme, key workstreams have been identified and will be progressed via the phased approach previously outlined in Section 1. These workstreams are:

- Residential Building Safety Division
- Key Safety Measures
- Systems, Processes, and Information Management
- Competence
- Policy, Legislation, Regulation and Guidance
- Culture

The workstreams will be supported by a proactive, comprehensive schedule of stakeholder engagement and communications and an appropriate governance structure. Suitable engagement forums will be set up to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged, heard, well-informed and understand the strategic direction of the Residential Building Safety Division and the decisions it takes. This is essential given the range and number of stakeholders involved, and the need to foster good working relationships and achieve a collective buy-in.

It will be important for the Residential Building Safety Division to review the situation regarding building safety in Northern Ireland, which is different from other jurisdictions in many ways. While the Expert Panel’s report discusses some analysis of perceived issues, it is critically important that we dedicate time and expertise to strengthen this work. There is a need to further define and analyse the causes, weaknesses, gaps, and any duplication in the current building safety system in Northern Ireland that gives rise to problems here.

Scoping exercises and in-depth research into all aspects of residential building safety in Northern Ireland are required. This includes researching and analysing the culture around safety and the various systems and processes that make up the overall building safety system that is involved with the lifecycle of high-rise residential buildings.

Systems thinking methodology and tools can be used to ensure a local, multi-perspective and iterative approach, rather than looking at constituent parts or processes in isolation. Looking at the residential building safety system in the round, considering all relevant factors, such as interconnections, relationships and dynamics will provide a suitable environment for effective decision-making, policy and legislation change and transformation. This systemic approach will help the Residential Building Safety Division develop effective solutions that can be sustained long term.

Our work will be underpinned by effective governance and evidenced rationale that leads to the best practice solutions, sound policy and legislation and a building safety system that promotes a culture of safety at its core.

The remainder of this section provides a summary of the key workstreams the Residential Building Safety Division will focus on initially, to commence its work. Further workstreams may be added as work progresses. Each workstream section outlines the vision and desired outcomes, how these we will achieved, and some specifics about what the Residential Building Safety Division will do.

## Residential Building Safety Division

### Vision

To identify and establish the appropriate remit for the Residential Building Safety Division in Northern Ireland and align all the relevant functions that sit across other NICS departments and local government. Successfully deliver the programme of work outlined in the Expert Panel's Report by learning and building on the work progressed in the rest of the UK.

### Desired Outcomes

- Transfer of knowledge from other jurisdictions.
- Future functions of the Residential Building Safety Division clearly understood by all key stakeholders.
- New operating model identified and implemented.

### How will this be achieved?

- Initially the Residential Building Safety Division will focus on the delivery of the programme of work outlined in this Roadmap but will be developed and transition to the future remit over time.
- Functions, remit and structure will be benchmarked with other parts of the UK and Ireland.
- Engage with other NICS departments and local government responsible for related functions to align and agree future position.
- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement and communication.

### What will we do?

- Deliver the programme of work to address the recommendations of the Expert Panel Report and the Hackitt Reports.
- Benchmark the Residential Building Safety Division with models adopted in the rest of the UK, Ireland and other jurisdictions.
- Implement the operating model for the Residential Building Safety Division.

## Key Safety Measures

### Vision

To mitigate the risk to life safety, key safety measures are prioritised and implemented.

### Desired Outcomes

- Northern Ireland citizens are safer in their homes.
- Parity with other parts of the UK on key safety measures has been achieved.

### How will we achieve this?

- By implementing fundamental high impact safety measures, we will enhance the safety of high-rise residential buildings.
- By ensuring the citizens of Northern Ireland can seek the same level of assistance to remediate unsafe cladding on their buildings, as that afforded to other UK citizens.
- Through reviewing appropriate policy and legislation vehicles for the mandatory retrospective installation of smoke and heat alarms in all existing dwellings (not just high-rise residential buildings).
- Through liaising with Northern Ireland Building Regulations team to consider the benefits of introducing a mandatory requirement for sprinklers in high-rise residential buildings over a certain height.
- Through discussion with Northern Ireland Building Regulations team on the benefits of having more than one escape staircase in high-rise residential buildings over a certain height.

### What will we do?

- Engage with and consult relevant fora to seek advice on implementing high impact safety measures.
- Review Article 46 of the Housing (NI) Order 1981, Article 11B(2) of the Private Tenancies (NI) Order 2006 (as amended); and other potential policy and legislative delivery mechanisms; for example, via social housing policy, conveyancing, or insurance routes.
- Support the current proposal to amend the Building Regulations to introduce mandatory sprinkler provision in new residential buildings over 11m and 4 floors via an amendment to Part E of the Building Regulations.
- Discuss and support a proposal to introduce a requirement for more than one fire escape staircase in new residential buildings over 18m, via an amendment to Part E of the Building Regulations.
- Monitor the progress of Northern Ireland applications in the Cladding Safety Scheme managed by Homes England for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Department for Communities.

## Systems, Processes and Information Management

### Vision

To promote safety and compliance, an effective and connected residential building safety system for managing the lifecycle of high-rise residential buildings is implemented.

### Desired Outcomes

- A robust and streamlined residential building safety system is in place.
- Oversight arrangements and structured joined-up processes are in place.
- There is enhanced compliance and application of best practice, and in turn improved safety.

### How will we achieve this?

- Use systems thinking methodology and tools to review the current building safety system that manages the lifecycle of high-rise residential buildings.
- Through mapping the current complex building safety system, its sub-systems, processes and statutory approval procedures, the Residential Building Safety Division will gain a full understanding of the current environment, its fragmentation, gaps, missing linkages, etc. This will inform improvements and the changes required.
- By engaging with all relevant stakeholders to inform an improved residential building safety system that is focused on a culture of safety, that promotes best practice solutions and that bolsters compliance.

- Through researching, learning and building on best practice and progress made across the rest of the UK, Ireland, and other relevant jurisdictions.
- Through aligning and integrating related functions within the NICS departments and local government, consolidating where possible.
- By encouraging Northern Ireland citizens to be involved in the management of their own safety.

### What will we do?

- Work across government and industry to engage expert Task and Finish groups and advisory panels to create a new rationalised and connected residential building safety system that is more efficient and cohesive.
- Carry out specifically tailored research and scoping exercises to establish requirements that will strengthen oversight and compliance within the system, such as; approval checks or gateways, competency accreditations, golden thread information or safety procedures required during occupation stages, for instance.
- Define, communicate, and ratify a new best practice residential building safety system and any additional processes/procedures required to ensure consistency, continuity and endurance well into the future.

- Implement amendments and new guidance, policy, regulations and legislation, informed by the outputs of extensive stakeholder engagement, research and learning.
- Set up and facilitate databases and registers that improves the residential building safety system for all involved.
- Implement clear, concise and accessible guidance detailing how the improved residential building safety system works.

## Competence

### Vision

High-rise residential buildings are produced and managed by skilled, knowledgeable and competent people to make them safe and of high quality.

### Desired Outcomes

- Those involved with high-rise residential buildings work within a well-defined competence framework to ensure they are competent to deliver safe outcomes.
- Key role holders and duty holders have clearly, defined and well-understood responsibilities and accountabilities.
- This new way of working and its protocols improves competence, and in turn, culture, quality and safety.

### How will we achieve this?

- Through relevant stakeholder engagement to fully understand the current landscape in Northern Ireland.
- Through learning from other jurisdictions to understand work completed to date on competence, lessons learnt and best practice.
- By identifying and defining key roles that need to undergo assessment and verification to assure competence.
- By equipping people with appropriate tools and guidance that will improve competence.
- By firmly establishing clear policy, legislation and guidance on competence that will drive positive change and promote residential building safety.

### What will we do?

- Research and draw on existing resources, such as, the work associated with the Building Safety Act 2022, the BSI 8670 and PAS 8671-8673 document series.
- Engage with the Industry Competence Committee for England to gain insight and apply appropriate learnings.
- Review existing approved third party accreditation / assessment schemes, and adopt best practice where appropriate.
- Work with professional bodies to ensure that third party accreditation and assessment schemes are appropriate.
- Promote widespread commitment to Continuing Professional Development (CPD), advancement of skills and subsequent recording of such.
- Introduce policy, legislation, guidance and processes in the residential building safety system that check competence and provide assurance.
- Look ahead and work with professional and trade bodies, academia and the Department for the Economy to help maintain a supply of appropriately competent resources for the new residential building safety system and help avoid skills shortages.
- Horizon scanning to ensure competency requirements are matched to wider strategic policy and legislation, market trends, technology advancement, economic and environmental shifts, etc.

## Policy, Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

### Vision

Sound, joined-up and unambiguous policy, legislation, regulation and guidance that supports the residential building safety system and effective management of the lifecycle of high-rise residential buildings.

### Desired Outcomes

- The policy, legislation, regulation and guidance supporting the residential building safety system promotes a culture of safety, compliance, high quality work and is fit for purpose well into the future.

### How will we achieve this?

- Through scoping and mapping exercises to determine existing relevant legislation in Northern Ireland, other UK jurisdictions and further afield as appropriate.
- By being cognisant of wider strategic priorities, policy and legislation that may be related to residential building safety, to ensure a cohesive and consistent approach.
- Through stakeholder engagement that will inform the policy and legislative direction needed to improve residential building safety.
- By formulating a clear and concise strategic policy direction and legislative schedule to administer the required changes that will improve safety.

### What will we do?

- Use the outputs from significant stakeholder engagement and the formal consultation and approvals processes to inform aims and objectives that need to be translated into policy and legislation.
- Set up and manage an Advisory Committee in association with the NI Building Regulations Advisory Committee (NIBRAC) and seek legal advice as and when necessary.
- Progress existing legislative amendments that can proceed earlier than new primary legislation.
- Complete required impact assessments and liaise with other organisations as necessary e.g., Information Commissioners Office (data protection), Department of Finance (public expenditure).
- Draft new policy and carry out amendments to existing.
- Translate policy proposals into instructions for Legislative Counsel to commence the legislation work.
- Seek Executive approval of policy and work with the Assembly Committee to progress legislative ratification process.
- Work through the formal legislation process, including formal consultation procedures.
- Ensure appropriate, accessible, clear and concise guidance is implemented to support policy, legislation and regulation.

## Culture

### Vision

Establish a residential building safety system that has the safety of our citizens at its core.

### Desired Outcomes

- The residential building safety system promotes a culture of safety, competence, accountability and high quality.
- Responsible behaviours that put safety and best practice first becomes the norm.

### How will we achieve this?

- By Changing Mindsets: we will challenge current behaviours and beliefs that focus on minimal compliance and encourage best practice through the development and implementation of policy and a regulatory framework that focuses on responsibility and citizen safety.
- Through Engagement & Education: by learning from other jurisdictions, we will address competency across the residential building safety system by engaging, supporting and equipping people and the industry with new tools and information that will promote safety.
- Improved Systems & Processes: we will identify and address the shortcomings within the current system by ensuring the new residential building safety system promotes the safety of our citizens and best practice.

### What will we do?

- Develop a blueprint for the desired culture.
- Identify and assess the gaps between current behaviours and practices and evaluate them against desired behaviours and best practice.
- Engage with stakeholder leaders and managers and encourage them to be advocates of desired culture.
- Develop and implement new policy, processes and practices that promote residential building safety.
- Track progress towards the future vision.
- Ensure appropriate, accessible, clear and concise guidance is implemented to support policy, legislation and regulation.

# Section 3: Recommendations of the Expert Panel's Report

## Recommendations to be addressed in Phase 1: Planning, Producing a Roadmap and Establishing the Residential Building Safety Division:

This section will address what actions the Residential Building Safety Division intends to take in order to address the recommendations of the Expert Panel, including details of anticipated timelines as requested in recommendation 1 of the report.

### Recommendation 1

A full-time Building Safety Team (the Interim Team) should be established to develop further detail and a 'roadmap' for the implementation of the recommendations in this report, including the establishment of an 'Office for Building Safety'. The 'roadmap' (to include a timetable for the completion of the necessary actions) should be developed within three months of the Interim Team being established.

Actions to Address the Recommendation		
	Actions	Indicative Timings (completion date or range)
1	Establish the Interim Team	Complete
2	Review Expert Panel Report & Hackitt Recommendations	Complete
3	Look at Residential Building Safety Division remit and functions in other UK regions	by 31 July 2024
4	Inform Industry and wider Public Sector of Roadmap development	Complete
5	Develop Roadmap	January 2024 - March 2024
6	Establish a Residential Building Safety Division within the Department for Communities	by 30 March 2024
7	Publish Roadmap	by 29 March 2024

## Recommendation 2

Adequate resources (financial, people, etc.) should be allocated providing appropriate knowledge, skills, expertise, and support services to implement the recommendations in this report, including the use of external specialists or the establishment of Task and Finish groups as required.

Actions to Address Recommendation 2		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Identify skill set requirements for Interim Team and potential specialists for Task & Finish Groups.	by 30 June 2024
2	Establish 2024-2025 funding requirements	by 30 June 2024

## Recommendation 10

Introduce a mandatory requirement for smoke and heat alarms to be installed in all existing dwellings, similar to the approach implemented in Scotland.

Actions to Address Recommendation 10		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Establish potential policy and legislative vehicles that could deliver the requirement.	Complete
2	Liaise with Housing Policy Team in Department for Communities to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what change is possible under article 46 of the Housing Fitness Standards within the Housing (NI) Order 1981; and</li> <li>• consider vehicles to introduce mandatory requirement into social housing policy.</li> </ul>	by 30 April 2024
3	Liaise with Conveyancing and Insurance Stakeholders to investigate any routes to implementation in these areas	Complete
4	Introduce new and amend existing policy	by 31 July 2024
5	Commence the process to introduce new and amend existing legislation	by 31 December 2024

### Recommendation 11

Consider the introduction of appropriate fire suppression systems, such as sprinklers, in new high-rise residential buildings. A cost-benefit analysis should be completed prior to the implementation of the recommendation.

Actions to Address Recommendation 11		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Liaise with Department of Finance to establish the full scope of the proposed amendment to Part E of the Building Regulations.	by 31 December 2024
2	Continue to liaise with Department of Finance on consultation responses and progress	Ongoing until implementation
3	Anticipated implementation date	by 30 April 2024

### Recommendation 12

Carry out a review of whether two or more escape staircases are required in new high-rise residential buildings. A cost-benefit analysis should be completed as part of this review.

Actions to Address Recommendation 12		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Liaise with Department of Finance to establish a proposed amendment to Part E of the Building Regulations, which can potentially be captured in the second consultation process	Complete
2	Continue to liaise with Department of Finance on consultation responses and progress	Ongoing until implementation
3	If progressed, anticipated implementation date	by 30 September 2024

### Recommendation 13

An application to remediate one building, with unsafe Aluminum Composite Material (ACM) Cladding fitted, has been received by the Department of Finance. The remediation works should commence in April 2023. This is supported by the Expert Panel.

Actions to Address Recommendation 13		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Department of Finance to Complete Remediation Scheme	by 30 April 2024

### Recommendation 14

The Department for Communities (DfC) is developing a potential scheme for Northern Ireland, using the model of the English Building Safety Fund, to assess, and potentially fund, remediation required to buildings in Northern Ireland fitted with unsafe non-ACM cladding. This Panel considers that this work should be expedited urgently.

Actions to Address Recommendation 14		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Quantify potential impacted buildings	Complete
2	Establish funding requirements	Complete
3	Link into existing Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities arrangements	Complete
4	Launch Remediation Scheme	Complete
5	Remediate qualifying buildings	April 2024 -March 2026
6	Close Remediation Scheme	April 2026

## Recommendations to be addressed in Phases 2 and 3: Research, Engagement, Developing and Establishing the Functions of the Residential Building Safety Division:

### Recommendation 6

There are synergies in central and local government, such as, those between planning policy, building regulations, health and safety, environmental health and planning and building control functions in local councils. If changes are identified that enhance the effectiveness of the regulatory system for high-rise residential buildings, the Office for Building Safety should work with local and central government to facilitate collaboration and align functions were necessary.

Actions to Address Recommendation 6		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Set up Inter-departmental Working Groups	by 31 March 2024
2	Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan	Complete
3	Consider responsibilities fragmented across departments and agree functions to be transferred to Department for Communities	by 31 March 2024
4	Review the current regulatory system and identify nature and extent of gaps, weaknesses, and duplications	February - July 2024
5	Establish Working Groups with Local Government and other Public Bodies	by 30 June 2024
6	Agree new policy direction and changes needed to existing legislation	by September 2024
7	Progress policy and commence legislative process.	Post December 2024 – timetable unknown at this stage
8	Implement required guidance.	by 31 December 2024

## Recommendation 7

The Interim Team should collaborate with Land and Property Services (LPS) to establish and maintain a public register of high-rise residential buildings. The Office for Building Safety should hold up-to-date information on high-rise residential buildings and details of building owners/managers.

Actions to Address Recommendation 7		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Examine Northern Ireland high-rise residential building register compiled by Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the Expert Panel	Complete
2	Identify changes needed to the register	by April 2024
3	Agree and implement a strategy for maintaining the register	March – June 2024
4	Public call out for information to capture high-rise residential buildings not listed to date	by 30 April 2024
5	Define full extent of any policy and/or legislative requirements (new and amendments) to mandate registration.	by September 2024
6	Progress implementation of any policy and/or legislative requirements in line with overall legislative programme	by March 2025

## Recommendation 3

Life Safety must be advocated and incorporated in the guidance and policies developed by the Office for Building Safety to raise competencies and behaviours and improve the culture and attitudes of the actors involved in the end-to-end process.

## Recommendation 4

The Office for Building Safety should identify and define the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, for the actors involved in the end-to-end process. The competence requirements and accreditations needed should then be mapped. A procedural approach should then be provided for specifying, recording, and monitoring competency requirements and accreditations for all actors involved in high-rise residential buildings.

Actions to Address Recommendation 3 & 4		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Review work done to date such as that by the Construction Industry Council, British Standards Institute, and the Interim Industry Competence Committee (England)	by 30 March 2024
2	Consider the competency related requirements of the Building Safety Act	by 30 March 2024
3	Assess suitable application of requirements appropriate to Northern Ireland	by 30 June 2024
4	Work closely with industry led Advisory Panels or Task & Finish Groups to agree approach for Northern Ireland	June 2024 - March 2025
5	Liaise with relevant professional and trade bodies and academia to understand qualifications and assessment criteria for competency	by 30 June 2024
6	Establish the policy approach for Northern Ireland, including how it integrates with the end-to-end process in operational terms	by 31 March 2025
7	Consider synergies and interdependencies with other work streams and policy work emerging	by 31 December 2024
8	Formulate final policy to support new and amended legislation and engage with relevant stakeholders	post December 2024
9	Define full extent of legislative requirements (new and amendments) and progress with overall legislative programme	post December 2024

## Recommendation 5

The Office for Building Safety should endorse the view that a high-rise residential building is a complex system that needs to be treated as ‘one overall entity’ and is resourced appropriately. The functions of the Office for Building Safety should include, but not be limited to:

- providing oversight and coordination of fire and building safety matters related to the end-to-end process;
- driving clear strategic policy direction, leadership, continuity, guidance, and support for fire and building safety matters;
- forming a close working relationship with appropriate public bodies and central government departments in other jurisdictions; and
- continually reviewing and researching, as necessary, other subjects which could impact positively or negatively on fire and building safety matters (e.g. electric vehicle parking/charging in high-rise residential building underground car parks).

## Recommendation 8

The Office for Building Safety should establish a robust oversight gateway system covering the control and coordination of the end-to-end process. This system should include a series of integrated ‘approval gateways’. Approval to proceed through the approval gateway is required for any new build high-rise residential building, or existing high-rise residential which is subject to alterations (defined by the Office for Building Safety as ‘significant alterations’ in consultation with Planning and Building Regulations/Building Control). The work associated with designing this oversight gateway system should consider matters such as:

- identifying and addressing weaknesses, duplication, and gaps in the current overall regulatory system;
- identifying the deliverables which the Office for Building Safety needs to control and coordinate receipt of, as an ‘overseer’ in the end-to-end process;
- identifying, agreeing, and implementing approval gateways in the end-to-end process, clearly indicating when such deliverables should be submitted to the Office for Building Safety before work can continue;
- defining any additional inspection or certification regimes or roles required (without diminishing any liabilities, accountabilities or responsibilities already carried by any actor in the regulatory process or through any other contractual obligations);
- establishing a strategy for the notification of changes - a ‘change control mechanism’ that deals with changes specific to those defined as ‘significant’ for high-rise residential buildings by the Office for Building Safety, and different from other statutory requirements of planning or building control;
- establishing a strategy for the management of high-rise residential buildings in occupation, including the consideration of building safety cases, resident engagement strategies, risk assessments, and others as required; and
- to clarify the responsibilities of actors throughout the end-to-end process to ensure the ‘golden thread’ of building record information is maintained for high-rise residential buildings.

Actions to Address Recommendation 5 & 8		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	High level scoping and mapping of the existing wider system associated with building safety	by 30 April 2024
2	Assess and document best practice and effective systems in other jurisdictions and internationally	by 30 August 2024
3	Identify and establish specialist Working Groups, Advisory Panels or Task & Finish Groups	by 30 June 2024
4	Carry out relevant stakeholder engagement	June 2024 - March 2025
5	Identify and analyse problems, issues, weaknesses, etc. in the end-to-end process, leading to building safety being compromised	by 30 September 2024
6	Establish changes needed, develop the policy approach to achieve desired operational outcome	by 31 October 2024
7	Define full extent of legislative requirements (new and amendments)	post December 2024
8	Progress the formal legislative process	post December 2024

### Recommendation 9

- The Office for Building Safety should review existing policies, legislation, and guidance to identify any amendments needed and any new policies, legislation and guidance required to enable the end-to-end process. This should be carried out by collaborating with the central government departments responsible for these policies, legislation, and guidance to:
- remove duplication in the current control and regulation of high-rise residential buildings;
- clarify what amendments to current guidance, policies or legislation is required to strengthen the current regime for high-rise residential buildings;
- identify where new guidance, policy and legislation is required and work with the relevant department to develop this; and
- review and approve any proposals for amendments to existing legislation, regulations, or guidance, that are currently in-train or under consultation.

Actions to Address Recommendation 9		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	High level scoping and mapping of existing policy and legislation associated with the building safety system in Northern Ireland	by 30 March 2024
2	Assess and document effective policy, legislation and guidance associated with building safety regimes in other jurisdictions and internationally	by 30 August 2024
3	Carry out relevant stakeholder engagement	April 2024 – June 2025
4	Analyse outputs of actions to inform the policy direction	by 30 September 2024
5	Consider synergies and interdependencies with other work streams and policy work emerging	October – December 2024
6	Formulate final policy to support new and amended legislation and engage and consult with relevant stakeholders	post March 2025
7	Define full extent of legislative requirements – new and amendments	post March 2025
8	Progress the formal legislative process	post March 2025

### Recommendation 15

Establish a strategy to define the requirements for assessment, funding, and remediation of life safety issues in existing high-rise residential buildings that may have additional vulnerabilities and problems that need to be rectified.

Actions to Address Recommendation 15		
	Actions	Time Scale
1	Review feasibility of this recommendation	June 2025

## Section 4: Conclusion

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This Roadmap represents the start of our journey towards a better residential building safety system for Northern Ireland. It communicates the critical need for our work, the approach we are going to take, all of which focuses on the safety of our citizens.

It outlines timescales and actions in order to address the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Expert Panel report and importantly considered the wider recommendations of the Hackitt Reports and the existing work progressed across the UK and in other relevant jurisdictions.

As stated, our aim is to move beyond the recommendations of the Expert Panel into the improvement of a residential building safety system based on best practice across both local and international jurisdictions to ensure the safety of our citizens.

As our work progresses, we will keep all key stakeholders informed of our progress and significant developments. Finally, we recognise the significant challenge that we face. However regardless of the scale of the challenge, we stand confident that we can do better driven by the fact that preventable loss of life is unacceptable.

## Further Information

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