

1. Key Asks

1.1 **Electrical Safety First calls for the following three improvements to the Building Safety Bill: -**

- i. The introduction of mandatory electrical safety checks in all High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs) in England, regardless of the tenure of the properties.
- ii. Clarification of the role and responsibilities of the Accountable Person with regard to electrical safety in HRRBs to ensure tenants have confidence and clarity.
- iii. Reinstatement of the Clause on Electrical Safety 'Residents' Responsibilities' to help tenants understand their own electrical safety responsibilities.

1.2 **The Building Safety Bill is a real opportunity to protect lives and property by reducing the number of fires caused by electrical sources of ignition in HRRBs.** However, since the publication of the draft Bill last year, the Government has removed important Clauses from the Bill which would have helped improve electrical safety in HRRBs. Electrical Safety First is concerned this opportunity to protect residents will now be lost.

1.3 Electrical Safety First is the only UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths, injuries and fires caused by domestic electrical accidents. **Electricity causes around 14,000 house fires a year in England alone – over half of all accidental dwelling firesⁱ.** Every year, thousands of people are injured in their homes due to electrical accidents and incidents, and some tragically lose their lives in fires caused by electricity.

1.4 Electrical Safety First has developed the High Rise Properties (Electrical Safety) Bill which seeks to improve electrical safety in HRRBs. **We urge the Government to incorporate the text of this Bill into the Building Safety Bill to ensure that lives and property are protected.**

2. **Ask One - The introduction of mandatory electrical safety checks in all High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs) in England, regardless of the tenure of the properties**

2.1 In England, 54% of all electrical dwelling fires are caused by an electrical source of ignition.ⁱⁱ **These include the fires in Shirley Towers in Southamptonⁱⁱⁱ, Grenfell Tower^{iv}, Lakanal House^v, New Providence Wharf^{vi} and Shepherds Court^{vii} in London.** These tragic events have demonstrated the fatal risk electrical incidents pose to people in their own homes, particularly in high-density housing such as HRRBs.

- 2.2 Each of these buildings were mixed tenure – with residents from the social rented sector, private rented sector, as well as owner occupiers. **Yet at present, only those tenants who rent privately would receive a legally required electrical check.**
- 2.3 There are around 4,000 HRRBs in the UK, estimated to contain over 480,000 individual flats in England alone^{viii}. Electrical Safety First believes that **every dwelling** in a high-rise building, regardless of tenure, should be subject to the same electrical safety regime, otherwise everyone in the building can be placed at risk from an incident occurring in a single flat. Without improvement to this Bill, over one million people living in HRRBs may be at risk.
- 2.4 The benefit of mandatory five-yearly electrical checks has already been recognised by the Government and implemented via The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations (2020)^{ix}. **Now is the time to include all individual dwellings within HRRBs in this regulation - regardless of their tenure.**
- 2.5 We are very pleased that the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee’s report agreed with Electrical Safety First and recommended that mandatory checks should be introduced for HRRBs.^x **We therefore urge MPs to back our attempts to introduce mandatory checks for people living in HRRBs in England.**
- 2.6 **Mandatory electrical safety checks in HRRBs will help prevent the deaths, injuries and property damage caused by fires.** These five-yearly checks would be paid for by the owner of the property – costing about £150-£200 per dwelling, as little as £30 per year.
3. **Ask Two - Clarification of the role and responsibilities of the Accountable Person with regard to electrical safety in HRRBs to ensure tenants have confidence and clarity.**
- 3.1 Electrical Safety First calls for the Government to clarify within the Bill what an ‘Accountable Person’ will be responsible for in terms of electrical safety. We believe that they should be responsible for maintaining records, as well as ensuring electrical safety information is provided to residents.
- 3.2 Whilst Electrical Safety First has been working with industry, Fire and Rescue Services and the Office for Product Safety and Standards to help improve electrical appliance safety, this Bill can improve the safety of HRRBs by implementing a proactive approach to prevent fires caused by electrical installations and appliances.
- 3.3 For example, there could be recalled electrical goods in use and it only takes one dangerous, faulty and unchecked product to place everyone in the entire building at risk. **The Accountable Person could have an important role in with the provision of advice and information.** Electrical Safety First would be able to help local authorities, management companies and ‘Accountable Persons’ with educational advice through the information and guidance that we already publish.

Clarifying the role of the Accountable person would help ensure a joined-up approach to safety and protect residents living in HRRBs.

- 4. Ask Three - Reinstatement of the clause on Electrical Safety ‘Residents’ Responsibilities’ to help tenants understand their own electrical safety responsibilities**
- 4.1 In the draft version of the Building Safety Bill published on 20 July 2020^{xi} - Clause 86 was aimed at residents and places a duty of responsibility on them to *“Keep any relevant resident’s item in repair and proper working order”*.^{xii}
- 4.2 The Government has removed this Clause which would have been a clear way in which to help ensure installations and appliances are kept in good working order.
- 4.3 This Clause would have also supported in law the Government’s “Fire Kills” campaign which is an educational initiative to prevent fires in the home that Electrical Safety First works closely with the Home Office to promote. **We are very concerned the Government has removed this Clause from the Bill. We believe this is a backward step in addressing electrical safety issues in HRRBs. We ask MPs to question why the Government has taken this step and request that the Government considers reinserting this important Clause.**

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For further information, please email policy@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

ⁱ Electrical Safety First analysis of Home Office Statistics 2018-19 <https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/westminster/statistics-england/>

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ⁱⁱⁱ Shirley Towers Fire - <https://www.ife.org.uk/incidents-of-interest/shirley-towers-2010/34619>

^{iv} Grenfell Tower Fire <https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/>

^v Lakanal House Fire <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-london-21964603>

^{vi} New Providence Wharf Fire <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-57260742>

^{vii} Shepherds Court Fire <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-37203933>

^{viii} English Housing Survey 2018-19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2018-to-2019-headline-report>

^{ix} <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2020/9780111191934>

^x HCLG Parliamentary Committee – Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3605/documents/35262/default/>

^{xi} Draft Building Safety Bill <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-building-safety-bill>

^{xii} Ibid