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*Dear Councillor Stallan*

**08 JUL 2011**

### **FIRE SAFETY IN FLAT BLOCKS**

Thank you for your letter of 7 April to the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, about fire safety in purpose built blocks of flats. I am replying as I have responsibility for fire safety policy.

I recognise concerns about the provision of fire safety in blocks of flats. The tragic fire in Lakanal House, Camberwell, gave rise to concerns among housing providers – local authorities, housing associations and the private sector – and the enforcing authorities about the adequacy of risk assessments and fire safety measures necessary to ensure sufficient protection to residents and deliver compliance under both the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the FSO) and the Housing Act 2004.

Both the housing and fire sectors considered that additional fire safety guidance should be developed to focus on the particular circumstances and challenges presented by purpose built blocks of flats. We listened carefully to the concerns of the sector on this, and have provided Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) – part of the Local Government Group – with grant funding to develop and own, on behalf of the sector, practical and proportionate fire safety guidance specifically for these types of residential buildings. The guidance is expected to clarify a number of issues around managing fire safety and ensuring residents in purpose built flats get appropriate advice on what to do in the event of a fire. LGID has consulted widely on the draft guidance, and plan to make the final guidance available on its website, and for dissemination by sector partners, by the end of July.

Finally, you ask about the role of the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). As the enforcing authorities, FRAs are, of course, unable to carry out the risk assessment for those with responsibilities under the FSO. However, they are expected to support compliance through the provision of advice and information as appropriate.

**BOB NEILL MP**