

# Electrical Safety First Briefing

**Building Safety Bill – House of Lords – Committee Stage**

**In Support of Amendments: Electrical Safety: Leasehold dwellings in high rise residential buildings**

Electrical Safety First is the only UK charity dedicated to reducing deaths, injuries and fires caused by domestic electrical accidents: [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)

## Building Safety Bill – House of Lords Committee Stage

### Amendments to improve electrical safety in leasehold dwellings in high rise residential buildings

#### Background

- Electrical Safety First is the charity committed to reducing the number of deaths, injuries and accidents caused by electricity. We fully support the new clauses tabled by Lord Foster of Bath which aims to improve the safety of High-Rise Residential buildings (HRRBs) by requiring leasehold properties to be protected by an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) for the electrical installations in their properties. This is required for privately rented homes in HRRBs but does not apply to leasehold properties.

#### Why this is needed

- Currently, **there is no legal requirement for social landlords or leaseholders to undertake electrical safety checks of their dwellings in England.** This is particularly concerning in relation to HRRBs, as unsafe electrical installations in one property undermines the safety of the entire building.
- **Mandatory electrical safety checks are already in place in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in England.**
- Recent high-profile fires in tower blocks, (Grenfell Tower, Shepherds Court, and Lakanal House) were caused by electricity. **These buildings were of mixed tenure, strengthening the case for parity in electrical safety standards across all tenures in HRRBs.**
- According to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request completed by the then Ministry of Housing, Communities, & Local Government in April 2019, there are **4812 social residential high-rise buildings in England,<sup>i</sup>** out of 10,112 total. **This is 48% of HRRBs in England.**

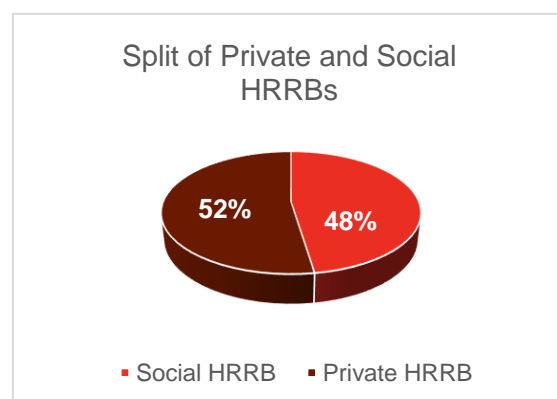


Fig A. Chart showing the split in social and private HRRB derived from analysis of an FOI to the DLUHC.

## Urgency

- Leaseholders in social housing blocks should be required to have electrical checks, because;
  - Fires caused by electricity in all HRRBs have remained at a consistent level over the last 5 years. Home Office fire data shows a consistently high level of accidental electrical fires in high-rise buildings with 10 or more flats.<sup>ii</sup>

Year	Number of Fires
2016/17	301
2017/18	309
2018/19	355
2019/20	315

Fig 2. Table showing the number of accidental electrical fires in PBHRs derived from the Home Office Dwellings Fire Dataset.

## Leaseholder Attitudes

- Electrical Safety First completed a survey of 100 leaseholders in HRRBs in England to gain insight into their attitudes and behaviours around electrical safety.<sup>iii</sup>
- When asked if they would support or oppose 5 yearly electrical safety checks at a cost of £150-200, **87% (net) supported being legally required to complete electrical safety checks.**

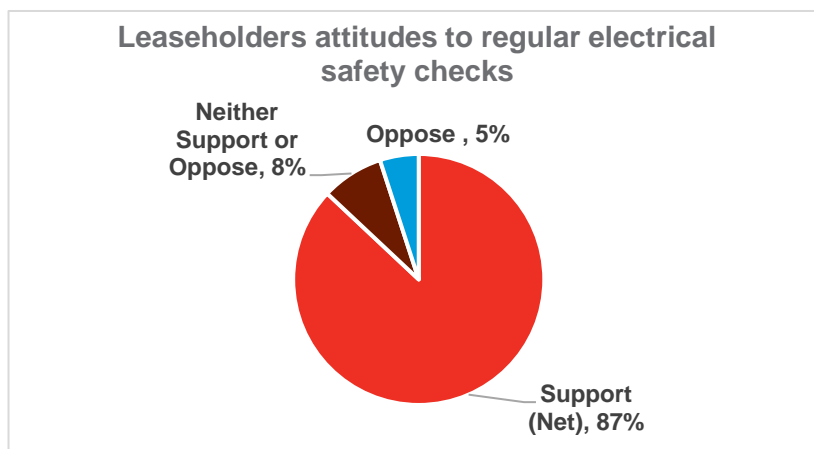


Fig 2. Table showing leaseholder support for mandatory electrical safety checks

- When asked how more or less concerned they were for the safety of themselves/tenants following the high-profile case of the Grenfell Tower Tragedy, **91% (net) said they were more concerned about safety.**
- This survey would suggest **there is support from leaseholders** to implement and conduct 5- yearly electrical safety checks, to protect themselves, and their neighbours.

## The Government's Position

- Regarding this Bill, Minister of State for Building Safety and Fire, Lord Greenhalgh, said at Second Reading: 'Dame Judith [i.e., Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Hackitt

review] called for a complete overhaul of the system, and her recommendations underpin the Bill, with a golden thread that will ensure that, henceforth, people remain safe in the homes that we build for them. The Bill is unapologetically ambitious, creating a world-class building safety regulatory regime that holds **all to the same high standard.**<sup>iv</sup>

- Making HRRBs safe requires much more than action to stop fire spreading. There is also an urgent need to prevent those fires from starting in the first place. **One of the most important preventative actions that can be taken to achieve this, is by improving electrical safety.**

## The deficiency of existing legislation

- Mandatory electrical safety checks are required in the Private Rented Sector (“PRS”) in England. This is in accordance with the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020<sup>v</sup>.
- A forthcoming consultation on the Social Rented Sector (SRS) will ask for views on replicating the electrical safety regulations in the PRS for the SRS, which is a welcome development. **Tenants, regardless of tenure, should be afforded the same safety protections.**
- However, it cannot be right that in a mixed tenure block, a renter will have electrical safety checks carried out by law, whilst the leaseholder living next door will not be required to do the same. **A fire in a tower block does not check the tenancy status of those it threatens.** Those inconsistent standards could potentially undermine the safety of the whole building.

## How the amendment will help

- The proposed new clauses will require leasehold properties in HRRBs to have a valid electrical safety certificate for all their properties. This means that the testing will be carried out by a qualified and competent person and must be carried out every five years. This will achieve the Government’s stated aim. These amendments allow the Secretary of State to decide on how this is financed.
- The current safety regime cannot continue. Given the nature of HRRBs and the spread of fire, this undermines the safety of the entire building. Not including the amendments will continue to place a significant number of residents at risk.

## Contact Details:

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i What Do They Know? Tower Blocks and Owners FOI, 26th April 2019. [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/tower\\_blocks\\_and\\_owners?nocache=incoming-1354533#incoming-1354533](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/tower_blocks_and_owners?nocache=incoming-1354533#incoming-1354533)

ii ESF Methodology Applied to Purpose-Built High Rise (10+ flats) from the Home Office Dwelling Fires Database from the years 2016 – 2021.

iii Survey conducted by Censurwide on behalf of ESC: 100 Leaseholders were asked questions on their attitudes and opinions around potential electrical safety checks every 5 years at a cost of £150-200.

iv Hansard 2nd February 2022 col 916

v The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))