

BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS BRIEFING 2

The building safety crisis refers to a range of safety issues identified in buildings for multiple occupancy of varied heights, including problems with: flammable cladding, insulation, fire breaks, cavity barriers, compartmentation, fire doors, and balconies.



RIPPLE EFFECTS: FAMILY, POLITICS, HOUSING MARKETS

SUMMARY

- The impacts of the building safety crisis are not just felt by those living with affected properties, but their wider networks of family and friends around the country
- Many leaseholders have been left questioning their stake in society, because the meaning and values associated with buying a home have been undermined
- A building cannot be made 'half safe'; it is vital that all safety problems in all building types are remedied. This is essential to restore confidence in the housing market for leasehold flats, and requires financial support for all types of leaseholder

POLICY SOLUTIONS

- Legislative protection for all leaseholders from the costs associated with remediation of cladding and other safety problems, to ensure the completion of all work to make buildings safe
- Extension of financial support to all impacted buildings, including those under 11m
- Forward funding by Government to facilitate swift and risk-based remediation

A CRISIS ACROSS CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

The impacts of the building safety crisis extend far beyond leaseholders with affected homes, rippling through networks of friends and family, creating a new 'parental politics' that spreads out from urban centres. Negative wellbeing impacts cut across constituency boundaries, and all MPs have a responsibility to recognise the wider impacts of the building safety crisis and restore confidence in this sector of homes. Whilst some people were trying to shield their wider family from stress and worry, leaseholders have also mobilised wider networks to engage with policymakers. For some, their experience of living through the building safety crisis has shifted their view of politics.

“My parents, I know they're not handling it very well at all, they're struggling. My dad struggles particularly...he gets himself tied up in knots about what should have happened”

Anna, age 35-44, Southampton

SHAKING CORE INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL VALUES

Many leaseholders spoke of the catastrophic impact of the crisis on their wellbeing. This goes far beyond diagnosable mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety, to affect individuals' wider outlook on the world. The Government's approach left many questioning their stake in society, because the crisis has undermined the meanings and values associated with homeownership. Some leaseholders had used Government-backed schemes such as Help to Buy or shared ownership, which explicitly sought to foster demand and provide routes into ownership of the types of properties now caught up in the building safety crisis. This made the lack of recognition from Government of the scale of problems, and lack of comprehensive support for those affected, all the more difficult to comprehend.

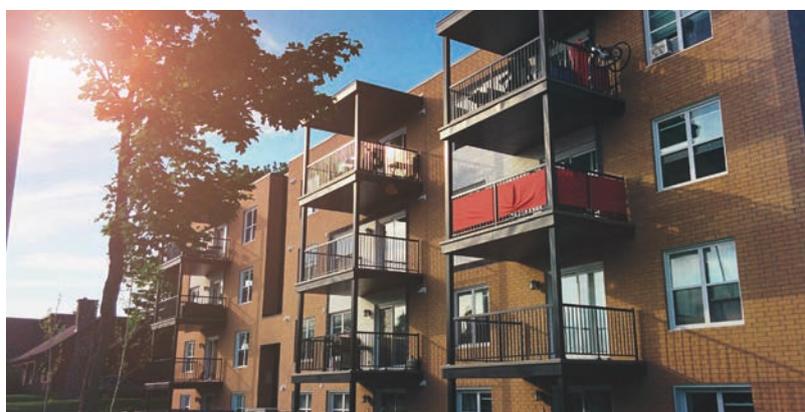
“I think it's particularly gross coming from the Tory party because they are all about property ownership and young people getting on the ladder... Like Help to Buy, shared ownership, they've led people up a path and then are happy...to see them go bankrupt”

Sarah, age 25-34, London

One of the longer-term impacts of the building safety crisis may be the way it has undermined trust in Government and key institutions that had previously been seen as stable, secure, and a solid building block for future lives. Numerous leaseholders likened the crisis to a range of other scandals, such as the wrongful conviction of Post Office workers. Mistrust of Government, developers, manufacturers, building managers, and the regulatory system was high. Many leaseholders felt that core values which make society function had been eroded by the handling of the building safety crisis.

“I've done everything society has wanted me to do. Get a good job, get a foot onto the property ladder... All the things I should be doing as a grown up for money, for self-esteem, for distinction...for self-worth...I've done nothing wrong”

Steve, age 35-44, London



HOUSING MARKET IMPACTS

These problems have devalued an important part of our housing system. Many of those who are trapped first found out about problems when they tried to sell their homes. In preventing leaseholders from moving on with the life transitions they would otherwise be making, the building safety crisis is also preventing other cohorts from moving into vacated homes. A building cannot be made 'half safe'; it is vital that all safety problems in all building types are remedied. This will build confidence not only in leasehold flats, but for a wider housing market in which mass insulation programmes are central to meeting climate objectives.

“If the banks start to worry about their portfolio of worthless properties all over the country it really could have a knock-on effect. You won't have any first-time buyers moving onto the market”

Michael, age 35-44, London

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This briefing is based on in-depth interviews with leaseholders in England impacted by the building safety crisis, living in buildings of different heights. The full report can be found here: housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/living-through-the-building-safety-crisis/

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