



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Alison Mutch
HM Coroner - Manchester South
Coroners Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
Cheshire
SK1 3AG

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

[REDACTED]
www.gov.uk/dluhc
[REDACTED]

27th October 2021

For Alison

Thank you very much for your letter and report of 26 August 2021 provided in accordance with Regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, following your inquest into the death of James Golds on 28 September 2020. I am very sorry for the delay in replying, which was due to an administrative error, which I understand my officials have explained to you. I take our responsibilities in considering your reports very seriously.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr Golds following this very sad incident.

You have recommended that I, in my capacity as the Secretary of State, should consider requiring mandatory installation of sprinkler systems in accommodation provided for vulnerable people. You also raise the availability of guidance for the management of risk in premises for vulnerable people.

Regarding sprinklers specifically, in November 2020 the Government brought forward changes to the guidance to the Building Regulations with regards to fire safety (Approved Document B) reducing the height threshold at which sprinkler systems are provided in new blocks of flats from 30 metres to 11 metres and greatly increased the number of future homes provided with sprinkler protection. This was the first step in a full technical review of Approved Document B, which will include research to ensure that any changes to this guidance is based on a robust evidence base. The technical review programme includes a workstream reviewing the current provisions for new specialised housing and care homes such as the one in which Mr Golds resided.

Alongside this review of requirements for new homes, the new safety case review regime being brought forward in the Building Safety Bill will inform decisions on retrofitting sprinklers in existing high-rise buildings in scope. This approach will ensure that the layers of protection provided are tailored to the risks in each building.

There are also number of provisions already in place to try to ensure fire safety in all existing homes. Under the Housing Act 2004, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk based tool to help local authorities identify and protect against risks and hazards to health and safety, including that of fire safety. The powers under the Act enable local authorities to take action where necessary.

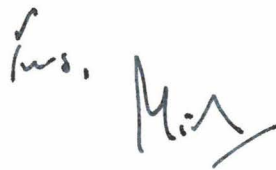
The Home Secretary has a statutory requirement to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework for England setting out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities to enable them to effectively discharge their functions. Fire and rescue authorities are expected to work closely with partners in the public and voluntary sector to reduce the risk to vulnerable individuals. As part of their fire safety function, fire and rescue authorities provide home fire safety checks which includes educating individuals on fire safety measures in their homes. During such visits, their officers provide tailored fire prevention and safety advice and may provide and install smoke alarms free of charge. Where risks are identified, which cannot be dealt with by the fire and rescue authority, they work closely with other public services through existing local arrangements – such as multi-agency safeguarding hubs – to ensure appropriate action can be taken to protect vulnerable individuals.

In addition to the work carried out by local fire and rescue services, the National Fire Chiefs' Council has published a document called 'Fire Safety in Specialised Housing' available online which provides additional guidance for those assessing risk in specialised forms of housing. This recommends a person-centred risk assessment for vulnerable residents to provide tailored risk mitigation. As well as sprinklers and enhanced fire detection, this includes other established mitigation strategies including provision of ignition resistant bedding and fire-retardant nightwear.

I hope this response makes clear the importance the Government places on improving fire safety and our ongoing commitment to ensure people are and feel safe in their own homes.

Thank you again for your letter and report.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mrs. Min', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations**