



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
*Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and
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Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
2 Marsham Street
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Our reference: 31690300

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Committee
House of Commons
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29 September 2023

Dear Clive

Thank you for your letter dated 12 September in which you ask for an update on the risks of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

I will take your questions in turn. First, you ask about the Government's assessment of the risk of RAAC in residential and non-residential buildings. The Government's professional advice from experts on RAAC has evolved over time, from advice in the 1990s that RAAC did not pose a safety hazard to more recent advice on identifying and assessing structural adequacy.

The Office of Government Property (OGP) is overseeing the response to RAAC across the public estate through a cross-government working group. All Government Property Leaders were contacted in 2021 and September 2022, highlighting safety alerts on RAAC and they were referred to relevant guidance.

The Regulator of Social Housing wrote to all Chief Executives of registered social housing providers on 7 September, stating their understanding that RAAC is not widespread in social housing. This was based on engagement with their stakeholder and sector leaders. We recognise that RAAC may be present in a small number of residential buildings constructed from 1950 to 1990. To date, there have been no reported incidents of RAAC failures in residential buildings.

Second, you asked about the latest guidance for residents, landlords, and local authorities and if there are plans to update this guidance. All building owners must address safety risks of all kinds in their buildings to keep residents and the public safe. Where RAAC is identified, building owners must continue to take a risk-based, proportionate, and evidence-led approach. To do so, all building owners should continue to follow guidance published by the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), supported by their identification and assessment guidance published in March 2022 and April 2023.

This guidance is accessible on the IStructE webpage, <https://www.istructe.org>. This guidance is also available through the Local Government Association (LGA) website, <https://www.local.gov.uk>. The LGA have advised members since 2018 to check whether any buildings in their estates have RAAC, to ensure it can be identified, assessed, and responded to accordingly.

Third, you asked about funding to mitigate the risk of RAAC where it is identified in social housing and in local authorities' estates. RAAC is a long-standing known issue, and all building owners must address safety risks of all kinds in their buildings to keep residents and the public safe. The main source of funding for the management, repair and maintenance of existing social homes is social landlords' rental income. For private registered providers of social housing (mainly housing associations) this was over £21 billion in 2021-22. For local authorities, this was £6.9 billion in 2012-22. The final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2023-24 makes available up to £59.7 billion for local governments in England.

Fourth, you asked what action this Department is taking to identify and mitigate the risk of RAAC in its own estate. As I set out above, the OGP is overseeing the response to RAAC across the public estate through a cross-government working group. Since then, departments have been surveying properties and - depending on the assessment of the RAAC - decided to either continue to monitor the structure, reinforce it, or replace it. This is in line with the approach recommended by the IStructE.

Finally, you asked what how this department is supporting the cross-government response to the risk of RAAC. As you know, the Building Safety Act makes ground-breaking reforms to give residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections so homes across the country are safer. It will drive the culture change needed across the industry to enable the design and construction of high-quality, safe homes in the years to come.

The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) has been set up in the Health and Safety Executive through the Building Safety Act, to oversee the safety and standards of buildings. The BSR's work is key to delivering the government's commitment to the Grenfell Inquiry to take responsibility for the effective stewardship of the built environment.

Thank you again for your letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations