



Barnet Council announces UK's first-of-its-kind project to replace cladding on hundreds of houses

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In what could be a national issue, Barnet Council is sharing the findings of its investigation and remediation scheme with other local authorities and wants to work with national and regional government to see if there are ways to further support homeowners affected by the cladding issue.

Barnet Council has announced plans to replace cladding on nearly 600 low-rise houses in its borough, in a multi-million-pound scheme that it believes will be the first of its kind in the country.

Safety issues with the cladding on over 580 terraced homes came to the attention of Barnet Council following a serious house fire in one of the properties in the summer of 2023.

Following an investigation, it was found the UPVC cladding installed on the exterior of the properties allowed the fire to spread quickly to neighbouring homes. Along with the timber frame of these buildings and fire stop issues, they no longer meet more stringent post-Grenfell building standards.

Barnet Council has now written to all affected residents, detailing plans to replace the cladding on 153 council-owned homes, in a £3.6m scheme.

Alongside this, it is offering the 426 freeholders and seven leaseholders a package of works to replace the cladding, as well as a loan and repayment plan to freeholders to manage the cost.

Barnet Council is also alerting other local authorities to the problem and is writing to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Greater London Authority to see what support can be provided to help homeowners facing huge costs for replacing out of date cladding on their properties.

Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Homes and Regeneration, Cllr Ross Houston, said he feared other homeowners in similar properties across the country could be similarly affected by this type of cladding.

He said: "The council will cover the cost for replacing cladding on its social housing stock but homeowners will unfortunately need to fund remediation for their own properties. The cost of replacing the cladding on each property could be up to £23,000 so to help we are organising* a loan and a repayment plan for those who need it, but we're really limited on what we can do.

"We believe the 586 affected homes in Barnet are just the tip of the iceberg across the country. We're sharing details with other local authorities and DLUHC as clearly there is need for a national plan to raise awareness and work out how best to support homeowners."

The 586 affected properties were built between the 1930s and 1960s and are timber-framed one or two-storey terraced houses, with original timber cladding or UPVC cladding installed in the 1980s. The privately owned homes were purchased through the government's right to buy scheme. The houses are located in four areas across the borough.

The investigation last summer was conducted by expert building consultants, Capital, at the request of Barnet Homes (Barnet Council's arm's length management organisation for council properties).

Alongside the timber frame of these buildings and fire stopping issues, the cladding constituted a "Category 1 hazard". This is the highest risk, where the council has a legal duty to take action.

Capital have confirmed that the works to the council homes cannot be completed without works to other properties in the terrace being completed in tandem.

The works are estimated to cost up to £23,000, depending on the size of the property.

Letters have gone out to all homeowners and occupiers of the properties letting them know that whilst their homes contain a significant hazard, there is no imminent risk to occupiers. Fire safety advice has been provided, and battery powered smoke detectors are being offered at no cost to all affected residents.

Any property identified as being of a higher priority because of its construction or because of the occupier's mobility issues will be prioritised for work completion.

A report to Cabinet (12 March) is recommending offering a loan and repayment plan to homeowners who opt to commission the council to undertake the refit.

As well as other local authorities and national and regional government, Barnet Council has briefed London Fire Brigade, housing associations and housing bodies such as the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure they are aware of the cladding issue on this type of property.

Cllr Ross Houston added: "Ours is an inherited problem relating to buildings constructed and adapted a long time ago. We recognise how hard this will be for all the homeowners who will be faced with an unexpected bill for works, but we have a legal duty to act, and the safety of our residents must come first."

Note for editors

* This is subject to agreement by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 March.

If approved by Cabinet, the £3.6m cost to council properties will be met by the Housing Revenue Account capital programme and a loan and repayment plan will be put in place for freehold owners.

The council has also secured £13m to pay for the up-front costs to freehold properties to ensure all the works required can go ahead, but homeowners will ultimately be responsible for their costs. They will be offered the option of a loan and repayment plan to help manage these costs.

The works will begin in April 2024 and be undertaken over a three-year period.

Since Grenfell, legislation and remediation has focused on making safe high-rise tower blocks and not low-rise homes.

However, the fire in summer 2023 puts a new spotlight on low rise buildings. This took place in a property in Moss Hall Grove, West Finchley and the fire spread rapidly across the terrace of four properties. A photo is available on request.

More information and a detailed FAQ is available on our website: [Fire safety for timber-framed homes | Barnet Council](#)

What we have done post-Grenfell

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, Barnet Council carried out £52m of fire safety works across its social housing stock. Barnet was one of the first local authorities in the country to remove aluminium composite cladding (ACM) from its tower blocks.

Since July 2017, Barnet has carried out an extensive programme of fire safety works on medium and high-rise buildings, including replacing cladding and fire doors, installing sprinklers and improving fire safety measures.

A further £23m will be invested in keeping low and medium rise blocks fire-safe over the next four years.

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