



Dear Michael Gove,

We write to you today with a heavy heart. This is not the first letter your department has received from us — indeed, there have been many in the past four and a half years since the building safety crisis first began to devastate lives — but it is the saddest. It is also written by campaigners at their very angriest.

The devastating news of the suicide of Tom Mansell, a 37-year-old leaseholder from Leeds, as revealed in today's *Sunday Mirror*, will come as a shock to many, but unfortunately not to us. We know of at least three people who have now taken their own lives as a result of facing financial ruin because they did nothing more than become a leaseholder of a flat. And we know there will be many more unless this government — finally — gets a grip on a disaster that has long been spiralling out of control.

We recognise that one should always be wary of assigning suicide to a single cause — indeed, in the *Sunday Mirror*, Tom's friends have revealed that he had a long history of depression. But they have also disclosed how this crisis played a 'significant' role in his untimely death, painting a picture of a man left desperate by the burden of numerous unexpected bills, the terrifying prospect of more, and the uncertainty and doubt of what could happen in the future: 'Tom was left in limbo with huge costs and worthless properties,' one said. 'The burden of uncertainty eventually overwhelmed him.'

All leaseholders reading these comments will understand Tom's feelings only too well. In June, a survey published by *Which?* laid bare the severe stress, anxiety and depression the building safety crisis is wreaking on innocent, ordinary people across the country. Almost all respondents said that living in an unsafe flat — not to mention considering bankruptcy to fix serious building safety issues they did not cause — has had a fairly negative or very negative effect on their wellbeing. Another survey undertaken last year by our co-founder, the UK Cladding Action Group, revealed nine out of ten victims have seen their mental health deteriorate as a direct result of cladding issues. Just over a quarter have been given a medical diagnosis of new mental health conditions and more than a third have experienced a worsening of existing conditions. Most alarmingly, nearly a quarter of respondents reported having suicidal feelings or a desire to self-harm.

Every member of our campaign team is a leaseholder personally affected by the cladding scandal: all of us have grappled with the anguish of finding ourselves trapped in this predicament. We are contacted by dozens of leaseholders daily asking for advice about their buildings and legal issues — but also seeking guidance on how to cope. None of us is a mental health professional, and in the absence of any help by government (bar template letters from ministers telling those affected to contact the Samaritans) we do the best we can. To be clear: we shouldn't have to. We shouldn't have to fight this hard not only for our homes — but also for our sanity.

We have written to you already asking for an urgent meeting about the building safety crisis and about the forthcoming Building Safety Bill. We would still like this meeting. We understand that you have told Sir Peter Bottomley that you will meet the cladding groups as a matter of urgency and we hope your staff can arrange this in the next two weeks. But we would also ask for you to meet — and meet widely — the real people at the forefront of this scandal. Hear their stories. Get behind the cold figures and statistics. And, as the new leader of your department, help us put right its previous wrongs.

We hope to hear from you as soon as possible,
The EOCS team