

# Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

## Written Submission to the Building Safety Bill Committee

### 1. Introduction to RoSPA

- 1.1 The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) is the UK's leading accident prevention charity. For over a century, RoSPA has been at the heart of accident prevention, and is the only UK charity to work across safety in homes, on roads, in leisure, in education, and in work.
  - 1.2 With an unwavering eye on evidence and data, RoSPA has played a pivotal role in helping people enjoy daily activities while remaining free from fatal or life-changing accidental injuries. They have reduced deaths and injuries across the UK without significantly affecting personal freedoms by applying a systematic approach to accident prevention. Successful campaigns include facing oncoming traffic, the introduction of seatbelts, fitted plugs on domestic appliances and the 'Safe At Home' scheme which provided home safety equipment and education to more than half a million disadvantaged families.
  - 1.3 All RoSPA campaigns are based on strong, objective evidence, and are backed by experts in the field. They are not party political or ideological, and their Presidential Team consists of Peers from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. You can read more about RoSPA on their website: [www.rospace.com](http://www.rospace.com)
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### 2. Overview of RoSPA's campaign to amend the Building Safety Bill

- 2.1 RoSPA is campaigning to amend the Building Safety Bill so that it includes a vital provision on stair safety. Falling on the stairs is an underestimated risk, claiming the lives of over 700 people and 43,000 hospital admissions in England every year. The scale of the problem is vast: for every hospital admission caused by a burn, there are 235 caused by a fall.
- 2.2 Unsafe stairs also impact fire safety. When there is a fire, lifts are often out of use and residents must quickly descend many flights of stairs. Falls in this circumstance too often have fatal results.
- 2.3 Improving safety standards for stair design will significantly reduce the number of people needlessly dying and getting hurt, and there is an existing framework (**British Standard 5395-1:2010**) which does exactly this. **Stairs built to this British Standard in new build homes result in an estimated 60% fewer falls.**
- 2.4 Compliance to BS 5395-1:2010 is commercially viable, evidence based, and straightforward to implement. This amendment is supported by housebuilders in both the private and public sector, and major developer Berkeley Homes is backing the campaign.
- 2.5 The amendment would exclusively apply to new build homes: the campaign does not ask for any buildings to be retrofitted, and the change would be baked into the design stage going forward. As such, the cost to the taxpayer would be zero but would prevent countless unnecessary deaths, as well as saving more than £45m for the NHS over a five-year period.

2.6 We are calling for the amendment to take effect in 2024, to give time and certainty for industry and supply chains to adapt to the regulation

### **3. British Standard 5395-1:2010**

- 3.1 BS 5395-1:2010 was established as an industry standard in 2010, by the British Standard Institution. It is based on 15 years of research conducted by the Building Research Establishment on behalf of the Government.
- 3.2 The basis of the research is summarised in Mike Roys (2013) BRE FB 53: Refurbishing stairs in dwellings to reduce the risk of falls and injuries.
- 3.3 However, BS 5395-1:2010 is a recommended code of practice rather than a legal requirement. As there is nothing to compel builders to make stairs to this standard, most simply ignore it, understandably focusing on mandatory regulations.
- 3.4 The difference between staircases built to BS 5395-1:2010 and most other stairs are minimal to the naked eye.
- 3.5 However, the small differences can have a huge impact. First of all, BS 5395-1:2010 recommends changes to the dimensions of stairs. The 'going' (horizontal portion of each step) must be at least 250mm, while currently the minimum is 220mm. This small change has a large impact because it reduces the risk of 'overstepping', which is a common cause of falls. There are also requirements on the provision of handrails; mandating two, one of which must be within reach at all times, as well as slip resistance and other amendments to the dimensions and uniformity of stairs. More details are provided here: [safer-by-design-supporting-technical-drawings.pdf \(rospa.com\)](#)
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### **4. The proposed amendment**

- 4.1 RoSPA are of the view that an amendment could be achieved through a simple additional clause in the Building Safety Bill. The suggested clause is below:
- 4.2 *The Secretary of State shall make regulations to mandate stairs in all new build properties comply with British Standard BS 5395-1:2010 Code of Practice for the design of stairs with straight flights and winders.*
- 4.3 Based on our reading of the Building Safety Bill, this could sit in Part 5, which is titled: 'Other Provision about Safety, Standards etc', and could be positioned as a new clause immediately after Clause 133 which deals with Construction Products more generally.
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### **5. Support for our campaign**

- 5.1 As stated above, this move is supported by the housing industry. Berkeley Group, one of the largest private home builders in the UK, is campaigning alongside RoSPA on this issue. Furthermore, the Housing Association Orbit is supporting the campaign as well.

5.2 We have also liaised with numerous trade associations and housing groups throughout our campaign. These include the Home Builders Federation (HBF), Local Government Association (LGA), National Home Builders Councils (NHBC), and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). **We have received no opposition whatsoever to our campaign to date.**

5.3 More details on the support garnered to date can be found here: [safer-by-design-supporting-technical-drawings.pdf \(rospa.com\)](#)

5.4 In terms of parliamentarians, we have met with MPs from both major parties. Firstly, RoSPA and Berkeley met with Lord Greenhalgh, Minister for Building Safety, and have followed up with him directly for further discussion on the amendment. Paul Maynard MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys supports our campaign and has written separately to the Housing Minister calling for the amendment to be brought forward. We also have met with the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee Clive Betts MP, who was helpful and supportive.

5.5 Finally, the Times has recently published a piece on the campaign, authored by Paul Maynard, which you can view here: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/why-the-building-safety-bill-must-tackle-death-on-the-stairs-lm8v1qs03>

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## **6. Next Steps**

6.1 RoSPA are keen to meet with members of the Building Safety Bill committee to brief you further on our expert perspective regarding the shortcoming of the Bill, and how you can help support an amendment to make it more effective.

6.2 Please get in touch at [saferstairs@rospa.com](mailto:saferstairs@rospa.com) to arrange a call or meeting.