

NHS trusts have been asked to urgently check their buildings for any potentially combustible cladding in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

A letter sent on Monday (19 June), told estates and facilities staff to provide details of any cladding on buildings and fire improvement schemes, and respond the next day.

It was sent by Simon Corben, NHS Improvement's director of estates and facilities.

The letter said: "Following the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower in London last week we are seeking to ensure all estates directors in NHS trusts have the best possible advice as soon as possible for any precautionary measures they may need to take with their buildings.

"I would also be grateful if you could urgently provide us with some essential information so we can make an assessment of where best to target our advice and support.

"We do need to take all reasonable precautionary measures and be ready to rapidly implement any recommendations that come from the findings of the ongoing investigations."

Mr Corben emphasised the need to account for all sites – including those built via the private finance initiative and local improvement finance trust schemes.

The letter asked staff to fill in a survey. It asked for information including:

- The type of cladding is used on trusts' buildings.
- Which contractor carried out the work.
- How many storeys the buildings have.
- If the buildings offer inpatient services.
- If a "prior risk assessment" has been carried out in the last 12 months.

In addition, estates managers were also asked to provide details on any capital schemes that are "underway or planned in regard to fire improvements".

Mr Corben's letter also said: "The NHS takes fire safety very seriously. The number of fire incidents in the NHS is extremely low given the size of the health estate and its level of clinical activity."

Seventy-nine people are believed to have died in the fire at Grenfell Tower in Kensington on 14 June. The Metropolitan Police today said it will consider manslaughter, health and safety and fire safety charges.

The fire started from a fridge freezer, believed to be on the fourth floor of the 24 storey building. Outside cladding and insulation – which failed safety tests this week – then caught fire.

A government spokesman said: "The Cabinet Office is chairing a cross-government taskforce that is carrying out inspections on the wider public sector estate.

"We are contacting building owners to ensure any risk is considered appropriately, managed and dealt with promptly where needed. Some of this work is already underway."