

An open letter to Lord Stephen Greenhalgh & The Rt Hon Priti Patel: from Fire Industry Professionals regarding CS Todd.

Dear Ministers,

This open letter is in relation to the recent appointment of CS Todd to draft the new guidance document (Government Procurement reference C19058) on "Means of Escape for Disabled People Guide" (having previously been awarded the contract to draft the previous tranche). We understand that CS Todd were awarded this contract following an open tender bid that followed conventional procedures for such appointments.

We write to express our concern after reading social media messages vilifying Colin Todd specifically for his perceived lack of concern for disabled people when it comes to fire safety in a residential environment; and then trying to influence the cancellation of the contract from the Home Office with CS Todd to draft, or revise much needed guidance on fire safety and the legislation under which fire safety is controlled in England.

We can fully empathise with the concerns relating to fire safety precautions for disabled people in buildings, in particular, relating to the tragic Grenfell Tower fire. However, we believe the criticisms are directed at the wrong person in this case.

Colin Todd has devoted much of his career of over 40 years in the fire safety profession to the work of British Standards Institution, the Fire Industry Association, and many other activities external to his company, including support for Government Working Groups in both England and Scotland. For his work, he has received countless awards from the British Standards Institution, the Chartered Association of Building Engineers, the National Association of Healthcare Fire Officers and the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, to name but a few. Ministers will be aware that, in the 2019 New Year's Honours List, he was awarded an MBE for his services to fire safety, with particular reference to fire safety of the public in domestic dwellings.

In addition, Colin Todd is a Chartered Engineer Fellow of the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE). The IFE is a professional body that is responsible for maintaining the code of conduct of its members, which reinforces the fact that as such he is bound by a professional code of conduct that reflects the values not just of IFE but also the wider engineering community and is subject to oversight by the Engineering Council. These values clearly demonstrate a commitment to ethical professional conduct that Colin Todd observes.

He is well-known for his often-forthright views on equality for disabled people in respect of their safety from fire, which we know has been a particular concern of his for several decades. Over his career, he has been personally responsible for numerous technological innovations specifically designed to enhance the safety of disabled people, whether mobility impaired, hearing impaired or living with cognitive difficulties. Only last year, he proposed and drafted, with support of the relevant technical committees, changes to a British Standard to enhance the safety of people living with dementia in care homes.

CS Todd is currently researching technology to identify the presence of disabled people in blocks of flats in the event of their need for rescue by the fire and rescue service; co-funders for his work include Scottish Government and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

It is the view of the majority of the fire industry that there is no practice in the UK better able to carry out the important work of producing the new guides than CS Todd. Indeed, ministers may be aware that direct competitors of CS Todd (some listed below within the signatures) with, again, nothing to gain, have made public statements to this effect on LinkedIn and, in addition some major competitors even noted that they chose not to tender for the work as CS Todd would be better placed to complete it successfully. It is also recognised that this work needs to be commenced at the earliest opportunity and will be subject to public consultation, where all interested parties will be able to provide scrutiny and comment. With the experience held within CS Todd, it is felt that there is no other company better placed at this time to expediate this important work with the required focus and timescale.

We acknowledge that the guidance on this subject within the Local Government Association guide, which CS Todd drafted and was a consensus opinion at the time in question, needs to be reviewed. We are confident that CS Todd would, in consultation with stakeholders, have properly considered this within their previous contract to revise the guidance. We are also confident that the Home Office would have properly conducted the tender process for this new contract and that the ultimate guidance will reflect the views of stakeholders and the Home Office, as the final content is not solely within the remit of the company that produces a first draft.

We sincerely hope that you will have cognisance of these strong views held within the fire sector, which are in stark contrast to other views of which you are aware, none of which, as far as we believe, are held by recognised fire safety experts within our sector.

Yours...

Colin Bassnett, Principal Fire Safety Advisor, Metro Safety.

Dave Berry, Director, Fire & Risk Management Support Services Ltd.

Jon Pagan, Head of Technical, IFC Group.

Ben Bradford, Chief Executive Officer, BB7 Group Limited.

Tom Simmonds, Chief Executive Officer, Allsaved Ltd.

Adam Sutherland, Director, AJ Fire & Security Ltd IFE Registered Fire Risk Assessor.

Harry Wilmot, HE Woolley Ltd.