

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT

Fourth Delegated Legislation Committee

## DRAFT ELECTRICAL SAFETY STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2020

*Tuesday 17 March 2020*

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the final version of the report should be clearly marked in a copy of the report—not telephoned—and must be received in the Editor’s Room, House of Commons,

**not later than**

**Saturday 21 March 2020**

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Commons 2020

*This publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence, which is published at [www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/](http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/).*

**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chair:* CAROLINE NOKES

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| † Elphicke, Mrs Natalie ( <i>Dover</i> ) (Con)   | † Mohindra, Mr Gagan ( <i>South West Hertfordshire</i> ) (Con) |
| † Hall, Luke ( <i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government</i> ) | Mullan, Dr Kieran ( <i>Crewe and Nantwich</i> ) (Con)          |
| † Hammond, Stephen ( <i>Wimbledon</i> ) (Con)  | Murray, James ( <i>Ealing North</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)              |
| † Hart, Sally-Ann ( <i>Hastings and Rye</i> ) (Con)  | Powell, Lucy ( <i>Manchester Central</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)         |
| † Hillier, Meg ( <i>Hackney South and Shoreditch</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)   | Rimmer, Ms Marie ( <i>St Helens South and Whiston</i> ) (Lab)  |
| † Hughes, Eddie ( <i>Walsall North</i> ) (Con)   | † Roberts, Rob ( <i>Delyn</i> ) (Con)                          |
| † Jones, Sarah ( <i>Croydon Central</i> ) (Lab)  | † Spellar, John ( <i>Warley</i> ) (Lab)                        |
| † Lewer, Andrew ( <i>Northampton South</i> ) (Con)   | Jack Dent, <i>Committee Clerk</i>                              |
| † Loder, Chris ( <i>West Dorset</i> ) (Con)  |  |
| † McGinn, Conor ( <i>St Helens North</i> ) (Lab)   | † <b>attended the Committee</b>                                |

## Fourth Delegated Legislation Committee

*Tuesday 17 March 2020*

[CAROLINE NOKES *in the Chair*]

### Draft Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020

8.55 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Luke Hall):** I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. This Government are committed to ensuring that private tenants live in safe, secure and high-quality properties. We truly value the contribution that responsible private landlords make to the housing market and the private rented sector. The majority of private rented houses and flats are well maintained and offer safe accommodation to tenants. However, there are still unscrupulous landlords who wilfully flout their responsibilities and put their tenants at significant risk of harm. At present, only 60% of privately rented homes have all the recommended electrical safety features installed—modern PVC wiring, modern earthing, modern consumer units, miniature circuit breakers and residual current devices—compared with 75% of social housing. That is why these regulations are so important.

The regulations will require all landlords to do what good landlords are already doing: make sure that electrical installations in their rented properties are safe. The regulations form part of the Government's work to improve safety in all buildings. They will drive up standards, reduce deaths and injuries caused by electrical faults, make tenants safer and help to level the playing field for the majority of good landlords who already provide decent rented properties. Landlords who choose to not comply with the vital safety measures in these regulations will have to improve or leave the business.

These regulations will apply to all new tenancies from July 2020 and to all existing tenancies from April 2021. They will require landlords to have the electrical installations in their properties inspected and tested at least every five years by a person who is qualified and competent. Landlords will have to provide a copy of the electrical safety report to their tenants and to their local authority if requested. If a report requires investigative or remedial works, landlords will have to carry those out. In practice, if a report does not require investigative or remedial works, the landlord will not be required to carry out any further work. Some landlords may already be complying with the requirements in the regulations—for example, where they have already had an inspection, where the electrical safety standards are being met and where no remedial work is required. Those proactive and responsible landlords may not need to take any further action when the regulations come into force.

In addition to requiring remedial work, reports can recommend improvements. If a report only recommends improvements but does not require any further investigative or remedial work to be carried out, although it would be good practice to carry out that work, it will not be required in order to comply with the regulations. In this way, we have ensured that the requirements are proportionate.

Because these regulations are so important, local authorities will have strong legal enforcement powers. They will have the power to require landlords to carry out remedial works, or even arrange the works themselves and recover the cost from the landlord. They will be able to decide on the appropriate penalty for landlords who do not comply, with the power to issue a financial penalty of up to £30,000. This is because those local authorities know their areas best and can make serious decisions about the unscrupulous landlords who are undercutting those who already provide safe and secure accommodation. Local authorities can see the severity of the issue and will know best how to tackle irresponsible landlords in their areas. Landlords will, of course, have a right of appeal against enforcement action. Local authorities will be able to keep the proceedings of financial penalties for enforcement purposes, allowing them to keep up the good work, driving up standards and contributing to their long-term financial stability.

The majority of landlords are proactive when it comes to ensuring the safety of their tenants, so the requirements in these regulations will not put an additional burden on those landlords, who make a welcome contribution to the housing market. However, it is of course reasonable to expect all landlords to make sure their tenants are safe from the risk of electrocution or fire. These regulations are important, because they will increase tenant safety and make the private rented sector fairer for those good landlords who are already concerned with tenant safety. Accordingly, I hope the Committee will support them.

8.59 am

**Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. The Opposition welcome these regulations, which are an example of good regulation that will protect tenants in their homes and landlords' properties and is not overly burdensome. I am grateful to the Minister for laying out the Government's case, and we will not be contesting this measure. However, I want to seek clarity on a number of points.

First, it is four years, almost to the day, since the measure was tabled as an amendment to the Housing and Planning Act 2016. That seems astonishing when we consider the fact that it has cross-party support, having first been tabled by Labour's Baroness Hayter and Lib Dem Lord Tope, and later adopted by the Government. One of the reasons for the Government accepting it was the evidence showing the huge gulf between the number of gas and electrical fires in properties.

A private renter is 10 times more likely to experience an electrical fire than a gas one. Data from the London Fire Brigade compiled by the campaign group Electrical Safety First shows that in London alone there have been at least 1,169 fires caused by electrics since 2010, compared with just 131 caused by gas. We also know

from the data that since 2016, when the measure could have been enacted, there have been more than 400 fires in private rented properties in London alone.

Those fires could have been avoided had the draft regulations been introduced more quickly. Such fires not only result in avoidable costs for tenants and landlords, but could involve injury or even death. Electrical Safety First has found that around 350,000 people are injured and 70 killed in the UK by electrical accidents every year. It would be good to understand why we have had such a delay. It might be, in part, because today's Minister is, with respect, the 10th in 10 years. The lack of continuity has meant that the measure has fallen by the wayside when we could have implemented it much sooner.

All Members present will agree that regulations are not worth the paper on which they are written unless they can be properly enforced. Our councils have suffered billions in cuts under this Government, losing 60p in every pound that they used to receive from the Government to spend on services. It is disappointing that the Government are placing the burden of enforcement solely on local authorities, without any additional funding for that enforcement. Scotland and Wales have successfully implemented a system that uses first-tier tribunals rather than council environmental health teams. Did the Minister assess the success of those systems before deciding to place the burden on councils? Can he confirm the number of cases brought to the first-tier tribunal in Scotland since the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014?

An investigation by Unison last year found that environmental health budgets have more than halved in the last decade, as have visits from environmental health officers. We have heard a lot about public health in the last few weeks, and we will hear more as coronavirus spreads. It is worth bearing in mind that environmental health teams cover a wide spectrum of health and safety in our communities, not just housing.

I was the shadow Minister for the Tenant Fees Act 2019, and concerns were raised on Report about the ability of councils to fund enforcement, particularly in the first year. The Government eventually agreed to provide £500,000 of funding for local authorities for enforcement in the first year, with fines funding enforcement from year two. Has similar funding been considered or agreed for councils this year?

In my borough in Croydon, and elsewhere, borough-wide landlord licensing has meant that the council can already require electrical safety checks as a condition of the licence, with enforcement funded through the licence fee, but the Government have indicated that they will not continue to support borough-wide licensing, meaning that funding for that enforcement will decline in such places as Croydon. How does the Minister intend to plug that funding gap?

Unlike similar regulations in Scotland, the draft regulations do not include the portable appliance testing of electrical appliances included as part of the let, such as white goods. Although the Government have chosen not to make it mandatory, would the Minister consider adding a recommendation for landlords to PAT test their goods, as well as guidance for both landlords and tenants to check for product recalls on any of the electrical appliances in their properties?

Homes in the private rented sector are more likely to have a higher proportion of second-hand white goods, and we know the dangers that faulty white goods can create. A fire in a Shepherd's Bush tower block in 2016 was caused by a Whirlpool tumble dryer, and the Grenfell Tower inquiry is looking at a Hotpoint fridge-freezer as a potential cause of the fire that killed 72 people. Whirlpool commenced a series of product recalls last year, but many tenants could be left with faulty, dangerous products in their properties that were bought by the landlord and forgotten about. Tenants could be entitled to a new, safe replacement. Surely it makes sense for the Government to take the opportunity to remind them of that if they will not enforce the PAT testing of appliances.

I will make a few final brief points, which I hope the Minister will respond to—if not today, then perhaps in writing. I mentioned the Grenfell Tower, which was, of course, a social housing block. Electrical Safety First has pointed out that the draft regulations will not apply to social housing. Although many councils and housing associations will already be doing the right thing and requiring the checks, it seems unfair to yet again treat social housing tenants as if deserving of a lower standard of safety. Will the Government consider extending the measure to social housing?

On enforcement, section 40 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 makes provision for rent repayments in certain cases, including failure to comply with an enforcement notice. Regulation 3 refers to "remedial action". Will failure to take remedial action constitute grounds for rent repayment?

Although we wholeheartedly support the regulations, we would go further to help the 4.5 million households in the private rented sector who, for too long, have not had the support they deserve. We need to face up to the fact that support for private renters has been sparse under this Government. It has taken four years to enact this relatively minor and non-contentious measure, and there have been a series of promises from the last Secretary of State that we are yet to see progress on, including the promise, almost a year ago, to abolish no-fault evictions.

During the general election, the Opposition set out plans for a new property MOT for landlords. It would have brought together existing requirements for gas and electrical safety with new checks to ensure homes are fit for habitation. Under our proposals, like with a vehicle, landlords who failed the check would not be allowed to let their property. Non-compliance is a really serious issue. Will the Minister consider going beyond fines as a penalty and consider banning landlords from letting properties?

Those most affected by rogue landlords are those who have borne the brunt of Government policy decisions since 2010—those on the lowest incomes. We support the regulations, but we would go much further to ensure everyone gets the basic right of access to a safe, secure home.

9.6 am

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon

[Meg Hillier]

Central, I warmly welcome the regulations. They are long overdue; it has taken a very long time to get here. It is shocking that in this country, tenants can still rent a property without any assurance about electrical safety.

My hon. Friend discussed the 400 fires that have occurred in private rented properties. I am particularly concerned about electric fan heaters. They are a major cause of fires, although they are not covered directly here. A few years ago, of 11 fires in the London area, three were down to fan heaters. That was not necessarily down to the landlord—I do not have the detail—but it goes to show what can happen if something goes badly wrong with an electrical appliance.

That brings me to the issue of PAT tests, which my hon. Friend raised. It is all very well having good wiring in a property—that is vital, of course—but if a single appliance has a problem, there can be a serious issue. In parts of the country where young professionals are passing through on short-term lets in single rooms in a property with shared electrical facilities, landlords are probably not checking every appliance. They are certainly not doing PAT tests; they are not required to. I urge the Minister—I know he is new in his post; I hope he stays a bit longer than any of his predecessors, which will not be difficult to achieve—to look at that issue and to respond to that serious point.

**John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): The missing part in this is who is actually doing the testing. There seems to be a serious gap in the regulations on the requirement for that person to be professionally competent. There is talk about issuing guidelines and all the rest of it, but there is precious little detail.

**Meg Hillier:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that intervention. He has read my mind—that is one of my other concerns. It is a really long-awaited measure and yet it is full of holes.

I am sorry, Ms Nokes—I should declare an interest. I let a property so I know a bit of what I speak. It is in the register of interests. I mentioned PAT tests. Good landlords should maintain high standards but, as my hon. Friend highlighted, finding someone with the right qualification to do this work and knowing that the recommendations they make are the right ones is a challenge. It is important. I hope the Minister, in guidance if not in the regulations at this late stage, will be able to look at the standards that electricians should be maintaining.

Even where someone has an electrician to visit a property or their home to have something done, standards change over time. Standards have changed even in the last decade or so. Perhaps the fuse box or other elements of electrical equipment may need to be altered. If that work is done piecemeal or by somebody with a lower qualification, there is a real concern.

The law did change—all electrical installations in any property, rented or otherwise, need to be done by a qualified electrician. For landlords, there is a public safety interest as well. It is not the same as in a private home. A landlord is acting to keep a place safe for a third party. It is important that we have slightly higher standards of inspection at that point.

The other issue I am concerned about is enforcement. In part 2, regulation 3(3)(c) says that the landlord is to “supply a copy of the report”—

the one that my right hon. Friend and I were discussing—“to the local housing authority within 7 days of receiving a request in writing for it from that authority”.

That is all very well, but given the squeeze on local authorities, highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central, and on environmental health, I cannot envisage that councils will have the resources to run around trying to find where landlords are and ask them whether their properties are safe. Of all the things that landlords do for tenants’ safety, electrical safety will be at the top of the list of importance.

Does the tenant therefore alert the local authority? In an ideal world, yes, but we all know that there are unscrupulous landlords who will inflict punishment on tenants for making a single complaint to the local authority—and anyway, that is reliant on the local authority having the resources to act in time and do something about it if it does not receive a report within seven days or considers it to be in some way inadequate. The enforcement element of the regulations is very light.

My hon. Friend also mentioned new burdens. I am sure the Minister will have done a new burdens assessment or required to see one on local government. This paragraph alone will provide a significant new burden, let alone the overall responsibility for ensuring that properties in an area are safe. At the same time, the Government have clamped down on local licensing regimes and refused to set in place even a basic national licensing programme.

Licensing can be another burden on local government, but basic modern safety standards for private rented housing are long overdue. I urge the Minister, early in his career with responsibility for housing—hopefully his career will be longer than his predecessors’—to look seriously at this issue. We have individual licensing schemes around the country that vary greatly, with no basic minimum standards other than those required by other parts of the law. We keep adding bits to legislation, like on a Christmas tree, without seeing coherently what should be at front and centre. A private let property is a home for the tenant living there, and they should be safe and secure at all times in the home in which they live. There are so many holes in the system.

I turn to the fine of up to £30,000. Is that how local government is expected to fund this measure? That will require local government to find some very bad transgressors quite quickly to get the money in to pay for staff time alone to ensure its implementation. We can all talk warm words about how vital it is to have this measure on the statute book, but how will it be delivered?

Finally, we are in the grip of a deadly killer in coronavirus, where households will self-isolate and professionals—however well qualified—will struggle to manage their workload; indeed, they may not want to leave their own homes. In part 3, regulation 5(2), on the duty of a private landlord to comply with a remedial notice, says:

“A private landlord is not to be taken to be in breach of the duty under paragraph (1) if the private landlord can show they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with that duty.”

Nothing should let an irresponsible landlord off the hook. However, given the timeframe involved, with the regulations coming into force in June for all new tenancies from July, and the severe restrictions on British society

because of the coronavirus situation, it might be challenging for some good landlords—possibly bad ones, too—to comply. Will the Minister be crystal clear about whether “reasonable steps” will cover the serious state we are in now? Will he also make clear how he will ensure that unscrupulous landlords do not use that as a get-out clause for doing what is proper and right in the interests of private tenants?

9.14 am

**John Spellar:** May I probe the Minister a bit further about who will do inspections? I hope he may intervene to satisfy me on that. The regulations talk about a “qualified person” but the explanatory memorandum says that the Department decided

“not to introduce a mandatory competent person scheme”.

I would not argue that the Department should set up its own mandatory competence scheme, but they are already out there in the industry, in the same way as they are in the gas industry. It is not necessarily for the Department and the Minister to identify one particular qualifying organisation, but what I find slightly odd is the fact that they are not requiring that someone qualified under part P must have a qualification from the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting or whoever in order to be able to undertake such work—as far as I recall, it is already required for certifying a new electrical installation. That is also a protection for the landlord against people who might purport to have such qualifications—unless they produce a fraudulent certificate, but that is a different danger and another issue. It would surely benefit the tenants and local authorities to have somebody sign off and give their registration number, which can be checked if there are subsequent problems.

**Meg Hillier:** My right hon. Friend raises a really important point. If we are trying to reduce the burden on local authorities while protecting tenants, a trusted trader scheme or a trusted inspection scheme can cut through some of the bureaucracy that local government may otherwise feel the need to introduce. Actually, local government does not have the resources to do that. Surely he would agree that that would be cost-effective to the taxpayer all round.

**John Spellar:** Very much so; it makes the local authorities’ job much easier. We already have a well-regulated scheme for training and for testing the competence of people working in the industry—for very good reasons, given the inherent dangers of electricity. As I said, I understand that people might produce fraudulent certificates and so on, but that can be dealt with in a different way. This approach would make it much easier for local authorities to say to a landlord, “Where’s your certificate?” and, if they have their suspicions, to check back on that or even to check on the individual. It cuts out a huge amount and does not require the Department, local authorities or consortiums of local authorities to pull that together.

If I may say bluntly to the Minister, this process seems to have a bit of a feel of, “We’re against the big state and bureaucracy.” This would cut bureaucracy, but we still have to cut through to the idea that having proper qualifications, regulation and checking is enormously important. It facilitates commerce, rather than inhibits it, but it also provides a lot of reassurance to all the parties involved.

9.17 am

**Luke Hall:** I am grateful for the contributions to the debate. I am certainly grateful for what sounds like support for the principle of introducing the regulations but, understandably, a number of questions have been raised.

All Opposition colleagues asked why this has taken so long. We wanted to introduce them early in this Parliament, having announced in July 2018 that we would introduce mandatory requirements. I hope all Members will appreciate that there have been parliamentary challenges on time over the past couple of years, but we have been using this time to work closely with experts in the sector, carefully considering some of the complex issues that we have talked about in the debate to ensure that what we are introducing is proportionate. Delivering the regulations early in this Parliament has been a priority.

We have heard a couple of questions about how landlords will know that an electrician is a qualified and competent person. We will ensure that landlords know that an electrician is a qualified and competent person. Before the regulations come into force, guidance on this specific issue will be published for landlords. I will make a note to ensure that the Members who have spoken in the debate are notified when that guidance is published.

**Meg Hillier:** I thank the Minister for alerting colleagues in the room—presumably others will pick this up—but we are now in mid-March. The regulations come into force in June, but landlords will want to make plans to get the tests done. When will the Minister provide that information? Will it be in time for landlords to know exactly who they should ask to do such work?

**Luke Hall:** I cannot give the hon. Member a specific date, but I will respond to her in writing on a number of the issues that she and others have raised. I will do my best to provide a date as soon as possible.

The right hon. Member for Warley mentioned the idea of competent person schemes and the principle of trusted trader schemes. We will be encouraging industry to establish competent person schemes but membership of them will not be compulsory, to ensure that there is no further pressure placed on industry nor burdens placed on inspectors or customers.

**John Spellar:** That is not necessary. Electricians are already highly regulated under all sorts of electrical legislation. They also have to be trained and to pass competency tests. They get certificates indicating their level of competency: some are competent to install, some to supervise and some to test. The industry already has this, and there is no need to create a new structure. Why does the Minister not just say that there are long-established regulatory bodies, and we will use their certification and schemes to establish competency? I honestly do not see the logical problem he is facing.

**Luke Hall:** As I say, before the regulations come into force we will be publishing guidance. I will look closely at the issues, but the guidance can be used before employing inspectors and testers to ensure that the person is competent. Of course, I will take the right hon. Gentleman’s point away.

[*Luke Hall*]

A number of Members raised the issue of PAT testing. They are right to point out that that has not been included in the draft regulations because of the variety of electrical appliances and because the use of one single mandated approach has not been considered practical. The Chair of the Public Accounts Committee has asked to me to look at that issue, which I am happy to do. I will report back to her on that point.

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesperson talked about the importance of not only considering the private rented sector in our work, but considering the social sector as well. She is right to make that point. We all acknowledge that the standards in the private rented sectors are significantly lower in some incidences than in the social sector, so the draft regulations target that sector, but we will be separately considering measures for social rented properties. I am happy to work with the hon. Lady and continue discussions as we move through this Parliament about how we can best achieve that.

Hon. Members also talked about how the regulations will be funded. Local authority environmental health departments are already responsible for enforcing electrical safety standards in the private rented sector. The new regulations will make it simpler for local authorities to do this because landlords will now have to provide them with proof that their electrics are safe. Local authorities will also be able to keep any money raised from financial penalties to fund those activities.

There was also a question about the first-tier tribunal, instead of enforcement, and about the system in Scotland and the number of cases. I do not have that information to hand, but I will find it and make sure it is reported back to the hon. Member for Croydon Central after the debate.

I am pleased that we have general support for the regulations and for our work to improve the private rented sector. I think we all agree that this is timely and overdue, and it is right we are bringing it forward this morning. We rightly heard that 871 people were injured in England in electrical fires in the home in 2016-17, and 16 people died. In a five-year period, the London Fire Brigade dealt with 748 fires caused by electrics. In the same period, only 97 fires it dealt with in London were caused by gas.

We have heard the discrepancies and disparities between the social rented sector and the private rented sector. Although there is a compelling case for change, it is right that we put on record the important contribution that private landlords make to the housing market. The majority of landlords in England provide well-maintained and safe accommodation for their tenants, allowing them to put down roots and thrive in their communities. However, we must ensure that all landlords, not just the good ones, are meeting standards of electrical safety. We want irresponsible and unscrupulous landlords who wilfully disregard their responsibilities and rent out dangerous properties to change their behaviour or leave the business. That will help level the playing field and helps support good landlords to deliver the homes that our country needs. The regulations are an important part of our wider reform programme, which seeks to level up the private rented sector, making it fairer, safer and more secure.

**Meg Hillier:** I thank the Minister for giving way again. I raised the issue of new burdens. We recognise that in certain parts of the country there are clusters of poor landlords, who need to be driven out. The challenge, though, is for local authorities, because they are going to have to pay up front for the inspections for the work before they get any money from the fines. Some of those landlords may well be the sort of fly-by-night people from whom it is very difficult to extract the fine at all, because they will find a way of dodging it by going bankrupt or whatever, or they often have properties in the name of other family members. How is the Minister going to make sure that local government can afford to get on with this job, and has he considered the new burdens?

**Luke Hall:** I thank the hon. Lady for making that point. The House has secured the most positive local government finance settlement for 10 years, a £2.9 billion increase in funding for local authorities. We are quite clear that that will not resolve all of the pressures on local authorities, but that settlement—a 4.4% real-terms increase in support for local government—has been welcomed by the sector, and we think they do have the resources they need. We accept that they are—

**Meg Hillier:** I apologise for intervening on the Minister again, but the new burdens rules are very clear. If there is a new requirement for local government to act, the Department has to make sure that the Treasury provides the necessary money to local government for at least 12 months after the new burden is introduced. If he cannot answer now, perhaps he could write to us with that information, but this is vitally important, particularly in areas with large swathes of unscrupulous landlords where it will be costly for the local authority to act when, quite rightly, they will want to do so.

As Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I must pick the Minister up on the fact that Minister after Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and tells us that local government has had its biggest financial settlement in cash terms for the past decade. That is because local authority funding has been cut back so ruthlessly over the past decade—by 40%, in my own local authority's case—so that does not go anywhere near filling the gap. There is still a huge squeeze on local authorities, and they certainly do not have money swilling around to deal with this as a huge priority above everything else. Although it is vital that they deal with it, they are having to face Hobson's choice, so will the Minister undertake to look at those new burden issues? I am sure it has been done already, but if he cannot tell me now, perhaps he could write to me.

**Luke Hall:** I will write to the hon. Lady with that information. She is right, by the way, that we do not think this latest settlement solves all the pressures that local government is facing. The Secretary of State made that very clear when we brought the settlement before the House a couple of weeks ago, so we completely appreciate that point. We do think, though, that it is the most positive settlement for a few years, and are pleased that it has been welcomed and supported by the whole House for the first time in a number of years. We will absolutely consider the points that the hon. Lady has made.

I am grateful that the Committee seems to support these vital regulations, and I will pick up on the points that have been raised. They will drive up standards and reduce injuries in the private rented sector, so I am grateful for the Committee's support.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Committee has considered the draft Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020.

9.27 am

*Committee rose.*





