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Our Ref: 20250131 – Andrew Gwynne

Andrew Gwynne MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention

31 January 2025

Dear Andrew,

The Fire Brigades Union welcomes your remarks on LBC, in which you stated that the Government “needs to seriously look at” the impact of toxic smoke on firefighters who responded to the Grenfell disaster.

In January, our union was proud to support the launch of landmark research, undertaken by independent academics at the University of Central Lancashire.

It revealed that of 524 firefighters who were exposed to smoke at the 2017 fire at Grenfell Tower, 136 reported life changing conditions three years later. These included 11 cases of cancer, 64 respiratory diseases, 22 neurological disorders and 66 digestive illnesses.

As the newly elected General Secretary of the FBU, I stand ready to work with the government to make rapid progress on delivering the union’s call for regular health checks for firefighters.

In the LBC interview on January 3rd, you stated that: “Certainly that’s something that I’m more than happy to take away and look at seriously because we recognise that people who go above and beyond putting their own lives at risk in situations like Grenfell Tower may well end up with health issues as a consequence of their own work.”

The FBU today reiterates its call for urgent talks with ministers about regular health checks for firefighters. Following your intervention, the government must make a firm commitment to deliver that health screening.

There can be no prevarication or delay in protecting firefighters from life threatening conditions.

The UK is decades behind many comparable countries on this issue, and the findings of this report are likely to be the tip of the iceberg.

I look forward to hearing from ministers about dates for a meeting on this critical issue, and on the government’s plans to back regular health monitoring for firefighters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Steve Wright", written in a cursive style.

Steve Wright
General Secretary