

Identifying how system conditions shape building safety behaviours and outcomes

Building safety compliance is affected by wider conditions that enable or constrain good building safety practice

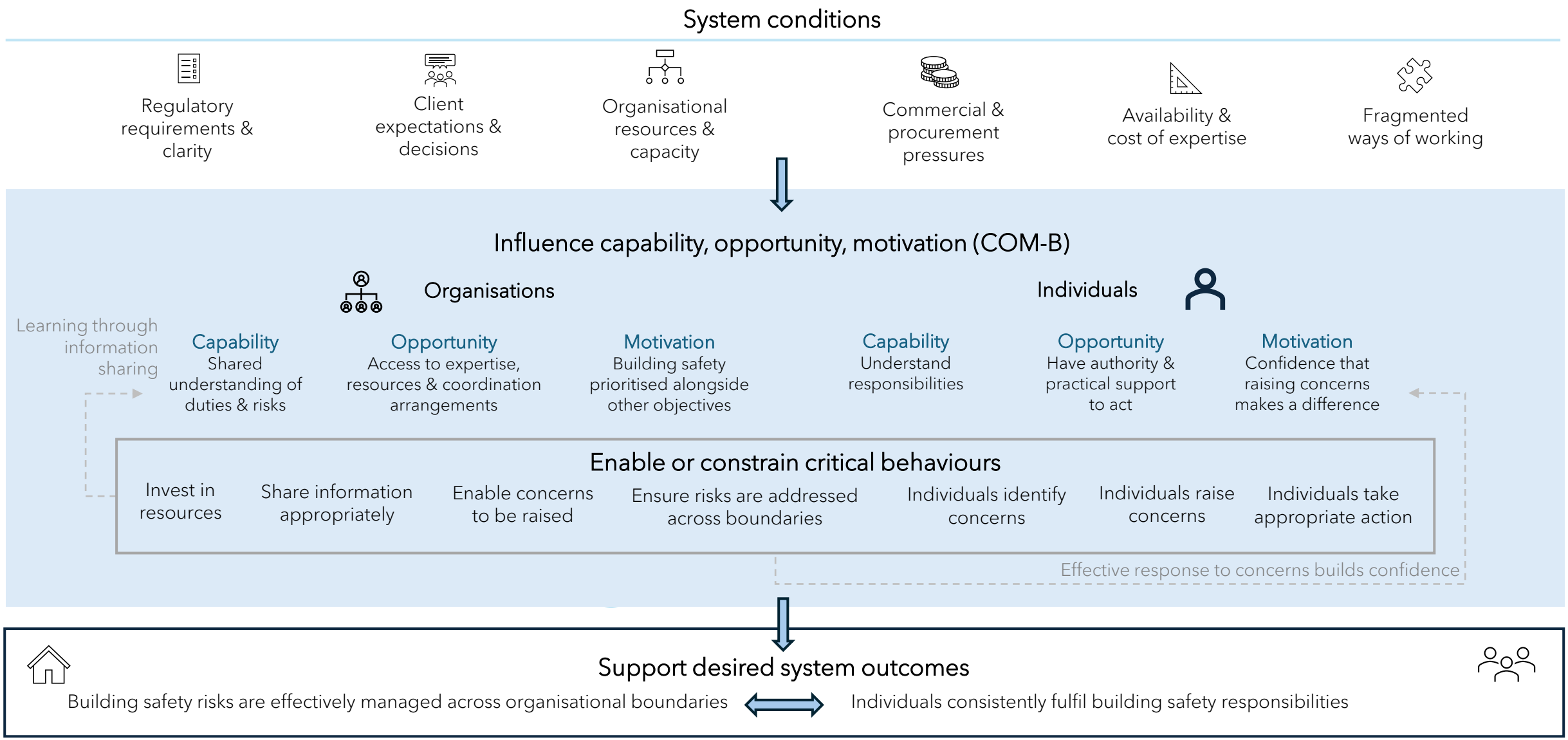
Following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, major regulatory reforms were introduced in England. However, the experiences of organisations and individuals in complying with these new regulations and processes are strongly influenced by the wider built environment system.

Drawing on six published HSE research projects, this independent case study illustrates how systems and behavioural analysis can help identify potential intervention opportunities and the constraints that may limit them to improve building safety compliance.

What this case study shows:

- Synthesising evidence across multiple studies and stakeholders
- Applying systems and behavioural frameworks to complex policy issues
- Identifying practical intervention opportunities
- Translating research into strategic insight
- Communicating complex systems through visual models

System conditions influence building safety behaviours and outcomes



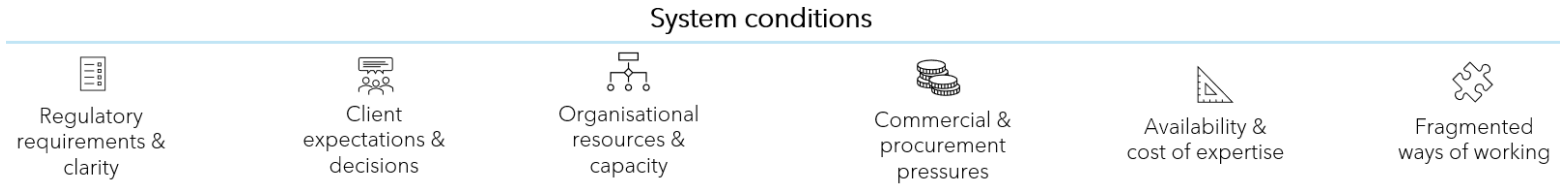


Some organisations need to manage building safety risks regardless of whether the conditions they work within fully support compliance

The wider system can constrain action even where organisations are committed to building safety

Resident Management Companies (RMCs) are run by volunteer directors but may hold significant statutory building safety responsibilities where their legal role makes them an accountable person for a higher-risk building. Due to their own sometimes limited expertise, many rely on managing agents and external specialists for advice, although they may also lack the resources to procure the competence they need.

Applying the previous model highlights a potential mismatch between the building safety responsibilities held by some RMCs and their practical ability to fulfil them.



Generating the key strategic question:

How can organisations fulfil their regulatory responsibilities when some of the conditions needed to act are outside their control?

System conditions may constrain RMCs' ability to manage building safety risks

System conditions

Regulatory requirements & clarity
May lack clarity over requirements

Client expectations & decisions
Constrained by historic decisions about building design and management

Organisational resources & capacity
Volunteer directors may have limited resources

Commercial & procurement pressures
Reliant on service charge income: constrained by affordability for residents

Availability & cost of expertise
Need to buy in competence externally

Fragmented ways of working
May have limited access to peer networks

Influence capability, opportunity, motivation (COM-B)

Organisations

Capability
May have limited understanding of duties & risks

Opportunity
May lack access to resources (time, money, competent specialists)

Motivation
Building safety may compete with affordability/ other priorities

Individuals

Capability
May not know when to seek advice/how to understand recommendations

Opportunity
May lack time & practical support to act

Motivation
Liability concerns & stress may undermine willingness to act

Behaviours that may be constrained

- Secure appropriate expertise and resources
- Coordinate advice and decisions
- Ensure necessary action is taken
- Exercise oversight and seek advice
- Authorise appropriate action
- Engage residents on impacts

High costs, stress and director turnover may weaken future capacity

System conditions may undermine desired outcomes unless addressed

Building safety risks are effectively managed across organisational boundaries ⟷ Individuals consistently fulfil building safety responsibilities

Addressing constraints is likely to require complementary action across the wider system

No single actor can address all these issues alone

Influence capability, opportunity, motivation (COM-B)

Organisations

1 Capability
May have limited understanding of duties & risks

2 Opportunity
May lack access to resources (time, money, competent specialists)

3 Motivation
Building safety may compete with affordability/ other priorities

Individuals

4 Capability
May not know when to seek advice/how to understand recommendations

5 Opportunity
May lack time & practical support to act

6 Motivation
Liability concerns & stress may undermine willingness to act

Potential interventions to investigate

Magenta numbers indicate which behavioural constraints each intervention might help address

Government	Regulator	Industry	RMCs
2 Stimulate training & skills pipelines	1 4 Provide guidance on duties & procuring expertise	4 5 Provide training & practical support for RMC directors	1 Engage with & act on available guidance
2 3 Consider affordability & funding pressures	2 3 Support proportionate support & implementation within legal requirements	2 4 Improve access to & coordination of competent advice	2 3 Explain safety requirements, costs & consequences of inaction to residents
6 Review whether RMC responsibilities are supported adequately	1 4 Encourage RMCs to network & resolve their own issues	2 Strengthen managing agent competence & support	1 Engage with specialist advice tailored to their building

Enduring system constraints

- Scarcity of expertise in the short term
- Expense of necessary work
- Affordability for residents
- Responsibility and liability concerns continuing to pressurise volunteer directors



Identifying where change is realistic, who needs to act and which constraints may remain

Complex challenges rarely have a single root cause or solution

By examining how system conditions shape organisational and individual behaviour, it becomes possible to understand where change is realistic, who needs to act and which constraints may remain. The value lies not in finding one answer but in providing a clearer basis for decision-making.

The same approach can be applied to policy, regulatory, service design and organisational challenges where outcomes depend on multiple interacting factors.

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Evidence and limitations

This independent conceptual analysis draws on published HSE research. The systems-behaviour models, proposed relationships and intervention options are the author's own synthesis and hypotheses. The proposed interventions have not been evaluated and do not represent recommendations endorsed by HSE or the Building Safety Regulator.

Selected published sources:

HSE (2025) - BSR Culture Change Programme
HSE (2024) - Facilitating culture change
HSE (2024) - Research into industry's ways of working
HSE (2023) - Key Building Information guidance research
HSE (2023) - Resident Engagement Strategy guidance research
HSE (2023) - Insight into Accountable Persons
Michie et al. (2011) - Behaviour Change Wheel/COM-B