



# Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy 2023

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# Contents

Introduction.....	1
External context.....	1
Objectives.....	1
Our approach.....	2
Information and understanding .....	2
Resident and Landlord responsibilities.....	4
Action to be taken in the event of a fire .....	5

## Introduction

Every resident of a multi-occupancy building should expect that their landlord (WDH) is managing their building to be safe and that they are informed about the measures being taken.

WDH must ensure the effective assessment and management of their building's safety. They must also inform and include residents in any decision-making about their building's safety, as well as providing further information to residents.

This Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy will focus on High-Risk Residential Buildings (HRRB's) (buildings over 11 metres or six storeys with two or more occupants) and will set out our approach to resident engagement relating to building safety and should be considered the first steps on the path towards meaningful engagement with residents about the safety of their homes.

## External context

Following the tragedy at Grenfell in June 2017, the Government commissioned the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt which was published in May 2018.

In December 2018 the Government accepted all 53 of her recommendations.

In June 2019 the Government published a consultation document setting out how they plan to overhaul the system for high-rise residential buildings through:

- clearer responsibilities for those building or managing these buildings;
- a stronger voice in the system and better information for residents;
- greater oversight by regulators; and
- tougher enforcement when things go wrong.

## Objectives

The key aims of this strategy are to:

- Ensure residents are empowered to play an effective role in ensuring their building is, and continues to be, safe.
- Set out the ways in which residents can get involved and the benefits to them from participating in engagement on building safety.
- Identify the building safety information residents wish to be provided with.
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- Establish methods of improving our approach to engaging with residents in relation to the safety of their home.
- Engage employees with regards to the importance of residents' rights to have a say in relation to their homes.

**This is a controlled document. Please refer to the WDH Website for the latest version.**

- Clarify our responsibilities and residents' responsibilities to ensure their homes remain safe.

The strategy will be reviewed as changes of legislation come into place and in response to priorities identified by the Building Safety Regulator.

## **Our approach**

Residents will have a stronger voice in the management of their building, ensuring that they have an important role to play in ensuring the safety of their building, whilst having clear guidance in place for when things have or are going wrong and who is responsible for dealing with these issues when they arise.

We will ensure residents are informed about and are involved in decisions that concern the safety of their building. We will also provide, comprehensive information that helps to ensure that residents are able to better understand and be able to be further informed about how the safety of their building is managed.

Our approach to engaging with residents around building safety will focus on three main strands:

- Information and understanding (as prescribed in the Building Safety Act).
- Resident and landlords' responsibilities.
- Action to take in the event of a fire.

## **Information and understanding**

We will use a range of ways to communicate with residents to consider, as much as possible, the diverse needs of our residents. We will endeavour to make adequate provisions for residents, for example, who have a physical or visual impairment, have other disabilities or who do not speak English on request.

Examples of the way in which we can communicate with residents may include but is not limited to:

- At sign up.
- Website.
- Notice boards.
- Text.
- Email.
- Letter.
- Pop up sessions to talk about building safety.
- Tenant Forums (for example, Neighbourhood Panels).

We will proactively provide all residents with the information they need to help them understand the protections that are in place to keep their building safe.

We will ensure that the information provided is sufficient, relevant and in a format that can be understood by residents.

As a standard practice we will provide:

- The measures we have in place to mitigate potential fire and building safety risks to residents, for example, fire precautions.
- Information for residents detailing how they can reduce the risk of fire in individual dwellings for example, by not storing flammable materials.
- A process whereby any communications received regarding a fire risk and / or raising any other safety concerns will be regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate action has been taken.
- Procedures to follow where a fire occurs in the building, including for evacuation.
- The different roles and responsibilities of the accountable person, and residents.
- Key information such as the contact details of the accountable person via our OneCALL service.

Residents will also be entitled to obtain further and more detailed information about the safety measures in their building if they wish and such information may include (but is not limited to):

- Full, current and historical fire risk assessments.
- Planned maintenance and repairs schedules.
- Outcome of building safety inspection checks.
- How assets in the building are managed, for example, frequency of lift maintenance.
- Details of preventive measures, for example, smoke alarms.
- Fire protection measures in place, for example, sprinklers, fire extinguishers.
- Information on the maintenance of fire safety systems.
- The fire strategy for the building.
- Structural assessments.
- Planned and historical changes to the building.

Requests for information will be dealt with in line with our Customer Charter standards.

Residents who have a concern about building safety can contact OneCALL who will follow our repairs process and arrange for a contractor to attend. Any resident who is not happy with the outcome and wishes to escalate the issue can submit a complaint in line with our formal complaints process.

At the start of every tenancy, we will provide a fire action notice within the sign-up pack.

Within six weeks of a tenancy starting, we will undertake a new tenant welcome visit at which we will discuss building safety and will answer any queries at that point.

## Resident and Landlord responsibilities

The Building Safety Act states that residents have an important part to play in the safety of their building, with a responsibility to make sure their actions do not undermine the safety of others.

There are three, clear and proportionate obligations on residents.

- Not act in a way that creates a significant risk of fire or structural failure.
- Not interfere with a relevant safety items or equipment.
- Comply with a request by the landlord for information reasonably required to perform their duties to assess and manage building safety risks.

Residents are expected to provide reasonable access by allowing us to inspect and carry out necessary works for several types of safety inspections or undertaking fire and structural safety-related maintenance. Where information or access is required, we will provide the resident with reasonable notice. Where access is not provided, we will try several measures to gain access to the property with the final measure being legal action and forced entry. We will look to recover the costs of such legal action directly from the resident.

We will carry out annual fire safety visits to all high-rise properties to identify any hazards and to engage with residents about any concerns they have about the safety of their building.

We will complete several checks to ensure our blocks remain safe. These will include daily checks of all blocks carried out by the on-site caretaker, these will include bin stores and communal areas to ensure they are free of rubbish or possessions.

A more in-depth check will be carried out on a weekly basis by our on-site caretaker. In addition to the checks undertaken daily, the weekly checks will include an inspection of the dry risers, fire doors, fire signage, emergency call in the lift, key safe (and that all keys are present, correct, and secure), firefighting equipment where provided, escape facilities and emergency lighting.

We will undertake a programme of fire door inspections; these will be annually for individual apartment doors and quarterly for fire doors in communal areas.

We have a zero-tolerance policy for residents leaving possessions in communal areas. Residents who breach this may have action taken against them. This includes giving seven-day notice to remove the items, failure to do so resulting in us removing the items and recharging the resident for the service.

We will identify residents with specific vulnerabilities that may affect their ability to vacate the building in the event of a fire. This information will be regularly reviewed and stored in the building's fire safety box.

**This is a controlled document. Please refer to the WDH Website for the latest version.**

We will ensure that residents are empowered to play an effective role in making sure that their building is, and remains, safe. We will provide regular updates and information to our Neighbourhood Panels as a standard agenda item to help residents to identify and report hazards that may impact on the safety of the building in order that they can fulfil their own responsibilities to ensure their own safety and that of their neighbours.

Residents are encouraged to regularly assess the needs of their household and any members of their family who may be vulnerable. They are encouraged to ensure they understand the action plan for their building so they know what they should do in the event of an emergency.

We will work in partnership with residents to ensure that they are involved in decisions about their building's safety and, (where possible), provide them with reasonable information on works due to be carried out to their property enabling them to have an opportunity to consult.

We will produce an annual Fire Safety Guide for all residents in High-Rise accommodation which will provide any updates on Fire Safety in their building, reinforce measure in place and confirm their responsibilities.

## **Action to be taken in the event of a fire**

There is an action plan for each scheme with specific details for the action residents should take in the event of a fire. This information is contained on a Fire Action Notice which are displayed in every building. It is also contained in Fire Safety Guides issued to all new tenants at tenancy sign up and all residents on an annual basis.