



Because good homes make everything possible

**Building Safety Resident
Engagement Strategy
2020-2024**

Resident Engagement Team
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1. Version details

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v.03	Amendments made following consultation with residents via email and text	July 2020
v.04	Amendments following internal consultation with members of Executive Leadership Team	April 2021

2. Introduction and objectives

This is Network Homes’ first Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy. The strategy is valid at the time to publication but may change as and when new legislation comes into place. Following the tragic

fire at Grenfell Tower a new regulatory regime is being introduced for High Risk Residential Buildings¹, the principles within this strategy apply to any Network Homes buildings with potential safety issues.

The strategy is about how we will engage and communicate with residents about building safety for new and existing buildings. It should be considered the first steps in achieving meaningful engagement with residents about the safety of their homes. 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 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;
- Identify the way in which residents wish to be provided with building safety information;
- Establish how we can improve the way we engage with residents in relation to the safety of their home;
- Engage staff with regards to residents' rights to have a say in relation to their homes;
- Clarify our responsibilities and residents' responsibilities to ensure their homes remain safe.

The strategy will be reviewed as part of our preparations for the implementation of the draft Building Safety Bill or as other changes of legislation or regulation come into place, and in response to priorities identified by the Building Safety Regulator.

3. Setting the scene

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. This report was published in May 2018. In December 2018 the Government accepted all 53 of the report's recommendations and many are being progressed in the Fire Safety Bill and the draft Building Safety Bill. We have established an internal working group with a view to implementing these recommendations.

Within the report there is a huge emphasis on landlords engaging with residents about building safety. This strategy outlines how we will engage with and involve residents in the safety of their homes.

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.

The Grenfell Inquiry – Phase 1 Report was published on 30 October 2019 with 16 recommendations for either landlords or the London Fire Brigade to review. We have established a new Building Safety team and we will be reviewing these recommendations and overseeing all required remedial work to our buildings. The Grenfell Inquiry – Phase 2 opened on 28 January 2020 and is expected to run until 2021.

The draft building safety bill was published in July 2020 and consultation on the bill is currently underway. The timetable for the introduction of new legislation and implementation of the recommendations has not yet been decided. We are actively reviewing the proposed requirements in

¹ A High-Risk Residential Building is a building where the impact of a fire can be catastrophic

legislation and will carefully review elements that we could take forward in advance of regulatory requirements. We aspire to be at the forefront of organisations addressing the building safety crisis but are also mindful of clarity and value-for-money.

4. Our approach

This strategy explains how we will engage and involve residents about the safety of their home. It doesn't include specific building safety information (such as information about cladding) about individual homes. Alongside the strategy we will have bespoke plans tailored to individual properties where there is deemed to be a need. These plans will explain how the strategy will work in practice for these buildings.

We have worked with residents to develop this strategy through focus groups and wider consultation via text, email and paper survey for residents living in our Older Person Schemes. We want to make sure it meets residents needs and requirements. It explains what residents can expect in terms of communication from us and how they can get involved and raise concerns.

There is a difference between building safety and building security. If the front door to the building is left open (for example) this is a building security issue but not a building safety issue. It could lead to a building safety issue if an unauthorised person entered and committed an act that endangers the safety of the building such as arson. This strategy will not discuss building security.

There are three main strands to how we will engage with residents around building safety:

- Information and understanding;
- Resident and landlords' responsibilities;
- Action to take in the event of a fire;

4.1. Information and understanding

4.1.1 Communication and engagement

We will use a range of ways to communicate with residents to cater for, as much as possible, the diverse needs of residents.

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

- At sign up
- New tenant visit
- Website
- Portal
- Notice boards
- App
- Text
- Email
- Letter
- Pop sessions to talk about building safety
- Video

We will also ensure we cater for residents at our Older Person's Schemes who may prefer face to face meetings to discuss the strategy and the specific arrangements for their building. Following all meetings information provided will be delivered to each resident's home. If there are any significant

changes to the strategy or action plan, we will update residents during their House Meetings on an annual basis (or more frequently if required).

For residents at our Older Persons Schemes we can share building safety information with their relatives if they request us to.

Where we have identified a serious issue with a building affecting the safety of all residents, we will update residents regularly about any interim safety measures we have put in place, remedial works and further investigations that are required. These updates may be in the form of monthly meetings and/or updates on our website and/or monthly newsletters.

A fire action notice is installed within each building. These confirm whether the building has a stay put strategy in the event of a fire or an evacuation strategy.

We will encourage residents to get involved in making decisions relating to the safety of their building. If residents would like to get involved the Resident Engagement team welcome their input. Residents can contact them directly at get-involved@networkhomes.org.uk.

Once this strategy is put in place, we will work with residents to identify a way to measure how satisfied all residents are with the way we have delivered the strategy. One way of doing this may be a reduction in the number of occasions upon which we have to remove fire hazards left by residents in the communal parts of a building. We will commit to reviewing feedback from our residents to ensure we continuously improve the service we provide to them.

4.1.2 Clarity and accessibility of information

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 make sure the information provided is relevant and in a format that can be understood by residents. We aim to provide this information in different formats on request, for example, for residents who have a physical or visual impairment, have other disabilities or who do not speak English.

As standard practice we will provide:

- The measures we have in place to mitigate potential fire and building safety risks to residents, e.g. fire precautions;
- Information for residents explaining how they can reduce the risk of fire in individual dwellings e.g. by not storing flammable materials;
- A process for reporting a fire risk and/or raising any other safety concerns;
- Procedures to follow where a fire occurs in the building, including for evacuation;

The draft Building Safety Bill proposes new roles of the Accountable Person and Building Safety Manager. When we have clarity in relation to the roles, responsibility and timing of these being in place we will clearly notify residents of this and their contact details.

Residents can ask for 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;

- Outcome of building safety inspection checks where available;
- How assets in the building are managed, e.g. frequency of lift maintenance;
- Details of preventive measures, e.g. smoke alarms;
- Fire protection measures in place, e.g. sprinklers, fire extinguishers;
- Information available on the maintenance of fire safety systems; what does this involve ?
- The fire strategy for the building;
- Structural assessments, where available;

We will put a process in place for dealing with requests for information. We will aim to provide residents with the documents they request within 1 month. Within this process we will provide guidelines to enable vulnerable residents to nominate an advocate, care-giver or representative who can request more detailed information on their behalf.

We also aspire to make additional information available to residents who are interested in it. This could include information on planned maintenance and repairs schedules and planned and historical changes to the building. We currently don't have the resources to make this available

We will not release draft reports, which are likely to be subject to change but will aim to release information as quickly as possible.

Residents who have a concern about building safety can contact our Customer Services Team who will arrange for Network Homes to deal with this concern. Any resident who is not happy with the outcome and wishes to escalate the issue can submit a complaint. We will be introducing a new role of Building Safety Managers, as outlined in the Hackitt report, who will deal with these issues.

Residents living in our Older Persons Schemes who report repairs directly to their Scheme Manager can continue to report any building safety concerns directly to them.

4.1.3 How safety information should be provided when residents move in

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

Within 6 weeks of a tenancy starting we will contact residents and discuss building safety and will answer any queries they may have at that point.

4.2. Residents' and landlords' responsibilities

4.2.1 Understanding our responsibilities

Building safety is something that all residents and landlords must work on together. Everyone in the building can have a positive impact on the safety of their household and neighbours, and it is all our responsibility to do what we can to keep the building and its occupants safe. That includes letting us know of any safety concerns residents may have, understanding building safety messaging and taking responsibility for the safety each home.

As a landlord we are responsible for undertaking different types of building safety inspections monthly, annually or bi-annually such as gas safety checks, fire risk assessments, legionella testing. The full list of our compliance testing regime is set out below. This is in line with legislation or best practice (where there is no legislation). This may vary from building to building.

Compliance test	Frequency
Gas safety checks	Annual
Pressure System Safety Regulations	Annual
Fire alarms	Quarterly
Automatic Opening Vents	Monthly
Dry/wet risers	6 monthly visual inspection and annual pressure test
Sprinkler	Annual
Emergency lighting	Monthly and annual (different tests undertaken)
Fire extinguishers	Annual
Fusible links	Annual
Fire blankets	Annual
Fire Risk Assessments	Up to 3 years (dependant on perceived risk of the building)
Legionella Risk Assessments	Up to 5 years (dependant on perceived risk of the building)
Water hygiene monthly inspections (eg water outlet temperature)	Monthly
Water hygiene quarterly inspections (eg shower cleans)	Quarterly
Water hygiene annual inspections (eg tank inspections and cleans)	Annual
Pump servicing	Quarterly for foul system and 6 monthly for cold water supply systems
Communal asbestos surveys	No specified timescale
Renewable heating and hot water systems	Annual
Domestic electrical testing	5 yearly
Communal electrical testing	5 yearly
Portable appliance testing	Annual
Lightning protection	Annual
Passenger lift PPM	Monthly
Domestic lifting/mobility equipment	6 monthly
LOLER (Lifting Operations & Lifting Equipment Regulations) inspection	6 monthly
SAFed (Safety Assessment Federation) inspections (inspection of lifts)	Annual
Electronic gate servicing	Annual
Fall arrest system inspection	Annual

Residents must provide access to their home for us to inspect and carry out different types of safety inspections (such as fitting fire alarms) or undertake fire and structural safety-related maintenance. Where information or access is required from residents, we will give the resident reasonable notice. Where access is not provided, we will try several methods to gain access to residents' homes. If we have not been able to gain access, we will have to take legal action. We will recover the costs of such legal action directly from the resident.

Due to the risk they may pose when evacuating in the event of a fire or other emergency, we have a zero-tolerance policy for residents leaving possessions in communal areas. Any items stored in communal areas may be removed and disposed of without notification to the residents concerned.

Within our sheltered schemes we follow specialised housing guidance and undertake people-centred risk assessments to evaluate the needs of individual residents. This means we can evaluate their situations and/or disabilities, minimise risks and put in place specific measures accordingly (an example of this is to use visual fire alarms for residents who are hearing impaired).

At high risk schemes we establish specific vulnerabilities for residents using a combination of data held on internal systems and questionnaires completed by each household. We will produce a PEEP (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan) for the resident. The PEEP is held on site in a premise's information box which the fire brigade has access to in case of an emergency. We cannot keep track in real-time of who is moving in or out of residents' homes or new vulnerabilities that may develop over time. For this reason, it is residents' responsibility to inform us if a member of their household has vulnerabilities that may affect their ability to evacuate.

We will work with the local fire service to electronically provide any information about the building they require.

In line with our process for reporting safety concerns, any legitimate concerns will be treated seriously, and remedial action will be taken to resolve the issue.

4.2.2 Encouraging residents to keep their buildings safe

We will ensure that residents are empowered to play an effective role in making sure that their building is, and remains, safe. This includes identifying and reporting hazards that may impact on the safety of the building and meeting their responsibilities to ensure their own safety and that of their neighbours.

Residents should think about the needs of their household and any members of their family who may be vulnerable (such as young children or someone with a disability). They should ensure they understand the action plan for their building so they know what they should do in the event of an emergency.

Upon advice from the Fire Service we no longer provide fire safety equipment (such as fire blankets and fire extinguishers) within either residents' homes or in communal areas. The Fire Service advise that unless individuals have the relevant training on the use of fire safety equipment then they are encouraged not to attempt to fight the fire. They should close all fire doors to contain the fire and follow the action plan for their building.

Residents are also encouraged to consider the wellbeing of their neighbours in the building and recognise that their actions may put the lives of others at risk. For example, residents should ensure they do not prop open any communal fire doors and they do not store items in the communal hallway which may impede an escape route in the event of an emergency. Residents must seek permission if they wish to make any changes to their fire doors. Residents who smoke should ensure they do so in a safe place and fully extinguish their cigarettes afterwards. Barbecues and patio heaters should never be used inside buildings, on balconies or in close proximity to any flammable material.

Where residents see one of their neighbours acting in a way that suggests they have not understood or remembered the building safety information they can remind them of it. An example of this could be neighbours who are suspected to be hoarding, who are storing items in the communal hallway or neighbours who may be considered vulnerable. If residents are not comfortable discussing this with their neighbours, they should report it as a building safety concern to us.

4.2.3 Improving communications on safety (i.e reporting safety concerns; works to the property)

We will work in partnership with residents to ensure that they are involved in decisions about their building's safety. We will provide them with information about works due to be carried out to their home so that they have a chance to talk to us about the works.

If any resident feels their concerns have not been addressed, they can follow our formal complaints process to escalate the issue.

4.3. Action to take in the event of 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 in communal hallways in every building.

All of our buildings are designed to keep residents safe. Buildings are compartmented which means that they are built in such a way to contain a fire within a single room or multiple rooms for a limited amount of time eg. 30 or 60 minutes. This limits the spread of fire, smoke and flue gases. One of the key safety measures to aid compartmentation is fire doors. It is important that you do not make alterations to fire doors within your home and keep them free of obstruction which may prevent them from closing.

The Fire Service advise that it is best for residents to keep fire doors closed to contain a fire rather risking injury trying to fight a fire themselves.

Most tall buildings are designed to contain fire, smoke and heat within individual homes for long enough to enable the Fire Brigade to extinguish the fire. In such buildings it is safe for residents to remain in their home, as long as it is not affected by fire, smoke or heat, while the fire is being extinguished. This is known as 'stay put' advice. For buildings where this is not possible we will advise of evacuation plans based on our fire risk assessments.

4.3.1 Understanding a building evacuation plan

A building evacuation plan means that all residents must leave the building and go to the assembly point for the building in the case of an emergency.

4.3.2 Understanding 'stay put' and when it should be used

All buildings which have been built in such a way as to contain a fire within one of the compartments of the building will have a stay put policy in place. The Fire Service advise us that the best option for residents is to remain in their own homes, unless that's where the fire started or fire, heat or smoke has spread to their home, rather than trying to evacuate which may result in them being in more danger.

4.3.3 Understanding what "Next place of safety" means

Any residents required to evacuate their homes should go to the "next place of safety". This means residents should move away from the building to a place of safety from a fire or any falling debris.

4.3.5 Evacuating a building safely

If residents are required to evacuate their homes, they must do so by walking to the safest and closest exit and/or stairway. Where possible, they should close any fire doors behind them. They should never use a lift to exit during a fire alarm activation. Once outside the building, residents must move away from the building and go nearest safest place.

The front of the building may be where the fire fighters and fire trucks will be operating. Residents must move away from the building and must not obstruct their access to the building.

If there is an incident occurring on the upper floors and glass is being blown out of the windows, the area below is the hazard zone where serious personal will happen. Residents must not remain in or near this area.

Once residents have left the building they must not re-enter until they are told to do so by the fire brigade.

4.3.6 Responding to fire alarms and contacting the fire brigade

If the fire or smoke alarm in your home sounds, call 999, ask for the fire service and follow their advice. If you hear the fire or smoke alarm sound in any communal area or a neighbour's home, call 999, ask for the fire service and follow the plan for your building.

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