

Resident Engagement Fire Strategy 2024

Review Due: April 2025.

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Introduction

This document links to the emerging Resident Engagement strategy managed by the resident engagement team in housing but has been developed and managed by the Fire safety Team in Compliance

The Building Safety Act 2022 (the Act) is legislation that aims to improve the safety of high-rise buildings following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy in 2017.

The Act includes measures such as creating a new Building Safety Regulator (BSR), establishing a new safety framework for high-rise residential buildings, and enhancing the powers of fire and rescue authorities. Under the Act, those who own or are responsible for managing high risk buildings (HRBs) will need to appoint a Principal Accountable Person (PAP) which is responsible for applying to register their buildings with the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR). The PAP's primary duties will include preparing the Golden Thread of Information through a series of gateways, developing a building safety case (BSC) report, and applying for the building assessment certificate (BAC), amongst other duties.

As part of the Building Safety Act 2022 Labeth will carry out a series of building safety cases for each of our high rise over 18m. We will use these building safety cases as a template for block level resident engagement that will be overseen by a Residents 'Fire Forum' that will provide residents with a voice on fire safety matters in their buildings. The fire forum will:

- Provide a platform for residents to have a voice in the management of their building and to ensure that their views are taken into account in decision-making.
- Ensure that residents can access critical building safety information, including information on fire safety, health and safety, and structural risks.
- Provide a mechanism for residents to raise concerns and lodge complaints about building safety issues and to ensure that these concerns are addressed promptly and effectively.
- Work with the accountable person and Building Safety Regulator to develop and implement a robust resident engagement strategy that meets the requirements of the Building Safety Act.
- Promote transparency and accountability in the management of the building and to foster a culture of open communication between residents and building management.
- Support the development of a positive and proactive safety culture within the building and encourage residents to maintain a safe and secure living environment.
- Ensure that residents are informed and involved in any decisions relating to the management of building safety risks, including decisions on risk assessments, remediation work, and ongoing monitoring and review.

Co-Production Approach

The Fire Forum will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this resident engagement strategy in a co-production with council officers. The Forum will be made up of residents who are representative of the residential population and who have a genuine interest in building safety.

The Fire Forum will also be responsible for co-organising regular resident meetings, where residents can be updated on building safety issues and provide feedback on the management of their building. They will ensure that the outcomes of these meetings are circulated to all residents and that any concerns raised by residents are addressed promptly.

The Fire Forum will also work closely with the building's management team to ensure that all residents know their responsibilities regarding building safety. This will involve providing residents with information on fire safety procedures, such as evacuating the building in the event of a fire and using fire extinguishers. Our approach, as a residents forum and as council officers is to co-produce fire safety activities and information through to individual block panels that will be set up later in 2023.

Overall, the Fire Forum will play a vital role in ensuring that residents are informed, engaged, and empowered regarding building safety. By working closely with the Accountable person (AP) for fire safety and the Building Safety Coordinator, the Fire Forum can help create a safety culture in the building and ensure that all residents can live safely and securely in their homes.

Communications

The Fire Forum will be established under the guidelines in the Building Safety Act 2022; we will ensure that the Forum is adequately resourced and supported to carry out its duties effectively.

The Forum will be initiate and oversee the following activities:

- Provide feedback on the effectiveness of the building safety measures and the effectiveness of the AP in managing the risks associated with the building.
- Provide feedback on any proposed building safety measures or management changes, ensuring that the residents' views are considered.
- Provide input on the information and communication needs of the residents, ensuring that they are adequately informed about building safety risks and the measures in place to manage them.
- Provide input on the training and support needs of the residents, ensuring that they can respond effectively in an emergency.

What to expect from us.

Regular communication will include newsletters, emails, or meetings with residents. We will also ensure that there are clear channels of communication for residents to report any safety concerns or raise any questions or issues.

- **Rapid App** - we will enable all interested residents to be trained in the use of our 'Rapid App' on any Android or iPhone device that will enable them to log all fire safety-related issues so we can act on any issues swiftly.

- **Data to us** – we will receive the resident generated information via the Rapid App; we will then investigate and allocate the report issued to the relevant teams, i.e. Responsive repairs and Community Works.
- **Analysis** – We will use the information from the app and present the findings and statistical data to the Fire Forum and the Building Safety Regulator as part of our building safety case report.
- **Feedback** – There will be a two-way communication stream, and all feedback will be considered and reported. In addition, we will detail how we will involve residents in the decision-making process for any significant works or refurbishments that may affect the safety of the building. This will include seeking resident input on selecting contractors, materials, and equipment and providing regular updates on the progress of the works.
- **Considering best practise.** This is a new approach for us; we will look to see how other social landlords are getting their residents involved and share and develop new ideas with the Forum.

How we will communicate with residents

To ensure that residents know about the resident engagement strategy, the Accountable Person will regularly communicate with residents through various channels such as email, social media, notice boards, or resident meetings. The Accountable Person will also encourage feedback from residents on the effectiveness of the resident engagement strategy and make any necessary improvements.

We will communicate using the following.

- Website
- Emails
- Text / WhatsApp
- Letters
- Posters
- QR codes
- Block meetings
- Fire action notices (updating residents after London Fire Brigade notices)
- Sheltered housing specific events.

What we will communicate to residents

- Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) present and historic will be available via QR codes in communal areas in blocks. Residents can download the specific FRA for their own block and also see in real time where we are with remediating any of the recommended actions from the FRA such as repairs or housing management tasks.
- Building Safety Case (BSC) / Structural surveys will also be available through block QR codes and on our website
- Preventative measures – what we expect from residents as part of the deal to keep their blocks safe (see below)
- Notes and actions of meetings that will be co-produced by the Building safety Coordinator and residents.

Strategies and tactics in the event of a fire

We work proactively to promote fire safety for vulnerable tenants. We can identify people who may need assistance in the event of a fire evacuation through property MOTs and vulnerability surveys. Residents can also self-refer to make us aware of any needs.

A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is a plan that is designed to help individuals with disabilities or mobility issues safely evacuate a building in the event of an emergency such as a fire or other crisis. A PEEP aims to identify any potential barriers to evacuation for an individual and establish a plan to overcome those barriers. A PEEP typically involves a thorough assessment of the individual's needs and an assessment of the building's layout and evacuation routes. Based on this information, the plan will include specific instructions and procedures for evacuating the individual in the event of an emergency, such as the use of designated safe areas, the provision of evacuation chairs or other mobility aids, and the assignment of a designated individual to assist in the evacuation. PEEPs are a critical component of building safety and emergency preparedness, as they help ensure that all building occupants can evacuate safely in an emergency, regardless of any disabilities or mobility issues they may have. Building owners and managers are often required by law to provide PEEPs for individuals with disabilities and ensure that all building occupants know the plan and how to implement it in an emergency. PEEPs will be completed by the Building Safety Managers.

A General Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEP) is a plan that is designed to help ensure the safe and orderly evacuation of a building in the event of an emergency. A GEEP typically includes procedures and guidelines for evacuating the building during a fire, natural disaster, or other crisis.

A typical GEEP includes the following key components:

Evacuation routes: A GEEP will identify the primary and secondary evacuation routes that occupants should use to evacuate the building safely. These routes are typically marked with signs and other visual cues to help guide occupants to safety.

Emergency alarms and notifications: A GEEP will describe the types of alarms and notifications that will be used to alert occupants to an emergency, as well as the procedures for activating these alarms and notifications.

Assembly points: A GEEP will identify one or more designated assembly points where occupants should gather after evacuating the building. These assembly points are typically located safely from the building and are easily identifiable.

Building-specific procedures: A GEEP will include any building-specific procedures necessary for a safe evacuation, such as the use of emergency stairwells, the location of fire extinguishers and other emergency equipment, and the procedures for shutting down critical building systems.

Communication protocols: A GEEP will describe the communication protocols that will be used to relay information about the emergency to building occupants, including the use of public address systems, emergency notifications, and other forms of communication.

What we expect back from residents

Encouraging residents to keep their buildings safe is essential to building safety. Residents can play an active role in identifying and reporting hazards that may impact the safety of the building and in ensuring their safety and that of their neighbours.

Residents will be encouraged to assess the needs of their household, including any vulnerable family members, such as young children or those with disabilities. They should also familiarise themselves with the emergency action plan for their building so they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

It is important to note that the fire service no longer recommends providing fire safety equipment, such as fire blankets and extinguishers, within residents' homes or communal areas. In addition, individuals need proper training on using such equipment effectively, which may worsen the situation. Instead, residents are advised to close all fire doors to contain the fire and follow the emergency action plan for their building.

In summary, by empowering residents to play an active role in building safety and by providing them with the necessary information and resources to protect themselves and their neighbours, we can help to create safer and more secure communities.

Action in the event of a fire

It is essential to follow the established evacuation procedures and guidelines to ensure a safe and efficient evacuation as per the fire action notice, which may be "Stay Put " or " Full evacuation.

In the event of an emergency evacuation as instructed by the London Fire Brigade or if there is a fire in the residents' home, residents should evacuate by walking to the nearest and safest exit or stairway.

Residents should familiarise themselves with their building's plan and the assembly point or the place of safety outside the building.

They should avoid using lifts or elevators during a fire alarm activation as they may malfunction or become trapped. Additionally, residents should close any fire doors behind them to help prevent the spread of fire and smoke.

Once outside the building, residents should move away from the building to a safe location that is a sufficient distance away from the building. The front of the building may be where firefighters and emergency vehicles will be located, so keeping their access to the building open is essential.

If an incident occurs on the upper floors and glass is blown out of the windows, the area below is considered a hazard zone where serious personal injury may occur. Therefore, it is essential for residents to avoid remaining in or near this area and to follow instructions provided by emergency responders.

Finally, once residents have evacuated the building, they should only re-enter once instructed by the fire brigade or other emergency responders. This helps to ensure their safety and prevents them from entering a potentially hazardous situation.