

City-wide Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy for High Rise Buildings



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Introduction

Following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, the government introduced new fire safety rules, including new rules for high-rise blocks of flats that are at least 18 metres or seven storeys high. The government also created a new body, the Building Safety Regulator (BSR), to enforce these rules.

We know that maintaining the safety, security, and cleanliness of every block is most effective when landlords, residents and other agencies work together and communicate fully to all play an important role in making our buildings and your homes, the safest they can be.

The Hull City Council building safety resident engagement strategy clearly outlines our approach to delivering fully accessible communications, ensuring all residents are aware of key building safety messages, know how they can raise building safety issues with us, and remain at the heart of decision making about their homes.

This strategy acts as a city-wide approach to provide consistency and confidence, which will inform the creation of bespoke individual engagement strategies for each high-rise residential building, based on the needs of the residents.

The high-rise residential buildings that are supported by this strategy are:

- Bathurst Street x 2
- Bayswater Court
- Cambridge Street x 2
- Denaby Court
- Gatwick House
- Great Thornton Street x 3
- Lindsey Place
- Melville Street x 2
- Muswell Court
- New Michael Street
- Padstow House
- Valiant Drive x 3

Each block will receive information specific to their setting, including fire safety procedures, building contact details, how to contact the building safety team and how to raise concerns, engage or make a complaint. These will be delivered directly to every resident aged 16 and over of each block.

Background

We are responsible for managing and maintaining 19 high-rise blocks of flats, containing 1,469 homes.



One of these blocks is classed as providing “sheltered support” - accommodation for residents receiving additional support from the Sheltered Warden Service to help them live independently.

There are 102 leaseholders living in these high-rise homes across the city. The blocks house a diverse range of residents, ranging from single people or couples in 1-bedroom homes to 2-bedroom flats with families with children. This changes over time, as do people's needs and circumstances.

The average age of a high-rise tenant is 53, with a broad range of ages across the city. 11% of residents are aged 30 or under, 16% aged 31 to 40, 18% aged 41 to 50, 22% aged 51 to 60, 17% 61 to 70, 9% aged 71 to 80 and 7% aged 81 or over. Residents are diverse, 9.3% have a disability or impairment of some kind and 24.8% are of non-White-British ethnicity.

We visit all residents at least once every three years (more often for those who may need our support), so that we can identify any issues and help make sure everyone's tenancy is sustainable.

The blocks are spread across a variety of communities and are of various construction types. We continue to invest in our high-rise homes with an annual investment programme of £5m to undertake a range of improvement works. This includes improvements to the fabric, safety, and energy efficiency of the buildings to improvements within tenants' homes.

What you have told us so far

During the Autumn of 2022 over 431 residents responded to a survey on how they felt about building safety, what they wanted to know more about and how they would like to be communicated with in the future.

Monthly we meet with residents of the Multi – Storey Living Group and hold regular open meetings at high rise sites.

We learnt from our conversations with you that:

- building safety for residents is not just about fire safety, it's about our whole approach to managing the building, people's homes, the communal areas and the quality of the building as a whole as a place to live
- the 'Stay Put Policy' - view from residents that this needs more explaining. For example, explaining more about the high standard of fire doors on people's homes and how these can help prevent the spread of fire
- we need to use different ways to communicate and engage. Not everyone is online, and those that are may not always open emails or look at website content. They also supported more information in pictorial form and in Plain English to help those with lower literacy.

We thank all those residents who took part in our survey, attended meetings and events, your feedback has helped us set the priorities for this strategy.



Strategy aims

The aims of this strategy are to ensure all residents:

- feel safe in their homes
- know how to report any problems about their home or any part of the building which may impact on their or their neighbour's safety
- know what to do in the event of an incident in the block where they live.
- have a clear understanding of our responsibilities as the building owner, and their responsibilities to ensure their homes remain safe
- are aware of the ways in which they can get involved and influence building safety and the services to high-rise buildings we provide
- know how we have actioned or responded to their feedback
- are communicated with in a way that residents find easy to access and understand
- know how to make a complaint if they feel their concerns are not being listened to

To deliver this strategy, we have committed to:

- be open, honest, and transparent in what we do to build resident trust
- understand the communication needs and preferences of residents
- produce communications that are clear and accessible, using appropriate channels and methods that are timely and consistent
- listen to residents, effectively responding to their concerns, acting, and learning from their complaints
- undertake meaningful engagement with all residents - whether on a local individual block issue, or a more common issue for all blocks, so that residents are clear on how they can influence the safety of their building, where we are in the decision-making process and how your feedback is being used

Building Safety Team

Hull City Councils Building Safety Team is responsible for the management and improvement of safety in all of Hulls high rise flats.

To achieve this the team:

- Works in partnership with the local area High Rise Tenancy Management team, who create Evacuation Plans for residents that require them
- Routinely inspects buildings fire and safety assets
- Works in partnership with the local fire and rescue service
- Produce an annual fire safety leaflet in consultation with a city-wide resident group to communicate important safety messages
- Ensures the website information is fully up to date and relevant
- Communicates in block newsletters
- Tailors letters and information for individual tenants based on their needs



Working alongside all teams within the housing service, they ensure activities by the wider authority do not affect the safety of the buildings, and any improvements or maintenance activities are completed in full partnership with the team.

The Area Housing Team carry out home visits with our high-rise residents to help them better understand how to live safely and inform them on what to do in emergency situations, such a fire in their property or any other part of their building. Full support is given to residents where needed depending on their own situations and how disabilities or any other reasons may affect their abilities in the case of evacuations to create Evacuation Plans. This information is shared with the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service with the resident's permission to aid any emergency situation.

Keeping homes and buildings safe

A planned and consistent schedule of maintenance, repairs and replacement is carried out in all blocks to maintain their safety. These include fire doors, smoke detectors, firefighting equipment, smoke vents and emergency lighting. Routine checks are also done on door entry systems, lifts, electrical systems and communal areas.

Housing Facilities Operatives undertake daily inspections of all communal areas, identifying any repairs or damage and ensuring communal areas are kept sterile and free from fire safety risks or hazards.

Our blocks are built using passive fire measures, meaning the combined features of ceilings, walls, doors and floors greatly limit the spread of fire and smoke. As a result of the effectiveness of this method, which gives the fire service more time to tackle situations, we advise residents to use the "stay put" policy by remaining in their homes as long as it safe to do so or instructed otherwise, if the fire is within your flat you are advised to evacuate closing doors behind you.

We regularly advise and encourage residents to keep up to date with safety measures in their buildings and we provide them with information on:

- What to do in the case of a fire
- Improvement works taking place
- Fire risk assessments

Our approach to accessible communications

By engaging and consulting with our residents, we now know more about how they want to be involved with and informed about safety in their homes and blocks.

Using home visits with every resident, phone calls, face to face discussions and feedback from the Multi storey living focus groups, we can better understand our residents' preferred methods of communication.

To do this we will:

- engage with residents to explore more effective methods of communication



- re-enforce messaging on areas identified by residents as lacking, such as “stay put”, waste disposal and the importance of resident’s roles and responsibilities
- create regular direct hard copy communication (leaflets and newsletters)
- use text messages and email, for those residents choosing this communication method. at least four times a year.
- use our website and social media (Facebook, X and Instagram)
- use communal noticeboards
- co-produce and co-brand information about building safety and fire prevention advice with support from the local Fire and Rescue Service, as a trusted source of information
- provide information in different formats for easier reading or in other community languages on request
- use QR codes for residents to access online content, and find more information
- share information with any tenants, residents, or community group active in surrounding communities
- share information with colleagues in teams who deal with resident enquiries, as well as our wider service colleagues
- hold drop ins, surgeries, or other meetings with residents, making use of communal rooms and local community facilities
- share information with and encourage the help and participation of block champions or other interested residents to check the cleaning standard in communal areas
- support and encourage group activity in our Sheltered block, helping bring residents together, enabling us to communicate with many residents in their social spaces
- share information on the community TVs currently installed at Bayswater, Great Thornton Street blocks 1,2 & 3

Resident feedback and complaints

Building safety is everyone’s responsibility, and we feel resident feedback and complaints are vital in helping us improve our service and the safety of our blocks.

We will listen, learn, and improve our approach to all feedback, ensuring there are multiple methods and options for residents to engage directly with us, such as:

- inviting residents to regular inspections and meetings in relation to their block
- ensuring all staff can effectively handle any resident enquiry or complaint
- using communal areas for regular feedback surgeries
- undertake regular surveys with residents to assess how effectively we are communicating and gather satisfaction data
- attend any resident groups, committees or public meeting if requested to do so
- providing help and support to any resident groups

We will publish results related to customer satisfaction in regular resident newsletters, reports and communications.



As well as resident feedback, complaints play an important role in improving the safety of our high-rise buildings. All residents must have the ability and information needed to make a complaint if they feel their needs have not been met or have any concerns regarding safety in their home or block.

Complaints will be treated as opportunities to learn and improve and more analysis of these complaints will be undertaken to identify issues and trends, giving us the opportunity to communicate directly with other residents who may also be affected by these.

We will publish results related to complaints in regular resident newsletters, reports and communications.

Measuring success

We will evaluate the success of our ongoing action following the release of this strategy and our plans moving ahead by monitoring:

- Tenant satisfaction and safety levels via surveys
- Our performance
- Number of residents interacting with engagement
- Complaints – number and nature of complaints received
- Number of fire or safety related incidents or service call outs

With involvement from residents, this strategy will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect resident feedback, best practice and new requirements set by the Building Safety Regulator.

This strategy will also be reviewed following any large-scale change in circumstances that could affect the function of the strategy, such as:

- large tenant turnover
- large refurbishments
- reduction or low engagement
- a major incident
- change in legislation



