

Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy 2022-25



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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Note

This strategy document should be read in conjunction with our **Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy** which details how we will engage with residents in the borough using the six standards of our Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC). These standards underpin our boroughwide approach to engagement and provide the foundation from which to build engagement with residents in our tower blocks, also known as 'higher risk and complex buildings'.

Preface

The Building Safety Act 2022 introduces a new regulatory system for the management of building safety in 'higher risk buildings', meaning buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or seven or more storeys, containing at least two flats. The most significant of the new requirements on landlords is the creation of the new Accountable Person role, with the following specific responsibilities:

- They will implement a single residents' engagement strategy for the whole building (this will be agreed in cooperation with the other Accountable Persons)
- They will establish and operate a system for the investigation of residents' complaints.
- They will be responsible for applying for registration and certification for the whole building, including bringing together a single safety case report.
- They will be responsible for displaying information about the most recent building assessment certificate, compliance notices and details of those responsible for managing building safety for the building.
- Where a special measures order has been made, they must ensure that no building assessment certificate relating to the building is displayed in the building.
- They will take the lead responsibility for coordinating the golden thread of safety information for the building, keeping the golden thread updated and ensuring it is accurate and accessible; and

- they will establish and operate a system for mandatory occurrence reporting.

Residents' engagement strategy

For the first time, it will be a statutory requirement for a resident engagement strategy to be produced for each higher risk building. The key purpose of this strategy will be for residents aged 16 and over (and non-resident owners) to be encouraged to participate in the making of building safety decisions. The strategy will need to set out:

- what information will be provided to residents,
- what decisions they will be consulted on,
- how residents' views will be taken into account; and
- how the appropriateness of consultation undertaken will be measured.

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Our Strategy

As required by the Building Safety Act, in Hillingdon we have nominated the Head of Repairs, Engineering, Planned Works and Facilities Management as the Principal Accountable Person who will be supported by a second Accountable Person, the Head of Housing Management. They are our lead officers for producing this engagement strategy, in partnership with residents, to promote their participation in the decision-making process about the building safety risks in their buildings. Every resident living in high risk and complex buildings will be provided with an accessible copy of this strategy document.

As required by the Building Safety Act, this strategy details

- what information will be provided to residents
- what decisions they will be consulted on
- how residents' views will be taken into account; and
- how the appropriateness of consultation undertaken will be measured.

Our strategy for engagement will ensure that residents understand the safety of their building that is required from the golden thread of information set out in the Building Safety Act. The golden thread is both:

- the information about a building that allows someone to understand a building and keep it safe, and
- the information management to ensure the information is accurate, easily understandable, can be accessed by those who need it and is up to date.

We will also ensure we are meeting all requirements of the 2021 Fire Safety Act and keeping abreast of all new government publications and consultations including the consultation on emergency evacuations and information sharing between building owners and the fire and rescue services.

Understanding our residents

The success of this strategy depends on how well we know our residents living within our high rise and complex buildings. This means that we need to understand the needs of every household living within these buildings in order to prepare appropriate evacuation procedures for them, but in particular our disabled and vulnerable residents. **We will do this as a commitment to good practice, even if guidance from government does not require it.**

Our approach should be founded not on the principle of us telling our residents that they are safe, but rather about asking them if they feel safe. We should not say, “we are doing this, therefore you are safe” we must ask residents the question “do you feel safe in your home and your building?”

Our success also relies on us regularly reviewing fire safety information and the methods we use to do this. We must also build trust with our residents by co-creating our engagement strategies with them and underpinning these with the standards of the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC).

A key priority of our action and communications plans is to conduct surveys of our residents in our high rise and complex buildings to understand the needs of their household. Residents will need reassurance that their data is secure and being used only for building safety purposes, although it should also be used to update household tenancy records.

We will also work with other key stakeholders and trusted community partners in the borough to ensure we hear the voices of the residents in these properties and engage successfully with them.

Our aim is that over time, each high rise or complex building in the borough, is represented either by block champions or by residents’ associations. The deployment of digital engagement tools will create new opportunities for engagement, particularly with younger tenants.

Information to be provided to residents

It is our intention that residents will have confidence in the safety of their building and will have a greater say in how their buildings are being managed through the information that we provide to them.

Our information will support our residents to understand how they can be involved in this engagement strategy. It will also tell them how they can request further information about the safety measures in place for their building from the Principal Accountable Person, where information is not already published on a dedicated section of the council's website. We will also signpost our residents to additional information such as fire safety information available from the Housing Ombudsman and how we are meeting the requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021.

A report by the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group in March 2021 found that

“personalised letters had the most positive impact on residents’ knowledge, understanding and recollection of fire safety measures in the home, regardless of their stated preference of communication method”

Information that we provide to residents of high risk and complex buildings will inform them:

- about the safety of their building and we will comply with mandatory requirements to provide this.
- of our complaints procedures so that if we fail to comply, they can access the complaints procedure easily; this demonstrates our commitment to transparency and openness. Residents can hold their Accountable Persons to account as each Principal Accountable Person will be required to operate a complaints system. Where complaints cannot be resolved, they can be heard by the regulator.
- that there are new duties on residents requiring them to play a significant part in the safety of their building. There are three clear obligations on residents:

- They must not act in a way that creates a significant risk of a building safety risk materialising,
- They must not interfere with or damage a 'relevant safety item' (which is defined as anything forming common parts that is intended to improve building safety).
- To comply with an Accountable Person's request for information that is reasonably required to enable them to perform their duties.

We will also inform residents that under the Building Safety Act, to ensure the safety of all residents, our Accountable Persons have been given the power to ensure compliance with these obligations.

If a resident does not meet their obligations, the Accountable Person can issue a contravention notice. An Accountable Person may also require access to a resident's premises, strictly to fulfil their duties relating to building safety or to determine whether a resident's duty has been contravened.

Our Accountable Persons will be proportionate in ensuring residents' compliance with their duties. However, if a resident does not agree with the Accountable Person's use of a contravention notice or request for access they can refuse to comply.

If the Accountable Person applies to the County Court, the resident will be able to set out their position to an independent judge. They are also able to formally raise an issue concerning the Accountable Person's actions through the Accountable Person's complaints process and escalate it to the Building Safety Regulator.

In line with best practice, a personal letter will be sent to all properties within our high rise and complex buildings containing all of the above information.


In addition, we will produce **fire safety cards**, similar to flight safety cards given to passengers in aeroplanes as an integral part of the Building Safety Information Packs issued to residents.

These cards will use simple infographics to highlight key elements of fire safety both in the home and in communal areas. They will be given to **all** new tenants as part of their new tenancy sign-up pack and information will be shared with all residents (tenants and leaseholders) as part of our commitments in our Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) living in communal and shared buildings in the borough.

We will co-design these with our residents and produce them in the most commonly used languages upon request.

The report by the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group used these graphics as part of its project and we will use this as a template to develop a Hillingdon version with our residents.

We will also produce one for communal areas and place these on noticeboards as constant, visual reminders to residents of how to prevent fires and how to react in the event of a fire.

There is also extensive information available from the London Fire Brigade (LFB)  www.london-fire.gov.uk which we will share with our residents including a home fire safety guide and an escape plan for blocks of flats.

The website also contains information about latest incidents and other activities by LFB within the borough of Hillingdon.

We will share links to the LFB website with our residents.



Decisions that we will consult on

We recognise that residents do not want to be consulted on every decision and would rather be consulted on decisions that are relevant to them. We will target our consultation to achieve this and ensure that it is residents living in our high rise and complex buildings that are engaging with us through this strategy.

We are committed to increasing engagement in these properties through our Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) and will not use other engaged residents as substitutes for this authentic customer voice. It is obvious that other residents will not understand the experiences of living in these specific types of [high rise] properties, therefore cannot genuinely represent this segment of our residents.

Residents will be involved at every phase of our decision-making processes on the services that we provide to these properties and to do this we will seek feedback at every stage of the customer journey. This will help us to gain a better understanding of where we need to direct our resources and attention. We will:

- implement more transactional surveys.
- conduct more frequent consultations with residents.
- use feedback and engagement activities as information gathering opportunities and not just box-ticking exercises.

How residents' views will be heard

Following our general tenant and leaseholder engagement strategy, we will take account of the views of or residents in our high rise and complex buildings, as follows:

- Methods will be resident-led with their preferences laying the foundations for our approaches, but we will aim to be modern, agile and responsive to meet their needs.
- We will incorporate methods such as:
 - in person meetings with key staff
 - residents' associations
 - estate walkabouts
 - digital participation e.g. social media, customer feedback
 - estate or block surgeries
 - estate or block champions
 - environmental projects such as Better Neighbourhoods.
- We will gather residents' views using social media platforms such as Facebook and X.
- We will provide translation and other accessibility services on request.

How we will measure the appropriateness of our consultation

Progress will be measured by monitoring and evaluating:

- residents' understanding of the ways they can take part and influence decisions.
- the support and resources provided for residents to take part, and
- resident satisfaction with services provided by survey results.

The council's Residents' Services Select Committee will receive an annual report for this three-year strategy for engagement, which will provide an update on the implementation of these recommendations, further actions, and continued direction of travel, supported by the latest data on resident engagement and feedback.

This annual report will also include an assessment of the impact that the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) is making in the borough to improve engagement between residents and the council.

Our annual report will include detailed information about our engagement with residents living in high rise and complex buildings.