



# Resident Engagement Strategy 2021



## City of Lincoln Resident Engagement Strategy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 This is the City of Lincoln Council's (CoLC) first Building Safety - Resident Engagement Strategy. The strategy is valid at the time of publication but may change as and when new legislation comes into place.

1.2 Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower a new regulatory regime is being introduced for High-Risk Residential Buildings, the principles within this strategy apply to any CoLC residential building with communal space. 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.

1.3 This strategy will lay out the ways in which the CoLC will respond to legislation but also define success, in terms of tangible response to this activity from our residents.

### 2. Objectives

2.1 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.

2.2 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. Background

3.1 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. 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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 focused team and we will be reviewing these recommendations and overseeing all required remedial work to our buildings. The draft Building Safety Bill was published in July 2020 and consultation on the bill was completed in June 2021 when it was introduced to parliament. The timetable for the introduction of new legislation and implementation of the recommendations has not yet been decided.

## 4. Actions

4.1 We are actively reviewing the proposed requirements in the High-Risk Residential Building's (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 requirement changes. We aspire to be at the forefront of organisations addressing the building safety crisis but are also mindful of clarity and value-for-money.

4.2 This strategy explains how we will engage and involve residents about the safety of their homes. It doesn't include specific building safety information about individual homes.

We have worked with staff, councilors and the LTP to develop this strategy through focus groups and wider consultation. The next step is to develop this plan with residents via various means such as text, email, paper survey and focus groups. 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 where required, 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.

## 5. Understanding our responsibilities

5.1 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 of 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.

## 6. The Plan

6.1 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.

### 7. Information and understanding

7.1 We will use a range of ways to communicate and engage 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 up sessions to talk about building safety
- Video

7.2 We will also ensure we cater for residents at our sheltered and grouped housing 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 on an annual basis (or more frequently if required).

7.3 For residents at our 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.

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

We will encourage residents to get involved in making decisions relating to the safety of their building. If residents would like to get involved in building safety matters, then contact the Resident Involvement team who will welcome their input. Residents can contact them directly at [LTP@Lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:LTP@Lincoln.gov.uk).

7.4 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.

### 8. Clarity and accessibility of information

8.1 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.

8.2 As standard practice we can 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.

8.3 This will be further confirmed during engagement activity with resident focus groups.

8.4 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.

8.5 We will follow the legal framework through FOI and DPA to deal with requests for information about building safety.. Within this process we will provide guidelines to enable vulnerable residents to nominate an advocate, caregiver or representative who can request more detailed information on their behalf.

8.6 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.

8.7 We will not release draft reports, which are likely to be subject to change but will aim to release information as quickly as possible and subject to the legal framework. Residents who have a concern about building safety can contact our Customer Services Team (who will be trained to recognise building safety issues) who will arrange for a CoLC officer to deal with this concern. Any resident who is not happy with the outcome and wishes to escalate the issue can submit a complaint.

8.8 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 Schemes who report repairs directly to their Independent Living Coordinator can continue to report any building safety concerns directly to them.

## Appendix 1

8.9 Home safety information should be provided when residents move in. At the start of every tenancy or lease we will provide a fire safety note 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.

8.10 Leaseholders will also need to be consulted and involved as part of the engagement strategy, as they have separate and unique needs compared to council tenants. Therefore, it is important for leaseholders to be fully involved in the process.

8.11 The CoLC carry out building safety compliance work and compile reports on compliance, which can be provide upon request. Below is an example of the types of compliance info a resident might want sight of and the recommended time frames for compliance activity.

| <b>Compliance test</b>  | <b>Frequency</b>  |
|---|---|
| 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   |

## 9. Collaboration

9.1 Residents are expected to guide 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 in accordance with their tenancy and leasehold agreements. We will consider taking legal action where tenants and leaseholders don't provide access. We will seek at recovering the costs of such legal action directly from the resident and leaseholder.

9.3 Due to the risk posed when evacuating in the event of a fire or other emergency, we have a zero-tolerance policy for residents leaving possessions in communal areas. We will need residents' collaboration to achieve this.

9.4 Within our sheltered schemes we follow specialised housing guidance and undertake people-centered risk assessments to evaluate the needs of individual residents. We will need residents coloration to achieve this. 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).

9.5 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. This information is held on site in a premises information box which the fire brigade has access to in case of an emergency. We cannot keep track of who is moving in or out of residents' homes or new vulnerabilities (that affect a person's ability to self-rescue to a place of safety) that may develop over time. For this reason, it is residents' responsibility to inform us if they, or 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.

### **10. Residents' part to play**

10.1 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. Do we need to provide a whistle-blowing service for tenants who can report neighbours anonymously for acting dangerously.

10.2 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. They should close all fire doors to contain the fire and follow the action plan for their specific 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.

10.3 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.

10.4 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.

### **11. Action to take in the event of fire**

11.1 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 e.g., 30 or 60 minutes. This limits the spread of fire, smoke and heat. One of the key safety measures to aid compartmentation is fire doors.

11.2 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. If you do, we will consider taking action against you under your Tenancy Agreement or leaseholder agreement. The Fire Service advise that it is best for residents to keep fire doors closed to contain a fire and never risk 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.

### **12. Understanding 'stay put' and when it should be used**

12.1 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 rather than trying to evacuate, which may result in more danger. Residents should only evacuate if told to do so by the fire service, if the fire starts in their home, or if a resident is affected by heat or smoke from a fire not in their home.