

Resident Engagement Strategy

A commitment to Building Safety



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Resident Engagement Strategy: A Commitment to Building Safety

INTRODUCTION

Stockport Homes want residents of high-rise buildings to be at the heart of decision making about where they live. This document sets out Stockport Homes' commitment to building safety following the guidance set out by the Government to ensure all housing providers have a Resident Engagement Strategy for building safety in place. It aims to ensure that residents:

- Know who they can speak to about their safety and sets out the responsibilities between the landlord (Stockport Homes) and residents.
- Have a variety of opportunities to speak to staff about any concerns or issues.
- Feel confident to hold Stockport Homes to account and understand any communications sent to them relating to building safety.

Many residents have contributed to this document by giving their views on keeping safe at home and how they want their landlord to communicate with them about building safety.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

After the tragic fire at Grenfell in 2017, Stockport Homes wanted to ensure it was at the forefront of building safety ensuring that residents living in a high-rise building feel safe where they live. Following the incident, Dame Judith Hackitt was commissioned to review building regulations and fire safety and put forward 53 recommendations for change. Her report was titled "Building a Safer Future" and has prompted new statutory requirements to be met, which are:

- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper

These changes highlight the importance of residents feeling safe in their home and ensure that their views and concerns are listened to and acted upon. The key areas of change are:

- Clearer responsibilities for individuals and organisations managing high-rise buildings
- A stronger voice and better information for residents
- Tougher enforcement for when things go wrong
- Greater oversight by the Regulator to ensure landlords are accountable to residents in an open and transparent way.



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LOCAL CONTEXT

Stockport Homes has an excellent track record of investing in fire and building safety measures within the housing stock. Since its inception, Stockport Homes has fully complied with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO). Communal areas of multi-occupied buildings have a Fire Risk Assessment carried out at regular intervals.

Stockport Homes was the first housing organisation in Greater Manchester, and one of only a few nationally, to undertake the more intrusive Type Four Fire Risk Assessments. This was completed before the Grenfell tragedy.

CUSTOMER CONSULTATION

Over 400 customers that expressed an interest in Building Safety were consulted on the Resident Engagement Strategy. Customers said that the strategy was informative, self-explanatory and easy to read and understand. Customers said the strategy demonstrates the excellent work that has been done by Stockport Homes and the document helps them feel safe. One customer said “it reassures me to know that the safety of these blocks all over the Borough are constantly being assessed”. All customers comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the strategy.

This document is written based on resident feedback and information.

A glossary has been created to help readers understand some of the technical phrases used in Fire and Building Safety in this document.

Glossary

Assets – Anything that fulfils a purpose and/or has a financial value, examples of assets in respect of building safety are fire doors, sprinkler systems and emergency lighting.

Capital Programme (Investment) – A list of budgets allocated to capital investment projects that are intended to build, improve, maintain or develop an asset.

Compartments – One or more rooms, spaces or storeys within a building that are constructed to prevent the spread of fire to or from another part of the same building.

High rise residential building – A building consisting of two or more dwellings with a height of 18 metres or more, or at least seven storeys (whichever is reached first.)

Partnership agreement – An agreement between Stockport Homes and GMFRS (Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service) setting out obligations each party will commit to in the interest of keeping residents and fire fighters safe.

The Regulator – A body within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who will oversee the safety of people in and around buildings and improve building standards by imposing new standards to be met.

Type 4 Fire Risk Assessment – A fire risk assessment that covers not only the common parts of a building but also living areas such as flats, these inspections will also include intrusive or destructive sampling.



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STOCKPORT HOMES BUILDING SAFETY TEAM – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Building Safety Team was created in 2020 as part of Stockport Homes' continued investment in high-rise building safety. The team's role is to oversee and routinely check the safety measures in all 22 high rise buildings currently managed by Stockport Homes.

The team achieve this using the following methods:

- Home visits specifically for building and fire safety
- Routine inspections of blocks and fire safety assets
- Block specific information booklets for residents
- Sharing information on Stockport Homes website
- Including information in new tenant sign up packs
- Articles in resident newsletters
- Dedicated letters and tailored information to residents
- Information on electronic notice boards in each block
- Partnership working with Greater Manchester Fire Service

The team play a significant role in how the blocks are managed by liaising with all teams at Stockport Homes to ensure the wider activities of the organisation do not compromise the overall safety of the building. Any improvement, maintenance or management activities within the buildings take place in partnership with the Building Safety Team.

The team will carry out home visits with high rise residents to discuss how to live safely in their building and what to do in the event of a fire, in either their property or another part of the building.

Where needed, residents are supported to help keep themselves safe, particularly if they have a disability or reason that may affect their ability to self-evacuate. In these circumstances, with residents' agreement, this information is shared with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service in the form of a simple colour coded chart of the building. This allows the fire service to easily and quickly determine the location of residents who cannot self-evacuate and assist them where required. The team will regularly be in touch with these residents to assess whether their situation has changed and update the fire service accordingly. Any new residents will be visited approximately three months after they move in.



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KEEPING YOUR HOME AND BUILDING SAFE

High rise buildings are kept safe through a planned regime of maintenance, servicing, repairs and replacement of assets and components within them. Some of the key fire safety related assets include sprinklers, fire doors, smoke detection, firefighting equipment, emergency lighting and smoke ventilation windows. Other assets that have routine checks and inspections are lifts, communal door entry systems, electrical systems and various plant, storage, and communal areas.

When assets such as fire doors or smoke detection are not performing as they were designed then this normally results in a repair or replacement. Where repairs are becoming too frequent on the same asset, they cannot be repaired or there are several in need of replacement, then they may be included within the Capital Programme. More extensive work would be budgeted and planned for and be delivered as a project by Stockport Homes' Investment Team.

Walls, floors, ceilings, and doors are passive fire measures, their characteristics mean that together they form compartments that limit the spread of fire and smoke. They are designed to contain fire and smoke at their source for a long enough period to allow the fire service to extinguish the fire. It is this design that means residents are safe to remain in their home so long as it is not affected by fire, smoke, or heat or unless otherwise instructed by the fire service.

Residents are encouraged to request information about the safety measures in their building. The Stockport Homes website holds a variety of information about living in a high-rise building including:

- What to do in the event of a fire.
- Fire Risk Assessments
- Servicing and maintenance performance
- Planned improvement works

COMPETENCY OF STAFF AND CONTRACTORS

All Stockport Homes staff and contractors can demonstrate their competency to fulfil their roles when working in a high-rise building through a variety of training and accreditation schemes. The Building Safety Team will continue to work in partnership with the local fire service to maintain knowledge and upkeep of the partnership agreement.



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RESIDENTS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The building safety reform means that there is an emphasis on ensuring residents of high-rise buildings trust their landlord and feel safe in their home. As a landlord, Stockport Homes will ensure homes and high-rise blocks are safe by meeting all the correct regulations and standards.

Residents are required to support Stockport Homes in meeting their obligations by:

- Living safely in their flat and not doing anything that puts other residents at risk, for example, not making alterations to the flat entrance fire door without permission.
- Knowing what to do in the event of a fire in their property or another part of the building.
- Contacting the Building Safety Team if residents' living circumstances change meaning a resident may not be able to self-evacuate in the event of a fire.
- Checking smoke detectors in their home are working at least once a month.
- Being respectful of neighbours and keeping the space outside the flat clear.
- Using the bin chutes safely to dispose of rubbish and contacting the caretaking team if help is needed to dispose of bulky items.
- Reporting any issues to Stockport Homes, particularly if a resident feels it is a fire safety concern.

Further information on residents' responsibilities is detailed in the Resident Building Safety Booklet.

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

In August 2021, Stockport Homes consulted with residents living in high-rise blocks about how they wanted to get involved in building safety. Consultation methods included visiting residents at home, telephone calls, text messaging and face-to-face contact at "Connecting Communities" events. Resident's feedback has been used to develop an annual engagement plan, offering residents multiple opportunities to speak to Stockport Homes about any concerns or issues about building safety, and Residents Building Safety Booklets, tailored to each block with a paper copy issued to every resident. The booklets are a customer focussed version of this document and hold a variety of information including the engagement opportunities specific to their building, useful contacts, how to contact the Building Safety Team and how to make a complaint.

Residents were clear about their preferred methods of communication, particularly when important safety related information needs to be communicated. Stockport Homes has used residents' feedback to develop service standards for communicating building safety information to residents. These are detailed in the Resident's Building Safety booklet. A copy can be found in Appendix 1.



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BUILDING SAFETY RESIDENT'S PANEL

The Building Safety Resident's Panel is made up of resident representatives from the 22 high rise buildings in Stockport. Residents have designed the content, membership, and accountability of the panel.

The aim of the Panel is to review building safety information and resident feedback on a quarterly basis. Panel members will examine general safety related performance information and resident feedback to ensure standards are being met. The Panel will also have a good understanding of any planned work that can impact on the safety of the buildings.

The Panel will link into the Stockport Homes' governance structure and report their findings, recommendations, and concerns to the Customer Focus Sub-Committee of the Board annually. The Panel have the remit to challenge Stockport Homes and raise any concerns about the safety of residents living in high rise buildings.

The Building Safety Residents Panel will monitor the delivery of the engagement and communication standards for building safety and any associated outcomes or actions. The Panel can challenge if Stockport Homes do not meet the standards and ask to see evidence of remedial action or change to address where standards are not met. The Panel have the power to call a "notice to act," the definition of which is written in the Building Safety Resident's Panel Terms of Reference¹. In addition, the Chair of the Panel can speak directly to the Executive Director of Operations.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS TO BE INVOLVED

Residents who want to apply to be part of the Building Safety Residents Panel will be asked to attend two mandatory training courses. This will ensure they have a basic knowledge of fire and building safety information and an understanding of working on a panel. Further training will be identified and provided once any skills gaps are identified.

In addition, panel members will be assigned a mentor to support them to take part in all aspects of the panel. Support provided can include IT training, confidence building or any support that the resident requires relevant to their role on the panel.

Residents who apply to be on the Panel can be loaned appropriate IT equipment to be able to attend meetings and access information. Residents who are not digital will be sent information in a format which suits their needs.

¹ [BSRP Terms of Reference FINAL.docx](#)



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RESIDENT FEEDBACK

Stockport Homes is committed to communicating well with residents and ensuring any queries or comments with regards to building safety are actioned quickly. A summary of resident's feedback, actions arising, and any associated outcomes will be published on Stockport Home's website quarterly, sent to customers who have opted in for building safety updates and shared on the digital AV screens in the communal areas in the high-rise blocks. Feedback and information are available in other formats on request as set out in the Resident's Building Safety Booklet.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

If a customer is not satisfied with the service being provided in their building, they should first bring this to the attention of the service concerned. Depending on the issue this may be any of the following services:

- Customer safety
- Investment
- Repairs
- Caretaking
- Neighbourhoods
- Concierge

Details of the numbers to contact are provided in the Resident's Building Safety Booklet.

There may also be issues directly related to building safety that a customer is not happy with such as staff conduct. These issues should be discussed with the Building Safety Team in the first instance.

How to make a complaint

Customers can contact Stockport Homes' Customer Feedback Team to talk through the issue and what resolution they would like. Stockport Homes has a two stage complaints process. The first stage is an investigation by a manager and the second stage is a review by a senior manager. Stockport Homes will always explain the outcome of a complaint to customers in writing.

Where customers have followed the complaints process and remain dissatisfied, customers can contact the Housing Ombudsman service who may undertake a review of the decisions made by Stockport Homes.

The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted through their website at

[:https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/.](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/)



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MONITORING PERFORMANCE

The Building Safety Residents' Panel will have oversight of this document and will review it annually. This is an opportunity to make changes, amendments and updates, dependant on the actions identified by the Panel at quarterly meetings.

The Panel will write and present an Annual Report of their activities to the Customer Focus Sub-Committee of the Board. The report will be published on the Stockport Homes website, along with outcomes from quarterly panel meetings.

CONCLUSION

This document is the first version of the Commitment to Building Safety between Stockport Homes and high-rise residents. It has been developed based on customer information and feedback and approved by the Building Safety Resident's Panel. The content of the document will remain under review to ensure that Stockport Homes is fully compliant with the Regulator and that the information contained meets the needs of customers. The Commitment to Building Safety and the corresponding Resident's Building Safety Booklet detail clearly how residents can approach their landlord for information, advice, and support to help keep their homes, and where they live safe.



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Appendix 1 - Resident Engagement Standards for Building Safety

These standards have been created based on customer feedback and will be monitored by the Building Safety Resident's Panel and the Building Safety Team	
Residents can attend a Building Safety 'Drop In' where they live or online at least quarterly	Four times a year
Residents can attend a safety related walkabout where they live and can inspect and comment on improvement works	Twice a year
Feedback from resident engagement activities will be summarised on the Stockport Homes website	Twice a year
The Building Safety Residents Panel meeting minutes will be published on the Stockport Homes website	Four times a year
The Building Safety Residents Panel will write and publish an annual report	Once a year
Residents will be asked if they are satisfied that their home is safe	On a visit from their Housing or Building Safety Officer
Residents will receive an updated Resident Building Safety Booklet through their door	Once a year

Building Safety Information for Residents will:

Use clear language (no jargon) and images / photos to ensure information is easy to understand.
Be shared with residents using a wide variety of communication methods to make sure residents receive important information in a way that suits them.
Be in line with the Fire Service's safety communications.
Be available in accessible formats on request and use the customers preferred form of communication

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