Building Safety Tenant Engagement Strategy - April 2024

Principal Accountable Person - Director of Housing

Responsible Person –BTS Service Manager

1. Background

The Building Safety Act 2022 introduced a new regulatory system for the management of building safety in "higher risk buildings". This relates to 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 was the creation of a new ‘accountable person’ role, with the following specific responsibilities:

- To implement a single Residents’ Engagement Strategy for the whole building (to be agreed in cooperation with the other accountable persons and residents living in the building)
- To establish and operate a system for the investigation of residents’ complaints. More information is on the council’s website under ‘compliments, comments and complaints’.
- To be responsible for applying for Registration and Certification for the whole building, including bringing together a single safety case report
- 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, ensuring that no building assessment certificate relating to the building is displayed in the building.
- Take the lead responsibility for coordinating safety information for the building, keeping everything updated and ensuring it is accurate and accessible.
- Establish and operate a system for mandatory occurrence reporting more information at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/operating-a-mandatory-occurrence-reporting-system

2. Residents' engagement strategy

A statutory requirement is for a resident engagement strategy to be produced for all the council’s high-rise buildings. A list of these buildings is in the appendix of this strategy. The key purpose of the strategy is for residents aged 16 and over (and non-resident owners) to be encouraged to participate in the making of building safety decisions.

This strategy sets out:

- What information is 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 measure

3. Resident Engagement Strategy

This strategy will ensure that residents understand how the safety of their buildings will be managed. As required by the Building Safety Act, Luton Council have Service Director Housing as the Principal Accountable Person.

Their role applies to all applicable council housing blocks managed by the Council (In this case any blocks above 7storeys or 18m high. They will work in partnership with tenants and leaseholders (residents) living in the buildings, to promote participation in the decision-making process about building safety risks.

As required by the Building Safety Act, this strategy details:

- The information that will be provided to residents.
- Details of the decisions they will be consulted upon.
- How residents' views will be considered.
- How appropriate consultation with residents will be undertaken and measured.

The council will also ensure they are meeting all requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021 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.

Every resident living in high risk and complex buildings will be provided with an accessible copy of this strategy document.

4. Understanding housing tenants and leaseholders

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

We will regularly ask residents about how safe they feel in their home and building and regularly repeat fire safety information and the methods we use to do this. Building trust with residents is key and we will work together to prioritise action and communications plans. We will also conduct surveys of residents in our high rise and complex buildings to understand the needs of their households.

Tenants can be reassured that in line with GDPR (data protection regulations, that their data is secure and alongside being used for building safety purposes, will be used to update their household tenancy records. We will also work with other key stakeholders and trusted community partners in Luton to ensure we hear the voices of all residents in the blocks and engage successfully with them. Our aim is that over time, each high rise or complex building in Luton, will be 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.

5. Information to be provided for residents.

Residents should feel confident in the safety of their building and to help facilitate this the council will ensure they have a greater say in how their buildings are being managed and the information provided to them. All residents will be informed of this Strategy and informed on how they can request further information about the safety measures in place for their building and how to contact the Accountable Person.

To increase residents' knowledge, understanding and recollection of fire safety measures in the home, we will use a wide range of consultation methods, including personalised letters, flyers, posters, events and website information.

Residents will also be signposted 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.

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

- About the safety of their building and how we comply with mandatory requirements
- Complaints procedures and how to access them. This will demonstrate our commitment to transparency and openness.

6. Resident Responsibilities

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:

1. They must not act in a way that creates a significant risk of a building safety risk materialising.
2. 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).
3. Comply with an accountable person's request for information that is reasonably required to enable them to perform their duties.
4. Comply with the Accountable Persons request to provide access where Health and Safety is concerned.

We will inform residents that under the Building Safety Act and to ensure the safety of all residents, an Accountable Persons have been appointed and given the power to ensure compliance with these obligations. Residents also have obligations to meet building safety and residents will be informed of these obligations. The accountable person may require access to a residents' home to fulfil their duties relating to building safety or to determine whether a residents' duty has been met.

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 a 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 sent to all residents (tenants and leaseholders) periodically as part of our commitments in communal and shared buildings in Luton. We will co-design these with residents.

We will produce one safety card 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 Fire Brigade which we will share with 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.

7. Decisions that we will consult upon

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. But, we are committed to increasing engagement in high rise and complex buildings and will offer a range of ways to give views to encourage participation. We will not use other engaged residents as substitutes for this local resident 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 journey. This will help us to gain a better understanding of where we need to direct our resources and attention. We will:

- Consult with residents when the strategy is issued and when any change to the document is proposed. The accountable person will ensure that all consultation is held open at a minimum for 3 weeks.
- Hold more frequent consultations with residents
- Use feedback and engagement activities as information gathering opportunities.

7. Things we may not consult upon

We don’t want to bombard resident with too much information, so much so that residents start ignoring the communications. At the same time we will agree with residents the items we will consult upon and those we will not. However there are things that due to regulations and safety issues it may not be prudent to consult as it must be done, (for example an emergency situation/repairs or recommendations made by statutory authorities). We will still inform the residents.

8. How residents' views will be heard

This Strategy is linked to housing general tenant and leaseholder engagement strategy.

We will take account of the views of or residents in our high rise and complex buildings, with resident-led preferences laying the foundations for our approach. We will aim to be modern, agile and responsive to meet resident’s needs and incorporate involvement through:

- Consultation – online, text, paper and face to face
- In person meetings with key staff
- Liaison with residents’ associations
- Estate walkabouts.

9. How we will measure 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
- Measuring resident satisfaction with services provided by survey results.

The Tenant Partnership Board will receive a regular report on progress against this strategy for engagement. This will provide an update on the implementation of these recommendations, further actions, and the continued direction of travel, supported by the latest data on resident engagement and feedback. This annual report will include an assessment of the impact that the Strategy is having on improving engagement between residents living in high rise and complex buildings with the council.

The Principle Accountable Person/Accountable Person will review this strategy every two years, after a mandatory occurrence review and after the completion of a significant material alteration to the building.

10. Complaints

Under the Building Safety Act 2022, a relevant complaint about a building safety may relate to

1. A building safety risk to a specific building
2. Performance of the Accountable Person in fulfilling its duties under the Building Safety Act.

We have an existing formal complaints process which can be accessed by anybody about the standard of service affecting residents.

Residents may use the same service to raise any specific building safety issues. We will get back to the resident on how we will address the issue.

We have a two-stage complaints process. If the tenant has exhausted both stages and still remain unsatisfied, then they can complain to the Building Safety Regulator https://www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-the-building-safety-regulator or Housing Ombudsman on https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/contact-us/

You can learn about building Safety on the following website link.

https://buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk/building-safety-regulator-making-buildings-safer/your-home-your-safety/