

Douglas House Resident Engagement Strategy



MONITORING INFORMATION

POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:

**Douglas House Resident
Engagement Strategy**

DATE APPROVED:

September 2023

EXPIRY DATE:

September 2024

OWNER:

Amanda Nicholls

JOB TITLE:

**Director of Customers and
Communities**

APPROVAL ROUTE:

Executive Management Team

Introduction and Background:

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:

- Implementation of a single Resident Engagement Strategy for the whole Douglas House building (this will be agreed in cooperation with the other Accountable Persons)
- Establishing a system for the investigation of residents' complaints.
- Application for Registration and Certification for the whole building, including bringing together a single safety case report.
- Responsibility 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, landlords must ensure that a building assessment certificate relating to the building is displayed in the building.
- Have responsibility for co-ordinating the golden thread of safety information for the building, keeping the golden thread updated and ensuring it is accurate and accessible; and
- Establish and operate a system for mandatory occurrence reporting. Residents' engagement strategy.

For the first time, it is a statutory requirement for a Resident Engagement Strategy to be produced for each higher-risk building. The key purpose of this strategy is for residents of Douglas House, aged 16 and over (and non-resident owners), to be encouraged to participate in the making of building safety decisions. The strategy sets out:

- what information will be provided to residents
- what decisions they will be consulted on
- how residents' views will be considered; and

- how the appropriateness of consultation undertaken will be measured

Scope of the Strategy:

We have initiated resident engagement activities (hosting events, paper surveys and drop-in sessions) to develop this strategy. So now, as required by the Building Safety Act 2022, this strategy details how we will continue to involve our residents so that we:-

1. Understand our residents
2. Consult on decisions we take
3. Listen and ensure our residents' views have been heard
4. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our consultation.

Strategy Statement:

This strategy is a working document and sets out how we will ensure residents are empowered to play an effective role in ensuring Douglas House is and continues to be safe. It will change to reflect the ongoing views/needs of residents.

We will achieve 'the golden thread' by making sure:

- the information about Douglas House allows all residents to understand the building and keep it safe.
- the information is accurate, easily understandable and can be accessed by those who need it and is up to date.

Teign Housing will also ensure it meets all requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and keeps 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.

As required by the Building Safety Act 2022, Teign Housing has nominated the Head of Asset Investment as the lead person who will be supported by the Health and Safety Manager and the Compliance Surveyor.

They are our lead officers responsible for producing this Resident 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 Douglas House will be provided with an accessible copy of this strategy document.

Key Principles:

1. Understanding our residents

The success of this strategy depends on how well we know all residents who live in Douglas House. This means understanding the needs of every household in order to prepare appropriate evacuation procedures for them, considering any disabilities/vulnerabilities.

Residents will be provided with the 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.

Our approach is 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 repeating fire safety information and the methods we use to do this.

We aim to build trust with our residents by co-creating our engagement strategy with them. We have, therefore, conducted resident surveys to understand the needs of their households and their preferred methods of engagement and communication.

We will also work with other key stakeholders and trusted community partners in the Teignmouth area to ensure we hear the voices of the residents in neighbouring properties and engage successfully with them. Our aim is, that, over time, Douglas House is represented either by block champions and/or a residents’ association - whatever is most appropriate for our residents. The development of digital engagement tools, such as a portal, will also create further opportunities for engagement too.

It is our intention that residents will have confidence in the safety of their building and will have a greater say in how their building is being managed through the information that we provide to them. Our information will support residents to understand how they can be involved in this 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 (Teign Housing) as well as the Accountable Persons. 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. This is echoed by most Douglas House residents when asked for their preferred method of communication.

Information that we provide to residents will inform them:

- about the safety of their building and how 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 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:
 1. that 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. to comply with an accountable person’s request for information that is reasonably required to enable them to perform their duties.

Responsibilities – Teign Housing

We will also inform residents that under the Building Safety Act 2022, to ensure the safety of all residents, our Accountable Persons have been given the power to ensure compliance with these obligations.

Teign Housing will undertake: -

- Compliance testing (electrical/gas)
- Annual fire risk assessments
- Fire door inspections (quarterly)

Responsibilities – Residents

Residents are empowered to play an effective role in making sure Douglas House is safe. They are responsible for ensuring that they do not create a hazard in their home, for example storing flammable items on their balcony, by blocking fire escapes etc. Residents

also play a key role in identifying and reporting hazards that may impact the safety of the building.

If a resident does not meet their obligations, the Accountable Persons can issue a contravention notice. An accountable person may also require access to a resident's home, 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 residents containing all the above information. In addition, we will produce fire safety cards, (like 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) annually. We will co-design these with our residents and produce them in the language and format that each resident can access.

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 the Douglas House 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 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) 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 the latest incidents and other activities by DSFRS within the Teignbridge District. We will share links to the DSFRS website with our residents.

2. Decisions that we 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 residents are engaging with us through this strategy. We are committed to increasing the engagement of residents in Douglas House 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, and therefore cannot genuinely represent this segment of our residents. Residents will be involved at every phase of our decision-making processes, and we will seek feedback at every stage of the customer journey, particularly the remediation works at Douglas House

To 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.

3. How residents' views will be heard

Following an initial survey of residents in Douglas House, we will take account of their views 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
 - ✓ drop-in surgeries
 - ✓ digital participation e.g., digital portal for Douglas House, customer feedback
 - ✓ block surgeries
 - ✓ block champions
 - ✓ environmental projects
- We will provide translation and other accessibility services on request.

4. How we will monitor and measure the effectiveness 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.

Teign's Housing's Raising Standards Committee will receive a quarterly report which will provide an update on the implementation of these recommendations, further actions which have been identified, and the continued direction of travel, supported by the latest data on resident engagement and feedback.

Quarterly reports were the most favoured option when residents at Douglas House were consulted. Residents will, therefore, also receive copies of the same report and will be invited to give us their feedback. In turn, this feedback will also be captured and acted upon. Actions will be presented in a 'you said, we did' format. This, again, is the favoured option for evidencing how the resident's voice has been acted upon.

Related Documents:

- Teign Housing's Resident Involvement Policy
- Teign Housing's Health and Safety Strategy