

Terms of Reference for the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group

The Group will seek to identify the best ways for landlords and residents to work together in making and keeping buildings safe through effective communication and engagement.

Aims

The Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group (“the Best Practice Group”) will test ways to engage effectively with residents in giving them a strong voice in an improved system of building safety. This will support the Government in taking forward the recommendations in Chapter 4 of Dame Judith Hackitt’s ‘Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety,’ and will deliver on the commitment in the Green Paper ‘A new deal for social housing’.

The principal aims of the Best Practice Group will be to:

- build on existing social sector expertise in working closely with residents;
- develop best practice in the fields of engagement and communication with residents;
- inform future policy development; and
- consider how approaches to resident engagement with regards to fire and building safety could be applied to other tenures.

The Best Practice Group will meet on a monthly basis for an initial period of six months. This arrangement will be reviewed and potentially lead to a further six month commitment.

a) The Best Practice Group will undertake to:

- i. Design and deliver pilots, aiming to provide clear objectives, success measures and tangible outputs which can realistically be implemented over the course of 6 months. These pilots will provide a range of evidence of effective good practice in communicating with residents on fire safety;
- ii. Consider the most effective methods of sharing best practice and disseminating important messages on building safety to the wider sector in order to foster a culture of resident engagement across all tenures;
- iii. Contribute towards independent advice for Ministers that draws together the learning from robust evaluation of these pilots, maximising on the range of practices and experiences from the Group members.

b) In particular, the Best Practice Group will be responsible for advising on or developing best practice for the future in relation to:

- i. Communicating critical building safety information to residents to shape the development of guidance, taking account of diverse needs;
 - ii. Ensuring residents who wish to are able to access more detailed building safety information;
 - iii. Involving residents in decision-making and the development of resident engagement strategies;
 - iv. Ensuring concerns are listened to and that robust systems for responding to safety concerns are in place; and
 - v. Considering options for how residents will be made aware of their role in ensuring their own safety and that of their neighbours.
- c) Members of the Group will seek to ensure the best interests of residents remain central and that residents are thoroughly and genuinely represented in the working of the Group.
- d) The Best Practice Group will have due consideration to work being carried out in the wider Department, particularly aiming to achieve outcomes that help to deliver effectively on the “Building a Safer Future” Implementation Plan.
- e) The Group will take account of the work of other groups such as the Residents’ Reference Panel on Building Safety in High Rise Residential Buildings, commissioned by the Department to help inform Government decisions on building safety, and the Residents Organisations Reference Group which aims to ensure that key messages on building safety are widely communicated to resident membership bodies.
- f) The Best Practice Group will report its findings to Government once the initial six-month period has concluded.

Meetings and Governance

- g) At the inaugural meeting, the Group will decide upon the time and location of the monthly meetings, and how best to incorporate flexible means of engagement.
- h) The Department will provide the secretariat and a Responsible Officer to enable the Group’s oversight of its aims and objectives.
- i) The functions of the Secretariat will be to:
 - i. Arrange and communicate venues and meeting times;
 - ii. Consult with Group members, the Chair and across the Department in developing agendas;

- iii. Issue meeting notes and monitor actions through to successful completion;
 - iv. Commission papers for the next meeting, as required by the action log;
 - v. Liaise with action owners to ensure progress is being made;
 - vi. Issue papers to Group members a minimum of 48 hours before the meeting;
 - vii. Support the Group and Chair with preparing advice for Ministers.
- j) The functions of the Responsible Officer will be to support the work of this Group to ensure it adds value and maximises reach by ensuring an aligned approach with other groups and across the Department.
- k) The aim will be that decisions are made by consensus and in agreement with the Chair. In the event of there being different views amongst the Group, the Chair will reflect these back to Ministers.
- l) Members will be invited to the Group by the Minister of State for Housing. All members invited must declare at their first meeting any personal or family interests - financial or otherwise - that might reasonably be thought to have capacity to influence their participation in the Best Practice Group.
- m) Members must be able to give the time and resource commitment to attend meetings of the Group and undertake pilots. Members must satisfy themselves they have adequate powers within their existing framework to deliver these pilots; membership of the Group will not displace these powers.
- n) Should the Group wish to vary its terms of reference, it must request to do so by agreement with the Chair, in consultation with the Department.