

BUILDING SAFETY

Resident Engagement Strategy

BOWATER



14 February 2024

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Dear Resident

As Chair of the Housing Building Safety Board, for Sandwell MBC, I have the responsibility of ensuring that the safety and well-being of residents is a core priority.

From the consultations undertaken in 2023, we have learned that building safety is not just about the risk of fire or the things that affect the building fabric. Your feedback tells us that building safety can also be about other things such as, how clean communal areas are or dealing with anti-social behaviour.

We therefore need to make sure both Council officers and contractors take a “whole team” approach to building safety, meaning you can raise a building safety concern with any team.

It is also vital that we work in partnership with residents when it comes to making decisions and resolving issues around building safety and the ongoing management of the building.

Only by listening to and acting on your views and experiences and with the co-operation of residents can we be confident that residents feel that our high-rise buildings are safe and secure.

This strategy is the start of our partnership agreement. We hope you get involved as much as you can.



Cllr Laura Rollins,
Cabinet Member for Housing & Built Environment



Why are we writing this strategy for Bowater House?

Following tragic events such as the 2017 Grenfell Fire and reforms such as the Building Safety Act 2022, it is now a statutory requirement for a resident and leaseholder engagement strategy to be produced for each high-rise building.

The key purpose of this strategy is to encourage tenants and leaseholders like you to have input in the making of decisions that affect both building safety and the management of Bowater House.

Also find out about:

- Your building and its safety features
- How the council is working to keep you and all residents of the building safe
- What you can do to keep yourself and other residents safe

If you do not understand English very well, please let us know what language(s) you speak or read, and we will make every effort to assist you.

If you require a large print version of this strategy, please contact us on **0121 569 6148**

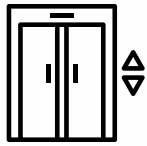




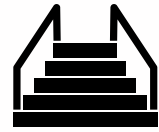
36
Flats



9
Floors



1
Lift



2
Staircases



automatic
smoke
ventilation



What you told us about living at Bowater House



- The Building Safety Team surveyed residents of Bowater House during July 2023 and we visited every flat on 4 July 2023. Residents who were not available also had the option to complete the survey on-line.
- To date, 33% (12) of households have given us their feedback. Of those responses:
 - 58% (7) of households agreed that they feel safe in their own home
 - 50% (6) of residents agreed that they feel safe within the communal areas of the block
 - Reasons why people did not feel safe include, noise, littering and strangers entering the building
 - 17% (2) of households reported that they have experienced damp and mould in their home. If you raised an issue with damp and mould and have not been contacted, please give us a call on 0121 569 6000 or inform us at <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/damp>. We appreciate your patience and cooperation
 - All households who responded confirmed they are happy with how often the smoke alarms are checked by Sandwell Council.

Your feedback makes a difference

Feedback from residents living in our high-rise buildings has helped us draft this Resident Engagement Strategy for Bowater House.

To ensure you feel safe we need to know what you are happy with in the block but also if they have any building safety concerns.



How we will involve you

We will:

- Consult you about any significant plans for the improvement of building safety
- Update you about planned improvement works if they will affect you
- We will consult you if there is a need to make a change to the strategy. You will be given 3 weeks to respond
- Ensure feedback from residents forms part of the annual review of the strategy.
- A summary of Building Safety Board minutes will be available online
- Send you a building safety newsletter every year, in either digital or in paper form - whichever is preferred
- Publish and share regular safety information on the Sandwell Council website and social media and text updates
- Hold face to face consultation every 12 months to see how safe you feel in your home
- Check with you - how you would like us to send you information

How we communicate with residents

We will use a range of ways to communicate with the residents of Bowater House about building safety

This may include:

- At the start of a tenancy
- Homecheck visits
- A change in leaseholder
- Sandwell Council website
- MySandwell portal/APP
- Notice boards
- Text
- Email
- Letter
- Face to Face visits
- Pop-up sessions to talk about building safety
- Video
- Workshops



We will give timely notice and reasonable timescales for maintenance/repair works except in the case of emergency repairs.

How else can you get involved?

- Taking part in building safety workshops
- Help set up a resident led Building Safety Group
- Become a Block Champion
- Take part in surveys
- Set up a Tenant and Residents Group
- Take part in joint inspections to review safety features of the block



Following feedback from residents we will make sure when we send information to you:

- It will be easy to read and understand.
- Wherever possible, Font size of minimum 14. Larger fonts to be provided on request
- Jargon is kept to a minimum
- Translation of documents to be made available on request
- We will include more graphics (visuals) and images

YOUR SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY

Fire safety advice

We are committed to ensuring your homes are safe places to live and take our responsibilities for doing so very seriously, but we also need your help. One of the ways you can help is by taking time to read and understand the advice below on the best way to respond in the unlikely event of a fire in your building.



What to do if a fire breaks out in **your** flat

1

Leave the room where the fire is and close the door.



2



Alert anyone else in the property that there is a fire and leave the flat, closing all doors behind you.

Do not stay to put out the fire.

3

Use the staircase to exit the building.

Do not use the lift.



4

Dial 999 and wait for the fire service to arrive.



Do not re-enter the building.



What to do if you see or hear a fire in another flat or part of the building

1

It will normally be safest for you to remain in your flat and **stay put** unless the heat or smoke from the fire is affecting you.

If your safety is compromised, then you should leave the building following the guidance as if the fire was in your flat.

2



If you are instructed to leave by a member of the emergency services, you should do so immediately.

3

In either case, use the staircase to exit the building.

Do not use the lift.



'Stay Put-Unless' is an evacuation strategy used in purpose-built blocks of flats. It is in place to keep people safe when they are not in an area directly affected by fire.

Contact us if you want to discuss this advice in more detail or if there are reasons you may not be able to follow the advice, for example because of medical conditions or disabilities so we can agree personal safety plans with you.

If you notice any doors within the building that are damaged or wedged open, or have any other concerns, please call us on 0121 569 6000.

We know a lot of residents question why we advise to Stay Put if the fire is not directly affecting you.

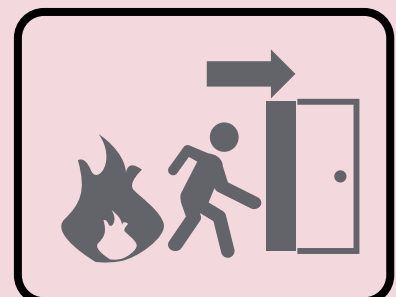
Did you know we continue to adopt this policy in line with advice from West Midlands Fire Service?

The measures we have in place to prevent fire and smoke spreading through the building means your home is safe.



To keep yourself safe and be a good neighbour:

- Be careful in your own flat around safety, keeping any escape routes clear and checking your smoke alarms regularly
- Allow access to your home for safety checks
- If you or a member of your household will need help getting out if there is a fire - let us know
- Let us know of any changes in your household
- Do not damage, remove or alter any fire safety item - If you plan to do any alterations to your property or communal area - please check with us first
- Ensure that front main entrance doors to the building are closed when not in use. Beware of others following you into the block
- When not in use all fire doors should be kept shut. Fire doors should not be tampered with, and any faults should be reported
- Ensure that any visitors you have, do not act in a way that is a risk to building safety or a nuisance to your neighbours
- Each resident is responsible for ensuring communal areas remain clean and tidy
- Ensure dogs are kept under control in public spaces for the safety of neighbours. Also, please be considerate and clean up any dog fouling in communal areas or lifts and dispose of it either at home or in a bin outside
- Please report any anti-social behaviour



Measuring our Performance and Impact

As well as sharing performance information with you, we will report our performance through the Building Safety Board. We will also share information with the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group and other forums as appropriate. We will share information more widely via our annual report to tenants.



- Share the findings, outcomes and recommendations arising from our engagement with residents of our high-rise buildings
- Show how the feedback has impacted on service delivery
- Provide regular opportunities for tenants to meet with Housing teams to discuss building safety issues
- Support the development of a formal resident led building safety group
- Obtain feedback from residents on what is working well in resident engagement and what we can do better
- Keep our measures of impact under regular review to make sure they measure the correct things

We will review resident engagement in building safety on a regular basis to ensure we continue to meet with Building Safety and Social Housing Regulations.

What Does the Council Do To Keep You, Your family and Your Neighbours Safe?

SAFETY FIRST

To keep you safe:

Daily

- Caretakers carry out fire safety checks of communal areas as part of their duties as well as doing minor communal repairs
- Emergency call out 24/7 365 days

Every Month

- Monthly service visits for each lift

Every 12 Weeks

- Communal Fire Doors are checked

Every 6 Months

- Fire safety equipment is checked : Dry Risers and Bin Room sprinklers
- LOLOR report every 6 months for each lift. (Like its MOT)

Every Year

- Smoke and heat detectors are checked
- Carbon monoxide detectors checked
- Gas supply checked
- Front doors are checked

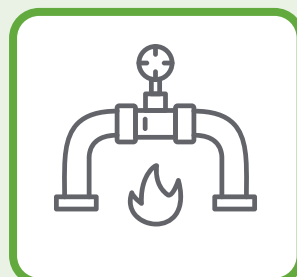
Every 4 years

but may be done more frequently than this...

- Structural condition

Every 5 years

- Electric checks



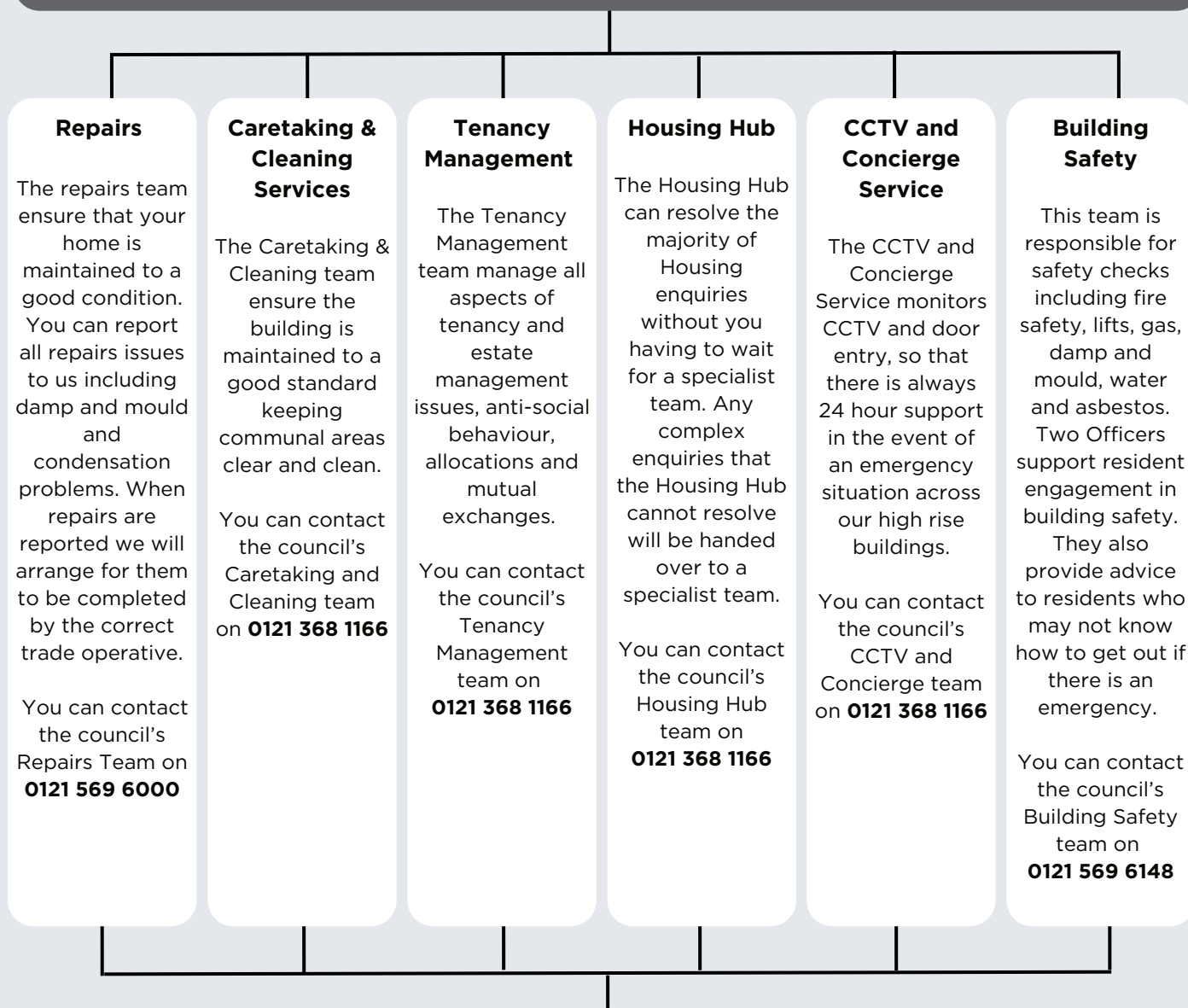
- We provide specialist fire safety aids such as vibrating pillows or flashing beacons or enhanced smoke detection for vulnerable residents
- A Fire Risk Assessment of the block is also completed annually details can be found at :
<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/HighRiseFireRiskAssessments>
- An Asbestos survey has been completed on the block. This survey means we know where any potential risks are in the building and can ensure that any works being done is carried out safely to protect the health of residents, staff and contractors
- A secure premise information box has been installed. This provides the fire service with important information they will need in an emergency
- Partnership working with West Midlands Fire Service ensures that your home and all our high-rise buildings are safe to live in. The fire service will also undertake Safe and Well checks on request

Building Safety Team Chart

Housing Services

The teams below are here to ensure activities that take place in your building are carried out in such a way as to not compromise it and your safety. They are also here to ensure your voice is heard for anything related to your building.

You can contact Housing Services on **0121 368 1166**



Customer Feedback Team

If you would like to make a complaint related to the safety of your building, or you are unhappy with the service you have received please contact us using one of the methods below. Please provide as much information as possible so that we can deal with your concern.

Online: **Contact us online via MySandwell**

Email: **customer_services@sandwell.gov.uk**

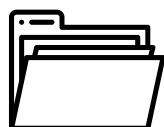
Phone: **0121 569 7867**

Write in: **Customer Feedback Team, Sandwell Council, Roway Lane, Oldbury, B69 3ES**

You can also contact the council on **0121 569 6000**

GDPR

In line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018, we will ensure all the information you provide is stored securely, following the seven key principles of GDPR:



Storage Limitations

Don't store personal data you do not need anymore



Lawfulness

Having a legal basis, being transparent and acting in the person's best interest



Confidentiality

Only people who are processing the data should have access to it



Accuracy

That "reasonable measures" to have the most accurate data possible



Purpose Limitations

Only process personal data for the purpose it was intended for



Accountability

Sandwell Council is responsible for complying with the GDPR



Data Minimisation

Only gather and keep the exact amount of data that is needed

Useful Contacts and Links

You can find useful information on Sandwell MBC services and report any issues via MySandwell

Building Safety Issues

For any issues or questions about building safety either in your block or in general please contact:

Telephone Number: **0121 569 6148**

Email Address:

building_safety@sandwell.gov.uk

Building Safety Complaints

If you would like to make a complaint related to the safety of your building, or you are unhappy with the service you have received:

Online: **Contact us online via MySandwell**

Email: **customer_services@sandwell.gov.uk**

Phone: **0121 569 7867**

Write in: Customer Feedback Team,
Sandwell Council, Roway Lane, Oldbury, B69
3ES. You can also contact the council on
0121 569 6000

For information on Building Safety Regulations -

www.hse.gov.uk/building-safety/resources.htm

To book a Safe and Well visit -

[West Midlands Fire Service Fire Safety Team](#) or 03300 589 000.

If you have a **complaint** and you are not happy with the response from SMBC you can also contact the [Housing Ombudsman](#)

If you are interested in setting up a tenant and residents group

please email

Comm_Partnerships@sandwell.gov.uk

or leave a message on **0121 569 2537**

Condensation, Damp & Mould

www.sandwell.gov.uk/damp
or contact the repairs team on
0121 569 6000



To report anti-social behaviour -

www.west-midlands.police.uk or
www.sandwell.gov.uk/ASB
or contact the Housing Hub on
0121 368 1166

Fire Safety

www.sandwell.gov.uk/fire-safety



Asbestos

www.sandwell.gov.uk/asbestos



Data Protection

www.sandwell.gov.uk/privacy



