

Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy - Surrey Towers

2024 - 2026

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Introduction

This is Runnymede Borough Council's first Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy for Surrey Towers. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring residents are empowered to play an effective role in ensuring the building is safe. This Strategy is informed by the Council's [Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy](#).

Aims

The Building Safety Act 2022 requires the Council to provide residents with relevant safety information about the building and to prepare and keep under review a residents' engagement strategy. The strategy should ensure residents are kept informed, are able to participate in decision making regarding the safety of the building and clarify a clear complaints procedure for residents to raise concerns about the safety of their home. The key aims of this strategy are to:

- Outline the different ways residents can participate in building safety engagement and explain the benefits they can gain from being involved;
- Identify the building safety information residents wish to be provided with;
- Set out how information relating to building safety will be provided;
- Establish methods of improving our approach to engaging with residents in relation to the safety of their home;
- Clarify both residents' and landlords' responsibilities to ensure residents' homes remain safe.

Information and understanding

Communication and engagement

The Council will use a variety of appropriate methods to communicate with residents, mindful of their diverse needs. Reasonable adjustments will be made on request for people support needs, for example people whose first language is not English.

We will make information about building safety easy to read and understand. Examples of ways we will communicate with residents will include:

- 'Sign up' packs for new tenants and leaseholders
- Visits to new tenants
- annual inspections of residents' fire doors.
- Dedicated pages on the Council's website
- Housing Online Accounts
- Notice board in the lobby area
- Emails and text messages
- Letters and leaflets
- Meetings about building safety
- Residents' groups.
- Social media.

If there is a serious issue, which could impact the safety of all residents, we will keep residents regularly updated on any interim safety measures, remedial works and further actions. Fire action notices are installed on each floor of the building, explaining the steps residents should follow if there is a fire.

We are keen to increase resident participation in decision-making across all sections of the community, including people from underrepresented groups. We will provide support and advice on setting up and maintaining Residents groups and a Residents Association.

Building safety is the responsibility of all residents as well as the Council as the landlord. We will work with residents to measure the success of this strategy for example by monitoring performance indicators such as take-up of engagement opportunities and reporting of safety concerns.

Clear and accessible information

We will proactively provide all residents with clear and concise information about:

- The precautions that are in place to mitigate potential fire and building safety risks.
- Reducing the risk of fire in individual dwellings, for example by not storing flammable materials.
- How to report a fire risk and other safety concerns.
- Procedures to follow if a fire occurs in the building, including evacuation.
- The different roles and responsibilities of the Council and residents.
- Helpful Contact details.

Residents can get more detailed information about safety measures such as:

- Full, current and historical fire risk assessments.
- Planned maintenance and repairs schedules.
- Outcome of building safety inspection checks.
- How assets in the building are managed for example lift maintenance.
- Details of preventive measures for example smoke alarms.
- Fire protection measures for example fire doors.
- Information on the maintenance of fire safety systems.
- The Fire Strategy
- Structural assessments.
- Planned changes to the building.

We will provide residents with these documents within one month.

Safety information provided at the start of the tenancy

At the start of every tenancy, we will provide fire action information. Within six weeks of a tenancy starting, we will visit tenants and discuss any building safety concerns and follow up any safety issues.

Advice and support

Providing advice and support helps demonstrate that the Council is keeping the building safe. Support for Residents is available from Council staff including

- Area Housing Manager
- Compliance team

- Caretakers
- Customer Services Team
- Engagement and Inclusion Officer
- Other organisations including:
- Surrey Fire and Rescue
- Housing Ombudsman
- Building Safety Regulator

Residents and landlord's responsibilities

As landlord, the Council is responsible for keeping the building and its occupants safe. Residents have a role to play too, which is why it is important we work together.

Residents must provide access to their home for the Council to inspect and carry out necessary works for example fitting smoke and heat alarms and undertaking fire and structural safety-related maintenance. We will provide the resident with reasonable notice. Legal action may be taken if access is not arranged, and the Council can recover the costs from the resident.

We have a zero-tolerance policy on possessions left in communal areas. Any hazardous items left in communal areas may be removed and disposed of without notification.

Landlord responsibilities

- Compliance testing
- Undertaking an annual fire risk assessment of the communal areas
- Quarterly communal fire door inspections
- Annual flat entrance door inspections
- Building maintenance and repairs

All residents living at Surrey Towers will be contacted annually to determine if they may require assistance during an emergency evacuation. This information will be shared with Surrey Fire and Rescue Services, allowing them to locate and evacuate these residents if there is a major incident. Residents' personal data will be processed and shared in line with the [Council's Privacy Notice](#).

This information may be used in a Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), in an emergency. The PEEP is held in the building's secure information box, which the Fire Service has access to.

Resident responsibilities

Residents are responsible for ensuring that they do not create a hazard in their home, for example by storing flammable items or by blocking fire escapes. Residents should be familiar with the safety measures and Fire Action Plan for the building, including the evacuation plan. The Council will help explain these on request.

Residents should consider the needs of their household especially young children or someone with a disability. And must tell the Council if someone would need help to evacuate.

Residents should report hazards that may impact the safety of the building. This may include the behaviour of people which could put others at risk, for example leaving communal fire doors open and leaving items in the communal hallway which could block an escape route. Residents need permission to make adaptations to their property and this includes any changes to fire doors. Residents should only smoke in a safe place and fully extinguish their cigarettes. Smoking is prohibited in the communal areas and the Council may take legal action against residents breaching this regulation. Barbecues and patio heaters should never be used inside buildings, on balconies, adjacent to external walls or near any flammable material. If residents are not comfortable discussing any potentially dangerous behaviour they witness, they should report it to the Council as a building safety concern.

Reporting safety concerns

We will ensure residents have the opportunity to be involved in decisions about building safety and will provide information on planned repair and maintenance works.

Action to take if there is a fire

The Surrey Towers Fire Action Notice is displayed in the communal hallways on every floor. Surrey Towers is designed to keep residents safe. It is compartmented which means that it was built i to contain a fire within a flat. This limits the spread of fire, smoke and flue gases. One of the key safety measures for compartmentation is fire doors. Fire doors must not be altered or prevented from closing.

Surrey Towers is designed to contain fire, smoke and heat within individual flats for long enough to enable the Fire and Rescue Services to extinguish the fire. It is safe for residents to remain in their home, as long as it is not affected by fire, smoke or heat, while it is extinguished. This is known as 'stay put' advice.

Understanding the 'stay put' policy

Surrey Fire and Rescue Services approve the 'stay put' advice.

They advise residents to remain in their own home unless there is fire, heat or smoke, rather than trying to evacuate which may be more dangerous.

Evacuating the building safely

If required to evacuate, residents should walk to the safest exit, closing fire doors behind them. Lifts must not be used. Once outside, residents must move away from the building to a place of safety, away from fire, falling debris and emergency services.

Once residents have left the building they must not re-enter until they are told to do so by the Fire Service.

Responding to fire alarms and contacting the fire and rescue service

If the heat or smoke alarm sounds in your flat, call 999 (or 112), ask for the Fire Service and follow their advice.

If you hear the fire or smoke alarm sound in any communal area or a neighbour's home, call 999 (or 112), ask for the Fire Service and follow the fire action plan for Surrey Towers.

Reducing fire risks

We use information from Surrey Fire and Rescue to amend campaigns and information for residents.

All Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken by an independent and accredited fire risk assessing contractor.

Measuring success

We will conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of this Strategy.

Regular surveys will measure how informed residents feel about building and fire safety and whether their feeling of safety has improved. We will encourage residents to tell us what information they would like about the safety of the building, and how we can make this information more accessible.

We will review feedback to ensure we continuously improve the information we provide and the way it is shared.

We aim to ensure that if building safety issues are raised, a resolution will be achieved by working with residents to agree what action is needed. If a resident is not satisfied with the outcome, they can use the [Council's Complaints process](#)