



RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

SKERTON HOUSE: A COMMITMENT TO BUILDING SAFETY

● INTRODUCTION

This strategy puts residents of Skerton House at the heart of decision making about where they live. It sets out Lancaster City Council's commitment to building safety, following the guidance set out by the Government to ensure all housing providers have a Resident Engagement Strategy for building safety in place.

It aims to ensure that residents of Skerton House:

- Know who they can speak to about their safety and understand the responsibilities of both the landlord (Lancaster City Council) and residents.
- Have a variety of opportunities to speak to staff about any concerns or issues.
- Feel confident to hold Lancaster City Council to account and understand any communications sent to them relating to building safety.

Many residents of Skerton House have contributed to this document by giving their views on keeping safe at home and how they want their landlord to communicate with them about building safety.

● NATIONAL CONTEXT

Following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, Dame Judith Hackitt was commissioned to review building regulations and fire safety. She put forward 53 recommendations for change in her report titled "Building a Safer Future".

This has prompted new statutory requirements to be met, which are:

- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2024

These changes highlight the importance of residents feeling safe in their home and ensure that their views and concerns are listened to and acted upon.

The key areas of change are:

- Clearer responsibilities for individuals and organisations managing high-rise buildings
- A stronger voice and better information for residents
- Tougher enforcement for when things go wrong
- Greater oversight by the Regulator to ensure landlords are accountable to residents in an open and transparent way.

● LOCAL CONTEXT

We have always taken our duty of care for residents seriously in terms of building safety. For some time, we have had processes in place to ensure our multi-occupied/multi-storey residential buildings (blocks of flats) are safe and secure places to live. Examples of this approach include:

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- Routine inspections of the communal areas/common parts of blocks of flats to ensure that escape routes remain unobstructed, and no hazardous items are left/stored in these areas.
- Compliance with British Standard maintenance regimens for any safety equipment installations in communal areas/common parts and other fixed installations such as Landlords electrical supplies and items such as Lifts.
- Conducting an Asbestos Management Survey as applicable.
- Conducting a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) as required by Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, on all applicable buildings and following up on the significant finding actions. The frequency of such FRAs are determined by the perceived inherent risk status of the building so any building that is either over 11m in height (to its uppermost storey floor level), which includes Skerton House, has an FRA review undertaken annually.

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**LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL**

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

(01524) 582929



COUNCILHOUSING@LANCASTER.GOV.UK





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● COMPLIANCE TEAM: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We created the Compliance Team in 2022. The team oversees and routinely checks the safety measures in all residential buildings currently managed by Lancaster City Council.

The team achieves this using the following methods:

- Employing specialist Consultancy and Competent Person services specifically for building and fire safety in addition to their own skills, knowledge and experience
- Routine inspections of Skerton House and fire safety items
- Skerton House information booklets for residents
- Sharing information on Lancaster City Council Housing website
- Articles in resident newsletters
- Dedicated letters and tailored information to residents of Skerton House
- Information on notice boards in Skerton House
- Partnership working with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

The team works with all Lancaster City Council departments to ensure that all activities maintain building safety. Any improvement, maintenance or management activities within the buildings take place in partnership with the Compliance Team. The team will carry out consultation with residents of Skerton House, to discuss how to live safely in their building and what to do in the event of a fire, in either their property or another part of the building.

We support residents in Skerton House to keep themselves safe, particularly if they have a disability or reason that may affect their ability to self-evacuate. In these circumstances, with residents' agreement, we conduct a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA). We share this information with the fire service in the form of a simple colour-coded chart located in the Secure Information Box. This allows the fire service to easily and quickly determine the location of residents who cannot self-evacuate and assist them where required. The team will regularly be in touch with these residents to assess whether their situation has changed and update the fire service accordingly. Any new residents will have a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment on sign-up to the property by either the Allocations Team, the Housing Management team or the Homeless Team. These are then passed to the Compliance team to update the Secure Information Box when necessary.

● KEEPING YOUR HOME AND BUILDING SAFE: HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

Skerton House is kept safe through a planned regime of maintenance, servicing, repairs and replacement of assets and components. Some of the key fire safety related assets include sprinklers, fire doors, smoke detection, firefighting equipment, emergency lighting and smoke ventilation windows. Other assets that have routine checks and inspections are lifts, communal door entry systems, electrical systems and various plant, storage, and communal areas. When assets such as fire doors or smoke detection are not performing as they were designed then this normally results in a repair or replacement. Where repairs are becoming too frequent on the same asset, they cannot be repaired or there are several in need of replacement, then they may be included within the Capital Programme.

Walls, floors, ceilings, and doors are passive fire measures, their characteristics mean that together they form compartments that limit the spread of fire and smoke. They are designed to contain fire and smoke at their source for a long enough period to allow the fire service to extinguish the fire. It is this design that means residents are safe to remain in their home so long as it is not affected by fire, smoke, or heat or unless otherwise instructed by the fire service.

We encourage residents to request information about the safety measures in their building.

Lancaster City Council Housing website holds a variety of information about living in a high-rise building including:

- What to do in the event of a fire
- Fire Risk Assessments
- Servicing and maintenance performance
- Planned improvement works

● COMPETENCY OF STAFF AND CONTRACTORS

All Lancaster City Council staff and contractors can demonstrate their competency to fulfil their roles when working in a building safety context through a variety of skills, knowledge, experience and suitable training/continuing professional development.

The Building Safety Team will continue to work in partnership with the local fire service to maintain knowledge and upkeep of the partnership agreement.



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● RESIDENTS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Building Safety Act emphasises ensuring residents of high-rise buildings trust their landlord and feel safe in their home. As a landlord, we will ensure Skerton House is safe by meeting all the correct regulations and standards. We will make sure residents feel safe in their homes by continual communication with residents of Skerton House.

Your behaviours and actions can affect the safety of the building and you may be breaking the law if you do not behave in a responsible way. This means you must:

- Refrain from damaging, removing or interfering with relevant safety items, such as fire doors, signage, sprinklers, smoke alarms or fire extinguishers.
- Refrain from doing anything that could increase or create a risk of spread of fire or structural failure, for example carrying out refurbishment or building work that increases or creates a building safety risk.
- Assist LCC by providing – if requested – any information needed for them to carry out their duties effectively.

Residents of Skerton House required to support Lancaster City Council in meeting their obligations by:

- Living safely in their flat and not doing anything that puts other residents at risk, for example, not making alterations to the flat entrance fire door without permission.
- Knowing what to do in the event of a fire in their property or another part of the building.
- Contacting the Housing Team if residents' living circumstances change, meaning a resident may not be able to self-evacuate in the event of a fire.
- Checking smoke detectors in their home are working at least once a month.
- Being respectful of neighbours and keeping the space outside the flat clear.
- Disposing of rubbish safely into the bin stores and contacting the Council Housing Customer Services Team if help is needed to dispose of bulky items. Bulky Matters may also be able to remove larger items.
- Reporting any issues to the Housing Team, particularly if a resident feels it is a fire safety concern.

Allowing access to your residence:

You must keep your residence safe.

- LCC can ask for access to your residence, at a reasonable time, in order to assess and manage building safety risks.
- They can also ask for access if they think you are causing a risk to the safety of the building.
- Please note that LCC are required by law to check the condition of your flat entrance (fire) door once per year. To carry out this assessment to regulatory standards, it must be performed with the door in the open position, and as a result, access to the inside of your flat is required.
- Please watch for notices regarding this annual inspection and provide your cooperation to enable the inspection to proceed.

● RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

We consulted all the residents of Skerton House on how they would like to be engaged with regarding building safety and what they would like to see included in this document.

From the information received from various events, surveys, texts and emails to the residents of Bridge House, the three main issues why people did not feel safe in their homes were:

- Security of the communal areas
- Disrepair of their property including communal areas
- Lack of communication from Lancaster City Council regarding building safety

The way residents of Skerton House want to receive information regarding building safety and their home are:

- Dedicated letters to residents Skerton House detailing information regarding building safety
- Information on the notice boards in Skerton House
- Regular articles in the Council Housing Matters newsletters
- Skerton House specific information booklets
- Website information
- Individual home visits where appropriate to residents in Skerton House
- Regular pop-up events outside Skerton House

To raise concerns about building safety, contact Council Housing on **01524 582929** or by email to **chreception@lancaster.gov.uk**.





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BUILDING SAFETY PANEL

The Building Safety Panel is made up of resident representatives from the 3 high-rise buildings in Lancaster. The aim of the Panel is to review building safety information and resident feedback monthly. Panel members will examine general safety-related performance information and resident feedback to ensure standards are being met. The Panel will also have a good understanding of any planned work that can impact the safety of the buildings.

The Panel will link into the Lancaster City Council governance structure and report their findings, recommendations, and concerns to the Tenants Voice Meeting every quarter. The Panel has the remit to challenge Lancaster City Council and raise any concerns about the safety of residents living in any of our blocks of flats. The Building Safety Panel will monitor the delivery of the engagement and communication standards for building safety and any associated outcomes or actions. The Panel can challenge if Lancaster City Council does not meet the standards and ask to see evidence of remedial action or change to address where standards are not met.

We are always looking for new members to join the Panel. For more information, please contact the Community Engagement Team on **01524 586891** or email **CHengagement@lancaster.gov.uk**.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS TO BE INVOLVED

Residents who want to apply to be part of the Building Safety Panel will be asked to attend relevant training. This will ensure they have a basic knowledge of fire and building safety information and an understanding of working on a panel. Further training will be identified and provided once any skills gaps are identified. Residents who are not digital will be sent information in a format which suits their needs.

We are committed to communicating well with residents and ensuring any queries or comments regarding building safety are actioned quickly. A summary of residents' feedback, actions arising, and any other associated actions will be included in Lancaster City Council's annual report.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

If a customer is not satisfied with the service being provided in their building, they should first bring this to the attention of the Council Housing Team.

Details of the numbers to contact are provided in the Resident's Building Safety Booklet and at the end of this document.

There may also be issues directly related to building safety that a resident is not happy with, such as staff conduct. These issues should be discussed with the Council Housing Team in the first instance. If a resident wishes to make a complaint, they can contact Council Housing Customer Services Team to talk through the issue and what resolution they would like. Lancaster City Council has a two-stage complaints process. The first stage is an investigation by a manager, and the second stage is a review by a senior manager. We will always explain the outcome of a complaint to customers in writing. Where customers have followed the complaints process and remain dissatisfied, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman service who may undertake a review of the decisions made by Lancaster City Council. The Housing Ombudsman can be contacted through their website at **www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk**

MONITORING PERFORMANCE

The Building Safety Panel will have oversight of this document and will review it annually. This is an opportunity to make changes, amendments and updates, dependent on the actions identified by the Panel at monthly meetings. The Panel will write and present an Annual Report of their activities to the Tenants Voice Panel. The report will be published on the Lancaster City Council Housing website, along with outcomes from quarterly panel meetings.

CONCLUSION

This document is the first version of the Commitment to Building Safety between Lancaster City Council and its residents who live in Skerton House. It has been developed based on customer information and feedback and approved by the Building Safety Panel. The content of the document will remain under review to ensure that Lancaster City Council is fully compliant with the Regulator and that the information contained meets the needs of the residents of Park House. The Commitment to Building Safety and the corresponding Resident's Building Safety Booklet detail clearly how residents can approach their landlord for information, advice, and support to help keep their homes, and where they live safe.





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LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL HOUSING CONTACT INFORMATION

CUSTOMER SERVICES

General Inquiries:

-  **Telephone:** 01524 582929
-  **Email:** councilhousing@lancaster.gov.uk
-  **Website:** www.lancaster.gov.uk
-  **Office Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Office Locations:


-  **Lancaster Town Hall (Open Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm):**
Lancaster Town Hall, Dalton Square, Lancaster, LA1 1PJ
-  **Morecambe Town Hall (Open Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm):**
Morecambe Town Hall, Marine Road, Morecambe, LA4 5AF

Postal Address

-  PO Box 4, Town Hall, Lancaster, LA1 1QR

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

24/7 Emergency Call Centre

-  **Telephone:** 01524 67099

Use this number for:




- Emergency housing repairs outside office hours
- Urgent housing issues that cannot wait until the next working day
- Immediate safety risks related to council housing

Gas Leaks

-  **National Gas Emergency Service:** 0800 111 999

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Routine Repairs and Maintenance



-  **Telephone:** 01524 582929
-  **Email:** chreception@lancaster.gov.uk
-  **Office Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Emergency Repairs (Outside Office Hours)

-  **Telephone:** 01524 67099

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Anti-Social Behaviour Reporting



-  **Telephone:** 01524 582929
-  **Email:** chasb@lancaster.gov.uk

Non-Emergency Police

-  **Telephone:** 101

EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Housing Ombudsman Service

-  **Telephone:** 0300 111 3000
-  **Email:** info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

SOCIAL MEDIA:



[facebook.com/
LanCityHousing](https://facebook.com/LanCityHousing)

Calls may be recorded to improve our service standards and the accuracy of information.

This document can be made available in large print, audio, Braille, and other languages upon request.

