

University of Leeds Residents' Engagement Strategy – Sentinel Towers, Block B

Why is this document important?

Living in University accommodation is a great way to experience student life, make new friends and feel part of our student community. We have an impressive range of accommodation from modern, purpose-built apartments to converted mansions both on and off campus.

Above all, we recognise the importance of providing homes which feel, and are proven to be, safe. We take our role of landlord seriously and strive to ensure your experience is a positive one. As well as having robust systems in place to ensure our buildings are designed, constructed and maintained safely, we also want to put our residents at the centre of our decision-making so we can be clear when we're getting things right, and where we might need to change.

This document sets out how we will involve you in decisions relating to your building's safety.

What can you expect from us?

We will provide you with a home which has been designed and constructed with safety in mind.

You will be given key information about your building, either via our website, or (from August 2024) via our e-induction when you accept a place at one of our residences. It will include:

- A short explanation about the University's role
- A summary of your rights and responsibilities as a resident
- Information on measures being taken to ensure peoples' safety
- Contact information for any building safety matters

It's important that you take time to read the information, and complete the induction prior to moving in.

You can raise any questions/queries about building safety whether in advance of your arrival, or once you have collected your keys and start to become more familiar with your new home. You can do this in-person by speaking to your on-site team, or using our online feedback form, available at:

accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/comments-and-complaints

All feedback will be reviewed and you should receive a response within 7 days. Listening to your views will help us understand your concerns, identify where we might need to improve and also what things are going well.

How else can you get involved?

We want to ensure that our buildings are not only legally compliant, but run efficiently, are comfortable, and also an enjoyable place to live.

Sometimes we'll need to carry out work to make sure things operate as intended, to improve the appearance of a building, replace old technology with new, and to make sure we continue to meet the changing needs of residents.

When we need to make certain decisions about changes to your building, we'll make sure you have plenty of opportunities to have your say. Below, we've outlined where we need your input:

Routine Maintenance

During your stay, you might notice technicians working in and around your building to carry out routine maintenance or testing of equipment such as smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. This is essential to ensure our buildings are as safe as possible during your stay, but there should be minimal impact upon the use of your room, the building, and its facilities. Because of the short duration and high frequency of these tasks, **we won't consult you about each of these**.

However, if you want to raise a concern or give positive feedback about how any work is being carried out, or notice a problem that you need to make us aware of, please speak to your on-site team, or use the online feedback form:

accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/comments-and-complaints

Emergency Repairs

Occasionally, we might also need to arrange emergency repairs where it would be impractical to consult with you in advance, such as to deal with a leaking pipe or broken heating.

In these cases we will make sure we communicate with you as quickly and conveniently as possible to explain any likely impact, which might be verbally, by email, or by signs in the affected area.

Should you wish to provide any comment, please use the online feedback form.

Improvement Schemes

Like many providers of student accommodation, most of our tenancy agreements are shorter than 12 months. Where we plan to carry out significant improvement works, we aim to complete these outside of term time whilst most residents are likely to be away from campus, which helps us minimise disruption.

Preparing the work requires a substantial amount of planning, which might include working with architects or designers to determine what the finished scheme will look like, sourcing materials and

tools required, as well as identifying who is best placed to do the job on site and when. Therefore it is not uncommon for planning to begin during one academic year, and a project concluded in the next – by which time you may have completed your tenancy, moved out and new tenants arrived.

So we think it's important to consult with you about:

- Any improvement schemes taking place during the period of your tenancy agreement; and
- Any planned (non-reactive) works which impact how you use the building, such as changes to routes through the building, use of lifts, fire escapes and/or how you should evacuate the building etc.

We will use our network of consultants and in-house specialists to draft an outline work proposal for each improvement scheme. As a minimum this proposal will include:

- A description of works & why they need to be carried out
- Proposed times, dates and likely durations
- The likely impact upon building users during the works
- An indication of whether the completed works will affect you and how
- A named person for you to contact with any queries or concerns

How will we consider your views?

The proposal will be shared with you by email and we'll use signage in your local area. If we consider that any residents need to be relocated to allow the works to progress, we'll also hold face-to-face surgeries where you can tell us about any queries or concerns.

Whilst some technical aspects of the work will be determined by building standards and therefore cannot be changed, we will ask for your opinions about:

- Reducing the impact upon residents during the work; and
- Any perceived adverse impact upon residents caused by the finished scheme

You can give feedback using the online form, or via your on-site team. We'll remind you of this when we publish the initial proposal.

For most works, we'll be in touch regularly with you well in advance to keep you informed about what's likely to happen. In any event, there will always be at least 3 weeks for you to make suggestions, and to raise any queries or concerns about the work. The University will consider those points raised and publish any response.

We will only collect and store relevant information in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Our privacy policy is available via the following link:

accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/privacy

What if I want to know more or have a complaint?

If at any time you have a specific complaint, question or would like to know more about how the University manages building safety in your residence, please get in touch with your local site team or by using the online feedback form.

accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/comments-and-complaints

For example, you might want to know about:

- Current and previous fire risk assessments for your building
- The current safety case report for the building, and/or previous relevant safety case reports where these are available
- Details about how building safety assets in your building are managed
- Details about any planned maintenance and repairs of the building and/or its fire safety features
- The outcome of any building safety inspection checks that have been undertaken

You can expect a response within 7 days or sooner.

If you aren't satisfied with how we're fulfilling our obligations, there is a complaints process outlined on our website:

accommodation.leeds.ac.uk/comments-and-complaints

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you can escalate it to the Building Safety Regulator using the link below:

www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-the-building-safety-regulator

What do we expect of you?

Whilst we will do our best to keep people safe, residents also have a large part to play and we ask for your cooperation to do this.

Did you know, as a resident you are legally required to:

- Provide information which might help us with the assessment or control of building safety risks
- Allow us access into your room or shared parts of the building in order to carry out any checks or to implement necessary control measures. (If this is required we will give you notice as set out in your tenancy agreement).
- Not damage, remove or interfere with things provided to keep people safe, such as using fire extinguishers (other than in the event of a fire), propping open fire doors, blocking fire escapes, over-loading the capacities of any lift etc.
- Not act in a way which puts people at risk from the spread of fire or structural failure
- If you have willfully interfered, damaged or removed any relevant item you may be asked to pay the reasonable cost of repairing or replacing those items.

Reviewing our arrangements

We need to know how well our plans to involve you in decisions are working, so we'll monitor this by:

- Consulting with you when this strategy is first launched
- Measuring participation of residents during consultation periods; and
- Using surveys to determine awareness of the strategy

We'll also regularly review the arrangements themselves to make sure they're effective, carrying out a review:

- After every consultation with you
- After the completion of significant material alterations to your building
- After any report we make to the Building Safety Regulator about a safety occurrence in your building
- In all other cases, at least every 2 years.

We will review your comments, determine what is working well, and where any improvements can be made. Any proposed changes to the strategy will be consulted upon with you, explaining why we feel they are needed.

Each review will be formally recorded whether or not we make changes to the overall strategy.



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Sue Green – Interim Director of Residential Services, University of Leeds

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