

Press release: Residents and landlords to team up to better communicate building safety issues

- New group will debate new ways to engage social housing residents on fire and building safety issues
- Scheme will help to ensure social residents are given a stronger voice
- Government fulfils key commitment made in Social Housing Green Paper and Hackitt Implementation Plan
- Pilots will help drive culture change across the social housing sector

A new group will see 8 social landlords and their respective residents come together to ensure residents are given a stronger voice in communicating approaches to building safety within social housing.

The [Social Sector Engagement Best Practice Group](#) is a key measure of the government's Social Housing Green Paper and the Building a Safer Future implementation plan.

It will be independently chaired by LEASE board member Victoria Elvidge with 2 fire and building safety experts – Tim Birchall, fire safety technical officer for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Paul Overall, Chief Executive of the Local Authority Building Control – also signing up to the group.

Each social landlord represented in the group will be joined by a resident from their respective housing stock to help share best practice and challenge existing approaches towards ensuring resident safety.

Housing Minister, Kit Malthouse MP said:

Everyone deserves a safe and decent place to call home.

As our Social Housing Green Paper and Implementation Plan set out, we are keen to pilot new and engaging options to ensure social housing residents are better informed on issues that matter most to them – none more so than their safety.

This new group will see social landlords and their residents come together to explore new ways to trial this that will help inform wider reforms as we look to rebalance the relationship between landlord and residents.

Group members will decide on and implement short-term pilots to be trialled over a 6-month period covering a wide range of approaches to keeping residents informed on the safety of their building.

Following the 6-month period, the panel will present its findings to the government which will be used to inform and develop future policy.

The membership of the [Social Sector \(Building Safety\) Engagement Best Practice Group](#) is the following:

- Victoria Elvidge (Chair)
- Chelmer Housing Partnership
- Clarion Housing Group
- Optivo
- Phoenix Community Housing
- Poole Housing Partnership
- Sheffield City Council
- Stockport Homes Group
- Your Homes Newcastle
- Tim Birchall, fire safety technical officer for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Paul Overall, Chief Executive of the Local Authority Building Control

The group will meet monthly for the next 6 months as a pilot. A decision on its future will then be taken accordingly.

[Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building regulations](#), published in May 2018, called for the government to test ways to engage effectively with residents and give them a much stronger voice in an improvement system of building safety.

Following this, the government committed to establishing a small group of social landlords to pilot innovative ways of communicating and engaging with residents on building safety issues in the [Social Housing Green Paper](#), published in August 2018.

The government then reaffirmed this commitment in the [Building a safer future implementation plan](#), setting out that the first meeting of the Best Practice Group would take place in the new year.

Victoria Elvidge is a board member of LEASE – the Leasehold Advisory Service and also chairs its remuneration committee.