



LTF REPORT: Single Issue Meetings
May - June 2023

[Repairs and Major Works — 18 May](#)
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MEETING REPORT: Major Works and Repairs

Meeting date: 18 May 2023

Tenants, residents and leaseholders from seven boroughs — Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith, Hackney, Lambeth, Lewisham and Westminster — came together for a single issue meeting on Major Works and Repairs.

Attendees discussed the “Make it Right” campaign, by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, meant to simplify the complaints process. Complainants make an initial complaint to their council, and are then supposed to be able to complain to the Housing Ombudsman. The toolkit for this campaign can be found [here](#). Further information about making a social housing complaint can be found [here](#). Those at the meeting felt that the process identified on the Housing Ombudsman website failed to highlight new protocols, and did not differ from the previous process. This is a major oversight and demonstrates a lack of interdepartmental communication.

The group also discussed the [Complaints Handling Code](#), and the possible conflict of interest emerging from landlords self-assessing themselves. They also shared that the complaints procedure for major works in housing estates is difficult, and that publicly shaming landlords is not effective. Attendees suggested seeking advice from housing organisations and regulators and using all available levers to bring pressure and effect change.

Tenants expounded, advocating for further improvements to the complaints procedure, and for increasing awareness and education of tenants and residents about their right to complain and to escalate that claim as needed.

Tenant representatives shared information about the new [Charter for Social Housing Residents](#), which includes an expectation of safety, prompt complaint resolution, and respect from landlords.

Attendees also discussed issues with repairs and maintenance of council housing, broadly speaking, including the issues of having repairs done in-house, the challenges of dealing with third party contractors, the difficulties of obtaining materials and the challenges of

holding local authorities to account. Timely repairs and major works in social housing are essential for avoiding unnecessary loss of life. The government must provide funding to local authorities to carry out these duties.

Attendees discussed the challenges faced by street properties relating to major works and repairs. One tenant shared that their street was left out of major works initiatives, and it was suggested that they utilise the Housing Ombudsman's complaints handling code.

Attendees received information about [Advocate](#), a charity which provides free legal assistance to those who cannot afford it. Meeting attendees discussed the issue of funding cuts in legal aid and local council areas, which has resulted in limited access to legal support and poor maintenance of buildings, and acknowledged that the efforts of organisations like [Advocate](#) are laudable yet fail to erase concerns over the lack of resources and funding for essential services.

The group discussed benefits and concerns around encouraging residents in tower blocks to use the stairs as a method of evacuation. Two attendees raised concerns about the risks and suggested alternative approaches, while others emphasised the importance of ensuring adaptability and preparedness, and the consideration of all evacuation options.

Fuel Poverty and Carbon Net Zero

Meeting Date: 8 June 2023

One of the key topics discussed at this meeting was the issue of district heating charges, particularly in Lambeth as there had just been a Lambeth council scrutiny committee meeting during which someone requested that people not be evicted as a result of not being able to pay the 350% price rise. The Council responded that they couldn't make such assurances, citing that they were unaware of government funds to help with district heating costs. Tenants from all boroughs were asked to enquire with their own councils whether they have applied relevant discounts to bills.

There was discussion on the issue of heat pumps as the UK government's preferred option for reducing carbon emissions from homes. While there is some potential, there remain issues with heat pumps that are important to consider, including the need for comprehensive insulation, slow heating times and decreased efficiency in colder

temperatures. There is limited research on the effectiveness of heat pumps in flats, and a nationally-funded insulation program would be necessary for their widespread adoption. More information on heat pumps can be found on our website: [here](#) and [here](#).

Other relevant links shared at this meeting:

- UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence — [The great heat pump mystery](#)
- [Report from NESTA](#) on GB household satisfaction with heat pumps survey

MEETING REPORT: Fire and Building Safety

Meeting date: 22 June 2023

The focus of this meeting was the Grenfell Tower tragedy, six years on.

Tenant representatives at the meeting discussed how changes to fire safety over this time have affected them and their homes. Attendees looked at the fires that are still occurring, even in buildings without flammable cladding, and how quickly they are to spread. In fact, there was a recent fire in Croydon, which took out multiple flats in quick succession. Although no one died, it was quite shocking and highlighted that issues around listening to tenants concerns — which also played a part in the Grenfell tragedy — are still present today.

Attendees discussed issues relating to fire safety policies, including the risk of barbecues on balconies and the ban on storing items outside of homes. Other useful plans or items for buildings and homes include:

- Smoke alarms
- Sprinklers
- Heat detectors
- Fire doors
- Intumescent door strips
- Evacuation plans and escape routes
- Designated meeting points
- Resident engagement strategy

Attendees compared fire safety measures in their respective boroughs, which provided them with the opportunity to determine whether there were additional resources that their respective boroughs were not but could be providing.

Shared concerns included:

- Cigarette litter and smoking policies
- Lack of information provided to residents about fire safety measures
- Storage of bikes
- Maintenance of escape routes
- Use of security gates and potential removal
- Doors that are too heavy to open
- Doors with multiple locks

Attendees agreed that it was important to ask questions of and push for answers from Responsible Persons and landlords, and spoke about which official bodies tenants can complain to about issues related to the safety of their homes.

Finally, tenant representatives discussed the consumer standards for registered providers of social housing, including the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH's) [five standards](#) and its role in investigating cases where landlords are at risk of not meeting the standards. They also discussed the building safety regulations and advisory function of the London Fire Brigade.

A [link](#) to the changes proposed by the Hackitt Report that were included in the Building Safety Act (became law in April 2022), some of which are now coming into effect.