

Customer Building Safety Engagement Strategy





A message from our CEO

Making sure you're safe in your home is as important to us as it is to you. The tragic Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 reminded us all how crucial it is to have robust safety measures in place. Since then, we've made a lot of changes to make sure your homes are as safe as possible.

The updated building safety legislation is clear that our customers should have a voice when it comes to building safety, and this Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy sets out how we're engaging and listening to our customers.

We now have a dedicated Building safety team who are committed to delivering a quality, localised approach to ensuring each of our high-rise buildings meets the standards set out in the Building Safety Act.

We're already working closely with our Customer Building Safety Group, they've offered crucial insights how we can better engage and communicate with customers. They've also identified ways we can work together to keep our customers and buildings safe.

We're incredibly grateful for their support and the support of other customers who have given us feedback.

Collaboration is the key to success and we all have a part to play when it comes to maintaining safe homes and neighbourhoods.

Nicholas Harris
Chief Executive Officer

What does this document tell me?

This document outlines Stonewater's commitment to engaging with customers on building safety matters, particularly for those living in high-rise buildings (HRBs).

It emphasises the importance of collaboration, communication, and transparency in ensuring the safety and well-being of our customers. Key points include:

Aims and Objectives

The primary goal is to deliver safe homes by listening, engaging, and evaluating customer feedback, with a commitment to improving safety measures continuously.

01

Customer Engagement Strategy

Stonewater has developed a dedicated strategy to involve customers in building safety decisions, ensuring your voices are heard and acted upon.

02

Building safety Team and Committee

Stonewater now has a Building safety Team and a Customer Building Safety Committee (CBSC) to help customers to participate actively in discussions and decision-making.

03

Legal Compliance

The strategy is aligned with the Building Safety Act 2022, which mandates customer involvement, transparency, and access to safety information.

04

Communication Channels

Various methods such as newsletters, in-person meetings, digital platforms, and training events, ensure customers receive timely and accessible information.

05

Measuring Success

The document sets out clear targets and performance indicators to monitor engagement and improve customer relationships.

06



**We're proud to
make it personal,
if it matters to
our customers, it
matters to us**

Introduction

At Stonewater, we are committed to ensuring that our customers feel safe in their homes.

We want our customers and colleagues to work together as partners, to identify building safety issues and to improve the safety our buildings.

To do this, we will continuously strive to identify new and improved ways to deliver our services and work with customers to ensure their homes are safe.

To ensure customer engagement on building safety matters is embedded into our Building Safety Strategy we have created a Customer Building Safety Group (CBSG), made up of Stonewater customers who live in our high rise buildings, as a sub-committee of our Building Safety Committee.

You can see how these groups fit into our formal reporting structure below.



Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this strategy is to ensure that we deliver safe homes for all of our customers living in high rise buildings (HRBs)*.

To deliver this we will:

- **Listen and communicate effectively** – with all customers who occupy our High Rise Buildings (HRBs) in a way that meets their needs. Keeping them up to date and well informed we will ensure that their voice is heard and acted upon.
- **Engage** – customers and empower them to play a key role in maintaining their homes and keeping their buildings safe. In doing so we will ensure that customers are also aware of their responsibilities under the Building Safety Act.
- **Evaluate** – by continually monitoring the effectiveness of engagement opportunities and participation, we will both maintain and strengthen our relationship with our customers.

*A high rise building is a building which is 18 metres or 7 or more storeys in height.

To deliver safe homes we will engage with our customers to ensure that:

- We continuously improve the safety of their homes
- We understand what is important to customers and what makes them feel safe in their homes
- We keep customers informed about building safety matters
- We understand how they can contribute to and influence the safety of their home and the building as a whole.

Why do we need to engage with customers on building safety?

Following the tragic events of Grenfell in 2017, Dame Judith Hackitt concluded that *“the voices of residents often go unheard, even when safety issues are identified”*.

Whilst the Building Safety Act 2022 addresses the key issues of best practice for the design and management of buildings it also outlines key requirements for customer engagement.

As the Primary Accountable Person (PAP) for our HRBs Stonewater must:

- Produce a customer engagement strategy (this document) and consult with all customers over the age of 16 on the document once produced and following any changes;
- Provide contact information for customers to report building safety matters to us and a short explanation of the Accountable Person’s role;
- Inform customers about measures being taken to reduce risk of fire and ensure the structural integrity of the building,
- Let customers know how to report a building safety risk or concern.

If customers request it we must provide:

- A copy of the current or previous fire risk assessment;
- A copy of the current safety case report
- Details of how building safety risks are being managed
- Details of any planned maintenance or repair works
- The outcome of any building safety inspections undertaken.



What do we mean by building safety?

Building safety, refers to the risks posed by fire and the structural failure, of the building fabric.

We appreciate that for customers the safety of a building depends on a much wider range safety factors, including;

- The management of asbestos (if present)
- The testing and maintenance of gas installations and appliances
- The testing and maintenance of power and lighting systems
- The safe operation of passenger lifts
- The availability of clean and drinkable water
- The general condition of communal areas and their homes
- Building security
- Levels of anti-social behaviour

To make sure we're promoting and enabling safety in all areas, whilst the Building Safety Acts focuses on fire and structural risks, we adopt a holistic approach to safety management.

This takes into account everything listed above and helps us to meet our statutory and regulatory duties as a registered provider of social housing.



Who are our customers?

Stonewater is one of the largest social housing providers in the UK, owning and managing over 39,000 homes for more than 82,000 customers. As a registered social landlord, Stonewater provides safe, affordable housing for people of all ages and backgrounds.

We have five HRBs of which four are currently occupied. Three of our occupied blocks are seven storeys in height, the fourth is ten.

Block	Leasehold	Rented	Shared Ownership	Total
Atlantis Court	10	16	2	28
Charlottes Wharf	2	24	8	34
Newlands Place	0	28	0	28
Fir Tree Walk	0	27	0	27
Harbour Sail	Unoccupied			
Total	12	95	10	117

In 2023 we completed a customer survey across our HRBs which has provided us with a range of information regarding our customers, their household composition, age, first language, income and employment status.

In 2025 we will complete a full Stonewater Customer Census to make sure we have the most up to date information for all Stonewater customers.

We will use this information to inform how we communicate with our customers, to ensure our communications are accessible to all.

Our Building Safety Manager will review household composition and ownership status on a rolling 12 month basis to ensure the information we hold for our customers living in our HRBs remains valid.



What we have done so far to engage customers

During the 2023-24 financial year we implemented fundamental changes to improve how we manage building and fire safety, so that our customers will be, and will feel, safe in their homes;

Set up a Building Safety Team and Building Safety Committee to oversee the safety of our HRBs and compliance with statutory requirements.

Employed a Building Safety Manager (BSM) who visits all HRBs on a bi-weekly basis and will be an on-site presence to monitor building safety risks and liaise with customers.

Created a Permit to Work System to make sure any work done to HRBs doesn't affect the existing safety features. This is managed by our Building Safety Manager.

Reviewed our Fire Risk Assessments for all HRBs and created fire strategies.

Created a quarterly Building safety newsletter.

Completed Structural Surveys to identify the structural safety risks associated with each building.

Completed Compartmentation Surveys to identify the standards of passive fire protection.

Undertook Fire Risk Assessments of the External Wall Systems and completed RICS EWS-1 reports.

Registered our buildings with the Building safety Regulator and completed our Building safety cases for when we are called upon to provide them.

Installed Secure Information Boxes with information for emergency services in line with national guidance.

Engaged with the customers in our HRBs by letter, e-mail and text in order to recruit customers to join our Customer Building safety Group.

Completed a survey of our customers to find out:

- If they need evacuation assistance
- Who lives in their home
- Their preferred methods of contact and communication
- Their first language and any barriers to communication.

We have created and displayed posters in a dedicated building safety notice board and contacted all customers directly via letter to inform them;

- Of their building safety responsibilities under the Building Safety Act
- Who our Building safety team are and how to contact the team and their Building Safety Manager;
- How to report building safety concerns or risks (a copy of our Mandatory Reporting process is also available via our website)
- What action to take in the event of a fire or other building emergency.



How we will engage and communicate with our customers in the future.

We understand that our customer base is diverse and that our customers will have different needs and capacities to engage with us. This may be due to work commitments, time and family commitments, health status, or even willingness to engage.

We are committed to providing every customer with the opportunity to engage with us at a time and in a way that they are comfortable with.

We will provide a wide range of opportunities and channels for customers to;

- Speak to us about the day to day safety management and condition of their building;
- Speak to us about building safety concerns or risks;
- Speak to us about the work we plan to do to their buildings or homes;
- Speak to us about the changes that are proposed to how we manage building safety.

Customers can:

- Access key information regarding the safety of their building and home via the building safety notice board, located in the main entrance of their building.
- Access general information and advice regarding fire and structural safety (and other safety risks such as gas safety, electrical safety) by visiting Stonewater.org
- Contact their Building Safety Manager (BSM) directly via email and arrange a call back to discuss any day to day safety or security concerns
- Contact Stonewater to discuss any tenancy related matters
- Contact the Resolution team regarding any updates to an open ASB complaint
- Contact our Customer Relations team regarding any updates on open complaints regarding service failures
- Report any building safety concerns, risks or incidents via our online reporting form

Stonewater will:

- Ensure all customers (over the age of 16) receive written information annually regarding the safety of their homes
- Ensure all customers (over the age of 16) receive written information about what to do in the event of a building emergency and have the option to attend an in person session with the local fire service to discuss the buildings fire evacuation strategy
- Ensure all customers know how to inform us if they or someone in their household needs assistance to evacuate in the event of a building emergency
- Ensure all written information provided in buildings or sent directly to residents is easy to understand and includes diagrams where necessary
- All written information provided to residents will be made in a range of languages and accessible formats on request
- Regularly update the information contained in the building safety notice board to ensure it is up to date, ensuring information is available (upon request) in a range of formats and languages
- Work with the Customer Building safety Group to produce a quarterly building safety newsletter
- Work with our Customer Building safety Group to provide online training courses for customers on fire safety, home safety or general health and safety matters, and provide access to public training events on building safety for customers
- Arrange at least two in person events per year, where customers can engage with their Building Safety Manager, housing management colleagues from Stonewater, and other useful service providers such as their maintenance contractor or the local fire and rescue service. These will be hosted as close as possible to each building. At least one meeting will be scheduled outside working hours.
- Complete an annual tenancy check to ensure information we hold about customers' household composition and ability to evacuate the buildings is still up to date.
- Schedule quarterly online meetings for each HRB to give customers an opportunity to hear updates from the Building Safety Manager, raise concerns or ask questions about building safety.
- Continue to promote participation of the Customer Building safety Group varying the times and days of meetings, to make sure customers can attend.
- Inform customers of planned work at their buildings and consult customers regarding the scope of planned works before it begins.
- Invite customers to participate in contractor evaluations as part of the tender process.
- Invite customers to complete customer surveys to gain feedback on their satisfaction with Stonewater performance and their feelings regarding the safety in their homes.

Consulting on this strategy

This strategy has been developed in consultation with customers, and we welcome any views or comments from customers residing in our HRBs.

Prior to first publication and following significant change, we will share the strategy with customers in our HRBs the opportunity to give feedback on the contents of this strategy.

All feedback will be recorded and reviewed by the Customer Building safety Group.

Consulting on building safety decisions

We will consult customers on any changes that we plan to make to how we manage building safety (fire and structural) risks or on any physical changes that we plan to make to the building.

This could include (but is not limited to);

- Changes to our building safety strategy which outlines how we manage building safety
- Changes to our operating model for building safety (ie the building safety team structure and roles)
- Changes to how we manage fire safety
- Changes to the fire evacuation strategy
- Changes to how we manage structural safety
- Major works that we plan to carry out to the communal areas (i.e lift replacements; the installation of sprinkler systems; the replacement of fire doors etc)
- How customers report or building safety concerns or risks
- How customers report a building safety complaint

In some instances we may need to inform (rather than consult) with customers regarding building safety decisions, where we identify that a risk is intolerable and we need to take urgent action to ensure customers are safe.

In such cases we will always;

- Be transparent with customers regarding the nature and scale of the risk(s);
- Inform customers what actions we need to take, why we need to take them and in what timescales;
- Let customers know if changes are temporary or permanent;
- Tell customers how they can help us ensure their homes are safe;
- Provide regular (weekly) updates regarding progress/status;
- Be available to support any customers impacted by remediation works.
- Let leaseholders or shared owners know if any works will be rechargeable.

Distributing this strategy

We will provide a hard copy of this strategy to all households in our HRBs, as part of our annual building safety communication plan.

It will also be available on our website.



Measuring Success

Since the Customer Building safety Group first met in September 2023 there has been a significant improvement in the relationship between customers and Stonewater.

Customers have confirmed that the committee has provided a vehicle for them to raise concerns, be listened to and have issues resolved.

However we always want to hear from more customers and improve engagement.

Block	Engaged in CBSG	Engaged NOT in CBSG	Not Engaged
Atlantis Court	7% (2)	14% (4)	79% (22)
Charlottes Wharf	9% (3)	44% (14)	47% (15)
Newlands Place	3% (1)	36% (10)	61% (17)

In order to improve on engagement levels the Building Safety team, in consultation with our Customer Building Safety Group has created a number of key targets and deliverable, leading and lagging performance measures to improve and measure the success of this engagement strategy.

Deliverables

Key Deliverables	Target
Number of Customer Engagement Group meetings per year	4 per year
Number of Individual HRHRB face to face meetings per year	2 per year/block
Number of online individual HRHRB meetings per year	4 per year/block
Number of resident training courses provided in a year	2 per year
Number of newsletters in a calendar year.	4 per year

Performance Indicators

	Target
Number of Customer building safety concerns/ risks reported per year (on a block basis)	>2
Number of Customer injury accidents in communal areas as a result of building condition, per building per annum	>2
Number of customer building safety complaints per building per annum	>2
Number of Customer Building Safety Committee meetings cancelled due to low attendance	0
New tenants contacted by our BSM during first month of start of their tenancy	100%
Minimum of 75% of customers surveyed (bi-annual customer engagement survey) confirm they feel safe in their home.	+75%
All compliance checks are at 100% at year end	100%

Reviewing this strategy

To ensure that we are able to meet our customers' needs alongside regulatory requirements, this strategy will be reviewed annually with our Customer Building safety Group.

A review will also be undertaken following a submission of a building safety mandatory report or following completion of a capital investment program.

All residents over the age of 16 will be given the opportunity to comment on any proposed changes before implementation.

During this process, we will:

- Produce a consultation questionnaire
- Give customers at least three weeks to share feedback
- Review and carefully consider your feedback
- Make any necessary amendments based on the feedback received
- Share the changes we have made based on the feedback
- Ensure that any personal data we gather is handled in accordance with GDPR.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

To ensure this strategy does not exclude or negatively impact anyone based on their protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, we have completed an Equality Impact Assessment. You can find this at the end of this document.

If you want to find out more about helping us to shape our services, visit [Stonewater.org/get-involved](https://www.stonewater.org/get-involved)

Building safety Complaints

Customers can raise building safety complaints via Stonewater's complaints process. A copy of Stonewater's complaints policy is available on the website.



English

This document is available in other languages. If you require a translation you can contact us at customers@stonewater.org or call 01202 319 119.

عربي

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اردو

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