



East Region Virtual Open Forum: Question and Answers

Date: Wednesday 16 September 2020

Staff in attendance:

- Neil Coils, Regional Head of Housing East Region (NC)
- Gordon Brewer, Housing Operations Manager East Region (GB)
- Daven Hinkson, Leasehold Manager (DH)
- Geoff Bronson, Contract Operations Manager (GB)
- Lauren Picton, Sustainment and Partnerships Manager (LP)
- Andy Mackay, Building Safety Director (AM)
- Justin Pearce Neudorf, Brand and Creative Services Manager (JPN)
- Ollie Levy, Resident Involvement Manager (OL)
- Peter Bagley, Resident Involvement Officer (PB)

Video link: <https://youtu.be/KiiPHc8EUxo>

Fire safety information: Please visit <https://www.nhg.org.uk/residents/repairs-and-maintenance/safety-in-your-home/fire-fags/> for the latest information with regards to fire safety. Leaseholders are being sent quarterly briefings on fire safety. The next one should be circulated by your PMO in November. If you do not receive this briefing, please contact your PMO.

Questions and Answers:

	Question	NHG Response
1	Mr Carl Byrne, the Group director of housing, said in the summer edition of Connections (the magazine for residents) that Notting Hill Genesis were looking for six residents to support their board in making decisions by joining their governing committees. I applied on 4 August 2020 using the link provided and received an email confirming my application saying that a member of their team will be in touch shortly. Since then I chased Notting Hill Genesis for an update but never heard from them. Could you please update me?	Governance Response: We were very appreciative of a large number of our residents applying to become part of our formal governance community in our recent round of recruitment. The applications were of a very high quality. This made our review process very challenging and the review process was undertaken during the summer. We have been in touch with all applicants during this time with final emails circulated on 2 October to all applicants with the outcome as the recruitment process was finalised. The response to this particular query may have gone into the spam/junk folder but we will this follow up.
2	I complained to my Housing officer on 7 July 2020 about noise pollution and dust that I get every day from the building works. My Housing Officer said he would look into this but I haven't heard from him.	Housing - Neil Coils Apologies that your housing officer did not get back to you as promised. The building work near your apartment is being instructed by Ballymore, if you are still experiencing dust and noise issues from the site it will be best to raise

		these directly with Ballymore.
3	I suggested to my Housing officer to put notices on each lift landing to remind people to be considerate when using the lift and to maintain social distancing but to this date nothing has been done yet. In fact Notting hill Genesis is well behind in terms of doing the necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. I've let my Housing officer know about a resident who threw a party, consequently bringing crowds of people to the building but he asked me to gather evidence. Something need to be done about it urgently.	The communal areas where you live are managed and maintained by BAML, they are responsible for putting up any signage and this would be paid for through the service charge. Your housing officer has initially sent group emails to residents to remind them to maintain social distancing and limit number of guests.
4	It's been less than 7 months since the building was opened and if you look at the state of some areas, you'd think it's a building from the 80s. Many door locks are damaged, windows locks in the common area broken, rubbish everywhere in the corridor, the letter boxes damaged, roof hatch kept opened and people smoking weed in the staircases, corridors and car park. If Notting Hill Genesis doesn't do anything about it now by checking the CCTV and enforcing the law on the perpetrators, I don't think this building will last long."	On a recent visit we noticed a number of small repair items these have been raised to BAML to arrange the repairing of these. Please do report any repairs through 'My Account' on our website. We will also revisit the site in November to check on repairs progress with the items raised.
5	What is waking watch and who does it apply to? How is it supposed to work, what's it for?	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>The waking watch has been implemented as we have changed the fire strategy from "Stay Put" to "Simultaneous Evacuation". To support this we need a means of raising the alarm in the event of a fire-related incident.</p> <p>The waking watch carry out a patrol every fifteen minutes to check for any instances of smoke, fire, or the smell of burning. In the event of an incident, they will call the fire brigade and raise the alarm for all residents to evacuate the building. They will also assist any residents who may need support or assistance in evacuating the building. When the fire brigade arrives on site, they will update the firefighters about the location of the fire.</p>
6	How can you find out who to contact if your housing officer is off sick? Previous experience is 4 weeks for a reply. The email had a message saying HO is unwell but no forwarding address until after three weeks, and then the email was written wrong.	<p>Housing – Neil Coils</p> <p>We are discouraging contact by email as email accounts are not monitored when HOs are on leave or off sick. We do actively encourage all residents to set up an online account and use this as the primary method of contact. Residents are also able to make online maintenance requests, view their rent accounts and make payments as well as making request</p>

		for the HO to contact. These requests are monitored and in the event of an HO being absent, these are picked up by other members of the team.
7	What consultation did you have with London fire brigade before bringing in waking watch?	<p>Fire Safety Team – Andy Mackay</p> <p>Once we received the advice from our Fire Engineer that the fire strategy needed to be changed to “Simultaneous Evacuation” and the waking watch was implemented to support this, we notified the Fire Brigade of the change in fire strategy. The Fire Brigade will be carrying out a series of familiarisation visits to all buildings with a waking watch.</p>
8	Some residents are receiving emails with newsletters, links to this forum etc. I only heard this from a neighbour. How do you get on the relevant mailing list?	<p>Housing – Neil Coils</p> <p>We always use the email address that is registered on our system to making email contact with residents. If you are not receiving our newsletter every two months, we would suggest that you contact your housing officer to ensure we have your most up to date contact details.</p>
9	When will you start remedial works to the blocks that are unsafe because of fire risk?	<p>Fire Safety Team – Andy Mackay</p> <p>This will depend on a number of factors. We are in discussions with developers about the issues identified in the intrusive surveys; we are also pursuing claims against any NHBC warranties.</p> <p>Until the outcome of these discussions or claims are finalised, we cannot confirm dates. For specific information about individual blocks, please contact your Property Management Officer.</p>
10	Our waking watch staff have been here two weeks. We’ve seen them watching tv on phones, sleeping in the fire escape stairs, walking around with headphones on and chatting on the phone, and sitting in the same place for over an hour without patrolling the block. What training have they had and what is being done to ensure they are actually keeping us safer rather than just costing us all a fortune for no benefit?	<p>Fire Safety Team – Andy Mackay</p> <p>We are very sorry that you have experienced this level of service. We are holding weekly meetings with our contractor to ensure that the service provision improves and issues such as this are eradicated.</p> <p>We take the strongest possible action against operatives that are not doing their job correctly. We are in the process of installing a sensor system on each floor that the waking watch operative must log into every time they patrol each floor. We can analyse these reports to check that operatives are patrolling as they should.</p>

		<p>Each operative is fully trained and understand their responsibilities, additional onsite training is also provided by the contractor to ensure operatives understand any site-specific issues.</p> <p>We would be grateful if residents can continue to report any instances so these can be investigated fully by both ourselves and our contractor.</p>
11	<p>We have not received the bill for the ground rent yet this year. When will this happen in a clear and transparent manner without being included in the service charge bill? Every year it is such a chaos.</p>	<p>Leasehold – Daven Hickson</p> <p>We are performing a thorough ground rent review project following the system merge earlier this year. We are close to concluding the first stage and once finalised, the ground rent bills will be issued accordingly. We anticipate this will be completed by the end of March 2021 and appropriate payment arrangements can be made on a case-by-case basis where required. We apologise that this has taken longer than anticipated but we want to ensure completeness and accuracy.</p>
12	<p>When will there be a right to acquire/right to buy for a housing association tenant?</p>	<p>Housing - Neil Coils</p> <p>You can apply to buy your housing association home under the right to acquire. There are specific Government restrictions on this so please do discuss with your housing officer to see if your property is eligible.</p>
13	<p>Would it be possible to communicate which properties need an EWS1 form? We live in a four-storey building attached to a six and seven storey building. The other buildings have a fire warden, and we don't. The property manager just sent a link to the generic EWS1 page on your website.</p>	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>We have a large number of surveys to be undertaken and we are having to take a risk-based approach to undertaking testing to try and get the EWS 1 forms issued. Due to this, our initial focus is on buildings taller than 18 metres.</p> <p>We will be undertaking testing as quickly as we can, but the process is likely to take some time because of the numbers involved and the lack of qualified engineers able to undertake the works required.</p> <p>We would suggest that people being asked for this information living in buildings lower than 18m push back and ask whether there are specific reasons for requesting the EWS 1.</p>
14	<p>How will NHG act in relation to leaseholders who can't afford the coming charges for waking watch, fire alarm and cladding</p>	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>We will be exploring all options to access</p>

	<p>removal? Will you allow people time to pay or will you seek to repossess properties as arrears start to build up?</p>	<p>funding to cover the costs of the remediation work and waking watch, and other project costs, including any potential agreements with contractors, insurers including NHBC or the government. We cannot rule out that as a last resort leaseholders may be asked to contribute towards the cost through their service charge.</p> <p>We would discuss and agree individual repayment plans with leaseholders.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>When did NHG realise that new cladding inspections would have to take place? Was it after the government published Advice Note 14?</p>	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>Central Government issued a combined advice note in January this year, which stipulated that we needed to survey and inspect our buildings in a comprehensive manner to ensure that all construction work met building regulations.</p> <p>We undertook a risk-based survey to determine which blocks and developments should be surveyed first. There was an initial delay in getting to site due to the Covid-19 lockdown in March.</p> <p>We have now surveyed a large number of blocks and developments. For information specific to individual blocks, please contact your Property Management Officer.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>When will we have an update on whether leaseholders will have to pay for walking watch and other suggestions following the survey? We have had no clarity on whether NHG will cover this payment or if we will be asked to cover and it's very stressful. We assume NHG will cover the payment as they mentioned about a £93m profit last year but would greatly welcome clarity asap. Surely a cost has been agreed with the Walking watch contractors - please disclose this agreed cost. Please confirm NHG stance whether NHG is recommending leaseholders to pay for building surveys</p>	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>Regarding waking watch, leaseholders will only have to pay as the last resort. Leaseholders do not have to pay for building surveys.</p>
<p>17</p>	<p>How long should it take once you've logged a fault/problem with your apartment/flat? And should you have to keep chasing your housing officer for the repair to be fixed?</p>	<p>Housing - Neil Coils</p> <p>You should never have to chase a repair and apologises to those who have had to. The standard time to complete a repair is within 28 days, however some more complex or larger repairs may take longer. The most effective way of logging a repair is by setting up an online account My Account. This way you can report a repair and track its progress as well as supply photos and videos.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>Can you tell us if our insurance costs are also</p>	<p>Leasehold – Daven Hickson</p>

	going up due to waking watch and fire risk?	<p>NHG insures buildings on a blanket / group insurance policy for all our properties. No claims or activity on one particular building or unit will directly impact the premium. At this stage we are not aware of an industry-wide change where premiums are affected by building safety risks.</p> <p>There was a relatively large reduction for the 2019/20 financial year with NHG's combined larger portfolio of properties. We are budgeting for a slight increase across all stock in the coming financial year, 2021/2022, compared to the actual costs for 2019/20 but it is not significant.</p>
19	How soon do you plan on inputting the systems so that waking watch isn't needed?	<p>Leasehold – Daven Hickson</p> <p>We are at the final stages of the tender process to install the temporary fire alarm system. We anticipate that work will begin in November.</p>
20	We have waking watch but no s20 consultation. Why is this?	<p>Fire Safety Team – Andy Mackay</p> <p>Due to the relatively short time that the waking watch will be in place and the need to implement the change in fire strategy quickly, section 20 consultation is not required for this type of work. It is not a qualifying long-term agreement, as defined by Section 20 because it does not exceed a year.</p>
21	Are we allowed to sublet in the absence of an EWS1 as the remedial works could take years to sort and we can't sell in the interim?	<p>Leasehold – Daven Hickson</p> <p>Given the unique circumstances, NHG are willing to give permission as an exception. Please contact your Property Management Officer who will go through the process.</p>
22	Will you be carrying out fire safety surveys on blocks under 18m? We have both heights on our estate so assume construction is the same. You've found problems on the over18m buildings so are the smaller buildings also going to need work?	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>Yes, we will be carrying out surveys of buildings under 18 metres and some have already been done when they are part of developments that have blocks over 18 metres.</p> <p>Until surveys are completed, we will not know the extent of works required or if any works are required. For specific block information, please contact your Property Management Officer.</p>
23	How did our building get sign off as safe when the fire breaks are absent throughout?	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>We are carrying out investigations and are in discussions with original developers to understand the issues at the time of construction and how we can complete any</p>

		remedial works.
24	Can a letter be issued for buildings under 18m as not needing an EWS1 form? This will support the sale of our property.	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>The guidance issued by Council of Mortgage Lenders and RICS is that EWS1 certificates are required for buildings over 18 metres and buildings with combustible material as part of the external wall system.</p> <p>We would suggest that people being asked for an EWS1 in buildings lower than 18m push back and ask whether there are specific reasons for requesting the EWS1.</p>
25	Did NHG respond to the building safety bill consultation? Do you support the proposal to require leaseholders to pay building safety charges within 28 days?	<p>Fire Safety Team - Andy Mackay</p> <p>NHG have responded to the Building Safety Bill consultation directly. Regarding charges being paid within 28 days, our approach is that leaseholders will only be recharged as a last resort. We would agree individual repayment plans over an extended period of time.</p>
26	What are you doing to help disabled residents who can't evacuate buildings?	<p>Housing – Neil Coils</p> <p>Each block should have a copy of the fire evacuation policy normally posted on a notice board or at strategic place near the main entrance: this will tell give instructions on what action to take in the event of a fire. Any residents who may need additional help to evacuate the building are encouraged to talk to us so we can discuss a personal evacuation plan with them.</p>