



North Region Virtual Forum Questions and Answers

Date: Tuesday 2 March 2021

Staff in attendance:

- Richard Bellis, Head of North Region
- Rachel Dow, Leasehold Manager
- Troy Husbands, Contract Operations Manager, North region
- Tanya Basse, Resident Involvement Project Manager
- Lauren Picton, Partnerships manager
- Radka Allen, Housing Operations Manager
- Andy Mackay, Building Safety Director

Video link: <https://youtu.be/liE7m4Mcnig>

Questions and Answers:

	Question	Answer
1	Are housing officers' responses to emails also monitored in the same way as you described phone calls are on Bright Surveys? If not, housing officers will understandably take even longer to respond to emails.	Email responses are not monitored in the same way. It is expected that housing officers will acknowledge emails in 24 hours and respond as soon as possible.
2	How can residents put in requests for things like a carpet refresh? I've lived in my property since 2013; not once has the property been reviewed nor I approached to see if improvements are needed.	We do not provide or renew flooring in our properties except for in the kitchen and bathroom. Flooring in communal area is reviewed and renewed as may be required during planned cyclical works.
3	Can you please clarify whether NHG is covering the costs for intrusive surveys?	NHG has not been charging for the initial intrusive survey costs to assess if there are any issues with the blocks. Where further surveys are required to get a detailed scope of the works, this would form part of the remediation costs and may be charged.
4	Why have all smoke alarms and fire extinguishers been removed from communal areas?	This needs to be followed up with Fire Team. However, it may have been smoke alarms were replaced with another alarm (address would be helpful).

5	Why are your accounts so far behind?	Due to the merger of Notting Hill Housing and Genesis, two differing service charge systems had to worked on and this caused some issues. We needed more time to receive certain accounts where we felt there may be incorrect costs allocated, which is why we had to Section 20B a number of accounts. We hope to finalise all accounts shortly.
6	If you are on shared ownership, how do you find out what repairs and upkeeps of property are a responsibility of NHG and what are the ones for the leaseholder?	You will need to review the terms of your lease. Essentially, anything inside your flat is your responsibility and anything outside and communal is NHG's. If you are unsure about responsibility of an issue, please ask your PMO.
7	Any updates on the discounts for right to acquire?	The policy is unchanged. The level of discount is the same as before and eligibility is the same as before. More info on government website
8	Hi, this question may be not appropriate for this session however it was raised multiple times with our property manager as well as Park Direct but was never resolved. There's a big problem with parking in Wells Mews, N11 2DQ. There are cars without parking permits parked in or outside the bays, or parked sideways, or on the pavement blocking everyone, particularly overnight. Park Direct ignores all calls or emails, Enfield Council says it's up to the property owner. Park Direct comes very rarely and around lunch time when most of the cars are gone. Is this something you can help with please?	We have recently reinstated the parking patrols for the Wells Mews development. This should significantly improve the parking situation for you. If you continue to have issues please do contact your PMO.
9	Does this mean that NHG is going to await BSF decision before repairing the buildings?	There is often more than one potential funding source for remedial works in specific buildings. These include recourse to the original developer, either working collaboratively or via legal action, claims on NHBC or a similar building warranty, and if the building meets the requirements, an application to the Building Safety Fund. Once a building has been surveyed and we have established further details regarding compliance with building regulations or identified any fire defects, we progress remedial works, based on priorities. We do not always need to await confirmation of funding sources to progress works, but we would normally wait for confirmation that grant (or other sources) have been approved.

10	Building costs should be NHG's responsibility including fire safety; leaseholders should never be told to pay for this.	Where remedial works need to take place in the external wall system, our first call is to the original developer to either work collaboratively or if needed by pursuing legal action. There may also be other potential funding sources such as warranties (NHBC and the like) or the Building Safety Fund, if the building qualifies. It is only if external funding sources do not cover all of the remedial works, NHG are unable to cover all of the remaining costs, and may need to resort to recharging leaseholders, in line with the terms of the lease.
11	What does decanting a building mean?	Decanting a building means to evacuate and empty that building of residents living there.
12	Erin Court: We asked for a virtual session with NHG, our housing officer and residents at last one of these meetings and were told that you would arrange something. This never happened.	Sincere apologies that this did not happen. The PMO for this site has not been working for a number of months and we have had someone covering her role. Once she is back we will ensure a virtual meeting is arranged.
13	Which properties do the kitchen and bathroom renewals apply to?	It's a planned programme done on individual need. A surveyor would attend and make a recommendation. Please contact your HO for more details.
14	Are those who are Shared Ownership eligible for kitchen and bathroom renewals?	No sorry, this is your responsibility as leaseholders.
15	How do you deal with repairs that are not completed properly (eg they immediately break again), especially when this happens repeatedly?	This should be raised with your Housing Officer. Where there are multi call-backs for the same repair, this would be escalated to management level internally.
16	Regarding building safety, can you explain what is happening with Type 4 surveys? How are you organising this? How many have been done? Who performs these surveys? Who pays for them?	NHG has a rolling programme of surveys and inspections of external wall systems, and as part of that, we need to conduct internal (Type 4) reviews. Due to Covid restrictions, these have been lagging behind or works on the external walls but have been carried out on around 40 blocks. We are working with external specialist consultants to complete these surveys. The initial survey costs are being absorbed by NHG.
17	Any information/updates about housing transfers?	Residents requiring a transfer need to contact housing officer for an application form. When the application is assessed they receive a priority banding according the reason for the transfer and then they would need to bid on Locata. Other options for a transfer is a mutual exchange, application for a Household Member Scheme, Housing Moves.
18	Are you aware that sometimes leaseholders are notified of checks and work being	Some works will take place in the communal areas of your building without your prior

	conducted on their building *after* the work has already been carried out? What are you doing to ensure this doesn't happen going forwards?	knowledge such as an electrical repair to the communal lights. However, in case of larger scale works which cause disruption to residents, you should be notified. All leaseholders are consulted over any works which will cost them £250 each or above as per Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1985. For further information on this specific case please do contact your PMO.
19	What plan do you have to sort or ease overcrowded houses. Can NHG help overcrowded houses with extensions/ loft conversion?	Households that are overcrowded can apply for a transfer or mutual exchange. The Household Member scheme also is an option for eligible households.
20	Re: Building Safety and Insurance: There was a Commons HCLG meeting on Monday 1 March 2021 where Kate Henderson from the National Housing Federation said 'Insurance premium increases not such a big issue for @natfedevents members as in private blocks according to @KateNHF - some key reasons are that HA's have insurance managers, buy as portfolios and don't have a 'commission share' incentive. Please can you confirm that this is the case for NHG buildings that need remediating.	Our insurers are fully aware of the external cladding systems on our buildings. NHG have a single insurance premium for all the buildings that we own and the risk is aggregated across the portfolio.
21	Are you able to send me a copy of my lease?	We can, but we charge a fee for it. I would advise you to obtain a copy from land registry who are much cheaper.
22	Hiya, as a shared ownership (leaseholder) do I need permissions to update bathroom, kitchen and light fittings?	You do not require our permission if you are changing like-for-like, that is simply upgrading what is already there. You do need our permission if you are changing something, such as changing from a shower to a bath as this is an alteration or an improvement. For more information on this please contact your PMO.
23	How fair is your assessment of kitchen replacements? I have lived in my property for 18 years. Recently the kitchen cabinet has broken down beyond repair but NHG says I had to repair out of own pocket. My neighbour's unit got broken and it was refitted.	In order to be replaced, kitchens would need to be inspected by Assets (surveyor) who will make a recommendation for the kitchen replacement. If any repairs are needed in the meantime, these can be reported through MyAccount or to HO.
24	Do you provide a lift for people in buildings of five floors?	Lifts are installed when properties are built. We would not install a lift in a block of flats which does not have it.
25	How do I find out if my property is on the cyclical works for 2021? I am referring to external parts of property. I am a leaseholder.	You need to contact your PMO who will be able to advise.
26	I've lived in my property for 25 years. Am I eligible to buy it?	Right to Acquire eligibility criteria will apply

27	Swale actually put in writing asking if we would like them to wear PPE! This is mandatory. They should be wearing PPE at all times. Not all contractors are wearing appropriate PPE, working to government guidelines. Why is this allowed?	All contractors have been informed that they are required to wear PPE. We apologise if this was not the case in certain instances, and will reinforce this at the next round of contract performance meetings.
28	Why has my housing officer changed so many times over the last 18 months?	We would normally only change a Housing Officer when necessary and most often a new Housing Officer would take over a patch when the previous one has left or changed roles.
29	How are decisions about rent levels made? Recent new developments by NHG have been beyond affordability and rents have been higher than market prices for the area. What measures are there to help with social mobility where household needs outgrow current property but residents are unable to find affordable rent in higher bedroom property?	NHG has a rent setting policy. Affordable Rents are set for new developments and when an existing affordable rent property is re-let in line with guidelines published by the Regulator of Social Housing. Affordable Rents are inclusive of service charges. New Affordable Rents will be set at the lowest of 80% of market rent or Local Housing Allowance levels.
30	Could you provide details as to how tenants can report to 'line managers' if housing officer does not respond?	If a Housing Officer does not respond to emails, then this should be raised as a Complaint using 'My Account'
31	Thank you for offering to send out a list of housing officer line managers. That will be helpful. Because if the issue is that the housing officer doesn't respond to emails, my fear would be that they don't open a 'task' and so these will slip under any monitoring radar.	If a Housing Officer does not respond to emails, then this should be raised as a Complaint using 'My Account'
32	Can you please clarify whether NHG is covering the costs for intrusive surveys?	NHG has not been charging for the initial intrusive survey costs to assess if there are any issues with the blocks. Where further surveys are required to get a detailed scope of the works, this would form part of the remediation costs and may be charged.
33	Are there any updates on the right to buy for HA tenants? Same rights as local authority tenants. Currently we only have the right to acquire.	There is currently no right to buy for HA tenants.
34	You have said that residents were contacted about the fire upgrades. Some of us haven't. Does that mean we don't fall into the not being charged category?	All leaseholders will have received a quarterly update on the general progress of building safety investigations, as projects progress on specific sites and developments, then we will provide resident updates to all residents on those sites. If you have not received notification, then it is more likely that we have not yet investigated your block.
35	Shared ownership question - how do you access a sinking fund?	The sinking fund is used for one-off large items of works. Residents do not access themselves - we manage the funds on your behalf.

36	I've lived in my property for 25 years. Am I eligible to buy it?	All RTA eligibility criteria would apply in the normal way
37	What plan does NHG have to sort or ease overcrowded houses? Can you help overcrowded houses with extensions/ loft conversions?	Households that are overcrowded can apply for a transfer or mutual exchange. The Household Member scheme also is an option for eligible households.
38	What is the average time spent on Locata before being offered a place?	The time that households will need to wait before they are successful in bidding on Locata depends on a number of factors, their priority band, time they have been waiting, the type of property they are bidding for and others. It is therefore not possible to say how long the wait might be. It will vary for different households.
39	Are service charges going up this year? How do I find out this information about my property so I can budget well in these difficult times? Of course if they are going down, that would be welcome but also good to know in advance.	You should have received confirmation on all your new charges by now. New charges are implemented from 1 April and residents are notified a few weeks beforehand.
40	Is there any support from NHG for single parents? And if yes, how do I find out more about this provision/support?	<p>Yes we have a range of support on offer for single parents ranging from debt advice, budgeting support, energy support, employment and training support, legal advice and wellbeing. You can search through our full partner database where you can search and filter according to your needs. See https://www.nhg.org.uk/supportservices/</p> <p>The best way to keep updated with the latest support and initiatives is to join our mailing list http://eepurl.com/gz3KAT</p> <p>If you need support with a welfare benefits issue or you are experiencing financial hardship please speak to your housing officer who if appropriate will be able to refer you to internal support.</p>
41	Why has my housing officer changed so many times over the last 18 months?	Most often a new Housing Officer would take over management of a patch when the previous one had left or changed roles.
42	I can't get an answer when I email my contact at NHG - what do I do?	If a Housing Officer or PMO does not respond to emails, then this should be raised as a Complaint using 'My Account'
43	Rather than sell a house at an auction, why not offer it to an overcrowded household, regardless of the state and they can do it up and release their unit?	Houses that are sold by NHG often require substantial and expensive works to be completed on them and so this is not an option.
44	How do you deal with repairs that are not completed properly, especially when this happens repeatedly?	If the repair is not completed properly a recall would be raised to the contractor. If this happens repeatedly the Housing Officer would raise this

		with the Contract Manager who will raise with the contractor.
45	How do I find out who is our housing officer?	Housing Officer's name and contact details can be found through our website.
46	Thank you for responding to advise emails are not monitored. Could you provide details as to how tenants can report to 'line managers' if housing officer does not respond?	If a Housing Officer does not respond to emails, then this should be raised as a Complaint using 'My Account'
47	I think I've found a discrepancy in my rent/service charge from 2017. Who can I speak to about this?	Details of the query can be directed to the HO/PMO who will investigate.
48	Can we have a customer service email back so that housing officers etc are held accountable when they fail to respond?	If a Housing Officer does not respond to emails, then this should be raised as a Complaint using 'My Account'
50	Why are debts/payments assigned to a property, not to a tenant?	Accounts like service charge accounts for leaseholders and rent accounts <i>are</i> normally set up for the tenant or leaseholder. They are closed when the tenancy ends or the leasehold is sold with new accounts created for the new leaseholder or tenant.