



## West Region Virtual Open Forum Q&As

14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Staff in attendance:

- Ludo Basse - Regional Head of Housing (West Region)
- Lauren Picton - Sustainment and Partnerships Manager
- Mike Bester & Mahbubar Rahman - Leasehold Manager & Senior Property Management Officer
- Robert Manning - Asset Lead (Repairs)
- Nick Trotman - Asset Lead (Planned Investments)
- Kindy Bansal-Shah - Head of Building Safety (Remediation)
- Ollie Levy - Resident Involvement Manager

Video link: [https://youtu.be/myW\\_lbSV\\_RM](https://youtu.be/myW_lbSV_RM)

### Questions and Answers:

	Question/Query	Answer
Q1	When remediation works start on buildings affected by fire safety works, what kind of offers are available for residents (i.e., rehousing in temporary accommodation)? Works will be disruptive to residents' lives, especially to those working nightshifts regularly.	Any contractors working on site will be expected to adhere to strict conduct standards and should take all reasonable steps to minimise their impact on residents' enjoyment of their homes. While there may be some disruption, NHG would not ordinarily consider temporary rehousing unless there was an ongoing interruption to vital services, such as water or electricity. As this is unlikely to happen, we would ask that you discuss individual circumstances with your local officer.
Q2	If an FRA reveals issues that go beyond the scope of the EWS1 form, like insulation, have you carried out remedial work at the cost of leaseholders?	It is NHG's position that we will only attempt to recover costs from leaseholders as a last resort. We will pursue all other avenues of cost recovery, such as applications to the Building Safety Fund negotiations with Developers and Building Insurance claims before attempting recharge residents for vital fire safety works. In instances where this is necessary Leaseholders will be fully consulted on costs

		and payment plans can be discussed on an individual basis.
Q3	Please can you confirm that you have applied for the Building Safety Fund for remedial work to higher risk buildings in your portfolio?	NHG have submitted applications to the Building Safety Fund for any blocks where issues have been identified that fulfil the necessary criteria.
Q4	Would NHG consider buying back properties from shared owners, who cannot sell but would like to move on due the #FireSafetyScandal?	Without more details on the specific fire-safety issue that you are referring to, it is assumed that works to your building have been identified, but that you have been told that buyers won't be interested in your flat until these are completed. We are afraid that there are currently no plans to buy back flats where this is an issue. However, if you need to move out of your shared ownership flat, we may consider allowing you to rent it out for a period of time. If you believe that this situation applies to you, you should contact your PMO to discuss this.
Q5	There is a Community Development Trust in the West Region, set up in part by NHG and other key stakeholders. NHG have been absent for years. On partnerships, please can you confirm if you would endeavour to work with groups on matters of shared interest?	We are always happy to be involved with local community trusts or initiatives. Please could you send me more details about the trust you mentioned, and I will make contact- you can email me on <a href="mailto:lauren.picton@nhg.org.uk">lauren.picton@nhg.org.uk</a>
Q6	Do housing association tenants of Notting Hill Genesis have the right to buy the house?	Right to Buy usually applied to local authority residents however Right to Acquire may apply to NHG residents. Whether there is the Right to Acquire will depend on the tenancy residents hold, the length of time in occupation and the type of property. The Right to Acquire was developed in 1996 but was updated in the Housing Act 2004. It gives tenants the right to buy their property at a reduced cost and the reduction is calculated dependent on the above criteria. Please note not all residents will hold this right and if you are interested in gathering more information, please contact your Housing Officer. They will work with our internal resales team to gather your details and send you out a pack where the right applies.

Q7	<p>I have used "My Account" many, many times - some successfully, but more unsuccessfully. I remain convinced that certain areas of the app would benefit from Resident/Workwise getting together in order for Residents to show the experts where we are experiencing problems, as I am sure everyone involved could benefit..... Thank you.</p>	<p>My Account is a great way to make payments and review your rent account, raise and track repairs and also raise a request for your Housing Officer or Property Management Officer to get in contact with you. For more details or to register please visit <a href="http://www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account/">www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account/</a>. Also, within this page there are useful tips for when issues arise. NHG carried out a survey earlier this year asking for feedback on My Account, and this was reviewed by the project group who work with staff to develop the functionality. The group meet monthly to make improvements and improve the user experience. Thank you to all those residents who provided feedback as this is being used in the changes we will make.</p>
Q8	<p>Workmen can arrange an appointment and not show up at allocated time i.e., 11-1! Don't hear anything from them until they call up at 4.30 (3 and a 1/2 hour past latest time) and try and gain access! I tell them no, you've missed appointment, HO has now cancelled appointment as I've fixed problem! And they still get paid for attending and doing inspection! Surely if they do not attend, they should not get paid! Our money being wasted! Why are we paying for Workman that pick and choose when to show! Surely their contract with NHG/Plentific states they show at allocated time to get paid!</p>	<p>Firstly, I would like to confirm that our contractors or subcontractors are only paid when the job is attended. Our repairs will usually book an AM or PM slot, but we recognise that when emergencies arise some appointments may need to be rearranged. Where this is the case, you should receive a call to notify you of this. Our Housing Officer and Surveyors work to review completed jobs and carry out a sign off process on My Account or on the Plentific platform. When this is in My Account residents can review the information and query/dispute the works carried out. We are currently working on improving the sign off process which is one of the focuses of the Housing Service Improvement Plan</p>
Q9	<p>Does Notting hill genesis use contractors that never seem to fix issues or do poor jobs in repairs? It is a false economy, as the repair has to be done over again. Use skilled people / business contracts in the local community that have a good reputation. May pay a bit extra but more economical in the long run.</p>	<p>NHG uses both large and small contractors to carry out repairs. The repairs service is dependent on the area you live. All of our contractors will carry out the works to the best of their ability and pictures should be taken of all completed works. This can then be reviewed by Housing Officers or Surveyors depending on the type of job. Where a repair is not possible, we will review alternative options such as renewing the item. If a resident is unhappy with the works carried out this can be raised on My Account or via your Housing Officer who will take this up with the contractor who carried out the repair.</p>

Q10	<p>We have had three PMO changes in three years, the most recent was a month ago. The lack of continuity is a real issue in this regard. Is there no handover process from one PMO to another?</p>	<p>We understand there may be occasions where there are changes in the PMO managing your property and sometimes this can be more often than we would hope for. Whilst staff changes within leasehold are not uncommon, there is little we can do to prevent someone from moving on whether they choose to leave the organisation or in some cases get promoted. We invest in our permanent staff by way of training and development courses and always encourage development opportunities and progression within the department where possible. In relation to changes in particular handovers, each PMO has an in-depth handover with their predecessor which is captured in each scheme information sheet. This holds key information about the property, current repairs and ongoing projects. During the handover it's an opportunity for the new PMO to capture all the information relevant for the property they will be managing but I do agree there is room for improvement which we will focus on to ensure the service you receive is consistent.</p>
Q11	<p>Jobs in the dynamic purchasing system are going missing or not being logged properly and this is causing untold issues for leaseholders. How can this be improved? How will this be reflected in the needed upgrade to the Workwise app?</p>	<p>Please contact your local officer who will be able to assist.</p>
Q12	<p>At the March meeting the following question was asked: can you make ALL transactions visible for service charge (= sundry) accounts in the NHG MyAccount section? Currently only the last 12 months' transactions are available. Any progress on this please? Also, no specific descriptions of transactions are available, adding extra info would also be helpful. The only current alternative is I have to ask my Housing Officer for a full account. Thank you I live in High Pint Village in Hayes.</p>	<p>We want to make My Account as useful for customers as possible, but we also want to ensure that it runs quickly for them, and that it doesn't contain too much information. At the moment, we think that the transaction information which is available strikes this balance. However, we have asked the development team about the possibility of increasing the number of months transactions that are shown on My Account, and also if more information about each transaction can be shown. We will feedback the results of this at the next Forum.</p>

Q13	<p>My service charge has gone up by more than 53% since I moved into a shared ownership flat (since 2012). The managing agent is absolutely shameless in digging into our pockets. Currently they manage to spend / splurge on who-knows-what over £2.2 million pounds per year. When I applied for shared ownership, I had to pass an affordability test to be able to go ahead. How can NHG help price sensitive shared owners not to be taken advantage of by the incompetent managing agent's excessive charges?</p>	<p>NHG are currently reviewing all our schemes where we are the superior landlord or freeholder and have a managing agent providing management services. We understand there is a need for a review to ensure we have agents in place that are both value for money and meet the expectations of the services our customers expect to receive. This project will support the organisation to setup a framework to appoint future managing agents on a scheme where we are the legal party responsible for providing management services. This is a key step forward to managing some of the issue's leaseholders have raised around efficiency, value for their money and for their questions to be answered.</p> <p>As part of this project, we carried out a survey to gather feedback on the experiences of Notting Hill Genesis (NHG) residents living at schemes where the communal services are provided by a third-party managing agent. The analysis of this data will help us to understand customers' expectations of managing agents, transparency around service charges and how they can provide feedback to shape the services we provide. This is a big project, but we are keen to work with residents to create value for money and ensure the services provided meets the requirements of their homes.</p> <p>On schemes where NHG is an intermediate landlord and do not hold the freehold, service charge estimates will be prepared by the Superior Landlord or their appointed Managing Agent. Your Property Management Officer (PMO) will still follow a review process to identify any issues and provide residents with a formal opportunity to raise queries so that these can be given to the managing agent to address. The PMO will write to the managing agent to ask that they prepare to answer those questions received or that a meeting is arranged with the PMO to do so. The PMO will also take this opportunity to address any queries to the managing agent which have arisen as a result of their initial review of the estimates. Once the review has been completed and queries answered, the PMO will prepare a summary of responses received and provide the details of these to all the residents through a circular communication.</p> <p>If you would like to provide some feedback on the current managing agent or the services they provide, please can you contact your PMO to discuss as we would be grateful for your input.</p>
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Q14	<p>Hi, I'm from Park West Property West Drayton - Leasehold - Service charge keeps increasing but level of service from First port going down the drains. Parking problems, you cannot buy additional permits. The Notting Hill blocks area aren't maintained properly as the other blocks.</p>	<p>Please contact your local officer who will be able to assist.</p>
Q15	<p>I am a share ownership customer, our development has been completely abandoned, no maintenance, beside the normal cleaning, about 10 minutes a week, things are starting to fall out, garden is overgrowing... is a plan to visit sites to check the state of it?</p>	<p>Thank you for comments and we appreciate you bringing this to our attention.</p> <p>As part of the Property Management Officer role, monthly inspections of the building and larger estates should be carried out to identify repairs and address health and safety matters before they become a serious issue. The Covid-19 pandemic and at the start of the restrictions had meant these inspections were halted and we understand this may have impacted the state of your building and estates. As the restrictions have slowly eased our PMO's will be visiting your building and estates regularly to continue these inspections.</p> <p>We continue to encourage residents to communicate with their PMO or by logging this through the NHG app "My account" requesting call backs if there are any issues you would like to discuss which will help to improve the services and ensure your building and estates are managed more effectively.</p> <p>In the interim for the customer who had raised this question I have contacted your PMO and asked them to contact you to discuss your concerns in more detail and request that they arrange their next inspection informing you ahead of their visit.</p>
Q16	<p>Is it real than there is 5 days turn around for any questions to our PMO? This is a long time, which in reality is usually much longer, so why is not an automatic response to let us know that the email has been received? I never know if they got the email or not!!!</p>	<p>From comparisons with other large organisations, we feel that five days to respond to an email is a reasonable amount of time. However, we would encourage all residents to use MyAccount to submit queries. Not only is this quicker and easier for you than an email, but you can be sure that your query will be directed to the right person straight away. You will also be able to view the progress of the query via My Account.</p>

Q17	<p>As leaseholders we are finding it difficult to find reliable plumbers and other technicians to attend household repairs and replacements. it would be great if NHHG make available their technicians to attend repairs and charge the cost to our accounts. This arrangement would not only be cheap for leaseholders but also prevent damages to the building due to the engagement of unreliable handymen!</p>	<p>As a landlord we have our internal procurement process for appointing contractors for repairs and services we provide to manage communal areas and landlord obligations as per the lease. Notting Hill Genesis would not be able to disclose our contractors for leaseholders to use for several reasons; firstly, we have a contract in place and altering any agreements may breach the contract with the provider. There is also the additional difficulty to manage customers' expectations when things go wrong, for example where works are not completed to the standard expected by the customer, therefore managing these disputes would be quite difficult. In addition, the contractors rely on NHG to provide them with all the information as part of their contract to ensure the buildings and estates they visit have a risk assessment completed and this would not be something we would consider for leaseholder's flats. There is also the added complication around liability insurance and with the final point of NHG remaining impartial when a dispute arises.</p> <p>In today's market there are various platforms for homeowners to source a reputable contractor and we would recommend you explore these avenues if you require a trades person to carry out repairs within your home or for works that fall under the leaseholders responsibility stipulated in the lease.</p>
Q18	<p>Our cyclical maintenance, including much needed window replacement, is delayed by quite a few years and at this point you can't blame the pandemic. If it's going to happen this summer, then please provide dates asap so we can plan accordingly. 2. We are a dumping ground for local fly tippers. Not only is the bin area an eye sore and breeding ground for mice and rats, but we we've been paying for other people's rubbish for a number of years now. This whole nightmare really needs to be resolved asap. 3. The newly appointed gardeners are not doing nearly as good a job as the previous company. 4. Cleaners are not allowed to use ladders so there is no-one to clean communal windows from the outside. Whose job is that then? 5. There is still loads of leaves in the gutters, which broke in a couple of places recently. The unblocking should be done on regular basis, at least a couple of times a year I imagine, so you don't waste our money on emergencies (cherry pickers are too expensive). Thank you.</p>	<p>Your PMO will be able to provide more detailed responses to these questions, but in relation to the performance of our sub-contractors, we would always urge leaseholders to report any time that they are unhappy with the quality of what Just Ask are doing. The PMO will be able to report this to the relevant supervisor, and Just Ask have always been happy to meet with the PMO and leaseholders on site to see the specific areas that are not being maintained satisfactorily.</p>