

Big victory for residents on fire safety

Haringey Council is in the leading pack of housing providers in asking residents about adequate means of escape in emergency evacuations.

However, the Council has now abandoned its defective safety survey of residents in 42 high and mid rise blocks. In its door-knocking and online survey, the Council 'forgot' to remind people that the lifts cannot be used in the case of a fire evacuation.

Following tenant objections and letters to Councillors - and after an initial response which did not address the issues raised - they have had to change the plan.

Now they are going to do the survey all over again, and this time mention that the lifts cannot be used. That is the strict instruction to residents in the case of a fire evacuation, 'do not use the lift'.

The council's turnaround was announced by Building Safety Manager Chris Gill at a stormy resident consultation meeting on Tuesday 26 March.

This is a big win for residents. There will be many more challenges in Haringey, in the struggle for safer homes as the Building Safety Act 2023 is implemented.

Haringey Council's "mistake" in forgetting about the lifts is part of a much wider problem. Almost 7 years on since the Grenfell disaster, the government has sided with the housing industry in refusing to make Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for disabled people mandatory for the owners and managers of high rise residential buildings.

Their reasons have included suggesting that disabled people leaving a building might obstruct the escape of the able bodied.

The government also suggested that high leasehold charges to pay for PEEPs would create ill feeling against those who might benefit from them, as young and healthy people saw their bills rise to pay for measures to support the evacuation of disabled, elderly, or vulnerable residents.

Because of this, the government concluded that 'mandating PEEPs as described in the consultation at this time could in fact have a detrimental effect on those with certain protected characteristics: in particular, disabled individuals, the elderly, and those who are less mobile due to pregnancy or maternity'.¹

So there is a lot more to do, to win safer homes from this government and any future government.

¹ Home Office, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in High-Rise Residential Buildings – recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report: Government response https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1081886/PEEPs_Consultation_Response.pdf See para 3 of Safety Case on p 53, para 3 of Proportionality on p 55, para 2 of Summary on p56.

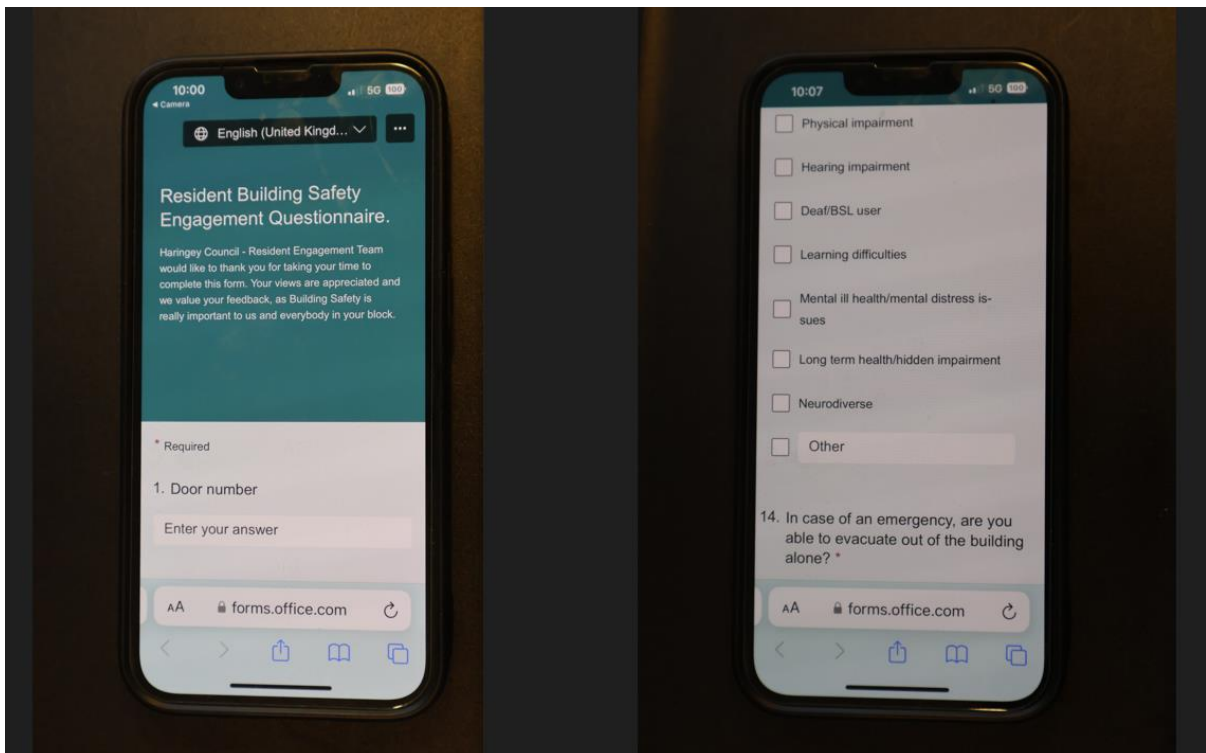
[Here is the email which was sent to the Council](#)

From: Paul Burnham <haringey_dch@outlook.com>
Sent: 17 March 2024 11:37
To: buildingsafetyengagement@haringey.gov.uk
Subject: Means of escape from high rise buildings - Residents will not be able to use the lift

To the Building Safety Engagement team

Dear colleagues

I was very concerned to read Question 14 of the current Building Safety consultation for residents of high rise buildings: 'In case of emergency, are you able to evacuate out of the building alone?'



The Council is seeking to identify vulnerable residents who might have difficulty in escaping in case of a fire.

However, this wording is not acceptable, because it ignores the key fact that people would not be allowed to use the lift in case of a fire.

It is disabled and vulnerable people who are most reliant on the lifts. Some may be able to get out okay with the use of the lift, but not using the stairs. They would have to use the latter in the case of a fire evacuation.

This survey question could place people's lives at risk.

I believe that the survey should be done again, and done properly this time.

I look forward to your response according to the council's published timescales for replies to correspondence.

This message is copied to all Councillors.

Kind regards

Paul Burnham

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