

Briefing Note for *Lessons from Grenfell Community Think Tank*

The Housing Plus Academy wants to bring together tenants from **multi-storey** estates around the country to share their views of living in blocks of flats. There are many positive reasons why high-rise blocks are built and people make secure, welcoming homes in those communities.

The **Grenfell fire changed everything**. It highlighted the lack of careful management of high rise blocks, the poor standard of repair and upgrading, the inadequate checks and misapplied fire safety measures, the lack of clear information and guidance to tenants, the conflicting advice and barriers to tenants getting their worries, fears and experiences heard or acted on. The disaster also highlighted the lack of control over follow-on lettings from Right to Buy converting to profitable Buy-To-Let tenancies.

We aim to gather **residents' experiences, develop action plans for estates, and develop clear messages to landlords, professional bodies and to the government**. Everyone recognises now that the way social housing is run has to change. Tenants need to access their landlord to get their concerns heard.

Many follow through actions are already happening. Some tower blocks now have no gas supply for safety reasons. Some have been evacuated. Some are being stripped of their expensive cladding and tenants' bills will inevitably rise as a result. **We are preparing an information and resource pack to help tenants steer their way through often conflicting advice**. We are asking fire services, building research bodies, recognised architects, surveyors and government to provide the clearest, most authoritative guidance, which we will turn into simple information sheets for the Think Tank.

We will also have on-hand **support staff and advisers ready to help participants with specific problems**. We very much hope that residents from estates facing these serious challenges will come as they will be able to help us understand the serious challenges, the barriers to overcoming them and ways forward.

We want **tenants from diverse backgrounds, different age groups, different parts of the country, and different landlords** all to join in this combined effort to draw the lessons from Grenfell and then persuade landlords, councils and government to apply them. There has to be a way forward that helps and we want to help find it. So please join us at Trafford Hall on October 30th-31st for a dedicated 24 hours in a peaceful, green environment, with help at hand. Together we can solve this problem.

The Housing Plus Academy reflects the diversity of social housing among our staff, tenants and customers because we believe that diversity gives us access to better ideas, innovation and solutions. Recognising the benefits of diversity means that we would like to invite more people from a wide variety of backgrounds to join us. So, for example, if you have a different thinking style, are from an ethnic minority background, are younger, or perhaps you have a disability, your experience will be invaluable in keeping us current and relevant, and will be welcome.

Community Think Tank
Lessons from Grenfell
Trafford Hall, near Chester
Monday 30th - Tuesday 31st October
Facilitator: Tim Morton

Day One: 30th October

2.00pm Registration. Tea and coffee will be available (lunch will not be provided)

2.30 – 3.15pm

Session 1: Introductory session

- Why did the Grenfell fire disaster change the way we think?
- Multi-storey blocks need on-site management
- Essential safety measures in blocks of flats
- Why are tower blocks different?
- Why we need all the social housing we've got
- Lessons from past disasters in high-rise blocks

Contributors: Anne Power (LSE); Margaret Pierre (High Trees)

3.15– 4.30pm

Session 2: Living in multi-storey estates

- Living close to neighbours
- Security and social control
- Caretaking and maintenance
- Social facilities and outdoor space

Contributors: Peter McLoughlin (Sheffield City Council); Andrea Newton (Lancaster West Residents Association)

4.30 – 4.45pm Refreshment break

4.45 – 6.00pm

Session 3: Making high-rise blocks work

- What does make private blocks work?
- How do social landlords differ?
- Why do residents need to get involved?
- What does make a high-rise block work?

Contributors: Christopher Took (Charecroft TRA); Anne Power (LSE)

6.00 – 6.30pm Free time and networking

6.30 – 7.45pm Dinner in ballroom

7.45pm onwards

After-dinner debate – *chaired by Anne Power*

- *“Multi-storey flats are/are not hard to manage and hard to live in – discuss”*

Day Two: 31st October

7.00 – 9.00am Breakfast

9.00 – 10.00am Session 4: Making high-rise safe and comfortable

- Basic fire safety, exit routes, alarms, fire extinguishers, sprinklers
- The human side of fire safety:
 - Knowing who lives in the block
 - Door controls
 - Knowing your neighbours
 - Caretaking and maintenance
 - Who you can call on in emergencies

Contributors: Phil Murphy (Stretford House TRA); Jane Everton (DCLG); Jason Sterlitz (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)

10.00 – 11.05am Session 5: The cost of living in high-rise

- Many items are expensive to install and maintain – lifts, door controls, alarm systems, sprinklers, fire extinguishers
- Without cladding in high-rise blocks, bills for heating are higher
- Repairs are more expensive and more complicated
- What can be done to reduce tenants' bills? Why cladding is so important? How does it help?
- Why landlords shouldn't and mustn't cut corners
- Cladding and fire risk

Contributors: James Traynor (ECD); Abi Laseinde (Holland Rise TMO)

11.05 – 11.20am Refreshment break

11.20 – 12.30am Session 6: How tenants can make a difference?

- What strengths do tenants have that are valuable?
- What weaknesses?
- What training do tenants need (e.g. safety, security, management, cladding, costs, training volunteers, etc.)?
- The role of scrutiny, tenant inspectors and block guardians

Contributors: Sally Dale & Sandra Dixon (Gleadless Valley Tenants and Residents Association); Lynne Jones & Lynn Cullen (Bolton at Home)

12.30 – 1.30pm Lunch and tour of Trafford Hall's energy saving and improvement works

1.30– 2.30pm Session 7: Workshop on what residents can do – making an action plan on safety issues/management challenges/resident involvement – run by Alice Belotti

2.30 – 2.40pm Feedback form

2.40 – 3.00pm Brainstorm on top ideas and round up – run by Anne Power