

Blog

The Housing Quality Network

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Maintaining trust

By Mo Crouch, Partnering and New Business Director at United Living

Early morning in New Cross and the sun is rising over the three tower blocks at Hatfield Close and Gerrard House.

Workers arrive to start their day, social distancing and new ways of working underway, but united in hearts and minds with residents in ensuring that, not only that the buildings are safe, but that residents understand the measures taken by Lewisham Homes and United Living to make it so and to involve them on the journey every step of the way.

As works restart after the recent shut-down to complete the final stage of the project, we reflect on the long road we have taken to enhance every aspect of the building and homes within it.

Residents' trust and faith in constructors and landlords alike was tested like never before on the fateful night of 14 June 2017, changing lives forever. Working on homes with similar cladding, we know that residents deserve our openness and understanding on the impact these works are having on their daily lives and that of their families, friends and neighbours.

The works have been extensive; structural strengthening, the refitting of an A1 rated terracotta cladding, sprinkler system installation, fire alarms and automatic and permanent opening vents for smoke extraction, fire stopping and compartmentation, new windows, kitchens and bathrooms, dampening system for rubbish chutes and communal decorations.

The quality of products and the competence of the workforce in fitting them are only part of the story. Resident consultation has very much led this project from the very beginning, taking each and every person at Hatfield and Gerrard on this vital journey to ensure they have been involved every step of the way.

Our teams have become very much part of the community in Lewisham and below are just some of the important steps we took to build our relationship with residents:

- Sited our resident liaison officers at the heart of the project to be on hand to support and answer any questions
- Identified and planned for vulnerable residents
- Worked closely with the tenant, resident association and local community groups

- Held multiple meet the contractor events
- Set up a hub on site where residents could pop in at any time
- True collaboration with Lewisham Homes throughout
- Communications strategy for all partners involved.

Ensuring residents were involved and ultimately made decisions on this project was imperative in making the right choices for their homes.

Not only did we want to give residents a home they felt safe and secure in, it was our job to renew their trust and confidence in those who manage and were making improvements to their buildings.

Our community engagement aside from the project work has included: job opportunities for local people, training, investment in facilities such as the gardens and the skills centre, sponsorship of local businesses. A thorough understanding of what the community needs has been vital in bringing this project to life, but it is the vitality, ownership and calm strength of the residents that gives us hope that we are all working hard in partnership to bring about the changes that are needed to ensure that every single person has a home they are safe and secure in.