Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Feeling Safe

Subjective perceptions of fire safety among residents
of high-rise buildings

Final report: 2019

Contents

Introduction

Rationale and research aims

1. Feeling Safe is a qualitative study investigating perceptions of fire safety amongst residents of high-rise buildings, commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Following the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, MHCLG is committed to ensuring that people are safe and feel safe from fire[1]. Specifically, the Building Safety Programme has been established to ensure that residents of high-rise buildings are safe – and feel safe – now, and in the future[2].

2. The Building Safety Programme is working with a range of stakeholders on new proposals for building safety. This includes residents, building owners, housing providers, schools, hospitals and the construction industry, including an Industry Response Group.

3. The department is measuring perceptions of fire safety using the English Housing Survey, our flagship survey of people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England. Due to the survey's data collection and reporting schedule, the findings on perceptions fire safety are not yet available[3]. In the wider literature, to our knowledge there is a paucity of evidence examining high-rise residents' attitudes and perceptions of fire safety[4]. To address this gap, the Feeling Safe project has been commissioned to understand more fully residents' perceptions and feelings with reference to fire safety in high-rise buildings.

4. Throughout this report, fire safety refers to 'the prevention of and protection from fire'.

5. The objectives of the Feeling Safe study are therefore to understand

---

[1] MHCLG Single Departmental Plan https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-communities-and-local-government-single-departmental-plan/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government-single-departmental-plan

[2] Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government established a Building Safety Programme with the aim of ensuring that residents of high-rise residential buildings are safe, and feel safe from the risk of fire, now and in the future. An independent Expert Panel was appointed to provide advice to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on building safety measures. With the support of local fire and rescue services, MHCLG is supporting building owners in taking immediate steps to ensure their residents' safety and in making decisions on any remedial work that is necessary to do. The programme is working with residents, building owners, housing providers, schools, hospitals and the construction industry, including an Industry Response Group.

[3] English Housing Survey Methodology https://www.gov.uk/guidance/english-housing-survey-guidance-and-methodology

[4] There is some research on how people respond in the event of a fire, e.g.   Kobes, M., Hesloot, I., de Vries B., and Post, J. (2009). Building safety and human behaviour in fire: a literature review. Fire Safety Journal.

- perceptions of fire safety amongst residents of high-rise buildings;
- the drivers behind perceptions of fire safety and whether views differ between residents with different characteristics;
- the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire on perceptions of fire safety; and
- how particular policy responses might influence perceptions of fire safety.

Report structure

6. Chapter 1 begins by briefly describing participants' perceptions of fire safety, highlighting the groups who feel most vulnerable. It then considers how these perceptions have been affected by the Grenfell Tower fire and other high-rise building fires.

7. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the two key drivers of perceptions of fire safety. First, the levels of trust residents must have in those responsible for their building's design and management, along with other residents in the building. Second, how feelings of confidence and a sense of control impact on perceptions of fire safety. Each of these chapters summarises actions which participants suggested would improve perceptions of fire safety in their high-rise building.

8. Chapter 4 presents participants' responses to three pre-formulated policy responses raised in each group discussion, ranging from running resident consultations on refurbishment, to providing training courses or producing information packs.

Overview of method

9. Full details of the sampling, recruitment, fieldwork, analysis and ethics are in the technical note at the end of this report. Briefly, Feeling Safe is a qualitative study designed to gather in-depth data on experiences and views of high-rise residents and to understand perceptions of fire safety from their own perspectives. Focus groups were used to produce rich data in an efficient way, by bringing together a diverse range of residents in a way that deepened participants' reflections on the topic.

10. Rigour in qualitative research is achieved through a systematic approach to sampling, recruitment and analysis. Qualitative samples tend to be modest and are not designed to be representative at a population level, but to generate a range of diverse views. A purposive sampling approach, in which participants are selected based on pre-defined criteria, is a marker of quality and was used in Feeling Safe. A 'blended' recruitment approach was used, drawing on a list of respondents who had agreed to be re-contacted for further

research from the English Housing Survey and boosting this sample using an experienced recruitment agency[5].

11. Nine focus groups were conducted, with between three and eight high-rise residents per group, totalling 50 participants. For the purpose of this study, a high-rise-building was defined as a residential building with at least six floors. The number of groups enabled data collection from each of the three housing tenures (owner occupiers, social renters and private renters) in three regions of England with a high concentration of high-rise buildings (London, North West, West Midlands). As far as possible, participants were diverse with respect to their floor level, gender, ethnicity, age and presence of children and/or someone with a medical condition in the household. Experienced researchers facilitated the focus groups, using a discussion guide which was designed to introduce fire safety, map and understand participant concerns and explore solutions, including testing pre-formulated policy solutions[6]. Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

12. The Framework approach was used to analyse transcripts. This systematic analysis of the data involved understanding views within each focus group as well as comparing views across the sample. The findings are therefore grounded in participants' accounts and quotes are used throughout the report to illustrate findings[7].

---

[5] English Housing Survey Methodology https://www.gov.uk/guidance/english-housing-survey-guidance-and-methodology
[6] The topic guide is provided in Appendix 2 of this report.
[7] Full details of the method are provided in the technical note at the end of this report, Appendix 1.

Main findings

Participants from all tenures expressed concerns about fire safety in high-rise residential buildings. People living in older buildings, on higher floors or in vulnerable groups had greater concerns.

- Residents were concerned about how to prevent a fire and what would happen if a fire occurred. These concerns were expressed spontaneously or as the discussion prompted consideration of the issues.

- Residents living on higher floors had particular concerns about their ability to escape in the event of a fire. This concern was shared by residents of older buildings or those with a single fire exit, which residents were not confident could be used for safe evacuation, especially of residents with cognitive or physical impairments.

For some, the Grenfell Tower fire raised or confirmed existing concerns about fire safety in their high-rise building. However, it was also felt that fire safety is being taken more seriously following the Grenfell Tower fire.

- High-rise residents whose feelings of safety were least affected by the Grenfell Tower fire felt their building was significantly different from Grenfell Tower in terms of age, design, materials and safety features. These tended to be owner occupiers or private renters living in privately owned buildings.

- Participants spoke positively that they felt fire safety was being taken more seriously since the Grenfell Tower fire. In particular, those living in buildings managed by social landlords felt reassured by actions their landlords had taken.

Fire safety in high-rise buildings is a shared concern and feelings of safety depend on residents having trust in those responsible for the design and management of the building, as well as trust in their neighbours. There was some mistrust in these relationships, negatively affecting how safe high-rise residents felt.

- There were consistent concerns across tenures that those responsible for the design and management of high-rise buildings prioritise cost saving and do not prioritise fire safety.

- Concerns were expressed about a lack of resident engagement in building management, by social housing tenants in particular.

- Residents were also concerned about the extent to which they could trust their neighbours to behave safely to prevent fires and to respond appropriately in the event of a fire.

Residents of high-rise buildings were not confident that they knew enough about whether the design of their building would help to prevent a fire from spreading or that fire safety equipment and evacuation procedures would work in the event of a fire. Such confidence would provide residents with a greater sense of control over their own safety.

- Residents reported that independent verification of the quality of building work and the installation and maintenance of fire safety equipment would be reassuring.

- In particular, residents wanted to understand the fire alarm systems in their building and be familiar with the evacuation procedures including when to stay put and when and how to evacuate, ensuring provision for evacuating vulnerable residents.

- Residents living in buildings managed by private landlords were uncertain who was responsible for maintaining the fire safety equipment and more widely who has responsibility for ensuring a building has fire measures in place. Residents living in buildings managed by social landlords did not raise such concerns.

High-rise residents made clear the need for those with responsibility for managing high-rise buildings to inform, to consult, to listen and to check, in order to make residents feel safer from fire.

- This was apparent when residents were discussing their concerns, as a factor influencing greater concern was poor building management. Residents wanted those responsible for managing the building to engage with them on fire safety, to provide information on the current safety assessment of their building and advice on what to do in the event of a fire. Such actions would provide a sense of reassurance.

- Residents also reported it was important for those responsible for building management to maintain regular contact with residents on fire safety, to listen to their concerns and to consult them. This would help to build a sense of community and shared responsibility for fire safety.

- Residents also wanted management and regulation of short-term sub-letting, as they perceived this to pose a risk to fire safety.

An information pack describing the design and fire safety features of a high-rise residential building was one measure that would reassure residents that building managers take safety seriously, that their building is safe and that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

- Information packs should be provided as a matter of course to all residents and include information on the building design, its safety measures, procedures in the event of a fire and a named point of contact responsible for fire safety.

- Residents felt that the person responsible for the building should also be responsible for producing and distributing information packs, ensuring they stand out from everyday correspondence, to encourage residents to read the pack, which could also be available online.

Residents liked proposals for a training course covering fire prevention and protection, as it would give them confidence in coping in the event of a fire and increase trust in their neighbours to prevent and respond appropriately to a fire.

- Residents suggested the course should include raising awareness of behaviours that increase fire risks, even those which seem obvious such as smoking. It would also need to include tailored, building specific information on what to do in the event of a fire.

- Given the cost of a comprehensive training programme, delivered by experts, which could helpfully be supplemented with media campaigns, it was suggested that government funding would need to be made available to support training delivery.

High-rise residents would value being consulted on proposed building improvements as this encourages a view that fire safety is everyone's responsibility and could foster trust between residents and building managers.

- Involving residents in decision making meaningfully requires information on the proposed work, its compliance with safety regulations, the timing and cost to be made accessible through a variety of channels, including an opportunity to discuss with fire safety professionals.

- However, residents did not want to be tasked with the final decision on refurbishment due to their lack of technical knowledge and the need for decisions to be in the best interest of all residents, not only those most vocal in a consultation.

Acknowledgements and further queries

15. If you have any queries about this report or would like any further information, please contact ehs@communities.gov.uk.

Chapter 1
Perceptions of safety in high-rise residential buildings

Chapter summary

1.1 Participants from all tenures were concerned about fire safety. Participants considered people living in older buildings, on higher floors or in vulnerable groups to feel the least safe.

1.2 The Grenfell Tower fire had an effect on perceptions, although often to confirm existing fears among those who did not consider their building to be safe.

1.3 Those least affected felt their building was significantly different from Grenfell Tower in terms of age, design, materials and safety features. This tended to be owner occupiers or private renters living in privately owned buildings.

1.4 Participants felt fire safety was being taken more seriously since the Grenfell Tower fire, particularly those living in buildings managed by social landlords.

1.5 Perceptions of fire safety of residents of high-rise buildings were highly interdependent on others. People could not control their safety in the same way as those living in houses or low-rise flats. Instead, they needed to rely on the actions of stakeholders external to the building, including building commissioners, contractors, managers and the fire brigade, to make their building safe and other residents in the building to help prevent or respond appropriately to fires.

Introduction

1.6 This chapter provides an overview of participants' perceptions of fire safety, how they varied across different groups and how those perceptions may have been affected by the Grenfell Tower fire.
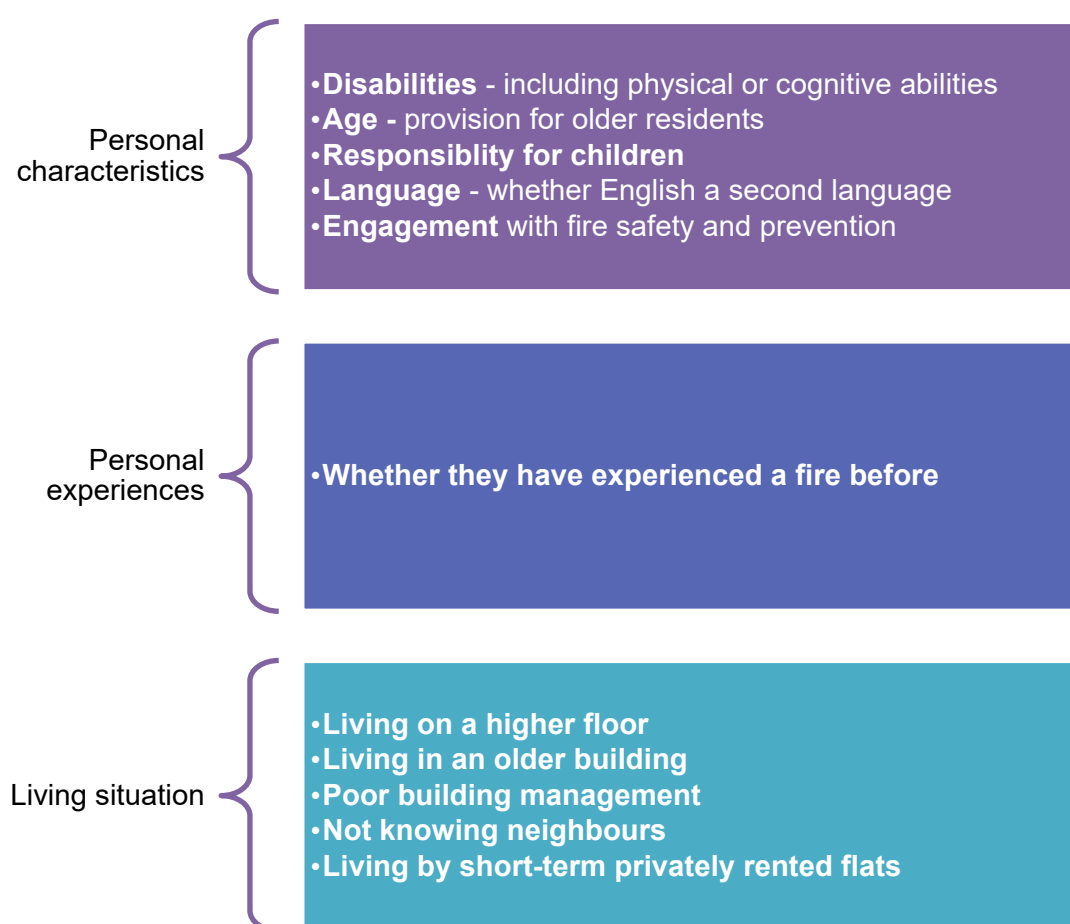
Who is concerned about fire safety?

1.7 Participants in all tenure groups expressed concerns about their fire safety, either spontaneously or as the discussion prompted consideration of the issues. They worried both about how to prevent a fire and what would happen if a fire occurred.

"The flat underneath me had a fire… I think once you see something like that and then you think…'You live in a high-rise, could that'… If it did something like… It would be hard…[on] everybody."

(Social renter, West Midlands)

1.8   During the discussion, participants in more vulnerable groups and those living on higher floors or in older buildings felt the least safe (summarised in Figure 1.1). Similarly, even residents who did not share these characteristics were concerned for others in these circumstances. Participants also considered themselves and other residents to feel less safe if they were in poorly managed buildings, did not know their neighbours, or where surrounding properties were privately rented on a short-term basis. These characteristics will be returned to throughout the report when drivers of perceptions of fire safety are explored.

Figure 1.1: Factors influencing greater concern for fire safety

Personal characteristics
- **Disabilities** - including physical or cognitive abilities
- **Age -** provision for older residents
- **Responsiblity for children**
- **Language** - whether English a second language
- **Engagement** with fire safety and prevention

Personal experiences
- **Whether they have experienced a fire before**

Living situation
- **Living on a higher floor**
- **Living in an older building**
- **Poor building management**
- **Not knowing neighbours**
- **Living by short-term privately rented flats**

How have perceptions of fire safety changed?

1.9   Participants were very aware of recent fires, notably at Grenfell Tower and before that in Shepherd's Court in 2016. However, fears of being "trapped" in the event of a fire in their high-rise building were not new. For participants

already living in a building they considered to be unsafe, the Grenfell Tower fire had either amplified these fears or confirmed what they already felt.

1.10 The Grenfell Tower fire had less of an effect on those that felt that their building was very different to Grenfell Tower fire in terms of age, design, materials and safety features. Participants expressed views that such a fire could only happen in older buildings or that the tragedy was unique in some way. That is, the Grenfell Tower fire was seen as a "perfect storm" caused and exacerbated by factors that were unlikely to co-exist again, such as the building design and the perception of how the fire brigade responded. Notably, this was a belief expressed by owner occupiers and private renters in privately owned buildings while social renters did not say such a fire was unlikely to happen again.

1.11 For others, the Grenfell Tower fire had raised new concerns, leaving people feeling more vulnerable. Learning how easily a fire from a single appliance had spread and how many people could not be rescued had made them question safety and procedures in their own building.

> *"It did play on my mind a bit. It did increase [concerns] when that happened. I think that could have been here."*
>
> (Private renter, West Midlands)

> *"I think before Grenfell, high-rises were sort of these long luxurious kind of benefit of living high up in London, the views you get sort of thing. It always seemed rosy I guess, but I think after Grenfell there's a clear threat."*
>
> (Owner occupier, London)

1.12 Participants did however express positive views that fire safety is being taken more seriously after the loss of life at Grenfell Tower. Social tenants in particular reported being reassured by the actions of their social landlord since the fire, such as conducting fire checks in their building, letting residents know that their building cladding was safe or adding signage reminding residents not to use lifts in the event of a fire. Participants only wondered why it took a tragedy to trigger this action.

> *"Why is it whenever something goes wrong, that is the time they tend to put things in place to correct that?"*
>
> (Social renter, London)

What do perceptions of fire safety depend on?

1.13 Participants' felt that fire safety in high-rise buildings was almost entirely interdependent on the decisions and behaviours of others. They felt that they could not control their own fire safety in the same way as those living in a house or low-rise flat. High-rise residents were seen by participants to be more dependent on shared fire safety measures, including the fire prevention features of the building and its fire safety equipment. Consequently,

participants felt that high-rise residents need to trust those responsible for the fire safety measures in their building in order to feel safe.

1.14 Throughout the study, participants talked of being reliant on the actions of those external to, but responsible for the building, such as the building commissioners, contractors, managers and the fire brigade. Moreover, participants felt that living in a high-rise meant living in a "community", where the fire safety of each resident is interdependent on the actions and decisions of other residents.

> *"… once you become a community of people in a high-rise then you start to think, I wonder if their white goods are safe."*
>
> (Private renter, West Midlands)

> *"You can only be safe as you're being, but then you don't know what your neighbour is up to…"*
>
> (Social renter, London)

1.15 These levels of interdependence mean that residents needed to place their trust both in external stakeholders and other residents to help prevent and tackle a fire should it break out. They also needed to rely on others to provide information and guidance to give them confidence that they would be able to cope. It is these drivers of fire safety perceptions that are considered in subsequent chapters.

Variation in views

1.16 Residents from all tenure groups were concerned about fire safety. Those in more vulnerable groups, living on higher floors or in older buildings tended to feel the least safe.

1.17 Perceptions of safety had been affected by the Grenfell Tower fire and other high-rise building fires. In part this has heightened concerns among those who already felt vulnerable. Where action had been taken in response to the fire, particularly by social landlords, participants felt assured that fire safety was being taken more seriously.

1.18 Owner occupiers and private renters, who were more likely to live in privately owned and managed buildings, were less likely to feel that an incident like the Grenfell Tower fire could happen in their building.

Chapter 2

Drivers of feeling safe: Relationships and trust

Chapter summary

2.1 Residents of high-rise buildings needed to place their trust in two groups of people. First, those who are responsible for the design and management of their building and second, other residents.

2.2 Participants felt that building legislation and regulations in the UK were not tight enough. They were also concerned that older buildings could not be adapted in line with the latest developments in fire safety.

2.3 Those living in buildings managed by a local authority or housing association felt that the tendering process for contractors encouraged the selection of "cheap contractors" who would not fully comply with standards. Residents in privately owned and managed buildings felt the process of appointing contractors was not transparent. To restore trust, participants wanted to see independent verification of the quality of any building work carried out on their building.

2.4 Similarly, participants were seeking assurance from those responsible for their building that fire safety equipment was installed and maintained correctly. They wanted to know exactly who was responsible for fire safety in their building. Owner occupiers and private renters reported often not knowing who to go to for fire safety.

2.5 Participants wanted to trust in the fire brigade's advice and capacity to rescue them. Faith in the 'stay put' policy had been shaken by the Grenfell Tower fire.

2.6 Participants wanted to be kept informed about the current safety assessment of their building and consulted better regarding the appointment of contractors.

2.7 Participants spoke of the need for other residents in their buildings to behave safely to help prevent fires and know what to do if one broke out. They were also concerned that not everyone had safe electrical appliances and discussed the need for regular appliance testing.

2.8 Participants wanted to trust other residents to respond appropriately if there was a fire; to take notice of alarms, stay calm and have taken note of advice about what to do during a fire. Participants felt that this advice about fire evacuation should be provided by the landlord or management company.

Introduction

2.1   As noted in Chapter 1, residents of high-rise buildings felt that they could not take charge of their own fire safety in the same way as those living in houses or low-rise flats. To feel safe, they needed to depend on, and trust in, two groups of stakeholders. Firstly, those who are external to the building: building commissioners, contractors, managers and the fire brigade. Secondly, they needed to rely on other residents in the building to help prevent fires and respond appropriately should one break out.

External stakeholders

The regulatory framework

2.2   Participants felt that UK building standards and regulation were too low and changed too often, creating an environment in which those responsible for their building were able to prioritise cost-cutting over their safety. There was a view that tighter legislation would have prevented the Grenfell Tower fire by stopping the installation of the flammable cladding. Participants pointed to countries perceived to have stricter building regulations.

> *"Like in Germany you wouldn't get Grenfell happening … in the UK I think … we've got low standards …."*
>
> (Owner occupier, North West)

2.3   Frequent developments in building standards, reflecting improved understanding of which building materials are safe, was perceived to introduce uncertainty. Participants questioned how long it would be before materials currently considered to be safe for their building would be found to be inadequate. They used the example of the Grenfell Tower fire, where participants believed the cladding had been considered safe prior to the fire but then the Government "changed the goalposts" by deeming it unsafe in response to the incident.

2.4   Participants also wondered if their building could keep pace with developments in building material safety. Those in older buildings tended to question whether much could be done to improve fire safety given the material used in the construction of the building could not be changed.

> *"… you can do a lot to building standards, but the actual fabric of the building hasn't changed. It's still the concrete building, the design, where the walls are. All of that is still designed as it was in the 60s."*
>
> (Private renter, North West)

2.5   Owner occupiers raised concerns about who would pay for improvements to building safety following each change to standards. They feared they would face hefty bills when, in their view, the freeholder should shoulder the costs

because the changes were to the fabric of the building and they were paying service charges.

Trusting those who design and manage the building

2.6   With no personal expertise in fire safety, residents felt they needed to trust not only the legislative and regulatory framework but also those who commission, build and maintain their building to prioritise safety.

2.7   Participants of all tenures living in a building managed by a local authority or housing association felt that the first barrier to upholding the highest standards was the contractor tendering process. They felt that the process drove a race to the bottom to select "cheap contractors" doing "cowboy quality" work. They questioned whether these contractors used the most appropriate materials or had the expertise to ensure a building fully complied with regulatory standards. Participants provided examples of concerns they had about their building, such as whether a sprinkler system had been installed correctly; whether a building had a sufficient number of fire doors and if cladding was flammable. Indeed, one participant who worked as a building contractor recounted being personally contracted by the council to install windows in a high-rise building and being told by them to use "cheap material" but make sure it looked nice.

2.8   Participants in privately owned and managed buildings shared these concerns, driven here by perceived lack of transparency about how contractors were appointed and the quality of their work.

2.9   Concerns were heightened by what people had heard about how cheap and flammable cladding contributed to the escalation of the Grenfell Tower fire. It made people ask whether the materials in their own building were safe.

> *"You've got to get to a point where you question; what's right and what's wrong here? I think it has brought a lot of questions up about … cutting corners, that's a classic to come out of [the Grenfell Tower fire] ..."*
> (Owner occupier, West Midlands)

2.10 To restore trust, participants wanted independent expert inspections of building work to verify that standards have been upheld.

> *"… it needs experts to check … and crosscheck the work they do because no one is there to verify that this is a good job they've done."*
> (Social renter, London)

Trust in the provision and maintenance of fire safety equipment

2.11 Participants wanted to be able to trust building owners and managers to install, regularly inspect and maintain sufficient fire safety equipment, such as alarms, sprinklers and fire extinguishers. The presence of well looked after equipment demonstrates to residents that those responsible for the building are prioritising safety and gives residents a greater sense of confidence that they can manage during a fire (see Chapter 4). Participants highlighted that if a building owner or

manager could not even maintain routine aspects of the building, they could equally not be trusted with ensuring that fire safety equipment is in full working order and exits are being kept clear.

> *"… if for example an elevator is broken, and it takes that long to get it fixed, it's hard for people to be confident that there's the right things in place."*
>
> (Owner occupier, London)

2.12 Participants wanted to be able to place their trust in a single person who was responsible for fire safety measures in their building. Owner occupiers and private renters reported often not knowing who to go to for fire safety. Knowing who is looking after safety was particularly difficult where a building was owned by several companies/individuals or when there was a high turnover of building management companies over time.

Trusting the fire brigade and their advice

2.13 Participants were concerned that, in their view, because of cuts to funding the fire brigade did not have enough officers, engines and equipment, such as specialist ladders, to deal with the challenges of a fire in a high-rise building. Concern was greatest among those living on higher floors. They worried that if the number of fire officers was insufficient, they would either be rescued last when time was most critical or left "trapped" in the fire.

2.14 People's levels of trust were influenced by their understanding of the response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

> *"… the fire brigade … couldn't fight the fire effectively because they didn't have the equipment to do so with the double extension ladders."*
>
> (Owner occupier, London)

2.15 Since the Grenfell Tower fire a recurring view was that participants no longer trusted the 'stay put' policy. They felt that it "had cost a lot of people's lives" after the fire spread more rapidly than anticipated. This was reinforced by the "natural" instinct to escape a fire. One participant recounted how they had stayed put following the fire brigade's advice during a fire and witnessed three neighbouring houses burn down.

> *"I had an experience … with the fire brigade. We could smell gas where we lived and they told us to stay put all night … I wouldn't do it again. We said, 'Are we safe?' They went, 'Yes' and three houses fell down and it was the worst experience of my life."*
>
> (Social renter, North West)

2.16 With trust in the policy damaged, participants had considered how they would take escaping into their own hands in the event of a fire.

> *"… I had a look to see if it's jumpable from my balcony or how realistic it is to be able to climb down in an emergency."*
>
> (Owner occupier, North West)

2.17 Those prepared to still accept the policy felt this was conditional on receiving reassurance to build their confidence regarding the safety of the building materials, particularly cladding, and how a fire would be contained (discussed in Chapter 3).

Resident involvement

2.18 Throughout discussions about external stakeholders, participants living in both socially and privately owned and managed buildings expressed concerns about a lack of resident engagement making it easier to cut corners. Participants did not feel they were kept informed about the current assessment of how safe their building was by the local authority, housing association or management company. Neither did they feel they had access to the process of appointing contractors.

> *"When this tendering is going on, who's making the decisions here? Is it just the local authorities or is someone else involved? It's like they're making decisions on our behalf ..."*
>
> (Owner occupier, London)

2.19 Social housing tenants were most likely to express feelings of being ignored. They recounted examples of raising concerns to their social landlord about the state of communal areas or smoking in flats that were not addressed. Some felt their socio-economic status made them a low priority.

> *"… because we're in the lower end of housing, nobody cares, not bothered."*
>
> (Social renter, North West)

> *"I'm sick of being treated like an idiot because I live in council property. Obviously, we're very stupid people because you can't afford to buy a million pound flat."*
>
> (Social renter, London)

2.20 Even where participants did not have previous experience of being ignored, they mentioned the importance of the Grenfell Tower fire in raising their awareness of the importance of the residents' voice being listened to. They held a perception that Grenfell Tower residents' fire safety concerns were not handled adequately by the tenant management organisation (TMO) or listened to by their council. They questioned whether they would be listened to if they needed to raise fire safety concerns.

Other residents

Preventing a fire

2.21 To feel safe, residents needed to trust that others in the building are behaving in a way that prevents fires and that everyone is prepared and knows what to do should there be a fire. Some participants did not feel this held true in their building and were concerned that this endangered lives.

"… no matter how many precautions you take in your own property, a couple of metres away there could be someone doing something mad that's going to set the whole building on fire."

(Owner occupier, North West)

2.22 To prevent fires, participants wanted other residents to behave safely and avoid "careless" actions, both in their own flat and in communal areas.

"I can't be the police for my next-door neighbour to knock on the door and say, 'Have you turned your cooker off? Don't leave the stove on.' We can't do that. We take precautions for our own selves, but if other people are careless then the fire comes then. They put other people's lives at risk."

(Social renter, London)

2.23 Participants mentioned a range of risky behaviour that they had experienced among residents in their building, which can be grouped and summarised as follows:

Behaviours that increase fire risk

- Going out and leaving appliances on (mentioning cookers and tumble driers).
- Cooking while drunk.
- Leaving burning candles unattended.
- Overloading electrical sockets.
- Smoking in communal areas where smoking is banned.
- Not extinguishing cigarettes properly.
- Leaving children unsupervised in flats.
- Leaving Christmas lights on.

Behaviours that interfere with fire protection measures

- Not installing or maintaining fire alarms within flats.
- Blocking stairwells and fire exits by "dumping" furniture and other personal items (e.g. bicycles) on landings.
- Leaving fire doors open and parking in places which could obstruct emergency vehicles.

2.24 Participants were also concerned about the safety of their neighbours' electrical appliances. Participants felt that although they would purchase their appliances from a "reputable source", other residents were constrained by low incomes and unable to afford good quality appliances or to replace faulty ones. They were careful not to blame residents in this situation, understanding that they were forced to prioritise essential expenditure.

2.25 These concerns about faulty domestic appliances were heightened by participants' understanding that it took "just one" faulty fridge freezer to cause the Grenfell Tower fire as well as previous media coverage of a faulty tumble

drier causing a fire (in a high-rise residential building in Shepherd's Court in 2016).

Responding in the event of a fire

2.26 Participants wanted to be sure that other residents would respond appropriately if there was a fire in the building. They wanted to trust that their neighbours would:

- take notice of a fire alarm;

- stay calm and in control of their emotions; and

- know what to do.

2.27 Participants wanted other residents to stop ignoring fire alarms in flats around them. This raised the concern that they would not be alerted to a fire by other residents as well as general complacency in the building around fire prevention.

"… if they're not overly concerned about a fire alarm going off, how concerned are they about actually causing a fire or preventing their own fires?"

(Social renter, West Midlands)

2.28 This was part of a wider concern about the risks posed by people who were indifferent to fire safety. It was felt that these residents would also be less likely, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to know what to do and respond appropriately if a fire did break out.

2.29 Participants were also worried that in the event of a fire some groups of people would be less able than others to respond calmly and remember fire instructions. Participants were first concerned about those with impaired cognitive decision making. This included some of their oldest neighbours, particularly if they were living with dementia, but also those under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

2.30 Finally, participants felt unsafe if there were nearby residents they did not know. This included neighbours who kept themselves to themselves but also people staying in sub-let flats.

"They don't care; here today, gone tomorrow for work reasons or study reasons or whatever, whereas people like me have been there for seven years now, I'm more invested somehow."

(Owner occupier, North West)

2.31 Concerns were most acute where a flat was being rented on a short-term basis through *Airbnb* or similar agencies. Participants thought that this was leading to overcrowding and bringing in people who could not be trusted to have the same concern for building safety.

Variation in views

2.32 When considering trust in external stakeholders and other residents in high-rise buildings it was the similarity rather than difference of views that was most striking. Residents of high-rise buildings often live in mixed communities and are very aware of their mutual dependence regardless of tenure. Similarly, although the processes by which buildings are managed vary according to whether they are publicly or privately owned, there were consistent concerns that maintenance was being done on the cheap and fire safety was not given enough priority.

2.33 Social tenants tended to be most disillusioned about being heard given previous negative experiences of contacting their landlord over safety or other issues. Owner occupiers were more likely to be seeking clarity over financial responsibility, given the potentially significant costs of improving safety to a building. They also felt that the process of appointing contractors was not transparent. Owner occupiers and private renters were more likely not to know who to go to for fire safety for their building. Participants from all tenures wanted to be sure that private renting was long-term and regulated to avoid the potential risks associated with transient populations.

Addressing concerns related to relationships and trust

2.34 Table 2.1 summarises the solutions that participants offered to increase their trust in those they depended on for fire safety in their building and the steps they suggested should be taken.

Table 2.1: Summary of participant solutions relating to relationships and trust

Solution	Steps	Participants' voices
Provide independent verification that building materials are safe and fire safety equipment is working.	Increase the level and frequency of involvement of independent experts, from architects to the fire brigade, to confirm that buildings are safe both during and after the construction process. Display certificates of compliance for building materials and equipment clearly in the building to reassure residents.	*"Involvement of independent experts: "… people would be more confident if it said: this was tested by the London Fire Brigade … somebody's got to certify it and be responsible for it."* (Owner occupier, London)
Tighten legislation on cladding to ensure it is safe and be clear who has legal and financial responsibility for replacing it on a building if it fails to meet new standards.	Communicate to people what type of cladding is safe following recent legislation and continually assure people that the cladding on their building is certified as safe. Ensure residents in high-rise buildings know who is responsible for ensuring the cladding is safe, how often it should be checked and hold people	*"So without taking a match to the cladding, I've got no idea how flammable that is."* (Private renter, North West)

Solution	Steps	Participants' voices
	legally accountable for non-compliance.	
Provide assurance that residents' safety equipment and other appliances are working safely.	Use independent qualified electricians and other fire safety equipment specialists to certify that equipment is working and safe. Conduct Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) when residents first move in and potentially annually thereafter. Annual tests of smoke alarms within flats as well as those for communal areas. Give residents access to a log of equipment testing dates and results. Participants suggested providing an online register.	*"I think an agency or independent company … they should have a maintenance contract with them [the management company] to send someone out every six months or once a year to come and test it. If you're a concierge and you've been in this building for five years, ten years working the same job going around checking it, after a while there may be some level of slack in terms of, oh I checked that last [time]."* (Private renter, London) *"I just think it gives you peace of mind really with certain things, thinking, right, that's been done. There's always that whole, in an emergency, 'Oh, the fire extinguishers have dried up or someone's broken them' … these things do happen."* (Owner occupier, London) *"If I've got a schedule that says they're going to do these series of checks throughout … and I get maybe an email every time a check is done successfully, then I know that the safety is priority and is continuous within my building. I think that helps me feel safer."* (Owner occupier, London)
Engage with residents on safety and build a sense of community and mutual reliance through regular contact.	Sustain regular tenant/resident meetings and consultation on safety (three times a year was suggested). Managers should be more visible for fire safety and use the meetings to be held to account. Include residents' own actions in the meetings' action plans to build the sense of mutual dependency and self-reliance, such as changing a fire alarm battery in their flat.	*"… you [residents] should be held to account after a meeting. 'Are you doing that?' 'No.' 'Well, this is what you should be doing."* (Social renter, North West)
Have a qualified single point of contact for the building's fire safety, such as a fire marshal or concierge.	A visible individual leading on fire safety builds confidence that the issue is taken seriously. They would co-ordinate training, equipment checking and be trained to	*"He's the man, isn't it? He's the one that's going to come on the speakerphones and say, 'Look, if you're on this floor or if you're here, do this."* (Social renter, West Midlands)

Solution	Steps	Participants' voices
	lead any response in the event of a fire. They can monitor risky behaviours (such as smoking and sub-letting) to help prevent fires. To ensure they are consistently available and appropriately trained, the person should be employed by the local authority or building owner to do this and not be a volunteer. Participants talked of recruiting former fire fighters as the right people for the job.	*"… generally, people would feel a bit more secure about it all. It's come from an official source rather than just some guy in a high visibility jacket."* (Owner occupier, North West)
Enforce restrictions on sub-letting effectively and limit short-term letting in high-rise buildings given the risks to fire safety.	Hold building owners and managers to account for controlling sub-letting in the building and registering residents. Provide a visible concierge to provide assurance and identify transient residents or loiterers entering the building.	"*It's largely unregulated … who owns a place, who lives in it? Is there subletting, is there overcrowding?"* (Private renter, London)

Chapter 3

Drivers of feeling safe: Confidence and control

Chapter summary

3.1 Residents of high-rise buildings were not confident that they knew enough about whether the design of their building would help to prevent a fire from spreading, or that fire safety equipment and evacuation procedures will work in the event of a fire.

3.2 Confidence in a building's fire protection measures would provide high-rise residents with a greater sense of personal control over their own fire safety. Residents wanted to understand the fire alarm systems in their building and to understand their options of the evacuation procedures or to fight a fire.

3.3 Residents in older buildings or in buildings with only one fire exit route were the least confident in their ability to escape during a fire. They wanted to know that the exit routes could cope with the number of people in their building and that provision had been made for those who would have difficulties evacuating.

3.4 Residents need to be confident that fire safety equipment is sufficient and working. Those who felt capable wanted training in how to use extinguishers and other fire safety equipment correctly.

Introduction

3.5 The second driver of feeling safe, that builds on trust in those responsible for safety, is having confidence in the safety of your building and knowing fire safety equipment and evacuation procedures will work for you in the event of a fire. Residents of high-rise buildings have less control over shared fire safety equipment and evacuation procedures than those living in houses and low-rise flats. As noted in Chapter 2, confidence in the building's safety features gives residents more of a sense of control over their own safety.

Being confident in the building's fire protection measures

3.6 Participants were not confident they knew enough about whether the design of their building could help prevent a fire from spreading. In particular, participants wanted to know whether their building design would help contain a fire to the flat or floor where it had started.

3.7 Participants also wanted to feel confident that the materials, especially cladding, used for their building are safe. Since the Grenfell Tower fire, participants had thought about what would happen to the materials used in their building in the event of a fire. For example, participants in one of the group discussions expressed uncertainty about whether a wooden façade on an interior wall of a building posed a fire risk or would exacerbate a fire. Participants wanted more information about types of flammable and flame-retardant materials used in their building and how they met fire standards for high-rise buildings.

Being confident about coping in the event of a fire

3.8 Being able to cope during a fire was about feeling in control of the situation for participants, both emotionally and practically. Emotionally, this meant that they did not want to "panic" and/or "feel trapped" in the event of a fire, which could hinder decision making.

> "… if you're panicking you're not reacting to it or you're not thinking rationally."
>
> (Owner occupier, North West)

3.9 High-rise residents wanted to know exactly what to do during a fire, to give them confidence that they could evacuate the building safely and/or have the means to tackle a fire if appropriate. This would help residents feel more in control in the event of a fire. Concerns over protecting and rescuing oneself had been heightened by the damage the Grenfell Tower fire had done to trust in the fire brigade and their procedures (discussed in Chapter 2).

Knowing how fire alarms in the building operate

3.10 Participants questioned their ability to cope in a fire where they did not fully understand how fire alarms operated. This introduced concerns around whether alarms would work to notify them if a fire had started and given them enough information about its location to act on.

> "… if you don't know where the fire is and I come out of my apartment, do I take a left or do I take a right?"
>
> (Owner occupier, North West)

3.11 One concern was residents not knowing how localised alarms in flats interacted with wider communal alarms. For example, participants did not know how to distinguish between these two types of alarm, such as whether they sounded differently or were at a different volume. They also felt confused about whether alarms were connected, and if so how. For example, there was uncertainty around whether an alarm activated in a flat would also trigger the communal alarm.

3.12 Participants were also unclear about how communal alarms operated. For example, they wanted to know whether communal alarms would be sounded in sequence, floor by floor, or across the whole building in the event of a fire.

Knowing what to do if a fire alarm goes off

3.13 Participants were clear that they wanted knowledge and guidance about procedures in the event of a fire to give them more confidence in their own decision making on how to respond. This included when to evacuate and when to stay put; which fire exit to use; how to safely navigate the stairways; and what to avoid when evacuating, such as not using a lift.

> *"… [I]f I'm in my flat and the fire alarm goes off, what exactly am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to stay put and wait for the fire service to come and get me out or someone to quench the fire or am I supposed to look for the nearest exit, get my son and hold my wife with the left hand and take everything with me."*
>
> (Private renter, London)

3.14 Participants felt more confident about what to do in the event of a fire at work because fire safety guidance and practice is more comprehensive. They questioned why the same regular fire drills did not take place in their building at home.

Being confident in fire escape routes

3.15 Participants wanted to feel confident that their available fire escape routes offered them the maximum protection and safety in the event of a fire. They wanted assurance that the routes were fireproofed, with participants raising concerns about hazardous materials, such as wood, lining the walls of stairwells. They wanted confirmation that fire doors would open and feel familiar with where they led to.

> *"… does the door that leads out on to the ground floor, does it actually open? … it'd be great if the building manager put a notice up saying - fire escape is checked."*
>
> (Private renter, North West)

3.16 Residents in buildings with a single fire exit were least confident in their ability to escape in the event of a fire. Those on the highest floors knew they would have to place their trust in the fire brigade to rescue them but felt they would be the "last priority" as the rescue operation would begin on the lower floors. As a result, they felt very little sense of control over their evacuation.

3.17 Those with only one evacuation route were also concerned about the numbers of people that would be using it in the event of a fire and the risks that this entailed. Those in older buildings in particular felt that stairwells had not been designed to cope with the number of people now living in their building. Participants were concerned about overcrowding, visibility and breathing

problems caused by rising smoke and "trampling" if people panicked. All of these concerns were felt most acutely by those living on higher floors.

3.18 Participants raised further issues about evacuation support for people with physical or cognitive impairments and those with small children; both for their own safety and to prevent single exit routes being clogged if other residents are having difficulties. Those with their own dependents knew they would have to "think for" and manage the emotional response of their family during a fire. This could slow down their escape and increase the likelihood of them becoming trapped.

> *"I have this feeling that if I'm just myself I think I would more easily be able to exit the building if there's fire, but of course with my son and my wife it's three people thinking about themselves and thinking about two other people. I think it will be chaos."*
>
> (Private renter, London)

3.19 Participants talked about needing alternative escape options such as balcony escape routes, external stairwells or windows that could be opened in the event of a fire.

Being confident in the fire safety equipment

3.20 Residents needed to feel confident that fire safety equipment is sufficient and fit for purpose, that they can access it and know how to use it if necessary. These included fire extinguishers, fire blankets, equipment to facilitate escape (such as hatchets for breaking windows) and smoke alarms to help them feel "in control" of a fire situation.

3.21 Feeling confident that the fire safety equipment will work, and you can personally take action in the event of a fire, helps to compensate for the lack of trust that other residents are helping to prevent fires or would respond appropriately if there was one (as discussed in Chapter 2).

> *"If someone does act stupid and cause a fire, the sprinklers work and extinguish it out straightaway and that's more important."*
>
> (Private renter, North West)

> *"… if I'm on the floor and there's an old lady or an old man with me, I'm going to feel pressure to help them … But how else am I going to help somebody if I haven't got the necessary tools to help somebody?"*
>
> (Social renter, West Midlands)

3.22 To gain that confidence, participants first wanted assurance that the equipment was up to date and to see that it worked. Then those who felt capable wanted to know how to use the fire safety equipment effectively. Participants felt that they lacked the knowledge and could make mistakes, such as using the wrong type of fire extinguisher, making matters "ten times worse".

Variation in views

3.23 Participants' felt that their and other residents' confidence and sense of control to prevent and respond to a fire was lower if they had certain characteristics considered to be vulnerable. These included older people, those with poor physical and mental health and those with dependents; however, tenure was not seen to be important to confidence and control.

3.24 Views did vary according to the age of the building. Those reporting living in older buildings were most concerned that the building design, particularly for evacuation, was no longer adequate.

3.25 Those living on higher floors had the lowest confidence and least sense of their own control over their ability to escape a fire. They were the most concerned about being "trapped" in their flats and this concern had been heightened by the experience of the Grenfell Tower residents.

Addressing concerns related to confidence and control

3.26 Table 3.1 outlines residents' suggestions for helping them to feel more confident in fire safety measures. It details the necessary steps for addressing their specific concerns around needing to be confident in the fire safety measures in place in their building and being able to cope in the event of a fire.

Table 3.1: Summary of participant solutions relating to confidence and control

Solution	Steps	Participants' voices
Provide adequate and easily accessible fire safety equipment.	Ensure there are fire alarms and sprinklers on every floor. Provide fire-fighting equipment on every floor.	*"… it [having equipment] would give me peace of mind that if there was a fire, I wouldn't have to wait for somebody to get in [to rescue them]. As a group, as a community we could try and do something."* (Private renter, West Midlands)
Train residents in fire prevention and protection	Train residents in how to keep their building safe, what to do in the event of a fire and how to operate fire safety equipment. Training should be provided by experts (such as the fire brigade) and cover procedures such as the importance of closing fire doors,	*"I think there should be some level of requirement from landlords or letting agents or government who give housing, as a result of Grenfell to people… So, it should be training… there should be some foundation of training…. Well, something that you do in the same way you do a check when you move into a flat and they do all these checks when you get keys. They take you through and they show you, this is where you exit …"* (Private renter, London) *"Luminous signs on each floor … but luminous, because in the light of day you don't know what's what, do you?"* (Social renter, North West)

Solution	Steps	Participants' voices
	use of escape routes and when to stay put.	"*Have fire drills every now and again…So you know what you're doing.*" (Social renter, North West)
	Increase and improve escape route and fire information signs.	
	Provide information packs written by experts. These should contain the information from training courses on the type of behaviours that increase fire risk and how to respond to fires. Update them regularly to provide assurance.	
	Hold regular fire drills.	
Provide information on the material used in the building and safety of the design	Use the information packs to communicate the latest information about the design and materials used for the building.	"*… it restores confidence then; if you move from that flat to another one, you can't... know that the same measures were in place in all of them.*" (Owner occupier, West Midlands)
Provide more than one fire evacuation route	Participants recognised the difficulty of adapting older buildings but felt that having more than one escape route was essential and should be taken seriously.	"*I don't know whether it's possible, but fire exits would be good…metal stairs down the back…More than one exit basically… you have to go down the stairs outside the building….Because you know you've got more than one chance to get out….The metal stairs are not going to burn. You've got a chance of getting outside and running down the stairs, whereas if you were on wooden stairs like what are inside, you've got no chance.*" (Private renter, West Midlands)

Chapter 4
Responses to policy options

Chapter summary

4.1 Participants were asked for their views on three policy options to address perceptions of fire safety.

4.2 Participants were positive about proposals describing a process of resident consultation on building improvements. They felt it was important that the consultation demonstrated the rationale for the work, detailed who would be involved and offered assurance over safety standards. The information should also be communicated accessibly. While valuing being consulted and informed, participants stressed that they did not want to be tasked with the final decision, both due to lack of technical knowledge and the need for decisions to be in the best interests of all residents and not necessarily those who are most vocal in the consultation.

4.3 Participants liked proposals for a training course covering fire prevention and safety. Such training, if available widely, would increase trust in other residents' ability to prevent and respond to fires and build personal confidence in your ability to cope. They thought it would be useful to deliver training through a number of channels. Participants looked for government involvement in training to ensure it was properly funded and enforce its delivery.

4.4 Participants also approved of the proposal for the provision of an information pack describing the design and fire safety features of their building. They wanted the packs to clearly describe procedures in the event of a fire and provide a named point of contact for fire safety. Participants felt that the freeholder should provide a pack for all new residents. While it was generally felt that residents should keep a copy of the information in their flat, there was also interest in providing the information online.

Introduction

4.5 In addition to spontaneously reflecting on solutions and actions to improve perceptions of fire safety, participants were asked to consider the potential barriers and facilitators to delivery of three hypothetical policy responses. These included resident consultation around refurbishment decisions, a training course for residents, and the provision of an information pack.

Refurbishment consultation

4.6   The first policy response was presented as shown below.

A decision is being made about the refurbishment of your building which may affect its fire safety and/or how safe its design is generally. The changes being made include a) the installation of new fire doors b) window replacements and c) re-cladding of the building. Your landlord or building manager wants to involve residents, so they:

- Ask for your opinion on the proposed changes, making it clear how the decision will be made

- Once the decision has been made, they inform you of the ways in which your views were taken into account

---

4.7   Participants were positive about being involved in the decision-making process and saw this as a sign that "they [building managers] care a bit about the residents". This was important given the concerns participants had voiced regarding not being listened to about fire safety concerns (discussed in Chapter 2).

4.8   This solution was also seen to help foster better relationships between residents and building managers by improving communication, trust and encouraging the view that fire safety was everyone's responsibility.

> *"…if they're highlighting to us the new changes and they're for the better, then, yeah the least we can do is acknowledge them and listen to what they've got to say. Try and get rid of this blame culture."*
>
> (Private renter, West Midlands)

4.9   Participants stressed that key information about any refurbishment should be made available to all residents in an accessible way. This meant using a variety of channels including residents' meetings and committees as well as letters and online consultations. Meetings should include professionals concerned with building and fire safety who "know what they're talking about" and who could answer questions on the proposals. Residents should then be given sufficient time to consider and respond to the consultation.

4.10   In terms of the content of the consultation, residents would need to know why a refurbishment is considered necessary and whether it was for safety or other reasons. Second, participants wanted details of what work would be involved, how it would comply with safety regulations, how long it would take and, for owner occupiers, the costs.

4.11   While they appreciated being consulted, participants did not trust building managers and landlords to use consultations as a genuine commitment to

listen to residents. They were concerned consultations would be used as a "box ticking exercise", with landlords and managers likely to prioritise costs above the fire safety concerns of residents.

"… if that was my property management company, I think basically they would listen to residents and then do whatever they were going to do in the first place anyway."

(Private renter, North West)

4.12 Although wanting to be consulted and heard, participants were reluctant to be tasked with making the final decisions. They were concerned both that they did not have sufficient technical knowledge and that some residents could oppose decisions that were in the best interest of everyone in the building.

"You want to be informed but you don't want it to be on your shoulders. You can't make those decisions on what's safe and what isn't."

(Owner occupier, North West)

4.13 Participants also liked the idea of being informed about how their views were considered and changes to their building that had resulted. This gave them a sense of being involved in the entire decision-making cycle and being able to hold managers and landlords accountable.

Training course

4.14 The second policy solution presented to participants centred on training to improve residents' fire safety knowledge in order to keep their building safe.

> What if you were also offered a training course that covers what you as a resident can do to help keep the building safe (for example how to reduce fire risks, how to raise issues?)

4.15 Participants liked the idea of a training course. As with the refurbishment consultation, they felt it could reassure residents that building owners and managers were taking fire safety issues seriously.

4.16 Participants felt that training could address both drivers of perceptions of fire safety discussed in this report. They thought it would increase their trust in other residents to prevent and respond appropriately to fires and would give them personal confidence that they could cope in the event of a fire.

"I'd like to make sure that the whole building was safe for myself and everybody else."

(Private renter, West Midlands)

"Just knowing for your peace of mind that you've got the awareness and the knowledge, instead of having no knowledge at all."

(Private renter, West Midlands)

4.17 Finally, a training course was considered as something that would "last a lifetime". Participants felt training would be valuable for many years and the knowledge could be transferred if they moved to another building.

4.18 Participants felt that training should cover both fire prevention and protection, as outlined below.

- **Prevention:** Participants wanted training to raise awareness of fire risks and provide tips on how to prevent a fire. This included educating people on behaviours that may seem "silly" or "obvious", such as the risks of leaving lighted candles unattended and leaving heaters on.

- **Protection:** Participants wanted to be shown what to do in the event of a fire. This included fire evacuation procedures and how to use fire safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers.

4.19 They also felt it was important for training to be tailored, covering the layout of their building and how an evacuation would work. They wanted the opportunity to ask questions to seek assurance that plans were sufficient.

> *"It's personal for your block then everyone that's there has got the block's interest at heart."*
>
> (Private renter, West Midlands)

4.20 Participants expressed interest in both face-to-face and online training. Face-to-face was felt to be more engaging and effective, but it should be supported by online information or a training manual to reach a wider audience.

4.21 For those less likely to engage with training courses, participants suggested showing information videos about fire risk or running television campaigns.

4.22 Participants discussed who they thought should be responsible for funding and delivering training. Both government and building owners were felt to have a "duty of care" towards residents to provide training. Participants also felt that insurance companies could be involved given their interest in fire prevention.

4.23 Given the cost of a large training programme, participants felt that government funding would need to be made available to support delivery by building owners and managers.

4.24 Participants also looked to government to enforce delivery of training by building owners, whether private or public, in the same way as done for employers. Participants did not trust building owners or managers to deliver training without a legal obligation to do so.

4.25 Participants were very clear that they wanted experts to deliver the training, rather than people who, for example, were employed by a general training

agency. Participants said they would trust members of the fire brigade given their knowledge and practical experience.

4.26 As well as concerns about cost, participants worried about the level of commitment from building owners and managers. Those with experience of living as social tenants expressed a view that their landlords often did not want to engage with social tenants beyond the basic provision of a home.

> *"You're lucky to have it [home], basically. They don't want to hear from you."*
>
> (Owner occupier, London)

4.27 Similarly, participants recognised that although they felt it was important, it would be challenging to engage all residents in training. They suggested making training and completing a fire safety test obligatory as part of tenancy or leasehold agreements.

> *"I think it would have to be done by everyone in the block really otherwise then you're just relying on others to do it and they might not have the same knowledge."*
>
> (Social renter, London)

4.28 As well as format, discussed previously, participants were concerned the training was at a convenient time for most residents and not overly long.

> *"… you'd want everyone to be involved, you'd want everyone on board for it, everyone sharing responsibility and pushing in the same direction. Realistically is that going to happen?"*
>
> (Owner occupier, London)

Information pack

4.29 This scenario stated:

> You are provided with an information pack containing details about the fire safety features of your building. These include how the design of the building (such as the materials used) can help it stand up to fires, as well as the other safety measures in place (such the use of sprinklers and fire doors).

4.30 Participants were positive about information packs feeling they:

- Reassured residents that building managers were taking fire safety seriously;

- Raised confidence that the building was safe and in what do during a fire;

- Provided a reference point to allow residents to verify fire safety measures themselves for additional reassurance.

4.31 Participants felt that an information pack should be provided to all residents as a matter of course at the point of moving in or even before deciding to move in to answer safety concerns. Currently participants said that provision of this kind

of information was inconsistent and tended to be targeted at the most vulnerable.

> *"You've got to be in receipt of a [welfare or charity] service to get that information and to get that help, whereas Joe Blogs doesn't get that. That's just something we're supposed to understand and pick up as we go along."*
> (Private renter, West Midlands)

4.32 Suggestions for what the information pack should include focused on four aspects summarised below:

- **Building design** - information on building materials, particularly cladding.

- **Safety measures** - information on the fire safety measures in place in a building. This included evacuation routes, sprinkler systems, the location of fire extinguishers, how the fire alarms operate and how long fire doors would protect them in the event of a fire. The pack should also confirm how often equipment is checked.

- **Procedures** - guidance on what to do during a fire, such as whether to stay put and/or how to leave a building safely, as well as what to expect during the evacuation (e.g. safety lighting).

- **Point of contact** - how to get in touch with key people responsible for fire safety in the building.

4.33 Participants felt that freeholders and councils should be responsible for the production and distribution of the packs and that landlords letting flats should ensure that tenants receive one upon moving in. However, participants were not confident that this would be consistently upheld by all stakeholders and questioned how it would be enforced.

4.34 Although the packs were considered sufficient for most people, participants wanted to make sure that new residents, especially young people moving into their first property, were contacted upon moving in to ensure they understood the information.

4.35 Finding the time to read an information pack was highlighted as potentially difficult. Participants who had received one with their flat admitted not looking at it, as it was not a priority when they moved in. However, participants also felt that they and others would be more likely to read their information packs, given the profile of fire safety raised by the Grenfell Tower fire.

> *"When we bought the property, I know it sounds really bad, but that's the last thing on your mind so you put it in the cupboard."*
> (Owner occupier, North West)

4.36 Participants suggested that the information pack needs to "stand out" from the everyday correspondence they receive from official bodies, such as councils, to encourage residents to read it. One suggestion was to use images which highlight the risks of a fire to "shock" residents to engage with the material,

similar to the information contained on cigarette packaging. However, participants felt that it was important that any imagery used be sensitive to the tragic loss of life at the Grenfell Tower fire.

4.37 The format of the information was also seen to be important for ensuring that people read it carefully. Participants suggested that the information could be in the form of a book or pack, rather than just a leaflet, which is more likely to get lost or ignored. A book would also last longer, and participants described being able to keep it on their book shelf to refer to when needed.

4.38 Although participants liked the idea of having a physical copy to refer to, there was also the view that the information should be provided in multiple formats (such as online) to make it accessible.

4.39 Participants also felt that the information would   need to be presented in appropriate community languages to ensure that it is accessible to residents for whom English is an additional language.

Summary of responses to policy options

4.40 Table 4.1 summarises the range of views on each of the broad policy solutions.

Table 4.1: Summary of responses to policy options

Policy option	Description	Key responses
Refurbishment consultation	Provides residents with the opportunity to be involved in influencing decisions that could affect the fire safety in their building	**Likes**: being informed and involved, value transparency. **Dislikes**: sceptical about consultation being 'tokenistic' and concerns around whether residents are qualified to make decisions **Suggestions**: residents felt they should be informed of the rationale for refurbishment, and that experts should be involved in decision making.
Training course	Improving residents' fire safety knowledge to help keep their building safe and to be able to cope in an event of a fire	**Likes**: educating residents around fire prevention and protection **Dislikes**: likelihood of everyone doing the training low, but vital for training to be effective **Suggestions**: training should be accessible, engaging, delivered by 'experts' and potentially obligatory.
Information pack	Raising awareness of fire safety to help participants feel in control and trust other residents.	**Likes**: information provision is a basic requirement, knowing that measures are in place is key to feeling safe **Dislikes**: information pack may not be effective if people don't read it **Suggestions**: should cover building design and procedures, format and presentation important to engage residents.

Appendix 1: Technical notes

Research approach
1. A qualitative research approach was used to conduct the study. Qualitative research is designed to gather in-depth data on the experiences and views of participants and to understand perceptions from the participants' own perspectives.

2. Focus groups were selected as the most appropriate method for the study as they harness group dynamics to produce rich and considered data in an efficient way. This enabled us to bring a diverse breadth of views on fire safety together in a way that also deepened participants' reflections on the reasons behind their views.

3. Rigour in qualitative research is achieved through a systematic approach to participant selection (sampling) and recruitment and in this case, ensuring that the focus groups were delivered in a consistent but participant-led way. Robust qualitative research also involves the systematic analysis of the data which, for this study, involved understanding views within each group as well as comparing views across the sample. The following sections outline these aspects in more detail. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

Sampling
4. To capture a range and diversity of views and experiences and to explore these in depth, qualitative samples tend to be small (typically between 6 to 12 focus groups for a study) and are not designed to be representative at a population level.

5. Taking a purposive sampling approach (a marker of quality in qualitative research (Ritchie et al., 2014[8], Spencer et al., 2003[9]) involves selecting 'sampling units' (participants, settings, areas, events, processes etc.) using a set of criteria that are thought to help understand the key questions to hand.

6. A key inclusion criterion in our sampling was that participants were living in a high-rise building, defined as a residential building with at least six floors. Once this criterion was met, a set of primary (with quotas) and secondary criteria were applied. Primary criteria focused on achieving diversity in terms of geographical region and tenure, as outlined below. In addition, six secondary criteria were monitored: (a) residential floor (sampling participants that lived on floors 0-5, floors 6-9 and floors 10 and above); (b) gender; (c) ethnicity; (d) age; (e) whether

---

[8] Ritchie, J, Lewis, J, Nichols, CM and Ormston, R (2014) Qualitative research in practice. Sage: London. (2nd Edition)

[9] Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis J., and Dillon, L. (2003). Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence. Cabinet Office: London.

the participant or someone living in the household had a medical condition; and (f) whether participants had children living in their household.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">

Primary sampling criteria

- **Geographical region:** Participants were recruited from three regions in England with a high concentration of high-rise buildings: (a) London; (b) The North West (Manchester and Liverpool); and West Midlands (Birmingham).;

- **Tenure:** Participants were sampled from across three key tenures: (a) home owners; (b) private renters; and (c) social renters.

</div>

7. Nine focus groups were conducted, as outlined in table 1.1 below, with between three and eight participants (a total of 50 participants across the focus groups). The number of groups enabled us to collect data from all tenure groups and across all three selected regions. Who takes part in each group can affect how the discussion flows and whether a diverse range of views are collected. The composition for each group took into account three factors: (a) ensuring participants in a group share some key characteristics (i.e. tenure and region) to enable them to feel comfortable to discuss and disclose issues; (b) balancing this with a need to have diversity of other characteristics (particularly the secondary criteria, such as gender and residential floor), to encourage a breadth of views; and (c) ensuring that there could be some degree of comparison between groups, given that each group had a specific set of core characteristics.

Table 1.1: Focus group composition

Focus group composition									
Primary Sampling Criteria	**Group 1**	**Group 2**	**Group 3**	**Group 4**	**Group 5**	**Group 6**	**Group 7**	**Group 8**	**Group 9**
Area	London	London	London	NW England	NW England	NW England	W. Midlands	W. Midlands	W. Midlands
Tenure	Social renters	Private renters	Owner occupiers	Social renters	Private renters	Owner occupiers	Social renters	Private renters	Owner occupiers

8. Table 1.2 below provides a breakdown of the achieved sample across the groups in relation to both the primary and secondary criteria.

Table 1.2: Achieved sample of focus group participants

		Characteristics	Participants
Primary sampling characteristics	Region	London	17
		North West	17
		West Midlands	16
	Tenure	Social renters	18
		Private renters	17
		Owner occupies	15
Secondary sampling characteristics	Floor level	0-5	21
		6-9	21
		10+	8
	Gender	Male	29
		Female	21
	Ethnic group	White	36
		Black	5
		Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi	4
		Chinese and other	5
	Age	16-34	21
		35-54	23
		55-74	4
		75+	2
	Medical condition[10]	Household member with a medical condition	9
		No household members with a medical condition	41
	Children in household	Those with children in the household	18
		Those without children in the household	32

Recruitment

9. The recruitment approach was designed to ensure that consent was informed and voluntary (Appendix 1 provides further information about the approach.)

10. A 'blended' approach was used which involved drawing on a list of respondents who had agreed to be re-contacted for further research from the English Housing Survey (2015/16, 16/17 and 17/18) and boosting this sample by using an experienced and trusted recruitment agency[11].

---

[10] Participants were asked 'Do you or anyone else in your household have a condition or illness that reduces your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?'

[11] English Housing Survey Methodology https://www.gov.uk/guidance/english-housing-survey-guidance-and-methodology

11. An opt-in process was used in both cases. This involved individuals being given information about the study, both in written form and through a one-to-one discussion, as well as having an opportunity to discuss queries and concerns with researchers and/or external recruiters. Individuals then had the opportunity to choose to participate in the study, or not.

Focus group delivery

12. Focus groups lasted up to 2.5 hours (including a short break) and were organised to stimulate a rich discussion around fire safety concerns, whilst also ensuring participation was convenient and safe. Key safety considerations included discussing issues sensitively (see paragraph 15), promoting supportive group dynamics (see paragraph 15) and providing participants access to support after the discussion (see paragraph 18)

13. Groups were organised to maximise accessibility for participants. This included ensuring venues were centrally located, accessible by public transport and accessible for those with physical disabilities. Groups also took place between 6pm and 8.30pm so that both working and non-working populations were able to attend.

14. To encourage a rich discussion of fire safety, trained and experienced NatCen facilitators delivered the groups. Facilitators were skilled in setting up participant expectations at the start of groups, managing challenging group dynamics, ensuring participants felt in control of the discussion while also keeping it relevant and steering the discussion from detailed accounts of personal, traumatic events.

15. As mentioned, a key strength of qualitative research is its ability to explore participants' perspectives in their own terms in a systematic way. To do this, facilitators used a discussion guide outlining key issues, probes and prompts to support exploration of topics. Having a guide helped to ensure that there was consistency in coverage across groups while also allowing participants to raise issues spontaneously (Appendix 2 provides a copy of the guide).

16. A number of measures were used to ensure that the discussion was engaging for participants and that they were able to openly reflect on their perceptions of fire safety, beyond surface level answers. This included allowing participants to discuss issues in smaller breakout groups of two or three where appropriate and the use of a range of enabling tools to help generate more considered/nuanced views. This included the use of short, hypothetical scenarios that invited participants to reflect on broad pre-formulated policy solutions designed to make residents of high-rise buildings feel safer (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the scenarios, which are discussed at length in Chapter 4).

17. Participants were given £60 as a thank you payment at the end of the focus groups and an information leaflet outlining support organisations in case the discussion raised any emotional or practical fire safety issues. As is standard,

groups did not take place on Fridays, as this could limit the support that participants can access from organisations, which may be closed at the weekend.

Analysis

18. All focus groups were audio recorded with participants permission and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were anonymised and then managed and analysed using the Framework approach (Spencer et al., 2003[12]), a systematic approach to data analysis that is widely used in social policy research. This approach involved organising and summarising the data into matrices so that views within each group could be understood and compared across the sample. Each summary in the matrices was linked to the verbatim transcripts using the qualitative software package NVivo, ensuring that the findings were grounded in participants' accounts.

19. Verbatim quotations and examples from the group discussions are used throughout this report to illustrate themes and findings where appropriate.

20. The aim of this report is to capture the range and diversity of views on fire safety. Numbers of participants or groups expressing particular views are not reported, as any numerical inference is likely to be misleading or inaccurate because, as noted, qualitative samples are not designed to be statistically representative of the wider population. Instead, qualitative studies are designed to gather in-depth data on experiences and perceptions from particpants' perspectives

Ethics

21. Ethical approval was sought and obtained from NatCen's Ethics Committee (REC). This ethics governance procedure is in line with the requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2005) and the Government Social Research Unit Ethics Framework (GSRU, 2005).

---

[12] Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis J., and Dillon, L. (2003). Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence. Cabinet Office: London.

Challenges and limitations

22. The limitations for this study are set out below and relate to the type of generalisations that can be made, whether the study was able to capture the full range of views on fire safety and the degree to which comparisons can be made between groups.

Study limitations

- **Type of generalisations:** As noted, the sampling approach for this study focused on achieving a range and diversity of views, in alignment with the qualitative research principles. This translated into having a small sample that was purposively selected (rather than using a random sampling approach). These features of the study mean that it cannot comment on the prevalence of views.

- **Capturing the full range of views**: An opt-in recruitment process was used to ensure recruitment was undertaken ethically. However, this could mean that participants who felt strongly about the issue of fire safety and who want their views to be heard are more likely to opt-in to the study.

- **Comparing individual characteristics:** As noted, focus groups are an effective way to deepen insights through harnessing group dynamics. However, focus groups cannot explore in detail the views of individual members of each group nor take into account all the individual characteristics that may have these informed views. This limits the ability of this study to compare the views of sub-groups of participants (e.g. in terms of vulnerable household members) and understand why these views may differ. However, the report attempts to draw out key differences sensitively where these have been particularly pronounced.

Appendix 2: Study materials

1. About the focus groups

About the study approach

The key aim of the study is to explore high-rise residents' perceptions of fire safety. This involves identifying the range of concerns around fire safety and the reasons underpinning these concerns, as well as exploring what measures would make participants feel safe.

NatCen agreed with MHCLG that a qualitative approach is appropriate as it enables perceptions of safety to be explored from the participants' own perspectives. This has the potential to provide rich insights into whether fire safety is perceived to be a risk and, importantly, the drivers and barriers behind these perceptions. In selecting a specific qualitative approach, NatCen agreed that focus groups are the most appropriate for the following reasons:

- **They generate rich and considered data**. Focus groups are very effective in harnessing group interactions to surface, in this instance, a range of perspectives on fire safety, as well as deepening participants' reflection on the factors underpinning these perspectives.

- **They are cost effective.** Focus groups bring together a breadth of views in a single data collection encounter and so offer value for money. However, NatCen are mindful of the practical challenges in arranging focus groups, particularly where the sample is not geographically clustered.

Aims and objectives of the focus group guide

The guide speaks directly to the objectives of the study. The first two sections of the guide explore high-rise residents' perceptions of fire safety, identifying the range of concerns and the drivers that underpin these. The second section of the guide moves on to consider what would make participants feel safer; this includes 'testing' out some of MHCLG's policy ideas using vignettes (or hypothetical scenarios).

2. About the discussion flow

The guide is designed to manage the discussion in four ways:

- **Facilitating depth of dicussion**. As noted above, the richness of the insights will come from the interaction between participants. The guide therefore limits the discussion to the key issues so that there is scope for participants to discuss these issues as fully as possible within the timeframe
- **Participant-led.** The discussion will be as participant-led as possible in the following ways:
  - o Drawing on participants' own language (the language in the guide is for our reference only).
  - o Allowing participants to spontaneously generate ideas, express views and provide the reasons underpinning these. Probes and prompts will only be used to stimulate and expand the discussion where appropriate.
  - o Interactive in nature. This involves the use of activities and paired work within the groups where necessary to ensure all views are captured.
- **A 'scaffolded' approach to support participants to fully articulate their views.** The guide breaks down the discussion into different phases for two reasons.
  - o Taking account of group dynamics: The guide takes account of the usual sequence of group behaviours that happen during focus group discussions. Group behaviours usually undergo different phases – including early guardedness and anxiety (the 'forming stage') and initial intragroup tension ('storming' stage) before the group moves on to the productive phase of the discussion. This is where there is group cohesion and a productive engagement with the topic (the 'norming' and 'performing' stages). The guide eases participants into the discussion so that the key issues (perceptions of safety and what would make them feel safe) are discussed midway through the interaction, when the the group is likely to be at the norming and performing stage.

- Allows participants to incrementally develop their views: Although some participants may come with definite views around the issue of fire safety, there may be others that will need time and space within the discussion to fully surface their views and the reasons behind these. The guide enables participants to therefore develop their views incrementally.
- **Ensuring that there is a common frame of discussion.** The guide balances the need to allow participants to express views spontaneously whilst also ensuring there is a common frame of reference informing the discussion.

3. About the format of the topic guide

The topic guide is arranged in a table format listing the key phase of the discussion, the topics to be covered at each phase and the follow-up probes and prompts that can be used. Key features of the guide include:
- **The topics are not worded in the form of questions** – this encourages facilitators to be responsive to the concepts, language and terms used by participants.
- **It does not include many follow-up questions like Why? When? How?** as it is assumed that participant's contributions will be fully explored throughout to understand how and why views are held.
- **Probes and prompts are for guidance only** and are therefore not exhaustive. As noted, it is important for the discussion to be led by participants as much as possible, Probes and prompts are presented as bullet points in the topic guide.
- **Fonts.** The guide contains key instructions for facilitators.
  - Text in red indicates instructions to facilitators.
  - Text in blue outlines the purpose of each topic.
  - *Text in italics* conveys worded instructions for facilitators to use with participants – i.e. these instructions will be read out.

4.   The topic guide

Phase	Detail	Probes/prompts/notes

1.   **Introduction & ice breaker**
(10 minutes)
	A. **Introducing the discussion**
	(5 minutes)
		• **Purpose of discussion**: *We are here because we want to learn more about your thoughts and feelings on fire safety where you live. The study is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The findings will help policy makers understand residents' perceptions of fire safety and identify improvements that could be made.*
		• **Reassurances**:
		    o <u>No wrong or right answers:</u> Explain that we may ask what seems like obvious questions, but it is important to for us to explore issues in depth
		    o <u>About the discussion:</u> This will be a discussion amongst the group. We are interested in hearing everyone's views.
		    o <u>Permission to record:</u> Explain you will be making notes on flipcharts but recording means that we do not have to scribble everything down. Recording also ensures that we have an accurate record of the discussion. Ensure everyone is happy with interview to be recorded. Explain that recording will be stored securely and deleted at the end of the project.
		    o <u>Confidentiality:</u> Their name will not appear in any output. With their permission, we would like to share anonymised transcripts with the client (where participants will not be identifiable). <u>Facilitator:</u> Ensure participants are ok with this – address any concerns if possible. Whether concerns are raised or not, say you will check in with group at the end discussion to see if they are still happy for their contribution to be shared. Also remind participants it would be helpful to treat what other people say as confidential and not to be repeated outside the session
		    o <u>Voluntary participation:</u> they do not have to answer anything they don't want to – free to withdraw at any time.
		
		• **Ground rules**:
		    o There are likely to be different views among the group and we do not expect people to share each other's views, but respect differences and views
		    o Speak one at a time
		    o Switch mobiles off/ put on silent
		• **Re-iterate that we are interested in actual views** and the group is a safe space to provide this.
		• **Any questions**

	B. **Breaking the ice** **To establish rapport amongst the group and ease them into**	<u>**Paired exercise (do not record)**</u> • **Ask each participant to introduce themselves to their neighbour** and say 1) their name 2) what floor they live in and 3) one thing they like and do not like about living in a high-rise building

Phase	Detail	Probes/prompts/notes
	thinking about their building (5 minutes)	Facilitator: Handout 4 post-it notes to each pair to note down what they like and dislike. When convening again as a group, go around and ask people to introduce their neighbour to the rest of the group. Write down what they like and dislike on a flipchart as you go around the room.
2. **Views on fire safety** (5 minutes)	**Defining fire safety** By the end of the session we will have gathered initial views on fire safety and eased participants into discussing the topic	**Paired exercise (do not record)** • **What comes to mind when you think about fire safety where you live?** Facilitator: Explain that we will discuss this at length a little later, but just want to get their initial thoughts on this to get the discussion started. Facilitator to emphasise that they should discuss with their neighbour what comes to mind – there is no right or wrong answer Facilitator then collects responses from around the room and writes these down on a flipchart
3. **Fire safety – Establishing a common frame of reference** (5 minutes)	**Establish understanding of what is meant by 'fire safety'** By the end of the session we will have established a common frame of reference for the rest of the discussion, as well as getting participants' input into the term	**Group exercise** *Before we talk more about fire safety, this is how we define fire safety 'The prevention of and protection from fire'* [read out and show A3 card format]. Facilitator: Invite their reflections on this term but cover it briefly. • Whether they think the term covers what they discussed • If they think anything is missing in the definition Facilitator: Tell respondents that throughout the rest of the discussion we use the term 'fire safety' to include measures to prevent fire and measures in place during the fire and after
**Mapping and understanding concerns (1 hour 20 minutes)**	
**Aim:** The session aim is to generate insights in to the range of fire safety concerns participants have, the reasons underpinning these concerns, how these are prioritised and whether they vary according to different contexts. This section will also explore whether the concerns have changed over time – including whether and how Grenfell has shaped these concerns.	
4. **Perceptions of fire safety** (40 minutes)	**A. Mapping the range of concerns in pairs** This session allows participants to map the range of fire safety concerns they have in smaller (and more accessible) groups of 2-3 people (10 minutes)	**Paired exercise (do not record)** Facilitator: Explain now we are going to be focusing in on fire safety concerns. Ask participants to get together in pairs and list any fire safety concerns they have. During the activity • Distribute a maximum of 6 post-it notes per pair, asking participants to note one key concern on each post-it notes. Please walk around whilst participants are writing and do the following: • Get the pairs to reflect on why they have identified a concern • Place each concern on a flipchart paper
	B. Clarifying concerns and	**Group discussion**

Phase	Detail	Probes/prompts/notes

	understanding the reasons behind these – as a group
	
	By the end of the session we will have a detailed understanding of the concerns and the drivers underpinning these.
	
	We will also have some insight into the contexts in which concerns are strongest/ most relevant.
	
	(30 minutes)
		Facilitator: Go through as many post-it notes as possible, ensuring you cover as many areas as possible – grouping concerns into emerging categories, and checking this with participants.
		
		Allow participants to spontaneously respond on the following - ONLY probe and prompt if necessary. For each of the concerns:
		
		• **Provide further details about what the concern is to clarify understanding.** Some of the categories of concern that may emerge are listed below
		   o Accountability (e.g. single point of contact, escalation process, on-site staff /concierge)
		   o Equipment (e.g. sprinklers, fire alarm systems)
		   o Building infrastructure (e.g. cladding, fire doors, fire walls, evacuation staircases)
		   o Relationship between landlord/management and tenant (information provision, scope for feedback, on-site staff)
		   o Compartmentation
		   o Behaviour of others (e.g. neighbours)
		   o Building design (e.g. emergency access)
		• **Explore why it is a concern and the drivers behind it**
		   o Family and friends
		   o Personal experience
		   o Media coverage of incidents
		   o Historical events
		• **Exploring context –** in what context would the issues raised be of most and least concern (e.g. tenure type, household status, life stage etc.)

5. **Prioritising Concern** (25 minutes)	A. **Prioritising concerns in pairs** This session allows participants to prioritise concerns in smaller (and more accessible) groups of 2-3 people (10 minutes)	**Paired exercise (do not record)** Facilitator: Draws attention to the different concerns on the flipchart. Ask participants to work in pairs to identify which of these are the 'TOP 3' priority concerns and which are 'BOTTOM 3' concerns.
	B. **Prioritising concerns as a group** By the end of the session we will have a clear understanding of which are the most and least important concerns and why. We will also explore disagreements to	**Group discussion** Facilitator: Create a flipchart with three columns – 'high priority concerns', 'low priority concerns' and 'undecided' (to capture disagreements). Ask each pair of participants to share their top and bottom priorities. • Paste 'TOP 3' priorities in 'high priority' column of flip-chart. • Paste 'BOTTOM 3' priorities in 'low priority concerns' • In cases where a given concern appears in BOTH the 'high priority' and 'low priority' column, move this to the third column 'UNDECIDED' to return to and discuss.

Phase	Detail	Probes/prompts/notes
	further understand the reason behind concerns and why their importance may differ between the group (15 minutes)	**Once all the post-it notes have been captured on the flip-chart:** • As group, go through the top and bottom priority needs and discuss why these are important/less important and their reasons for this. • Discuss any agreements and disagreements through a direct discussion at the 'UNDECIDED' column.
6. Whether concerns have changed over time and impact of Grenfell (15 minutes)	**A. General thoughts on whether concerns changed over time** (5 minutes)	<u>**Group discussion**</u> • **Explore change in concerns** – whether concerns have changed over time for the group and why they have changed

	B. Impact of Grenfell
	By the end of the section we will know whether Grenfell has shaped participants' concerns and how – including the specific issues it raised (10 minutes)
		<u>**Group discussion**</u>
		
		Facilitator: If Grenfell hasn't been mentioned, briefly introduce the issue: *As you will most likely all know, in June 2017, the fire at Grenfell Tower happened. Grenfell Tower was a high-rise building in the London Borough of Kensington with a total of 24 floors. The independent public inquiry is on-going and has been set up to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire. Alongside the independent inquiry, the government is undertaking work to reform the system of building safety as whole, to ensure that something like the tragedy at Grenfell Tower cannot happen again.*
		
		• **Whether Grenfell has shaped participants concerns and why –** If so, mapping the range of issues it raised and why
		    o Accountability (e.g. on site staff)
		    o Equipment (e.g. sprinklers)
		    o Building infrastructure (e.g. cladding)
		    o Relationship between landlord/management and tenant
		    o Compartmentation
		    o Behaviour of others (e.g. neighbours)
		    o Images
		    o Media coverage/Public inquiry
		o **If not, explore why not**

**Comfort break (5 minutes)**	
**Solution forming (45 minutes)**	
**Aim:** This session provide will explore thoughts on what would make participants feel safer – including testing some of the policy solutions devised by MHCLG using vignettes	

7. Participant-led solution forming
 	
(15 minutes)
	Discussing solutions as a group
	
	By the end of the session we will learn what solutions can make residents feel safer, why they are
		Facilitator: As a group, go through 2-3 of the top priority concerns and ask participants on to reflect on 2-3 solutions (what can be done to make them feel safer) for each concern around fire safety. For each solution, find out more information on:
		• The nature of the solution (i.e. what it looks like)
		• Why it is important (i.e. why it would reassure them)
		• How it should be delivered – including who should be involved in delivering it. E.g.
		    o Local authority
		        o Landlord

Phase	Detail	Probes/prompts/notes
	important and how they should be delivered. We will also understand the barriers and facilitators to making the solutions effective	- o Management company/housing association - o On-site staff - o Tenants • Barriers and facilitators to effective delivery
8. **Testing policy solutions** (30 minutes)	**Testing and reflecting on solutions** **By the end of the session we will have a clear understanding of participants' views around whether policy solutions can help them feel safer, in what context the solutions would be effective/less effective as well as any changes they would make to the delivery of the solution**	<u>**Group exercise**</u> <u>Facilitator explains:</u> *So far we have talked about your solutions. Let's talk about other solutions.* <u>Facilitator:</u> There are 3 vignettes (see accompanying document) – you will have 10 minutes per vignette. Read each vignette in turn and ask participants to reflect on the following (can keep these reflections short if running out of time): • What they think about it • In what context it would work/ would not work • How they would deliver it differently
Close	**Thank you and close**	• Thank them for their time and for the helpful discussion • Revisit whether they are still happy for us to share anonymised transcripts • Let them know that report will most likely be published in the summer. Please let facilitator know if they want to see the report • Hand out incentives • Hand out leaflet with contact details of support organisations

Feeling Safe study - vignettes (hypothetical scenarios)

Vignettes are short hypothetical scenarios that have been designed to invite participants to reflect on some broad policy 'solutions' that MHCLG are interested in. The vignettes were designed in close collaboration with MHCLG and presented in columns 2 and 3 (column 1 provides an outline of MHCLG's policy thinking that informed the vignette design) .

Each vignette will introduce a single MHCLG solution, which will be read out. Participants will then be asked to reflect on whether the solution will help them feel safer and the reasons behind their views. We will also explore their thoughts on how the solution can be best delivered.

Facilitator: Please prioritise Vignettes 1, 2 and 3. If the solution discussed in any of these vignettes has already been covered in the group discussion, just touch on the vignette lightly. Please only cover Vignette 4 if time permits.

Topic: Consultation and engagement

Policy position and questions informing the vignettes – FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND NOT TO BE READ	Vignette 1 – and prompts TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS	Vignette 2 – and prompt TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS
We are working in relation to recommendation 4.3 of the Hackitt Report to **ensure that resident involvement and engagement are at the heart of the new system** and that duty holders should be able to demonstrate that they have a **strategy for resident engagement**. We need to determine the **approach and requirements for duty-holders in HRRBs to provide a Resident Engagement Strategy** to support the principle of the transparency of information and develop a feeling of partnership between duty holder/landlord/responsible person and residents.	**Facilitator: Read the vignette below:** *A decision is being made about the refurbishment of your building which may affect its fire safety and/or how safe its design is generally.* *The changes being made include a) the installation of new fire doors b) window replacements and c) re-cladding of the building.* *Your landlord or building manager wants to involve residents, so they:* • *Ask for your **opinion on the proposed changes**, making it clear how the decision will be made.* Facilitator: This includes the factors that are considered to make the decision (e.g. costs) and the decision-making process (e.g. the timeline, who is involved etc.)	**Facilitator: Read the vignette below:** *What if you were also offered a **training course** that covers what you as a resident can do to help keep the building safe (for example how to reduce fire risks, how to raise issues)?* **Follow-up prompts:** • How would this make you **feel** about fire safety? • Is there anything that you would want the **training to cover** in particular? • How would you want the training to be **delivered** (e.g. face-to face, online)? • What would be the **role of on-site manager?**

Policy position and questions informing the vignettes – FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND NOT TO BE READ	Vignette 1 – and prompts TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS	Vignette 2 – and prompt TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS
	• ***Once the decision has been made***, *they inform you of the ways in which your views were taken into account.* **Follow-up prompts:** • Would you **like to be involved** in this type of decision-making (i.e. around any changes made that can affect fire safety)? • Would this involvement make you f**eel** safe? • What **kind of issues** would you want to be consulted on to make you feel safer? • What would help you become **more involved** in this decision-making process (e.g. given a deadline by which to respond)? • What would be the **role of on-site manager?**	

Policy position and questions informing the vignettes – FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND NOT TO BE READ	Vignette 3 – and prompts TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS	Optional Vignette 4 [13]- and prompts TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS [Please ONLY read out this vignette if you still have time after covering vignettes 1, 3 and 4]

We are working in relation to recommendations 4.1 and 4.2 of the Hackitt Report to **ensure that residents have access to information about their building and the safety measures in place.**
 	
We need to determine the **requirements for what information duty-holders need to provide to residents in High-rise Residential Buildings (HRRB) about how their buildings are kept safe** – known as the 'layers of protection.' This will enable the residents to be better informed about the safety measures employed in their buildings designed to ensure that they are protected in their homes and better able to identify any issues with them when they arise.
 	
We need to determine **the requirements on duty-holders to provide additional information to residents on the safety management of their buildings.** This may include Fire Risk Assessments and their results but could also include information in other areas such as structural integrity and results of electrical checks.
	Facilitator: Read the vignette below:
	
	*You are provided with an **information pack** containing details about the fire safety features of your building. These include how the design of the building (such as the materials used) can help it stand up to fires, as well as the other safety measures in place (such the use of sprinklers and fire doors).*
	
	Follow-up prompts:
	
	• How would that make you **feel** about fire safety?
	• Are there **particular areas** of information you would like to know about which would make you feel safer? E.g.
	   ○ Building materials and their combustibility
	   ○ How easy is it for the firefighters to do their job?
	   ○ Fire stairwells etc.
	• Which **types of information** should be provided as **standard** by your landlord/building manager?
	• In what **format** would you like this information (e.g. email, online, face-to-face)?
	• What if you were told the **name of a person** that can explain this information to you if needed – would that be helpful? (Who would you trust to provide this information?)
	• What would be the **role of on-site manager?**
		Facilitator: Read the vignette below:
		
		*In addition to the information pack, what if you are also told you can access the details of the **fire risk assessment** of your building?*
		
		A fire risk assessment involves identifying fire hazards and people at risk of harm, judging the fire safety measures in place to keep people safe from fire and in the event of a fire, and making recommendations for any improvements which could be made should there be any shortfalls.)
		
		Follow-up prompts:
		
		• How would that make you **feel** about fire safety?
		• Would you like more information on **other risk areas** (e.g. results of electrical checks, structural integrity)? If so, would that make you feel safe?
		• Should fire risk assessment information be provided as **standard** by your landlord/ building manager?
		• In what **format** would you like this information (e.g. email, online, face-to-face)?
		• What if you were told the **name of a person** that can explain this information to you if needed – would that be helpful? (Who would you trust to provide this information?)

[13] Optional vignette 4 was not covered in the focus groups due to time constraints

Policy position and questions informing the vignettes – FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND NOT TO BE READ	Vignette 3 – and prompts TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS	Optional Vignette 4 [13]- and prompts TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS [Please ONLY read out this vignette if you still have time after covering vignettes 1, 3 and 4]
The requirements are likely to be split between a set of information that building safety managers must **proactively** provide to residents and that which can be **made available** on request. This will enable residents to be better informed about the ongoing day-to-day management of their buildings with greater ability to assess how well those responsible for building safety are fulfilling their duties. It will also help ensure that residents understand the role they play in keeping their building safe.		- Would you like this fire risk assessment **in addition** to the information pack? - What would you anticipate you would do with the information contained within the assessment? - What would be the **role of on-site manager?**