



Nov 2023

# Be inclusive of everyone

## Case study: Social stories

### Considering those with additional support needs

#### Background:

Origin Housing, a social housing provider, decided to make fire safety information as simple as possible by using social stories.

Social Stories and ‘comic strip conversations’ are a recognised learning tool, designed to exchange information with children and adults with developmental disabilities.

They present information in a literal ‘concrete’ way, which may improve a person’s understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous scenario or activity. The presentation can be adapted to meet different people’s needs.

They can also help someone with sequencing, which in an emergency situation can aid how a person responds. By providing information about what might happen in a particular situation and guidelines on behaviour, you can prepare a person, increase structure and reduce anxiety.

#### Activities and benefits:

Origin Housing used a social story that was created to help people with evacuating in an emergency, and how they would manage the noises and sights they may experience that could potentially cause them distress.

Extracts from the social story are provided below – note this is not the full storyboard.



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The social story has been used with both adults and children. Someone sits with the person, and goes through each slide, reading the text and discussing the individual slides.

One resident is a single parent and has 4 children, 2 of which have additional learning requirements. When the staff member spoke with her about her block's current fire strategy (full evacuation) the resident said she was concerned as to how she would manage to evacuate the building in an emergency if two of her children, who are triggered by noise and disrupted routine, were unable to cope and potentially having "meltdowns". The resident was understandably concerned that the children could become separated from her, panic, run and she would not be able to manage on her own. Both children read the social story and asked questions. They then practiced evacuating and asked the children to talk through each stage of the evacuation, using the social story. They also involved the other 2 children in a supportive role. The resident feels more confident that in the event of a real situation, she has a tool she can use to help her get all 4 of her children to safety.

A resident who lives on his own is triggered by noise which increases his anxiety and ability to think rationally. The staff member provided him with the social story, and they discussed each picture and the text provided. The resident has told them he feels better prepared for what could happen and what to expect and this has reduced his feelings of anxiety regarding evacuating his building. Again, they practiced evacuating and the resident said he felt much more comfortable about the process.

Social stories encourage engagement from groups who may be unable to engage using more traditional methods.



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## Case study: Communicating with those who may not understand English

### Multiple languages spoken in a block

#### Action:

Clarion Housing, a housing association, identified a block where many different languages were spoken but it was not clear which languages were spoken by which residents. When they distributed fire safety information to residents, they included a page with basic information in several languages. This included how residents could access the full information in their preferred language, example below:

**Clarion Housing**  
Level 6  
6 More London Place  
Tooley Street  
London  
SE1 2DA

myclarionhousing.com  
@clarionsupport  
/clarion-housing-group  
@clarionhousing  
@clarion.housing

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إذا كنت بحاجة إلى تنسيقات بديلة أو نسخ مترجمة من هذا الكتيب، فيرجى الاتصال بنا على الرقم 0300 500 8000

#### Challenges:

Identifying the appropriate languages in order to establish engagement with residents. Costs associated with translating materials.

#### Result:

Residents received the information they needed in an understandable form and the Housing Association demonstrated an awareness of their needs.



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# Engage via multiple channels

## Case study: Working with food banks and engaging with young people

### Accessing harder to reach groups

#### Background:

A resident engagement lead for Lewisham Homes, a social housing provider, wanted to increase the opportunities to engage with local residents on building safety matters. He was aware that a number of residents made use of a local food bank, so he approached the Mayoress of the borough and other local leaders to get permission to run “drop-in” sessions at the same time. They immediately recognised the added value that this could bring to the community.

#### Activities and benefits:

The original aim was to provide leaflets and information to local residents about building safety issues. Initially residents were more concerned about repairs and utility costs than raising building safety issues. Even though these issues were not directly part of the resident engagement lead’s role, he noted the concerns and passed them through to the right part of the organisation. By taking ownership and providing feedback, he was able not only to help individuals with what mattered to them but was able to build trust with the community.



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By attending the drop-in sessions, the resident engagement lead was also able to engage with a number of younger residents, who asked for more information about fire safety and what the provider was doing.

One young man aged 20 wanted to play his part in promoting building safety to other members of his own household as well as his friends. After discussing fire safety, a young woman (aged 17) and her parent realised that the daughter's habit of leaving tea lights to burn out unsupervised posed a risk. The young woman also asked if a talk could be arranged on building safety at her sixth form college.

Both these young people expressed an interest in basic fire safety training for residents that was being planned by the building safety team. They also indicated that there were others in their age groups in their blocks who would be interested.

By taking this approach, Lewisham Homes built trust with the community and encouraged residents to think about how their own behaviours contribute to building safety.

By meeting with young people, they have been able to engage with a hard-to-reach group. Young people wanting to influence the behaviour of others in their household increases the reach of the engagement.

## Future work:

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As well as delivering a college talk, the resident engagement lead will be working with local councillors at mobile surgeries they plan to hold later this year to promote building safety.

They are also considering setting up a youth panel for young people living in high rise residential blocks to give them a dedicated voice on building safety.



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# Engage via multiple channels

## Case study: Resident engagement

Gathering information on suitability of engagement and preferred means of contact

### Action:

A housing association decided to survey residents in a block to find out how they felt about building safety, how easy it was to access information and how they wanted to be consulted. They used a survey which included questions about preferred language, communication methods and the best time to be contacted.

### Challenges:

The effectiveness of any survey depends on the response rate. The housing association used a mixture of individual appointments, email, post and telephone calls to maximise resident responses. They achieved a response rate of 82%.

### Result:

They used the results of the survey to inform the development of their engagement strategy for the block. The information gathered ensured their strategy met the specific needs and preferences of the residents of that block.



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# Communicate information effectively

## Case study: Fire safety information for student residents

Providing students with information when they move in

### Action:

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IQ Student Accommodation has hundreds of students moving in each year for a period of months.

Fire safety information is provided to all students at check-in. The students have to work through the briefing material and videos on their accommodation app before their key fobs will work (so they can access their rooms).

The information includes the causes of fires, the importance of following the rules and what to do in an emergency. An online handbook is provided in both English and Mandarin.



### Challenges:

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Regular intakes of young people, usually living away from home for the first time who may not understand the importance of fire safety. Many students will be from overseas and may not speak English as a first language.

### Result:

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Students have to go through the required material before they can access their accommodation. They are provided with key information, the reasons for the measures in place and the implications of failing to follow the rules.

IQ Student Accommodation ensures a consistent level of basic knowledge among residents, which helps ensure the safety of the building.



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# Communicate information effectively

## Case study: TRIO

### Background:

A group of residents living in the same block of flats have set up a group to engage with their housing association. They have become known as the Residents Building Safety Group (RBSG). The founder of the group wanted to emphasise a joint approach between residents, the housing provider and others such as the emergency services – referring to the approach as ‘TRIO’ – ‘the responsibility is ours’. This aims to build trust between the different people and organisations who have responsibility for the safety of the buildings.



### Activities and benefits:

The group helped design a simple engagement questionnaire to be posted to all households. The questions focussed on what information residents want to receive, how they want to receive it and how often. The final question asked if they want to be part of a digital group to help enhance building safety.

The questionnaire achieved an impressive response rate – over 70% in one block. Over 60 residents volunteered to be part of the group.

RBSG has direct access to senior management at their housing association, including the Executive Director and the Chair of the Risk Management Audit Committee. This ensures they have both a voice, and ‘teeth’. Members of the group were recently part of the recruitment panel appointing 2 Building Safety Managers.

They have also been involved in developing a resident friendly fire risk assessment and a set of key performance indicators to help their housing provider judge the success of their residents’ engagement strategy.

The group also encourages their fellow residents to take responsibility for their own safety. Most recently they have developed an information sheet so residents can check the fire safety of their own front doors in addition to the check the housing provider does.



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# Listen to residents

## Case study: Estates day

One of our higher risk buildings has a number of anti-social behaviour problems as well as a complicated layout which means the evacuation strategy is different depending on the location of the flat within the block.

The building safety team worked alongside the key worker and repairs teams to arrange an estate day. The aim of the day was to provide residents with an opportunity to meet members of the team, who were happy to answer any queries residents had and discuss repairs or safety in their home and the rest of the building.

Staff visited each property to undertake customer safety checks. This involved explaining the evacuation strategy for each flat, checking if anyone lives in the property who would struggle to self-evacuate in the event of a fire, smoke alarm tests and checking for lifestyle issues that could increase the risk of fire; such as hoarding, overloading sockets, flammable items on balconies.

The repairs team were also in attendance, which meant residents could report any repairs needed in their homes. They were able to carry out minor repairs on the day and arrange follow up visits for larger jobs.

The use of an app meant that it was possible for all staff to record residents' comments and any follow ups required using their mobile phones or tablets. This was a useful tool to save admin time as well as keep a digital record of follow up actions.

It was agreed by all involved that there is value in approaching estate days in unison. It is also really helpful having greater exposure to the work our colleagues are doing.

### Our learning points from this approach

When we engage on the doorstep with our residents, they often want to talk about their repair or anti-social behaviour issues first. Having the neighbourhood and repairs teams on hand really helps in dealing with their queries quickly. This joined-up approach helps to build trust. We have found that by listening and acting on residents' concerns they are much more receptive to engage with us when it comes to discussing building safety issues and this results in better outcomes for everyone.



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# Understand who lives in each building

## Case study: Touch points

POD Management help to manage over 12,000 homes across the UK. One barrier they have encountered while trying to engage with residents about building safety, is understanding who lives in each property and having up to date contact details for these residents. This is particularly problematic with leasehold properties, where the leaseholder information may be readily available, but changes of residents are often not communicated with them.

To overcome this barrier, they have identified multiple different touch points where residents often make contact with them. These touch points are used as opportunities to register up to date resident contact details, and also provide residents with building safety information.

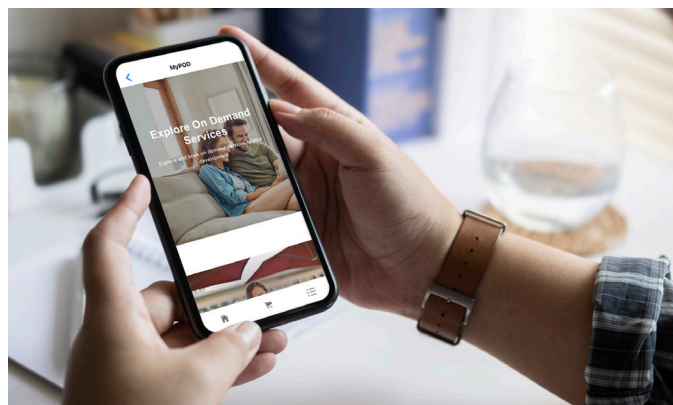
In buildings with services such as communal spaces or facilities, residents make contact when they want access to these services. For example, when residents contact the managing agent for access to the buildings gym or bicycle storage room, or for access to parking arrangements, these are valuable touch points. When a building has a concierge on site, this can be a touch point when residents come to collect packages or to report a problem.

In some buildings, such as those with limited services or no on site staff, digital touch points have been used. Online portals for paying service charges, requesting copy keys or reporting issues, were identified as a touch point used by all residents on a regular basis. Before a resident can proceed to access a digital service, a page is loaded where

questions can be asked of the resident. To gather information for further contact, resident contact details can be asked for. To tailor future contact to the resident's individual needs, questions such as your preferred language of contact can be asked. This opportunity has also been used to ask residents if their mobility requirements have changed recently, such as by an accident, and therefore the offer of personal evacuation plans can be kept up to date.

When collecting residents details for future contact, residents are also encouraged to sign up to the managing agents app. This allows information to be quickly and routinely shared with residents, and also allows the percentage of app users who read the notifications to be recorded.

By treating every touch point with residents as an opportunity to gather up to date resident contact information, and by harnessing digital solutions when touch points are harder to come by, POD Management have ensured there are multiple opportunities to find out who their residents are.



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