



NHC Presentation

Resident Involvement in the Residents Voice Team of the Building Safety Portfolio

Andrew Newton



Residents' Reference Panel: The Challenge

- Grenfell Tower tragedy: 14 June 2017
- Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety final report: 17 May 2018
- The Government accepted all report recommendations specifically the need for:
 - (i) more effective regulatory regime for High Rise Residential Buildings;
 - (ii) improved levels of competence across the system;
 - (iii) clearer package of regulations and guidance and
 - (iv) a stronger voice for residents so that they never again go unheard

Trust in Government institutions and the various bodies involved in delivering building safety was at a low point. It was particularly important to ensure that the perspective of residents **informed rather than responded to policy**.

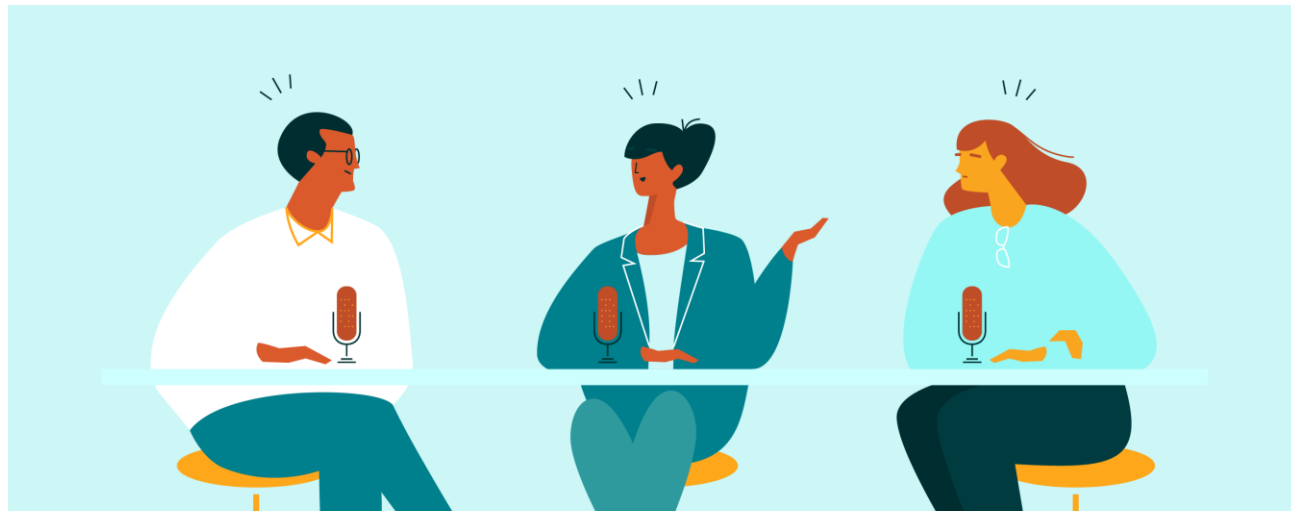
Alongside roadshow events, sessions with resident organisations and social research, the Residents' Reference Panel played a key role in helping us to achieve that





The Panel

- Government decided to bring together a diverse range of residents to discuss building safety policy directly with policymakers
- Rather than taking a usual 'focus group' approach, the Panel met with policy officials from the Building Safety Portfolio
- The Panel discussed a wide range of policy topics as well as focusing specifically on the communication of the Government's reforms to the wider public
- The Panel met four times over the course of a year and the outputs of their discussions fed directly into the Government's public consultation on building safety.





Recruitment and Independent Facilitation

Recruited via the English Housing Survey recontact list, allowing us to bring together individuals who had not previously been involved in resident engagement activities

Independent facilitation

- (i) delivered part of the meetings
- (ii) helped ensure materials were accessible
- (iii) wrote up the reports from the sessions

which helped to:

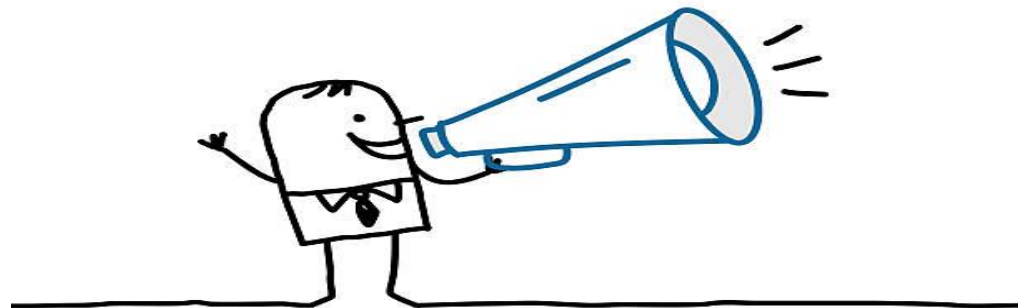
- (i) build trust where it was initially lacking;
- (ii) enable constructive discussions on emotive topics;
- (iii) provide a fresh perspective on policy and
- (iv) cut through convoluted Whitehall language.





Beyond Policy Development

- not just policy discussions – we also considered how to communicate the Government’s building safety proposals more effectively
- participants contributed a range of ideas about how to raise the profile of the public consultation, including the suggestion of an ‘easy read’ that was used by MHCLG
- the Panel were given the opportunity to mark the homework of policy makers and went through sections of the draft consultation document with a red pen!





What did we achieve?

- The Panel meetings covered a range of building safety issues, expanding beyond those directly concerning residents
- Full reports from each of the meetings were circulated across the Department
- Policy development was shaped by residents perspectives and real life day-to-day experience
- Policy changes ensued as a result of Panel influence and feedback
- Built strong bonds of trust (and friendship!) between participants, facilitators and policy officials
- Participants unanimously rated their experience highly and most expressed a desire to be involved in future events and / or to run their own panels





Most important lessons learned

- Foundation of success was trust between all involved – treating all as equal partners in discussion – avoiding any unnecessary patronisation
- Regular feedback about the influence of the group was important, including tangible examples of where policy had changed
- A bigger initial recruitment pool would have helped build up the Panel and given more leeway for drop-outs
- Venues and logistics are by far the most stressful element-get these sorted before you get close to contacting participants!





What next for Resident Involvement?

Following publication of the Building Safety Bill, a Programme is planned including

- developing further links with existing local resident groups to build on previous engagement
- 1-2-1s / small group engagement with other resident advocacy groups such as TPAS
- potential further social research

but we also want to establish a second Residents Reference Panel to

- run for a year starting in Autumn 2020
- help shape the resident facing parts of the Building Safety Regulator and supporting guidance
- build on the 1st panel but using a larger group (25 to 30 residents) with a wider remit that meets more often



What if we still can't run a face-to-face panel?



We will try and achieve the same results through different methods possibly including

- skype or MS Teams full panel and smaller group sessions
- use of other social media platforms and functions such as a designated virtual chatroom
- survey monkey
- 1-2-1 calls