

Residents in Ledbury Tower blocks

Gerri Scott  
Strategic Director for Housing & Modernisation

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Dear resident,

As you know, in response to concerns about cracks in the Ledbury Towers raised by residents following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, Southwark Council instructed structural engineers from Arup to investigate the cause of the cracking.

While Arup were part-way through their investigation, a separate historic issue was raised regarding the gas supply in the blocks. Records showed that a gas supply was installed when the blocks were built around 1968/1970, soon after a gas explosion at the similarly constructed Ronan Point block in Newham caused a partial collapse of that block. Records showed that the design of the Ledbury blocks and other blocks across the country had been strengthened following Ronan Point, to make them safe to carry a gas supply. However, we wanted to delve deeper for more assurance, and instructed Arup to include this issue as part of their investigation.

Earlier today I heard from Arup, who regrettably informed us, based on their structural investigations, that the information we have regarding the history of the blocks may not be correct, and we have therefore taken the decision to turn off the gas supply to all Ledbury tower blocks immediately, and have asked Southern Gas Network to do so. Whilst we know this will be very inconvenient for residents, we are not willing to take any risks with your safety. We will continue to review the situation and let you know if anything changes as investigations continue.

However, what this currently means for you is:

#### **Short term**

- We will immediately provide temporary hotplates so that you can prepare hot meals.
- We will give residents an upfront payment to cover any increase in electricity bills as a result of the temporary measures. This will be processed automatically as soon as possible.
- We have arranged for affected residents to have free access to the shower facilities at any of the Southwark leisure centres, including the nearest, Peckham Leisure Centre – please take proof of your address along.
- We are working towards a solution to install a single electrical water heater in each flat as soon as possible, for your bathroom and kitchen needs.

- If you have specific needs which means the temporary solutions are unsuitable, please speak to one of our resident services officers about other options.
- Anyone with a gas oven will be provided with a brand new electric oven as soon as possible.

### **Longer term**

- We had hoped to allow residents to remain in the Ledbury blocks while we carried out the work to fix the cracks, but this new information means we are now planning to temporarily decant the blocks over the coming weeks and months. We will talk to you all individually to discuss the possibilities available to you.
- We are in the process of purchasing a new build block in the vicinity of the Ledbury Estate and plan to reserve the 80 council properties at council rents for Ledbury Tower residents. We are also holding properties as they become empty in other parts of the borough for those affected.
- We have already offered Band 1 priority on our housing list for anyone wishing to move, and this offer stands.
- All residents will be offered the right to return to the refurbished Ledbury blocks, and every council flat will remain a council property, available for council rent.
- Leaseholders will not be charged for any of the work, and we will work with you to identify interim arrangements for your accommodation. If you wish to consider selling your home please contact the My Southwark Homeowners Service.
- We are working up a detailed timetable, as we know you will want certainty about what will happen when, so that you can plan. We will share this with you as soon as we can.

### **What you should do:**

- Please speak to one of our resident services officers who are on site if you have any specific questions or concerns.
- We suggest you contact your gas provider immediately and ask them to cancel your contract to provide gas to your property. The council will cover any costs you incur to do this.
- It is very important that you do not use any portable gas appliances while we carry out this work and complete our refurbishment of the buildings.

Council staff will continue to be available in your block every day to discuss any of these issues with you, and answer your questions. We understand what a difficult time it has been for you over the last few weeks, and are very sorry for the worry and disruption caused. Since these issues first came to light we have shared all available information with you, and we will continue to do so. Whilst we know some of the measures we are taking won't be popular, our number one priority is keeping you safe.

We will send you more information as soon as it becomes available.

Yours faithfully,

Gerri Scott  
Strategic Director for Housing & Modernisation