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## BLOCK MANAGEMENT

# How to communicate effectively with flat owners



**DEAN COOPER** explains what residents should expect from their managing agent

**ONE OF THE MOST** common complaints managing agents are accused of is 'lack of communication'. Communication across all levels is key to the success of any good managing agent and is a fundamental aspect in developing, securing and maintaining long client relationships. Good communication increases both trust and faith and is the most important contributing factor to the success of effective management.

Communication is fundamental in keeping clients and contractors informed of current events surrounding the building in question. However communication is a two-way process. Just as it is a requirement to be kept informed of situations from the managing agent, it is important to have

valuable feedback from residents to understand and effectively deal with situations, no matter how trivial these are.

There are various legal implications and reasons which can be affected through poor communication. One example is the requirements under the legislation of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 in reference to 'Section 20', where formal communications and notice of qualifying works or long term agreements over £250 for any one tenant is required. If consultation is not undertaken, the landlord may not be able to recover service charges over £250 per tenant, which could have a major impact on the residents, the development and the agent, especially if the works are urgent.

Another area which residents are not always familiar with is

Health, Safety and Fire legislation. Again, this will be down to the managing agent to communicate and inform the residents.

The first steps to take for improving communication when faced with an underperforming managing agent are to arrange a face to face meeting with all parties involved at a mutually convenient venue.

Brainstorm the issues which your clients have been facing to understand the situation and better meet needs and expectations. List the problems/ actions and agree a reasonable and achievable target timeframe for when these can be resolved or finalised. If you find that you can not keep to the original timescale then inform your clients with the reasons for delay. Honesty will go a long way: you

may find that your clients can be reasonable and even help keep things moving in the right direction, providing they believe that you are working in their best interests.

Another way of effective communication is to set up distribution lists on email for all parties and send regular updates via this. There is also another revolutionary solution called 'Your Block Online' where a website can be setup for each building in order for members to see regular updates or register concerns. Whether you are trying to obtain new clients or to stay in touch with those we all currently value so much, everything we say and do is a reflection of ourselves as managing agents.

Dean Cooper is a Senior Property Manager with JJ Homes (Properties) Ltd