

Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy Consultation Report

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Aims of the consultation

It is important that we hear from as many people as possible who live and work in Sandwell every day when developing our policies.

This consultation was designed and completed to obtain feedback from residents, tenants, employees and councillors on our Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy prior to its publication. Feedback received in this consultation will inform the final version of the Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy.

Sandwell Council are responsible for maintaining passenger lifts and ensuring their safe operation through regular inspections and examinations.

The Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy outlines our responsibilities for ensuring passenger lifts are regularly serviced, thoroughly inspected, tested, and efficiently repaired, while keeping clear and accurate records.

The Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy also outlines our responsibility for promptly resolving lift breakdowns within our low and high-rise blocks of flats'. It emphasises how we will support tenants and leaseholders through timely communication, focused assistance for vulnerable residents, and with efficient repairs to minimise disruption during lift breakdowns.

Approach to the consultation

Please note that the analysis of feedback found in this report pertains only to survey feedback received in the public consultation.

Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy Meeting

On Tuesday, November 12th, officers from Sandwell Council met with residents of Hamstead Village TRA to review the first draft, as it did not accurately reflect their views on the document's intended purpose.

Based on feedback from residents at this meeting, several changes were made to the draft policy before it went out for public consultation, including:

Policy Purpose section has been revised: In the policy purpose section, it is now made clear that this document '*details how the council*

will address lift breakdowns, prioritising timely communication, support for vulnerable residents, and minimising disruption’.

Revised the Policy Development section: This section outlines the council's commitment to clear and effective communication regarding lift safety and support during lift breakdowns. It details the process of consulting residents on the draft policy and incorporating their feedback.

Revised the Purpose section of the lift policy: This now highlights the importance of quickly addressing lift breakdowns across our housing stock, prioritising clear communication, assistance for vulnerable residents, and swift repairs to reduce inconvenience. This was something not mentioned in the previous draft version.

Revised the Lift Maintenance section of the policy so it contains less jargon/more tenant-friendly language: This section outlines our approach to ensuring that a lift doesn't break down in the first place. It details Sandwell Council's commitment to maintaining safe and reliable lifts through regular inspections, servicing, and safety checks.

Added in a Lift Breakdowns section: The section provides guidance on how lift breakdowns are managed, emphasising clear communication, and support for affected residents, particularly those with specific needs. It outlines the procedures for inspections, repairs, and updates, as well as fire safety considerations during outages. The section also highlights the importance of ongoing monitoring, notifications to residents, and collecting feedback to improve future response efforts.

In addition to the Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy Meeting, we also promoted the draft policies with other resident engagement groups, shared the policy with elected members at the SNAC board and completed an online survey.

Promoting draft policies within resident engagement groups:

The Council distributed the policy and raised awareness during two Housing Policy engagement sessions, as well as with the Tenant and Resident Associations representing areas with high-rise buildings. Additionally, we engaged members of the Resident Building Safety Forum and other residents through both post and email.

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities (SNAC) Board

Feedback was provided by elected members regarding operational delivery when the policy was presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny (SNAC) Board on 6th February 2025. These suggestions have been incorporated into the final drafts of the policy documents.

Online Consultation

Online consultation took place over a 4-week period, from February 5th to March 5th 2025. The survey included a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions, allowing respondents to provide feedback on the policy proposals, assess the document's accessibility for residents, and highlight any missing elements. Based on the feedback received, revisions will be made to the policy document where necessary before it is finalised and presented for Cabinet approval in April 2025.

Summary of consultation results

Respondents were generally in support of the Lift and Maintenance Breakdown policy but raised concerns about the council's commitment to delivering on the promises and actions of the policy. This highlighted a disconnect between the policy and the current level of service.

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the consultation, was respondents desire for improved communication from the council. Across multiple questions, respondents raised concerns that tenants are often not informed about maintenance and breakdowns in a timely or effective manner. While the policy commits to keeping residents updated, some felt that, in practice, this is not happening consistently.

While some respondents were aware of the council's existing support for lift maintenance and breakdowns, awareness was not universal amongst respondents.

Respondents told us that there was a lack of clarity over responsibilities, and at times confusion over whether issues should be reported to the council or the maintenance company.

However, despite these concerns, there was a broad agreement, that the responsibilities outlined in the policy were easy to understand and articulated clearly. Some respondents suggested improvements that

could make the policy more accessible for tenants, such as providing information in multiple languages or audio formats for those with a disability or without English as a first language. This indicates that while the policy is largely clear, there are barriers preventing some tenants from fully engaging with it.

Consultation questions and responses

As of March 5th, 2025, this consultation had **7** responses.

Please tick which best describes your interest in this consultation.

All 7 respondents (100%) stated that they are 'a tenant living in socially rented accommodation'.

Please state which type of accommodation you live in.

All 7 respondents (100%) live in a flat

Please state your age group.

4 out of 7 respondents (57%) are aged 35-59

2 of 7 respondents (29%) are aged 65 and over

1 of 7 respondents (14%) is aged 25-34

What is your gender?

6 of 7 respondents (86%) identified as female

1 respondent (14%) identified as male

What best describes your ethnicity?

4 of 7 respondents (57%) are white English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

1 respondent (14%) is Pakistani

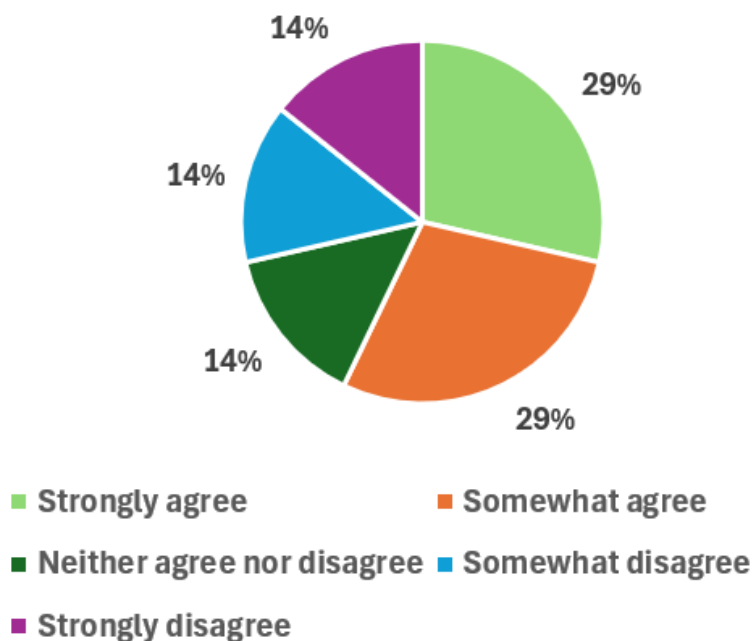
2 respondents (29%) selected the 'prefer not to say' option

For all questions, respondents could select one of the following answers:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

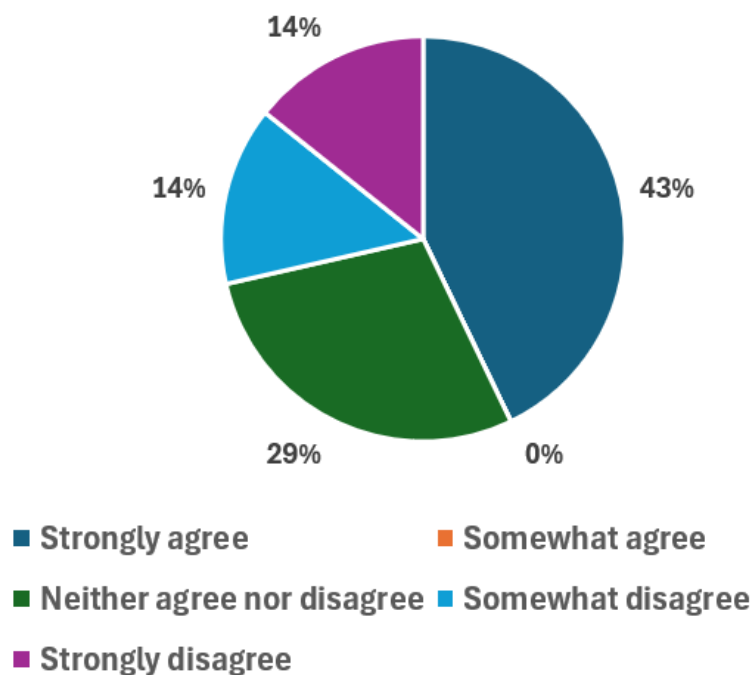
1. Before reading this policy, I was aware of the support Sandwell Council provides to tenants and leaseholders regarding lift maintenance and breakdowns.

Overall, a mixed response to this question was given. 4 of 7 respondents (57%), a slight majority, either strongly or somewhat agreed that they were aware of the support provided by the council.



2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the aims of the Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy?

Respondents provided mixed feedback on the Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy, with 3 of 7 respondents (43%) strongly agreeing with the aims, 2 of 7 (29%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 2 of 7 (29%) disagreeing.



Respondents who agreed with the aims of the policy, did so because they endorsed the policies commitment to the 'needs of individuals and the safety and quality of life of tenants'. This resident also stated their approval of the policy because 'the general upkeep of the lifts in any block of flats is important'.

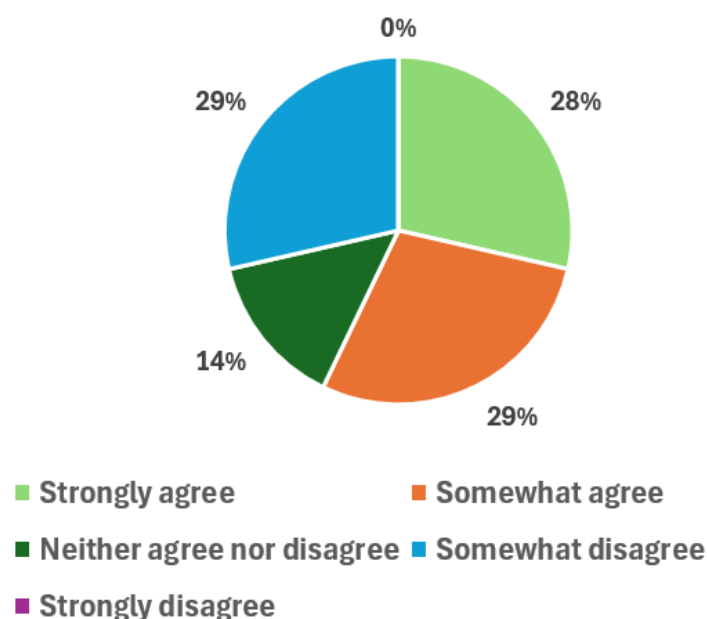
A further respondent strongly agreed with having the Lift Maintenance and Breakdown Policy as 'we (tenants) need our lifts to be in service and repaired quickly. Tenants need to be informed of what's going on'.

However, one respondent disagreed with the policy on the basis that there is a disconnect between the aims of the policy and real-life practise. The respondent said that the policy 'emphasises how we (Sandwell Council) will support tenants and leaseholders through timely communication', however 'many residents are not informed beforehand when maintenance is taking place'.

Another respondent who strongly disagreed with the policy stated their dissatisfaction that ‘tenants safety and wellbeing should have been considered regarding lift breakdowns a long time ago, especially in high-rise buildings’.

3. Are the general lift maintenance responsibilities for the council outlined in this policy easy to understand?

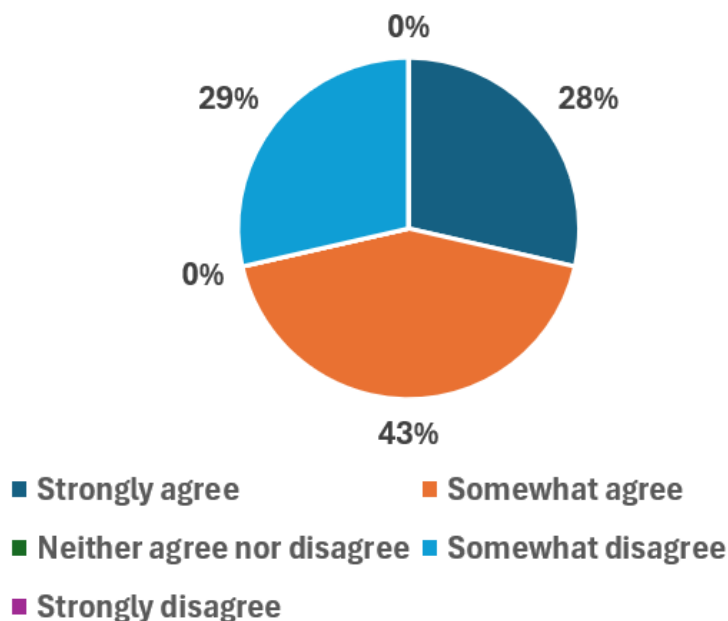
The majority of respondents agreed that the general lift maintenance responsibilities of the council were easy to understand in the policy. 4 of 7 respondents (57%) agreed and 2 of 7 (29%) disagreed.



One respondent confirmed that they thought the policy ‘clearly states its actions’. However, a respondent who disagreed, stated that the policy fails to clearly define the duty holder. They highlighted confusion over whether maintenance issues should be reported ‘to the council or the lift maintenance company’, further noting that currently, ‘only the contact details of the lift company are displayed in the lifts. The respondent also asked, ‘when a lift is out of use, who notifies tenants in high rise blocks?’, inferring that this is not clearly outlined in the policy.

4. Are the repairs responsibilities for the council outlined in this policy in the event of a lift breakdown easy to understand?

The majority of respondents, 5 of 7 (71%), agreed that the repairs responsibilities of the council, in the event of a lift breakdown, were easy to understand.

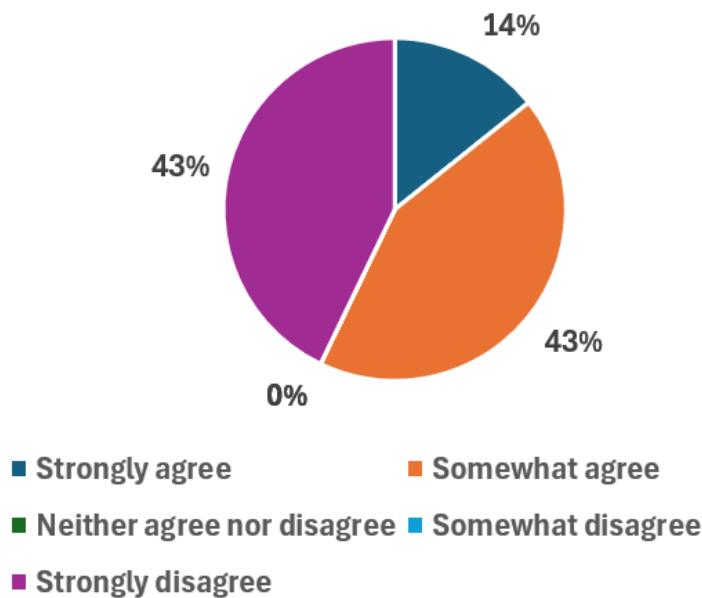


One respondent agreed that the responsibilities are 'easy to understand' for tenants who can read the English language and suggested that the policy could also be produced in 'various languages', and in 'audio versions for tenants with difficulties'.

However, one respondent who disagreed, asked 'will tenants in high-rise blocks be notified of planned upgrades, major works, dates of upcoming examinations and thorough examinations when it is presumed the lift will be out of use', implying that this process is not clearly outlined in the policy. The respondent also raised concerns as to how tenants will be contacted as 'not everyone has access to the internet'.

5. Does the policy clearly explain what support (e.g. resident communication and support for vulnerable residents) will be offered in the event of a lift breakdown?

While a slight majority of respondents, 4 of 7 (57%), agreed, 3 of 7 (43%), strongly disagreed with the statement that the policy clearly explains available support for vulnerable residents.

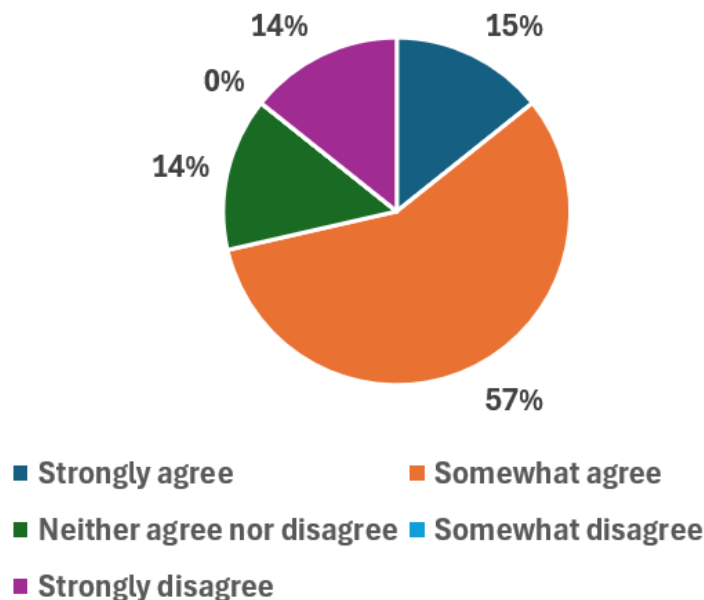


Those that disagreed said that the policy 'does not explain how tenants of high-rise blocks will be supported regarding communication by either telephone or in person'. This respondent emphasised that support should 'be on an individual basis', as people have 'different needs and vulnerabilities'. Another respondent who disagreed stated that the policy should go further when outlining the council's support offer.

One respondent who agreed, again highlighted that the policy should be accessible to individuals with disabilities and those without English as a first language.

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the majority of service users will understand this policy?

The majority, 5 of 7 (71%) of respondents agreed with the statement. One respondent (14%) disagreed.



The respondent who disagreed with the statement cited no reason for their persuasion. Of those that agreed, respondents also said that 'they (service users) may not necessarily agree with it in its current format, but the majority would possibly understand that it's for their safety and wellbeing'. Another added 'as long as it is carried through with', and the respondent who neither agreed nor disagreed stated that 'each person will interpret (the policy) differently due to vague terms used'.

7. Any other comments

Respondents were then asked if they had any additional comments on the policy.

One respondent said that residents need to be informed 'in advance of when the repairs/ maintenance is taking place and how long it will take'. The respondent also stated that 'lifts need to be cleaned regularly, morning, afternoon and evening if possible'.

Another respondent also highlighted that the related documents section in the policy 'does not include a link to the lift breakdown standing operating procedure', asking whether those without digital access 'will be given copies of this?'.

Actions taken in response to consultation feedback

During the consultation, respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers to the multiple choice questions. Respondents made clear that they would like improved communication from the council on when maintenance is scheduled to take place. Respondents also frequently told us that they would like council policies to be made more accessible for those with a disability or without English as a first language. Feedback received from respondents can be found in the table below, in addition to our response and any actions we are taking.

What respondents told us	Our response	Relevant actions	Timescale
"It also emphasises how we will support tenants and leaseholders through timely communication, focused assistance for vulnerable residents, and efficient repairs to minimise disruption during lift breakdowns" - Many residents are not informed beforehand when maintenance is taking place.	The servicing schedule will be published on our website, and we will contact customers in advance regarding any planned maintenance. However, in the case of a reactive repair, where the issue arises unexpectedly, we may not be able to provide prior notice to customers.	Publish servicing schedule on Council website.	May 2025
3.1 - Who is the 'duty holder'? Council or lift maintenance company to be informed? Only the contact details of the lift company in the lifts currently. When lift is out of commission,	Sandwell Council is the duty holder, all breakdowns are reported via the lift call centre or SMBC call centre. We do not report to individuals in-case they are not in office to		

who notifies tenants? (in high-rise blocks)	action. If over 24HR the web site will be updated, and the Housing team are informed to engage with tenants.		
They are easy for tenants who are able to understand the written word. Would it be possible to have these policies in various languages, braille and audio versions for tenants with difficulties.	We need to assess our corporate priorities regarding this as this is a prevalent issue across . While there are online tools available to help with language barriers on the website, there are still noticeable gaps.	<p>Conduct a review of corporate priorities regarding language barriers online, in person, and in policy documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current online tools available for language support. • Identify gaps in language accessibility for digital, in-person interactions, and policy documents. • Prioritise areas for improvement across all these areas. • Develop a plan to implement additional resources or tools to address these gaps. 	December 2025
3.2.3 - Communication and Support - Will TRAs and Councillors be notified as in 3.2.5's ongoing monitoring and communications?	Yes. Section 3.2.3 has been amended to reflect these changes to ensure there is a consistent message across both sections.		
How regular is regular? (during the repairs process)	This is determined by the lift company and the electrical		

	team with regards to how often they update us on progress during a breakdown, it's not a one size fits all.		
Related documents section doesn't include the link to the Lift Breakdown Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) - for those who want to access this with no digital access, will they be given copies of this?	The Lift Breakdown SOP is an internal document, so tenants won't need access to the detailed processes we follow. What we ask tenants to hold us accountable for is the policy itself, as it outlines the commitments and agreements. The focus will be on the policy, rather than the specific processes we use to carry it out.		