

What should you know about your building?

A practical guide to information access and accountability

You should be able to understand how your building is managed, what needs attention and who is responsible for acting. Finding a document is only the start. You also need to know whether it is current, what it means and what happened next.

This guide helps residents, leaseholders and directors ask better questions about building information. It covers ordinary blocks and the extra arrangements for higher-risk residential buildings in England.

Start with these six questions

- Who is responsible, and how do I contact them?
- What do I need to know to live here safely?
- What work is planned, outstanding or complete?
- What am I paying for, and how is it explained?
- What decisions have been made, and why?
- What happens to this knowledge when people or managing agents change?

Use the guide with your current landlord, managing agent or board. It sets out the standard BlockGenie recommends, and you do not need our software or services to use it.

England | Edition 1 | Sources checked 28 October 2026. General information, not advice on an individual dispute. Your exact rights depend on the building, your tenure and role, and the law that applies. Our recommendations are labelled separately from legal examples.

Different people need different information

Living in a building, owning a flat and directing its management company are different relationships, and one person may have all three. What someone receives should reflect the roles they hold.

Your role	Information you should be able to use
Resident	Safety instructions, contacts, service arrangements, disruption, repair updates and your own cases.
Tenant	Resident information plus the records relevant to your tenancy and home, from the responsible landlord or agent.
Leaseholder	Ownership responsibilities, your account, service-charge explanations, insurance, consultation and building-condition information.
Company member	Information connected to membership of the company. Being a member is not the same as being a director.
Director	Evidence needed to govern the company: finances, risks, contracts, decisions, authority and outstanding actions.
Freeholder and duty-holder	Information needed for the responsibilities actually held. Owning the freehold should not open every resident's private case.

How to read the labels in this guide

- **Legal example:** an example of a duty or right, supported by the cited source. It is not a full list of your legal rights.
- **Contract dependent:** check the lease, tenancy, company articles or management agreement.
- **BlockGenie recommendation:** what we think good practice looks like. It may go further than the law requires.

Someone renting a flat still needs resident safety information. An owner who lives elsewhere still needs information about what they own. Private complaints and support needs should have their own access rules.

Safety information people can act on

Ask for the current fire instructions for your building, the contact for reporting a safety concern and an explanation of any precautions that affect you. Keep the instructions somewhere you can find them without searching through a long report.

Legal examples in ordinary blocks

In buildings covered by the Fire Safety (England) Regulations, residents must be given fire instructions and information about fire doors, and the instructions must be displayed. New residents must receive them, and they must be reissued at least every 12 months. [1]

The amended Fire Safety Order also requires clear information about identified fire risks, the measures in place and who the responsible people are. In an ordinary block, this does not give residents a right to every full technical report. [2]

BlockGenie recommendation

- Give people a short explanation specific to the building, and tell them how to see the supporting evidence.
- Explain significant open findings, any interim measures and what residents need to do.
- For each significant action, say who is responsible and when residents will hear more. Keep evidence of what was completed.
- Offer other formats, and support for people who cannot use a digital portal.

Follow the current instructions for your building. If a notice, the handbook and a message say different things, ask the responsible person which is right. In an emergency, call the emergency services. Do not wait for a reply to an information request.

See page 7 for the extra information arrangements in higher-risk buildings and for personal evacuation planning.

Understand condition, repairs and planned work

A pile of inspection reports can leave residents unsure what is actually being repaired. Ask for an explanation of the building's condition, the work required and the next decision or action.

Information	What a useful explanation includes
Condition and inspections	What was inspected and when, any limitations, significant findings and further investigation.
Open actions	Priority, responsible person, target date, interim precautions and current status.
Planned maintenance	Which systems or areas are affected, the visit or works programme, access needs and expected disruption.
Your repair	Acknowledgement, appointment, progress, evidence of completion and a way to report the problem if it comes back.
Long-term work	Expected replacements, assumptions, options and what they mean for funding.

An example

A lift engineer finds a fault. A repair is ordered and an invoice is paid. Residents still need to know whether the fault has been fixed, whether the repair has been checked and whether the lift can be used. Each of those steps answers a different question.

BlockGenie recommends keeping these steps connected. A recent report or a paid invoice does not show that the recommended work is finished.

Not every building needs every certificate, and different equipment has different inspection rules. Ask what applies to the equipment in your building, rather than assuming every report expires after a year.

Make financial information understandable

People who pay towards a building need to understand what they are paying for, how the charge is worked out and how decisions affect future costs. An account balance will not tell them why the bill has gone up.

Legal examples for leaseholders

Leaseholders who pay a service charge can ask for a summary of costs and inspect the supporting paperwork, using the statutory process. There are also rights to information about the building's insurance, and consultation requirements for qualifying works or agreements. Check the lease, and the conditions attached to each right. [3]

BlockGenie recommends an explanation alongside the figures

- **Budget:** services covered, assumptions, how contributions are worked out and significant changes.
- **Year-end position:** actual spending, differences from the budget and how any balance is treated.
- **Reserve funds:** money held, commitments, planned spending and funding assumptions.
- **Insurance:** the cover, excesses, important exclusions and how to report a claim.
- **Major works:** why they are needed, the options, the programme, the likely contribution and how consultation will work.
- **Your account:** charges, payments, adjustments, how payments were allocated and any disputed items.

Ask which costs relate to your building, the wider estate or a particular group of homes. Company money and service-charge funds should be kept separate. Individual arrears and hardship cases should be handled privately.

Downloading a document from a portal or making an informal request does not replace the formal statutory route. If you are disputing a charge or thinking about withholding payment, get advice on your own situation.

Keep the reasons behind company decisions

A residents' management company or right-to-manage company needs a usable company record. New directors should be able to see what the company has committed to, who authorised each decision and what work is still outstanding.

BlockGenie recommends a connected governance record

Record	Question it should answer
Articles and appointments	Which company is acting, who is appointed and what authority do they hold?
Board papers and decisions	What was considered, what was decided, why and by whom?
Contracts and instructions	What has been commissioned, on what terms and within what limit?
Financial evidence	What funds, liabilities, commitments and forecasts support the decision?
Risks and actions	What remains unresolved, who owns it and what would show it is closed?
Conflicts and interests	What interests were declared and how were they managed?

Residents and leaseholders should get a clear explanation of decisions that affect them. That need not mean publishing every board paper, private case or piece of legal advice. A company member's rights are also different from the access a director needs to run the company.

Keep the supporting papers with each significant decision, along with any instructions that followed and the record of what happened. Approval to spend is not evidence that the work was done. Nor is a payment.

These are our recommendations. Which documents people are entitled to depends on the company, its articles and the law.

What changes in a higher-risk building

In England, the rules for occupied higher-risk buildings generally cover buildings at least 18 metres high or with at least seven storeys, and with at least two homes. There are detailed measurement rules and exclusions. These duties are in addition to ordinary management and fire-safety duties. [4]

Legal examples of the extra information

The required information includes summaries of the fire risk assessment and safety case, contact details for the people responsible, a resident engagement strategy and an explanation of residents' rights to request information. It must be given to residents aged 16 or over, subject to rules on identifying them. There is a separate duty to take reasonable steps to give it to owners. [4, 5]

Eligible residents and owners can request certain detailed records, including the current fire risk assessments and the safety case report. The route has its own exceptions, and it does not cover every building record. [5]

Some duties apply to smaller buildings too

For example, the fire-door checks required in buildings over 11 metres can apply to a building that is not higher-risk. Which rules apply depends on the building's height, number of storeys and use. [1]

Evacuation support is a private conversation

Since April 2026, some residential buildings have extra requirements for personal evacuation plans. If you might have difficulty leaving the building in an emergency, ask the responsible person about an assessment. Taking part, and sharing certain personal information with the fire and rescue service, depend on your consent. [6]

BlockGenie recommends one clear explanation of who does what, the current safety position, how residents can take part and how to raise concerns.

Share the right information with the right people

Sharing works best when everyone knows why the information is needed. People need enough to understand safety, spending and management decisions. They do not need access to their neighbours' health, finances or movements. Personal data should be adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for its purpose. [7]

Who can see it	Examples
Everyone in the building	Safety instructions, service notices, works updates and summaries of relevant decisions.
Verified contributors or members	Financial explanations, consultation material and company-member records, through the route that applies.
Only the person concerned	Their account, repair, complaint, tenancy record or agreed evacuation support.
Professionals, with controls	Detailed technical evidence, governance records, security arrangements and legal advice.

These four levels are our suggestion for organising access. They are not legal categories, and a specific statutory right can require a different disclosure. A contractor may need hazard information before starting work, and a director may need a confidential record to make a decision. Before sharing a record, check why it is needed and whether the recipient is entitled to it.

If information is withheld, ask whether part of it, an extract or an explanation can be supplied. If something is refused, you should be told why and how to ask for a review. "It's confidential" on its own is not enough.

Ask for another format if a document is unreadable, the portal is down or you cannot use the channel offered.

Ask for information and follow it up

Start with the person or organisation responsible for the subject. Say which building, record or question you mean, your connection to it and the format you need. If you are using a legal right, ask for the formal request process.

A request you can adapt

Please provide the current information about [subject] for [building or home]. I am asking as a [resident, tenant, leaseholder or director]. I would like the relevant document or explanation, its date and what it covers, any significant outstanding actions and the person responsible for the next update. Please explain the request process, when I can expect a reply, and the reason if any of the information cannot be provided. I need it in [format].

This is an ordinary letter. Where the law sets out a formal notice, use that instead. A manager may reasonably ask for proof of your identity, your interest or your authority to act for someone.

Check the answer against the question

- Does it refer to the right building, area, period or equipment?
- Is it current, and are its limitations clear?
- Does it separate a finding from a completed action?
- If the answer is incomplete, what is missing and when will it follow?
- If you disagree, do you know how to complain?

For poor service, start with the agent's complaints procedure. If that does not resolve it, the agent's property redress scheme may be the next step, subject to the scheme's rules. A dispute about whether a service charge is payable or reasonable can go to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber). [3, 9, 10]

Managing agents doing work covered by England's redress rules must belong to a government-approved scheme. There are limits and exemptions, including for some landlords and self-managing resident companies. [9]

Keep the request, the reply and the version of the document together. For an urgent safety concern, use the right reporting channel straight away. Do not wait for an answer to an ordinary request.

Test whether the knowledge survives a handover

When the managing agent, staff or directors change, nobody should have to rebuild the building's history from old emails. The next person needs a usable record of the evidence, the commitments and the questions still open.

A quick health check

Question	Your answer
Can a new resident find the right safety instructions and contacts?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown
Can an owner understand their charges and planned spending?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown
Can a director trace a significant decision to its evidence and authority?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown
Can the team list every significant open action and who owns it?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown
Can you tell finished work apart from work that was only ordered or paid for?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown
Can someone new explain a recurring defect and what was done about it before?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown
Can the information be handed over in a usable form, with the right access controls?	Yes / Partly / No / Unknown

Where an answer is "Partly", "No" or "Unknown", note what is missing and who will follow it up. Use "not applicable" only where a question genuinely does not apply to the building. The check shows where work is needed. It is not a compliance assessment.

BlockGenie recommends testing a handover with someone who does not know the building. Ask them to find and explain a decision, an open safety action and a recurring repair using only the transferred records. Note what they could work out and what they could not.

Agree who owns the records, how they can be used, how long they are kept and how they will be transferred, and put it in the relevant contracts. Before accepting a handover, check that the incoming team can actually use the records.

Sources, scope and the standard we recommend

This guide gives only a few legal examples. Follow the official sources cited, and get advice for an individual case, a disputed charge, a safety assessment or a formal request for information. The guide covers England. The rules in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland differ.

1. Resident fire instructions and fire doors

Home Office guidance on the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

2. Relevant fire risks and protective measures

Home Office guidance on section 156 and information for residents.

3. Service charges, insurance and consultation

Government overview of leaseholder information and consultation rights.

4. Information accountable persons must provide

Building Safety Regulator guidance for occupied higher-risk buildings.

5. Higher-risk building information regulations

Regulations 7 and 8, Schedules 2 and 3, and the disclosure exceptions.

6. Residential personal emergency evacuation planning

Government factsheet on the requirements in force from 6 April 2026.

7. Data minimisation

Information Commissioner guidance on keeping personal data adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary. The page says it is under review following changes to the law.

8. Service Charge Residential Management Code (4th edition)

RICS professional benchmark, effective 7 April 2026. Not every practice we recommend is a requirement of the Code.

9. Property managing agents and redress schemes

Government guidance on the membership requirement in England, its scope and exemptions.

10. First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)

HM Courts and Tribunals Service information. For service-charge rights and disputes, see also source 3.

About BlockGenie

BlockGenie manages residential buildings, so we have a commercial interest in how they are run and how their information is kept. This guide sets out the standard we think building information should meet. We do not claim that every building, or every part of our own software and service, meets it yet.

The test is simple: can someone use the records to understand what is happening in their building? You can use this guide with any managing agent or management company.

Edition 1 | 28 October 2026. Check the current law, guidance and how it applies to your building before relying on a legal example. RICS is a professional benchmark, and not every recommendation in this guide is a requirement of its Code. [8]