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Tenants flock to see new-look tower block

Tenants have been given a glimpse of new-look flats at a Hillfields housing block which is undergoing a £2.2million transformation.

Whitefriars Housing Group this week invited tenants to look around a showflat – one of the refurbished apartments at Pioneer House, off Primrose Hill Street. People living in the block and neighbouring tower blocks have also been able to put their names down for the revamped flats – part of a major regeneration of the Hillfields area.

All 128 flats at Pioneer House are being fitted with new kitchens and bathrooms. Other improvements include building a new communal area where tenants can meet as well as a refurbishment of the existing communal area and lifts.

A 40-strong team of workmen are carrying out the improvements, which are due to be completed by the end of the year. Disruption is being kept to a minimum, with tenants being given a choice of remaining in their homes while work is carried out, or moving temporarily to another flat in Pioneer House.

Kevin Roach, Regional Manager for Whitefriars, said: “We are giving the block a new lease of life and have received a very positive response from tenants. “They are beginning to see the physical changes of our work to regenerate their neighbourhood. Many of the tenants who have visited the showflat are signing up to move into refurbished flats.”

Neil Turner, site manager for housing refurbishment specialist Lovell, the company which is carrying out the improvements, added: "This is a really exciting project and people in the block have been very receptive. Work is on schedule and we are doing all we can to minimise disruption and help tenants to move into their new flats. We have a team of 40 working on site and expect work to be complete by the end of the year."

Harry Millard, 69, has been living in a refitted flat at Pioneer House for nearly three months now. Mr Millard, who has lived in the tower block for nearly 30 years, was initially against relocating from his old apartment, but is delighted with his new home.

He said: "I didn't want to move to start with because I was settled and thought it would be a real bother, but it has been first class all the way.

"They helped me to move, switch my phone and utility bills, in fact I hardly had to do anything. I was also able to choose the design and colour schemes for the flat."

William McGough, 67, who has lived in neighbouring Unity House for 24 years, is one of the tenants keen to relocate to the refurbished Pioneer House.

He said: "I'm really looking forward to making the move, the flats look great.

"At the moment I'm in a bedsit and I'd like a separate bedroom and living area. I don't want to move out of Hillfields because all my friends are here and I like it here."

Fellow Whitefriars tenant, 47-year-old Musarrat Afzal Butt, who lives in Stevens House, agreed.

He said: "I'm very impressed by the refurbishment, which is why I'm putting my name down for a flat. I've lived in Hillfields for 10 years now and I wouldn't want to move out of the area."

Improvements inside the flats include new open-plan kitchens, renovated and refitted bathrooms, redecorating and new water heating systems. Residents and tenants of Pioneer House were asked for their views on the work during a consultation last year, which involved a series of public drop-in sessions.

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