

Banana Flats residents say constantly broken lifts are making their lives a misery

Residents in Leith's Banana Flats say constantly broken lifts are making their lives a misery and leaving disabled people trapped in their own homes.

Over the past two years many living in the block have become stuck in lifts, and as a result are now too scared to use them even when they are working, they said.

A "high number" of families with young children, disabled tenants, children with additional support needs and people with long term health problems live on higher floors and "cannot simply take the stairs," the Cables Wynd Residents Group said as they made an urgent plea for the council to make improvements.

The group urged councillors to push for repairs – or if necessary full replacements – of the faulty elevators at an all-council meeting at the City Chambers on Thursday, June 27.

Resident Sheri Lich said: "Among us in the 212 flats are residents that are physically disabled, mentally disabled, children and parents with newborns and carriages.

"We are a diverse community united by a common struggle. For years, we have heard our neighbours cries for help, some of which have reached management and council repairs."

She said in recent engagement with those living in the block made famous by Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting "one issue stood out above all others – the dire need for functional lifts".

She added: "Imagine what a parent struggling to carry a newborn up multiple flights of stairs or a disabled person trapped in their home because the lift is broken.

"These are not mere inconveniences, they are unacceptable barriers to living a functional lift."

While the group welcomed a proposed retrofit of the Banana Flats to address issues such as damp and mould, Ms Lich having functioning lifts was "not just a priority, it's a necessity".

She added: "Our ability to lead functional day-to-day lives depend on it. We urge you to hear our voices and act with this urgency this situation demands."

Hannah Kirby from the Inspiring Leith community organisation said engagement with residents found more than a quarter of "now feel not at all confident about using the lifts".

She said: "This is because many people have experienced being stuck in a lift or had to rescue others."

Labour councillor for Leith Katrina Faccenda said those affected had been "let down by the council".

She said: "The current situation with the lifts is absolutely intolerable and has incredible negative impacts on people's lives.

"As a council we do have to live up to our responsibilities as a landlords because we wouldn't accept it from private landlords.

"Whatever financial constraints we're in, it just is not acceptable."

A motion tabled by Cllr Faccenda and passed unanimously agreed the finance and resources committee would consider the cost of renewing all lifts as part of the retrofit project.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter