

HERTFORD PANEL MEETING OF 9 JULY 2019

COMPLAINTS SCRUTINY PANEL 2017-2018

RESPONSIBLE ELT DIRECTOR

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

FOR INFORMATION – to provide a response to the Complaints Scrutiny Panel regarding their recommendations.

FOR INFORMATION - to share findings of the review with the appropriate areas of the business.

FOR INFORMATION - this report also contains a service improvement plan based on the panel's recommendations and evaluation of the project.

FOR INFORMATION – to share findings of the Scrutiny Panel Best Practice Review.

STRATEGIC/ REGULATORY IMPLICATIONS:

Delivering scrutiny is a core business function for generating service improvement and ensures compliance with regulation.

KEY POINTS:

1) Background

- a. A scrutiny project into the Network Homes complaints service was commissioned on 20 September 2016. The Panel, consisting of 7 residents from London and Hertford, received refresher training from an external consultant who specialises in Resident Scrutiny on 29 November 2016. This session was also to be a scoping meeting.
- b. There were a series of changes in the staff members who facilitated the scrutiny panel over the course of the 20 months before the panel submitted their report, due to staff changes. There were:
 - [REDACTED] – Resident Involvement and Community Investment Officer (September 2016 – May 2017)
 - [REDACTED] – Co-Regulation Manager (May 2017 – May 2018)
 - [REDACTED] - Governance Paralegal (Notetaker May 2017 – July 2018)
 - Shauna Hutchinson – Resident Engagement Officer (July 2018 – Present).
- c. Scrutiny took place during period of CRM being replaced by 1View.
 - Panel were provided a demonstration of the new 1View complaint logging system on 31 May 2017
 - Panel were provided a demonstration of the new 1View complaint response system 27 June 2017

- Further changes were made to the system and recording process with implementation of Customer Hub in June 2018.

2) Methodology

- During the course of the scrutiny, the panel:
 - reviewed complaints received alongside their resolutions from July – September 2016
 - visited the Customer Service Centre where they were able to observe our advisors handling calls and resolving residents' queries
 - interviewed the Complaints Manager.
- The Panel expressed an interest in investigating different aspects of the complaints journey:
 - Classification of when a complaint is logged as a formal complaint
 - Are our complaints satisfaction statistics accurate?
 - The level of information provided at the beginning of the complaints process.

But not all were facilitated by the officer due to difficulties in maintaining confidentiality and data protection.
- An evaluation meeting later held gave rise to the issue that the panel felt no further suggestions were provided to them to deliver the above, by the supporting officer facilitating the panel. Network Homes had suggested telephone interviews, surveys and limiting scope of the project.
- The aspects that were considered through the project were:
 - Complaints satisfaction – to be investigated using surveys or focus groups
 - Recognising informal complaints in the form general enquiries vs formal complaints
 - Understand the promotion of the complaint's procedure and the journey of a complaint using a mystery shop
 - The suggestion of a panel member to placing a fictitious complaint was made to be a mystery shop. This was not carried out due to this being a conflict of interest and would impact day to day business
 - A mystery shop was drafted, by Shauna Hutchinson, but was not presented to the panel due to the scope being limited to the promotion of the complaints procedure as opposed to the journey of a complaint. Shauna Hutchinson attended a meeting to suggest different questions for the pool of 19 mystery shoppers available.

3) Findings

- There was inconsistency between the way the Complaints Manager explained the service versus the practical application of the policy within the Customer Service Centre. The panel did not provide any detail around this finding in their report to provide further context.
- In the sample of 170 complaints from Quarter 1 and 2 only 10% were escalated from stage one to stage two. The panel could not determine if this was a representation of whether residents were satisfied with the resolution or if they were aware the complaint was closed in the first instance.
- The category of 'Communication Failure' was too vague but seemed to be used as a default reason for logging a complaint and therefore provided no real understanding of the complaint. This limited the ability to do further analysis of the complaints or identify lessons learnt.

- d. The panel felt that the logging of complaints was a subjective matter from the perspective of the Customer Service Advisor responsible for each call.
- e. There was no formal differentiation between informal complaints and general enquiries which gave rise to further questions of whether the number of complaints recorded is accurate.
- f. Using vouchers as a complaint resolution seemed to be frivolous without clear guidelines on the distribution of them.

Complaints Scrutiny Panel full report is included as Appendix Item 1

4) Recommendations

- a. The panel made 16 recommendations which are based both on the management of the panel itself and the complaints service. Highlights are:
 - Review the categories of complaints for recording purposes
 - Review the guidelines surrounding issuing Love 2 Shop vouchers
 - Consistency in contract management to adopt useful practices from e.g photographs for non-access.
 - Refresher training for staff on the complaint's procedures and Gober values
 - Greater independence as a panel in terms of governance and selecting areas for scrutiny.
- b. A service improvement loop has been created to address each recommendation however due to several changes made during this scrutiny, all findings of the project have been actioned with changes to processes, training and contracts so require no further action.
- c. The panel also raised concerns regarding the facilitation of the project. In 2017, the Network Homes Panel raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of the Scrutiny Panel. A Best Practice review was conducted alongside this project. Subsequent recommendations will therefore be considered and implemented from June 2019.
- d. It is suggested that another complaints scrutiny be conducted following changes to the structure and supporting documents for the Scrutiny Panel to identify potential areas of concern and make current recommendations.

Complaints scrutiny panel service improvement plan is included as Appendix Item 2

Scrutiny Panel Best Practice Review 2018 is included as Appendix Item 3

5) Evaluation

- a. 20 * 2 hour meetings were hold totalling 40 hours spent on the review from September 2016 to July 2018.
- b. The Scrutiny Panel members expressed they would not conduct business outside of meetings and items must be reviewed as a committee.
- c. Meetings were scheduled a month in advance but did not achieve 100% attendance.

- d. No written scope was produced by the panel. Suggestions were made in September 2016 but not adopted by the panel as they wish to operate with more autonomy to ensure minimal influence came from Network Homes.
- e. Methods of investigation were shared by a specialist at refresher training but were not adopted by the Panel.
- f. Template schedules of scrutiny projects were provided to assist the panel, at the refresher training in September 2016, but were rejected by the panel to reduce Network's influence. The templates suggested targets to complete the scrutiny in 12 – 16 weeks, in line with best practice.
- g. The panel did not allow staff to sit in on their meetings, this was to encourage panel members to discuss matters in a safe space. This limited Network Homes' ability to potentially answer questions immediately.
- h. In light of the above, the panel requested an independent notetaker, but due to cost implications Network were unable to provide this. Meetings were then recorded by Dictaphone and produced by members of the Resident Rngagement team. In August 2017, a member of the Governance Team took on the role of Notetaker.
- i. Network Homes offered to provide an independent 3rd party member to assist in completing the review but this was rejected.
- j. The panel were unhappy they had not selected the topic for scrutiny independently.
- k. Due to the duration of the complaint's scrutiny:
 - Two new systems have been implemented
 - Complaint period investigated is historic
 - Contractor terms have ended, and new Contractors employed
 - Staff members have left the team or organisation through restructure and career progression.
- l. Estimated Total Cost of Complaints Scrutiny £11,770. Based on:
 - Combined Resident Hours – 80 hours per attendee
 - Combined Staff Hours – 380 @ avg £19/hour = £7220
 - Catering - £350
 - Resident Transport and Expenses - £3000*
 - Training - £1000
 - Printing - £200
- m. Due to various changes within the organisation over the course of the Complaints scrutiny, the panels' recommendations have been superseded and therefore no further action is required.

**based on actual cost of 16 return journeys to Hertford @ £170 each + estimated additional Travel Expenses*