

**RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING
MINUTES
Tuesday 26 September 2023 6–7.30pm on Teams**

Present: Members

Natalieann Leadbetter (NL)
Paul Evans (PE)
Steve Hill (StH)
Teresa Godden-O’Callaghan (TGO’C)
Adam Field (AF)
Abdul Kader (AK)
Sue Masters (SM)

In attendance

Sarah Holden (SH), Resident Scrutiny Manager
Katherine Parker (KP), Independent Chair
Justin Clark (JC), Service Manager, Damp and Mould, Town & Country
Housing Repairs (TCHR)
Amanda Mankelow, (AM) Resident Scrutiny Administrative Assistant (Minutes)

	Actions
1. Welcome & apologies for absence	
1.1 Apologies had been received from Kirsty East (KE) and Alex Tuckwell (AT).	
1.2 NL was expected later.	
2. Declarations of interest	
2.1 None.	
3. Minutes of last meeting (Tuesday 22 August) & matters arising	
3.1 The panel’s research findings from other social housing providers had been collated and uploaded to Sharepoint.	
3.2 A paper copy of the Echelon leaflet had been passed to SH.	
3.3 KE’s issues viewing the complaints on Sharepoint had been resolved.	
3.4 TGO’C expressed her disappointment that very few residents had been at home when she attended the estate day in Rusthall in August. She stated that it had been a beautiful hot day, intimating this could be the reason so many residents weren’t in and therefore she had only been able to go into one house which had been repaired following a damp and mould issue.	
3.5 SH added that as a result, the Paddock Wood estate day which had been due to take place this week had now been cancelled.	
3.6 AM advised that the question which TGO’C had been going to ask at the estate day about following up and keeping tabs on jobs via a database had been posed to TCHR before today’s meeting, and a written answer would be circulated to the panel.	AM

3.7	A version of the Home User Guide (HUG) had been uploaded onto SharePoint. TCH allocations staff had advised that new tenants no longer receive a handbook. This ceased some time ago, but that a series of targeted emails were about to start next month. AM to share the content of these emails when this has been finalised.	AM
3.8	It was felt that this needed further exploration, as to leave residents in the interim with no information was felt by the panel to be inadequate. It was also noted that recommendations from previous reviews had included adding items and content to the former handbook. It was felt that tenants should receive a digital version if nothing else.	
3.9	A brief discussion was had about whether the handbook should remain in the property for the next occupant but TGO'C advised that when she was given one, it had her name in it so that did not appear to be the intention. SH stated this would be confirmed and clarity provided at the next meeting.	SH/AM
3.10	The question which TGO'C had been going to ask at the estate day about demonstrating the shift in attitude from blaming residents had been posed to TCHR before today's meeting, and a written answer was available to be shared with the panel.	AM
3.11	SH advised that Justin Clark, Service Manager – damp & mould would be joining the meeting later and suggested the panel could ask these types of questions to him, even if, as a very new member of staff, he needed to take them away to gather answers.	
3.12	Interim recommendations for the review and the resident survey would be discussed at items 5 and 6 later in the meeting, SH confirmed that there were 100s of residents to get in touch with for the survey, but that the first tranche of 200 residents had been contacted, with a few responses already received, both good and bad.	
3.13	The panel agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting held on 22 August.	
4.	Presentation about the damp & mould service provided by TCHR with Justin Clark, Service Manager (6.15 to 6.45pm – 15 minutes presentation and 15 minutes for questions)	
4.1	KP explained to the panel that JC would be joining the meeting and asked them to keep in mind that he had only been in the role for around four weeks, therefore may not be able answer all questions in the meeting.	
4.2	Apologies were received from Valerie George (VG) during the course of the meeting.	
4.3	JC joined.	
4.4	KP welcomed and reassured him that the panel were aware he was a new member of staff and that it would be entirely acceptable if he needed to take questions away to get answers. She expressed appreciation about him joining the meeting as a new member of staff.	
4.5	JC had prepared a presentation which was shared on screen. He introduced himself and reiterated that he was new to the organisation, apologising if he was unable to provide as concise answers as the panel may wish.	
4.6	JC advised that TCHR are trying to develop a new, pragmatic approach to	

monitoring jobs. He explained that they have developed a series of basic technical questions to ask residents at first point of contact, a script with no jargon, and a don't walk by approach. Contractors are being encouraged to raise jobs when attending for another reason, so they ask if damp and mould is present, or they simply spot it themselves.

- 4.7 He advised that there are now six dedicated damp and mould officers.
- 4.8 JC advised of the need to understand the reasons behind why damp and mould returns, stating that he had worked for other housing associations and that a very small amount of detail is taken across the sector when logging these issues. He went on to say that TCHR are developing a survey which will encompass building defects that can cause damp and mould, thereby gathering information to understand the route cause.
- 4.9 JC advised that there would be Toolbox talks delivered to field and office staff.
- 4.10 He advised of the intention to formulate a long-term resolution to ensure damp and mould doesn't come back. He spoke of communication being key and working together with residents.
- 4.11 JC advised of the desire to appreciate how residents are affected by damp and mould, offering a can do approach and planning any variables such as scaffolding or asbestos removal, that might be needed so TCHR are ready to resolve the problem. He noted that TCHR want to be able to explain the reasons why each part of the job is being carried out to residents. He advised this was the reason behind the app survey, to gather as much information about the current or previous problems, so the issue can be fixed and there isn't then a need to keep going back to a resident's property.
- 4.12 KP asked if JC felt that the approach across the sector has been one of putting on a sticking plaster and that this was something he was averse to doing, hence the approach to focusing on root causes? JC confirmed that a sticking plaster has been the approach with repairs across the sector, but that simply cannot be done with damp and mould. He advised that TCHR want residents to live in decent homes and be able to decorate how they like, as some of these options are currently out of their control.
- 4.13 JC finished by talking about mindset and stated this would likely be the hardest thing to get right. He stated that building defects are generally not down to residents and that assumption is the route of many mistakes. He reiterated that he is developing the tool box talks which will be delivered to all staff at TCH and TCHR to give one collaborative understanding of what they're trying to achieve. He advised this training would be done as an initial rollout, with updates to follow.
- 4.14 NL joined the meeting.
- 4.15 KP thanked JC for sharing his experiences and welcomed NL.
- 4.16 Q&A
- SH asked which of the items discussed was in place already. JC advised that the team are currently operating business as usual which he conceded wasn't as good as it could be, and stated that the reporting and capture of information needed to be right.
SH asked if it was the mindset and training side of things which was still to come? JC confirmed that this would come after sorting out the monitoring elements.

SH asked if the team was waiting for technology? JC confirmed that they were but that they are about 75% there.
 SH asked what the timetable was? JC advised that he would estimate it would be available at the beginning of November.
 SH asked if the operatives are currently carrying out the proactive work? JC advised that the contractors were not yet gathering as much information as they would like.
 SH asked if it came down to having better data? JC confirmed that it was, therefore the work being done on reporting and what information to gather.
 SH asked if lack of resources were holding things up? JC stated that it was the development of the app, not resources. He commented that it wasn't appropriate to be getting something off the shelf.
 SH asked if the service had improved in time JC has been there? JC advised that he felt people have/are developing a greater understanding.

- TGO'C stated that she felt the approach coming sounded perfect and was just what's needed. She asked if the six damp and mould officers were new or if they had been taken from other areas of the organisation? JC believed it to be a mixture. He advised they have other skills so can fix guttering, clean gulleys, repoint and do minor plumbing and that they have a very high level of competency. They have back up plans for big jobs.
 TGO'C asked how JC would compare TCH to other housing associations at this stage and whether TCH had given 100% backing? JC advised that he had started during holiday season so some people he needed to speak to weren't around to talk to, he would have liked the technology ready to go but yes, 100% backing.
- AK asked if the budget was there to allow TCHR to do what they wish? He asked how long the response time was and how long operatives are given in homes? And he asked what the technology was that there were waiting for?
 JC advised that the budget was sufficient. He added that there was a conscious plan to eradicate damp and mould, there would be no point putting together a team otherwise. He added that he had not felt any pushback, whenever he had asked a question everyone had wanted to help. JC stated that he wanted to make a difference. He advised that time on site was about asking the right amount of information to decide on the time commitment. He advised that they're going to remove mould and do the survey on the initial visit but that the problem won't be solved straight away. JC advised that he had developed the survey himself, it would take about an hour to complete and covered every room. He reiterated that it would look at various things within the property to establish what could potentially cause an issue when the weather changes etc. JC advised he was getting updates on the app on a daily basis.

4.17	KP asked if it would be ok to send further questions through SH and AM after the meeting.	All
4.18	SM was experiencing technical issues and was unable to ask her question. SH asked that she put it in the chat or send to AM/SH for follow up afterwards.	SM & SH/AM
4.19	KP thanked JC for joining.	
4.20	JC left.	
4.21	TGO'C stated that she hoped TCHR would deliver what JC had outlined. SH stated she felt that if they do, it could radicalise the issue and stop escalations. TGO'C stated that JC had said "TCH wants to do this" but in fact they must do it as it's law.	

4.22	SH suggested it may be a useful for a couple of members to sit with JC six months down the line to see where the service is at. KP felt that JC wanted to get results and do things properly so would probably enjoy revisiting with the panel.	
5.	Resident survey update and other planned activities	
5.1	SH advised that the resident survey had been launched with the first tranche of emails sent the day before. Some responses had already been received, some positive, others not. She advised that once a few more had been received, AM and SH would start to share with the panel. She stated that this was the last piece of the review before finalising recommendations unless anyone wanted to do anything else. She advised that it would be good to receive 30 responses, some of whom will hopefully attend the next meeting (focus group) on 1 November. SH advised that seven respondents had already said yes to the focus group, but the ideal would be for at least ten residents with a range of experiences. SH asked if all the panel members wanted to attend.	SH/AM
5.2	KP advised that she would not be able to attend the focus group on 1 November. SH confirmed she would facilitate this and stated that the residents attending would be reassured of confidentiality and that feedback would be anonymised when presented to Board.	
5.3	No suggestions for further exercises were made by the panel.	
6.	Recommendations discussion	
6.1	The interim recommendations were shared on screen. SH reiterated that these were evolving and that the panel may want to tweak or add to them. She conceded there was a lot of detail and requested the panel read them before the focus group.	All
6.2	SH suggested the panel may want to consider the following when making recommendations. She advised that herself and AM had recently attended a damp and mould online webinar with other registered providers. A director from Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (the housing association where Awaab Ishak had died) was in attendance as a guest speaker. SH advised that they had been required by the Regulator of Social Housing to go out and share the mistakes that had led to Awaab's death with the wider sector. She went on to say that there had been a language barrier resulting in Awaab's family taking him to the wrong hospital. SH noted that TCH uses the same translation service as Rochdale called 'language line', but that a video version of the service is available, as opposed to just telephone, which could reduce this kind of catastrophic misunderstanding.	
7.	Meeting plan for rest of 2023	
7.1	KP advised that the focus group planned for Wednesday 1 November had already been mentioned. SH continued by proposing the panel communicate by email before the meeting at the end of November (Tuesday 28) to nail down recommendations, including the draft board report. She then advised of VG's suggestion to present lessons learnt from the Tpas annual tenant conference to the panel. SH proposed handing the rest of the meeting on 28 November over to TGO'C, NL, AT and VG for that and asked if that would suit everyone. SH proposed to meet in person, though acknowledging due to the distance they would be travelling, StH and AK could join via Teams if needed. SH asked for as many people as possible to join in person and confirmed there would be catering provided.	

StH stated he would check his schedule as to where he would be working on that day.

SH asked TGO'C and NL to put together a presentation about key learns from the conference. KP stated that the enthusiasm from those attending the conference was infectious and it would be good to capture it. SH stated she felt it would be good to take this pause before going on to the next review.

7.2 SH advised that VG had also suggested going back over recent reviews, spending time with staff to see what has changed (tangibly) as a result of the recommendations; specifically recruitment, induction and training for new staff. She suggested panel members could sit with HR in December and PR could come to a meeting to outline website changes, since this has been a recurring theme across most previous reviews.

7.3 TGO'C asked if the panel could spend some time thinking about what to review next, evaluating what the panel is doing well rather than jumping straight into a new review.

7.4 SH suggested using the January meeting to look at the KPIs and to then start the new review in February with another meeting in person. It was felt it would be a good idea to look at what the panel has reviewed/achieved so far, to take stock.

9. KPIs and next review

9.1 SH moved on to item nine next as it was a natural progression in the conversation. She asked the panel to have a look at KPIs which had been uploaded onto Sharepoint. She asked if the panel felt there was any value or interest in looking at the complaints process. SH advised that there is a prescriptive process to complaints and the KPIs show that TCH sometimes does not meet targets for stage two responses. She stated that this would be talked about again at the end of November and suggested the panel ask some questions about what the KPIs show.

KP confirmed the dates of the next two meetings.

StH felt that when the panel come together to discuss, it could be helpful to think about what each member is dealing with themselves personally to inform what to review next.

8. Christmas meal

8.1 KP advised of the proposed date for a Christmas meal of Thursday 7 December 1pm. She stated that the suggested venue was going to be Framptons but having looked at recent reviews, food hygiene has gone downhill, the second suggestion was the Guinea. She suggested that there could be a getting to know each other element to the meal and asked what the panel thought of that.

10. AOB

10.1 Northamptonship Partnership Homes damp and mould scrutiny recommendations had been uploaded to SharePoint, AM reminded the panel to look at those when deciding on the recommendations they wanted to make for TCH.

10.2 Tpas Scrutiny Week was the week afterwards. AM had sent out an email and advised that the events were all during the day online, and although free, needed to be booked if any of the panel wanted to attend.

10.3 AM proposed the PR team attend the in person meeting at the end of

November to take some individual and group photos of the panel for the website, if agreeable.

10.4 AM requested members submit any expense claims urgently, particularly those from the Tpas conference as finance allows a three-month time frame.

10.5 AM advised that KD was taking a break from the panel due to work demands. SH added that he was practically running the local theatre single handedly.

10.6 KP thanked everyone for joining the meeting and stated she was looking forward to seeing them on Tuesday 28 November in person.

11. **Date of next meeting on Zoom/Teams (digital focus group) (Wednesday 1 November 2023 6–7.30pm)**

11.1 The next meeting had already been discussed. SH advised that herself/AM would be in touch with the panel about the focus group.

SH/AM