

**RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING  
MINUTES  
Tuesday 30 January 2024 6–7.30pm on Teams**

**Present:           Members**

Paul Evans (PE)  
Steve Hill (StH)  
Teresa Godden-O’Callaghan (TGO’C)  
Adam Field (AF)  
Alex Tuckwell (AT)  
Abdul Kader (AK)  
Kirsty East (KE)  
Natalieann Leadbetter (NL)

**In attendance**

Sarah Holden (SH), Resident Scrutiny Manager  
Amanda Mankelow (AM), Resident Scrutiny Administrative Assistant (Minutes)  
Amy Alexander (AA), Assistant HR Business Partner  
Andrew Greenwell (AG), Customer Feedback & Information Manager

<b>1.           Welcome &amp; apologies for absence</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1.1       SH welcomed everyone present. NL and PE were just joining as the meeting begun.	
1.2       SH advised that she believed it was just AG attending the meeting later, rather than Helen Charles as well.	
1.3       Apologies had been received from Valerie George (VG).	
<b>2.           Declarations of interest</b>	
2.1       None.	
<b>4.           Presentation and discussion from Andrew Greenwell, Customer Feedback and Information Manager.</b>	
4.1       SH advised that prior to Andrew joining the meeting, she wanted to talk through the information the panel had already received. She acknowledged that some members had been having problems with Sharepoint; something which AM was trying to get sorted with IT. SH asked that despite this, if all had seen and made sense of the information.	
4.2       She added again that she didn’t think Helen Charles would be joining the meeting and advised that AG manages the complaints service. She continued that herself and AM had seen the presentation he would be giving and noted that it was due to cover many of the questions the panel would likely want to ask. SH and AM had put together some suggested questions and these were shared on screen.	

- 4.3 SH advised that AG's presentation will touch on complaint themes identified but she felt it was unclear how these are used to shape the service.
- 4.4 SH explained that stage 2 complaints are shared among staff including herself so she needed to stay out of the conversation. She continued that TCH appeared to be some way off stage 2 closure deadlines. TGO'C asked if SH personally felt that many complaints should have been dealt with at stage 1. SH answered yes, and advised that there were certain triggers for escalation to stage 2 which the panel might want to explore. She said that a lot centred around repairs. She added that the Housing Ombudsman had just finished consulting on a new complaint handling code.
- 4.5 KE asked if complaints went to the service being complained about. SH said yes at stage 1, but if a resident feels it hasn't been answered or a problem not resolved, then goes to stage 2 which is independently responded to by a different department.
- 4.6 TGO'C asked about the meaning of CRM mentioned in the procedure document. SH advised it was the customer database used by TCH and stood for Customer Relationship Management.
- 4.7 TGO'C asked if TCHG staff referred to in the Rosebery complaint report are the same as TCH staff. She felt their report was very thorough and concise and that they'd done their homework but that it wasn't really clear what they were going to do about it. SH advised that KE had presented at the TCH board meeting the previous week but that the Epsom equivalent panel (formerly Rosebery) had taken the majority of the slot with their scrutiny report and recommendations. She advised they were now doing a damp and mould review.
- 4.8 November 2023 complaint KPI information was shared on screen. SH advised these figures were April to November. She noted the highest category was around repairs. It was acknowledged that November had seen an increase but that this could be seasonal, with boiler breakdowns and damp and mould. SH acknowledged that TCH didn't meet complaint closure targets on any month for stage 1 or stage 2.
- 4.9 SH wanted to discuss the scope of the review; suggesting this being the complaints process and using lessons learnt to improve services. She continued that the panel would need to be careful not to go into a different subject e.g. repairs. SH asked if the panel felt that the scope should be different. TGO'C said complaints only, AT agreed it's about TCH's accountability, KE agreed. SH suggested to include lessons learnt from complaints and how this feedback has been used to improve services, TGO'C said yes.
- 4.10 AA had joined the meeting and SH introduced the panel members to her, explaining the different tenures and areas where they lived.
- 4.11 AG joined the meeting. SH introduced the panel members to him stating that this was the first meeting of the complaint review. SH advised that the meeting was being recorded to ensure accurate minutes were

produced.

- 4.12 AG had a presentation which was shared on screen. He explained his role as having oversight of the complaint service to ensure it meets regulatory requirements and is accessible to residents. He advised that the complaint process had been improved with residents over recent years which meant more residents feeling able to use it. AG stated that he felt there was a better understanding by complaint handlers now, as well as support for them from his team.
- 4.13 He added that the focus was on ownership and resolving complaints correctly and promptly and that, after spoken to other registered providers, having subject experts responding to stage 1 reduces chasing around TCH for answers. AG stated that there was always room for improvement and that handlers are trying to get it right but still going over required timescales. He advised that there was a heavy emphasis on resolution rather than addressing the complaint, a lack of communication/updates due to capacity and issues with delivery of agreed resolutions, particularly in repairs.
- 4.14 AG felt that there was a need for more resources in complaints, stating that this had been raised and is being discussed with management. He stated that if the panel felt it appropriate to support this recommendation, it could go a long way to getting it agreed.
- 4.15 AG advised that the main complaint themes are poor communication causing complaints and with complaint handling and not doing what we said we would. He stated that the repairs service is better resourced than it was previously, but he said that repairs processes were needing to be constantly reviewed especially in the more complex cases.
- 4.16 AG stated that while he didn't feel TCH was receiving an unhealthy level of complaints, he felt it would be nice to reduce these. He stated that TCH has to report complaint resolution timescales, including when a complaint isn't closed within the initial time frame and an extension is agreed. He explained that further changes were coming to the CRM database to record this information more helpfully.
- 4.17 AT thanked AG for his presentation and honesty around potential improvements needed and asked how TCH compares to other registered providers. AG acknowledged TCH complaint closure timescales are not good, however TCH is on a par with others for the lessons learnt processes and perhaps ahead with the quality of complaint responses.
- 4.18 KE asked what was needed to support complaint handlers to be less defensive. AG stated that when he first joined TCH, he conducted an initial review of complaint responses and found that they weren't really addressing the issues, sensing defensiveness. As a result, he advised he had implemented stage 1 checking, guidance around language used in letter responses and training. He advised it had not been a quick process.
- 4.19 TGO'C asked why so many complaints were being upheld at stage 2 and what triggers stage 1 being escalated to stage 2. AG advised that

residents can escalate a complaint to stage 2 just because they want to even without giving a reason. He stated that the Housing Ombudsman expects a review of stage 1 complaints, even if the subject of the two stages are only vaguely related. AG advised that the biggest reasons of escalation to stage 2 are TCH not doing what it said we were going to, or the fix hasn't solved the problem (particularly in the case of repairs). Sometimes a resident just disagrees with TCH's response or new information has come to light. TGO'C asked if AG felt there should be a dedicated person in each team to deal with complaints. AG stated that he felt some teams would benefit from a dedicated resource; Repairs, Contracts & Compliance, Asset Management but felt others would not need it.

- 4.20 AF asked what changes AG expected from the new complaint handling code. AG stated that the main one, as discussed above was around residents not needing to give a reason to escalate from stage 1 to stage 2. He stated that if residents become aware of this, TCH could see a rise in stage 2 cases resulting in a bit of a learning curve. Currently if a resolution to a stage 2 complaint cannot be given within the initial 20 working days, an extension of 10 working days can be agreed. AG advised that it is expected that this extension time will become 20 working days under the new code.
- 4.21 StH clarified TCH's position as a registered provider in terms of the charges it must pay to the Housing Ombudsman. AG confirmed that TCH must pay an amount to the Housing Ombudsman per property, however the cost goes up in tiers. StH felt the panel should be aware that this subscription has risen significantly in the last couple of years from £2.16 to £4.75 per property. AG advised that the Housing Ombudsman issued a consultation to registered providers about the increase beforehand, but it didn't really give an option to object or suggest an alternative.
- 4.22 StH asked what was causing KPIs to be poor. AG replied this was mainly due to repairs and internal changes to/high publicity around damp & mould. He added that when residents get to stage 2, they often want a resolution before they're happy to close the complaint. Handlers are keeping residents updated even if there is no update. This causes the complaint to be open for longer.
- 4.23 StH asked what complaint training staff receive. AG advised that all staff receive induction training around complaints and the system used to log and track them (CRM). He added that complaint handlers are mentored and that in the past, more formal letter writing training has also been delivered, however this hasn't been repeated as those same complaint handlers were still in the role.
- 4.24 TGO'C acknowledged AG's comment in his presentation about accepting ownership and expressed her appreciation. She felt however that even if the timescale of complaints was to be extended by 10 days, TCH still wouldn't meet closure targets based on the most recent KPIs. She asked what major change he felt was needed to get this right. AG answered that currently a lot of time is spent looking at the detail rather than the point of the complaint, and focus is given to delivering a resolution rather than responding to the complaint.

- 4.25 TGO'C asked if any staff member had visited a tenant to see what the problem is about and why they're getting in touch. AG confirmed that there are a lot more visits than there used to be with stage 2 complaints, however less for repairs. He added that the complaint handler in repairs couldn't feasibly consider doing this due to the numbers of complaints they're dealing with.
- 4.26 AM asked if AG was saying that complaints were not being responded to at all where the focus is on the resolution, and what he would see as the balance between resolving the issue being complained about and responding to the complaint itself. AG advised that a response needs to be given as to whether we've failed in our service delivery, at the same time as the resolution being offered. He gave an example that a repair shouldn't stop being dealt with until a complaint handler gets involved, which is what sometimes happens.
- 4.27 KE asked if AG could give an example to demonstrate learning from feedback. He stated that lessons learned are separated out for individual teams to review, cases where residents are 'very dissatisfied' are also separated out. AG added that complaint handlers are asked to complete a form to capture why a stage 2 complaint is upheld and if an individual is deemed at fault, their manager is informed so 1-2-1 training and monitoring can be applied. AG reiterated that the person in the team who was looking after lessons learnt is currently on maternity leave.
- 4.28 SH stated that any further questions for AG from the panel would be sent to him after the meeting.
- 4.29 SH thanked AA and AG for joining.
- 4.30 AA and AG left.
- 4.31 SH asked for thoughts on the presentation.
- 4.32 TGO'C liked the presentation and noted communication sounded like it was the biggest problem again, particularly internal communication. SH stated there would be much more to examine, including how TCH compares to other registered providers.
- 4.33 TGO'C continued that she understood there may be a resource issue but that the fluidity was not there. She asked how repairs would know a complaint had been made and who would have told them to stop dealing with the repair. SH confirmed that they would know a stage 1 complaint had been made, and reiterated the need to be careful the review does not slip into looking at the repairs service. She added that the repairs service is still bedding down with the new joint venture contract.
- 4.34 AT added that she felt the need to say a member of staff was on maternity leave was just an excuse and not enough of a reason for the poor KPIs. She felt there was something the panel were not being told. She asked if she could chat to one of the customer service team who she knows, adding that she hadn't known they worked there until recently. SH confirmed this would be ok, adding that the panel will likely want to talk to staff handling complaints anyway.

All

AT

4.35	KE stated that when she worked at the NHS and had to deal with complaints, communication was also the biggest theme. She felt there wasn't enough detail in the documents they had seen about themes of complaints and asked to know more about the nature of complaints. SH added that she felt more information was also needed around closing the loop, explaining what we do with feedback and asked if the panel agreed.	SH/AM
4.36	TGO'C stated she would like more information on the process from the first call onwards. She asked to see it broken down more.	SH/AM
4.37	SH asked if the panel felt it would be useful to bring the Epsom panel to the February meeting to discuss their complaint review. It was felt that this could be beneficial. SH requested that all panel members have a look on Google at how other registered providers are performing with complaints and what their process was. She added that AM had suggested bringing a member of IT to a meeting to carry out some SharePoint training. It was felt this would be helpful. SH continued that the panel had got until around July to complete the current review.	SH/AM/All
4.38	SH apologised to the panel that she may need to move the February meeting as it will likely be her father's last birthday so she would wish to visit him in Canada. The panel were all very supportive and understanding of this.	
4.39	SH asked AK who had seemingly had some IT issues earlier to put any questions in the chat box or send through on WhatsApp afterwards. AK stated that his question was about when a request is for service and when it is a complaint.	SH/AM
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of last meeting (Tuesday 28 November) &amp; matters arising</b>	
3.1	SH confirmed that requesting TCHR undertake EDI training was added to the recommendations as it did not appear to take place currently.	
3.2	Feedback from the board meeting would be given later as a separate agenda item.	
3.3	The panel agreed the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting on 28 November 2023.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>PR/HR shadowing feedback</b>	
5.1	SH advised the panel that AF and TGO'C had carried out some shadowing of staff from PR & Marketing and HR before Christmas to understand how recommendations made in previous reviews have been implemented. AF commented that TCH had created a video for the website to give information in a more visual way to residents, however they had spent a lot of money on it which he felt could have been better used as a salary.	
5.2	TGO'C reiterated the suggestion of having a videographer position for example. She felt that both HR and PR were very open with them and had taken on board the panel's recommendations. She added that she	

found both staff members to be honest and nice and felt that a lot of the recommendations had been fulfilled.

5.3 SH added that she felt it had been a good thing to do and suggested the panel do it again to check recommendations are being implemented.

**6. Board meeting feedback**

6.1 SH stated that TCH had been squeezed right at the end of the resident scrutiny slot during the TCH board meeting, as the Epsom panel had taken up most of the time. KE reiterated this point saying that TCH had not had very much time to talk through their report. She added that the board members had asked if the panel was happy that several of the recommendations had only been partially accepted. KE added that she couldn't speak on behalf of the panel to answer but that she had pointed out that she felt one of the recommendations, around vulnerability data collection hadn't been properly answered. SH will be following up on this and will report back at the next meeting.

SH

**7. AOB**

7.1 AM drew the panel's attention to the newly relaunched resident scrutiny page on the TCH website which had been advertised in the previous week's resident email newsletter. This also had all the panel's photographs in it.

**8. Date of next meeting via Teams (Tuesday 27 February 2024 6 - 7.30pm)**

8.1 The next meeting date would be confirmed as discussed above.

SH/AM

8.2 SH thanked everyone for attending.