

Scrutiny Report

Review of

“Complaints Escalations”



Report Compiled by: OVH Tenant Scrutiny Team
Date of Issue:
Review Date:

1. Introduction

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England April 2012.

1.1 What are the benefits of Tenant Involvement and Empowerment?

Tenant scrutiny is a key aspect of the Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England which allows for the following benefits:

- The formulation of their landlords housing related policies and strategic priorities
- The making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- The scrutiny of their landlord and making of recommendations about how performance might be improved

1.2 What are the benefits of Scrutiny?

Tenant scrutiny can bring benefits for all stakeholders, as follows:

- **Residents** – improves services
- **OVH** – reviews performance and identifies areas for improvement
- **Regulators** – demonstrates regulatory compliance with the consumer standards
- **Partners and Stakeholders** – illustrates the benefits of partnership working, and continuous improvement.

1.3 Selecting Service for Scrutiny

A key role of the Scrutiny Team is to review key service areas by scrutinising the performance and customer intelligence data, identifying areas of concern and making recommendations of how to improve services.

The performance team presented 4 topics to the Scrutiny Team for possible review. The Scrutiny Team then undertook a review of the 4 topics and prioritised “Complaints Escalations and Satisfaction” as the next topic for review.

The Scrutiny Team agreed the scope detailing the information they required as part of the review and then undertook a ten step review of the service.

As a result of our investigations we identified 12 findings and recommendations.

The Scrutiny Team members involved in undertaking this scrutiny were:

Pam Holliday – Chair

Ken Williams - Vice Chair

Tony Bailey

Bernie Blackmore

Ian Leybourne

Marion Roberts

2. Scope of the Review

In selecting the areas for scrutiny the team considered information presented by the Performance and Customer Insight Team, which placed emphasis on customer intelligence data provided as part of the performance information.

The Scrutiny Team found that this service was currently experiencing problems with customer satisfaction.

Following a diagnostic test from the Complaints coordinator Katie Chandley, the scrutiny team examined the current processes, performance data and planned initiatives relating to this service, and also considered other best practice ideas being used by other housing associations. The Scrutiny Team then identified a number of “areas of challenge” and compiled a list of questions under each area of challenge and identified the source of evidence that may answer the questions. From there, the Scrutiny Team submitted the requests for information/ documentary evidence in a “notice for evidence”

When requesting further information, timescales are set out for the provision of the evidence, and it is vital that these deadlines are met in order for the review to be effective.

3. Scrutiny Process

The scrutiny process followed a 10 step plan and covered the following stages:

- Identify service for review
- Run an initial diagnostic test of the service area
- Agree scope and identify evidence requirements
- Desktop review of evidence
- Reality checking exercises
- Development of final report
- Presentation of report
- Agree Improvement Plan

The next step will be for the Scrutiny Team to receive six monthly and yearly feedback on improvements made since recommendations.

4. Findings and Recommendations

Attached is all of the Scrutiny Team's agreed findings and recommendations (see Appendix 1). On the xxx a meeting was held by the Scrutiny Team to agree the recommendations, during this meeting we summarised all the evidence presented across the 10 steps of the scrutiny process and discussed areas for improvement.

Following this review, the scrutiny team has made 12 recommendations to ensure that the performance of this area continues to improve and to ensure effective future monitoring of the standards takes place.

5. Conclusion & Acknowledgement

The Scrutiny Team would like to note that without the close working partnership with the Performance and Customer Insight Team, Customer Service Centre Team and Customer Empowerment Team this Scrutiny Review would have been impossible. The Scrutiny Team would like to thank the contributions made by all individuals and groups involved in conducting the review for their assistance and co-operation. The Scrutiny Team would also like to record thanks to all other One Vision Housing and Sovini staff involved in the scrutiny process.

On the whole we feel that all teams involved do a very good job. We would like to note that lower satisfaction may not always indicate issues with the service offered, but may be more about managing customer expectations.

An appendix detailing the findings and recommendations made is provided within.

Appendix 1

Findings (information discovered as a result of the investigation)	Recommendations (suggested action resulting from the findings)
<p><u>Process</u></p> <p>1. Formal Complaints process viewed.</p> <p>2. ST found that there is no single process for dealing with informal complaints.</p> <p>3. When an informal complaint is received by the CSC, staff will notify the relevant person or team involved, in order to resolve the issue at first point of contact.</p> <p>4. OVH have reduced the process down from 3 stages to 2 over the last year and “quick fix” has been introduced</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Quick Fix Complaints information to be included in the formal process and “quick fix” information within the complaints policy •2 Stage process to be reviewed in 12 months to establish its effectiveness
<p>5. When a customer wants to escalate their complaint it is re-opened at Stage 2 on Pentana. The case will then be reinvestigated by a more senior member of staff than dealt with the issue at Stage 1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ST felt this was an effective process and no recommendations made
<p>6. The ST found that "Quick fix" data is recorded, it is still logged as a complaint. The only difference is no letter is sent out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Consider re-introducing sending letter out confirming closure of complaint.

Findings (information discovered as a result of the investigation)	Recommendations (suggested action resulting from the findings)
7. OVH Complaints Team have used a HouseMark “toolkit”, introduced last year, to guide with best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review benefit of the toolkit in 6-12 months
<p>8. The team found that informal complaints are recorded on the Pentana system</p> <p>9. The CRM system classifies an informal complaint based on the options chosen by the customer services advisor depending on the information given to them during the call.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ST felt that the process for recording informal complaints was effective and therefore no recommendation made •Recommend to include the detail of how informal complaints are dealt with in the complaints process
<p>10. The CSC team have had customer service training and individual service area training. Staff always attempt to find a solution for our customers.</p> <p>11. The Performance team carry out regular refresher training with the CSC staff to clarify what is a formal / informal complaint and how to use the complaints system (Pentana) to enable better communication with customers, however not all CSC staff would be logged into Pentana, which could cause delays in providing up to date response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider greater use of Pentana system within CSC to view complaint detail •To provide ongoing training to CSC staff on using Pentana to view complaints
12. There is no expert in complaints in the CSC Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ST recommend the possibility of an expert advisor for complaints within the CSC Team

Findings (information discovered as a result of the investigation)	Recommendations (suggested action resulting from the findings)
<p><u>Communication</u></p> <p>13. Stage 1 to 2 escalation response letter does not always cover all points of complaint</p> <p>14. Letter needs simpler language and less jargon and to state clearly OVH stance or actions that will follow</p> <p>15. Letter should give specific date when we will get back to the customer by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review / Audits of Stage 1 and Stage 2 letters •The use of the words “staff training” should not be used in response letters- should replace with “we will do all we can to address the failure in service to ensure that this does not happen again”
<p>16. CSC make sure the customer understands the timescales and processes of their complaint over the phone. Response by letter explains the stages of the complaint.</p> <p>17. Leaflet considered unsuitable and would need to be individual to each complaint.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Various communication methods were discussed. Ensure letters are always personalised to suit each individual complaint. Consider letter audits at regular intervals
<p>18. The words upheld and not upheld do not necessarily have to be those particular words, ST felt they may be negative words however Ombudsman require that OVH are clear on the process and outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider use of different terms instead of "upheld/ not upheld" to ensure clarity/ satisfaction with customers

Findings (information discovered as a result of the investigation)	Recommendations (suggested action resulting from the findings)
<p><u>Complaints</u></p> <p>19. ST found that new tenants into our properties have the highest number of complaint escalations</p> <p>20. There seems to be a disparity between communication and expectations at point of handover</p> <p>21. OVH not clear / firm enough in response letters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ongoing Awareness Training with NSO's and Void Teams regarding complaints •Review process of void handover to highlight any issues, ST suggest written agreement to be introduced between tenant and NSO on sign up for any work due to be completed after occupation • Bullet points are needed within response letters to ensure all parts of complaint are addressed
<p>22. Complaints Policy is reviewed on an annual basis with tenants</p> <p>23. Quarterly (lessons learnt) meetings are carried out with managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST happy with this finding and no recommendations •ST would like to highlight this as an area of good practice
<p>24. Compensation Policy viewed alongside decision letters</p> <p>25. Scrutiny team feel that compensation / goodwill gestures offered are, at times, inconsistent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure all staff are aware of Compensation Policy via staff training to ensure consistency with outcomes • We recommend OVH monitor how departments are coming to decisions for compensation and goodwill gestures

Findings (information discovered as a result of the investigation)	Recommendations (suggested action resulting from the findings)
<p><u>Tenant Inspectors</u> 26. Tenant Inspectors Complaints Audit Report not all evidence relating to the complaint was included</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All complaints evidence to be provided in Tenant Complaints Audit Reports to ensure Tenant Inspectors have all the information available
<p><u>Satisfaction</u> 27. Viewed copy of complaints satisfaction survey and results 28. ST felt there were not enough meaningful survey results so may not get the details required to learn lessons 29. Survey questions do not cover escalations 30. Possible changes to feedback survey - questions to be added to 2nd survey "is there anything we could have done earlier/ better to stop the complaint escalating?" "Were you informed your complaint was closed?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review of Complaints Satisfaction survey questions •Aim for 100% complainants surveyed where possible •ST recommend having two sets of survey questions; after stage 1 and following escalation to stage 2

Summary

- Not all letters address all key points
- No consistency in addressing compensation
- CSA to have access to Pentana
- The only consistent trend identified with complaint escalation was dissatisfaction with quality of voids