

**Customer
Voice**



Scrutiny Review

Independent Living

Report date: October 2024

Purpose of report

As a registered provider of social housing, One Vision Housing has an obligation to engage with its tenants and residents in line with the Regulator for Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

'Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable.' [Consumer Standards 2024]

Customer involvement:

- Five customers were involved as part of the Scrutiny Team.
- 101 customers were involved through bespoke surveys.
- Over 20 customers were involved as part of two hot-topic groups.
- Transactional survey data from customers was also used.

Background

A scrutiny review provides customers with an opportunity to delve deep into housing matters which they may be concerned about or underperforming areas where they feel there is room for improvement. By involving customers in our decision-making, we are able to enhance our services, increase satisfaction, and become more efficient.

These reviews strengthen the relationship between tenant and landlord, fostering trust and improving our reputation in the process. We believe that effective communication is key, and we are dedicated to providing an open and honest forum where customers can have their questions answered and suggestions respected.

The scrutiny review of the Independent Living (IL) service was initiated after One Vision Housing (OVH) IL residents requested to review the level of engagement and communication between themselves and OVH. This prompted a review by OVH's Scrutiny Team to assess the quality and effectiveness of the Independent Living services being offered by OVH.

This report aims to identify potential areas for improvement to enhance the customer's overall experience of the Independent Living service.

About our service

OVH's Independent Living service is designed to help people over 18 live independently in their own homes. The service provides support to those who need assistance with maintaining their tenancy in over 900 homes across Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral. The service includes seven retirement living schemes designated for residents aged 55 and over.

The service is focused on five keys areas:

- Housing Related Support and Advice
- Being Safe and Secure
- Budgeting and Benefits
- Health and Wellbeing
- Repairs and Adaptations

As part of the service, customers receive support with budgeting, tenancy management, and accessing community services. It also provides opportunities for social interaction and personal development. The aim of the service is to enable people to live as independently as possible and to build their confidence and skills.

Customer insights

During the review, the Scrutiny Team asked One Vision Housing's Customer Voice Team to carry out a survey with Independent Living customers. We focused on three key questions:

- How satisfied are you with One Vision Housing's Independent Living Service?
- Do you feel you are listened to, and your concerns are addressed?
- How satisfied are you with communal areas in your scheme?

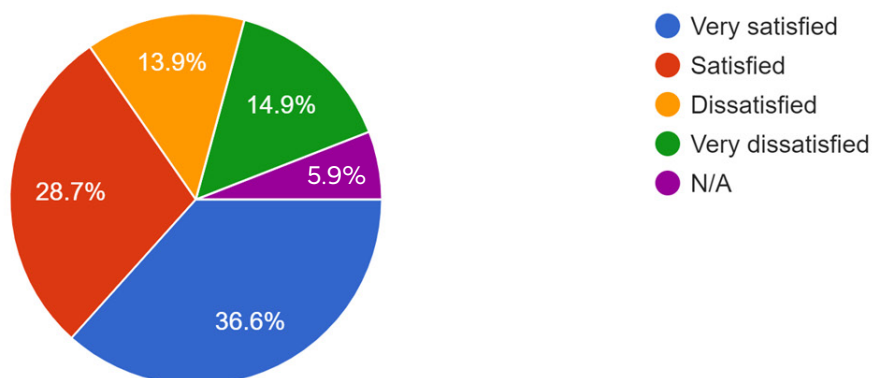
Further to this, we asked for customers to provide suggestions around improvements they would like to see around the building and grounds, as well as improvements with the overall service.

In addition to the survey, the Scrutiny Team reviewed performance figures, interviewed members of One Vision Housing, went to Hot Topic Groups to speak to Independent Living customers, and carried out a desktop review of evidence to make recommendations on how to improve the service.

Survey results:

How satisfied are you with One Vision Housing's Independent Living service?

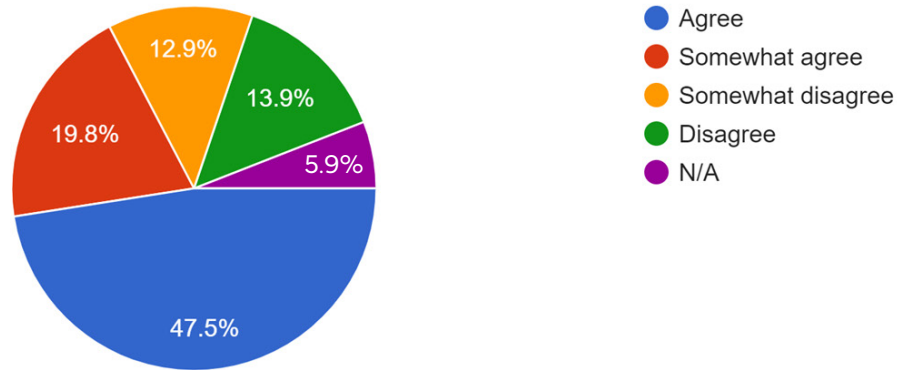
101 responses



Survey results:

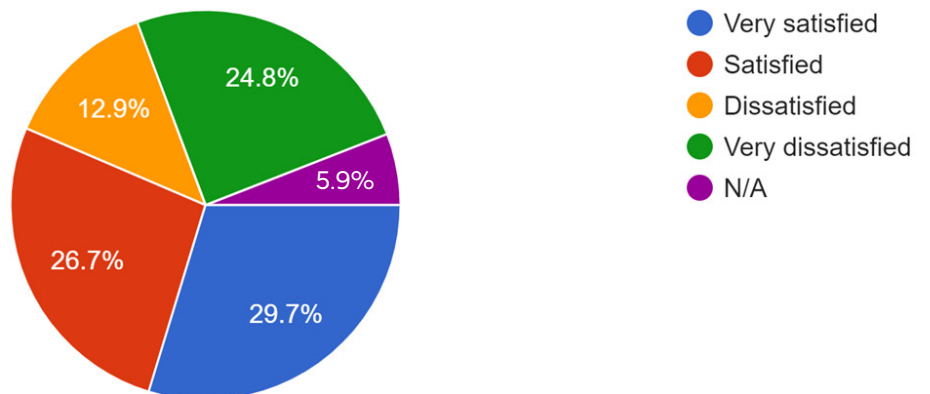
Do you feel you are listened to, and your concerns are addressed?

101 responses



How satisfied are you with the communal areas in your scheme?

101 responses



Transactional survey results

Independent Living Survey 2023/24 (Up to February 2024)

Comparison of CAT1 and CAT2 Satisfaction

	CAT1- Indepe ndent Living	CAT2- Retirem ent Housing	Over all (CAT1 & CAT2)
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Independent Living?	92%	98%	94%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by your Independent Living Officer?	92%	96%	94%
How satisfied are you with the frequency of contact with your Independent Living Officer?	92%	95%	93%
How much do you agree with the following <u>statement</u> : the service provided helps you to live independently	90%	95%	92%
What impact would you say that the Independent Living service has had on your personal circumstances?	74%	77%	75%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the safety and security of your home?	94%	93%	93%
Have you ever used the emergency call service?	15%	24%	19%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the emergency call service?	90%	67%	79%
Was the person who dealt with your call helpful and easy to speak to?	95%	70%	83%
How would you rate the quality of the service that you received from the emergency call service?	88%	67%	76%
Do you think that the emergency call service offers value for money?	94%	57%	74%
Total Surveys	114	82	196

CAT 1 - Independent Living - This involves our dispersed customers who receive the Independent Living Service but do not live in a Retirement Housing Scheme.

CAT 2 - Retirement Housing - This involves customers who receive the Independent Living Service within OVH's Retirement Housing Schemes.

Concerns raised around communal areas

Maintenance and cleanliness: Residents expressed concerns about the cleanliness of communal areas, including corridors, lounges, and laundry facilities. They also highlighted the need for regular maintenance of the building, including painting, carpet cleaning, ground maintenance etc.

Garden and outdoor space: Residents suggested improvements to the garden area, including adding new furniture, jet washing paving and patio areas, and increasing the care and maintenance of outdoor spaces.

Security and safety: Several responses mentioned the need for better security measures, such as improved lighting, better management of communal areas to prevent unauthorised access, and addressing safety concerns like noisy communal doors.

Furniture and amenities: Suggestions were made to update or replace furniture in communal areas, as well as provide additional amenities such as more washing machines and dryers in the laundry room.

Communication and management: Some residents expressed frustration highlighting the need for better communication channels.

Areas for overall service improvement

Communication and Engagement: Some residents feel communication can be improved, requesting more face-to-face communication and regular visits from management to address concerns as well as a desire for more social activities and events to promote community engagement and reduce isolation.

Safety and Security:

Concerns about safety due to instances of drug dealing, anti-social behaviour, and non-residents accessing the premises. Request for improved security measures, including better door entry systems and monitoring of communal areas to prevent incidents.

Maintenance and Facilities: Issues with the maintenance of communal areas, including cleanliness, window cleaning, gardening, and pest control. Requests for more frequent repairs, particularly for essential services such as heating and water systems, as well as improvements to laundry facilities.

Health and Well-being: Some concern regarding well-being of residents. Suggestions for tailored support for vulnerable residents, such as those with dementia, further work with healthcare providers to try and improve liaison with health services.

Accountability and Transparency: Calls for accountability from management, including addressing issues promptly and ensuring contractors produce quality work. For customers to be involved in decision-making processes.

Service Quality: Mixed feedback on the quality of services provided, with some residents expressing satisfaction with prompt repairs and helpful staff, while others report ongoing issues and dissatisfaction.

Community and Social Engagement: Desire for more community-building activities, such as choir practice and social gatherings, to foster a sense of belonging and well-being among residents. Suggestions to encourage social interaction and address concerns around isolation.

Recommendations & management response

Area of concern - Surveys

Why is the satisfaction figure set at 100% when multiple customers have come forward as being dissatisfied?

Scrutiny findings

After speaking with residents at two Independent Living schemes, the Scrutiny Team discovered inconsistencies between satisfaction levels reported through surveys completed by dispersed customers and those completed by residents within the Independent Living schemes.

Scrutiny recommendation

OVH should consider splitting Independent Living survey response data into two separate data sets (dispersed and schemes). This will provide a more localised and informative picture of each of these services, which in turn will help to highlight problems which may affect either one of these services in the future.

OVH response

OVH agree with the recommendation. As a result, the data will be separated by the seven schemes and the dispersed service.

Area of concern - Communication

What sort of consultation or communication takes place with customers before changes are implemented?

Scrutiny findings

Many residents raised concerns that they felt current communications with OVH, and the Independent Living service did not meet their expectations.

Scrutiny recommendation

On issues that may impact resident's environment daily, OVH and the Independent Living service need to maintain a dialogue with customers to reduce the opportunity for misunderstandings to arise and to improve the customer's overall experience. This could be in the form of a community or scheme newsletter and/or regular drop-in sessions with the Neighbourhood Officer and/or a representative from the Independent Living management team.

The Scrutiny Team was made aware of an initiative being set up by OVH's Customer Voice to run a series of drop-in sessions across various community organisations across the Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral area. The Scrutiny Team recommends that the Independent Living schemes are included within this initiative and that Customer Voice notifies residents within the schemes in advance of sessions taking place either by letter or newsletter with an open questionnaire included to improve opportunities for resident engagement.

Area of concern - Communication (cont.)

OVH response

OVH agree with the recommendation and has already taken steps to address these concerns. Independent Living Team Leaders have been actively participating in coffee mornings for several months.

In October 2024, the service allocated a dedicated Neighbourhood Housing Officer to enhance the experience of customers with housing management concerns. This Officer has already begun attending coffee mornings and increasing their presence within schemes, and this commitment will continue.

Both the Director of Housing and Customer Services and Head of the Independent Living Service have scheduled visits to coffee mornings at each scheme. This practice will be maintained on a cyclical basis.

In the fourth quarter, we will collaborate with our customers to develop a "Welcome to Independent Living Services" leaflet for both Retirement Housing Schemes and the Dispersed Service. This leaflet will provide an overview of both services, including our roles and responsibilities. While this leaflet will primarily be used for new customers, we will also distribute it to all existing customers.

The Customer Experience Team publish dates when they will be at a scheme and will continue to do so, in response to the recommendation. The Independent Living Service will work with the Customer Experience Team to develop a questionnaire to improve opportunities for feedback and engagement.

Area of concern - Rent & Service Charges

Are customers aware of the services included in their rent and are they reminded of this?

Scrutiny findings

The Scrutiny Team found strong evidence to indicate that many customers currently misunderstand what services are included within OVH core rent, and which additional services are applied as a service charge. Customers also raised misunderstandings and concerns about how service charges are calculated prior to being applied to their rent.

Scrutiny recommendation

OVH's Executive Management Team (EMT) should consider reviewing how rent and service charges are communicated to customers across all tenures. Furthermore, beyond simply providing information to customers, OVH should develop a mechanism to test the effectiveness of information and communications provided relating to service charges, to ensure customers understand the services they are being charged for. The Scrutiny Team may consider the communication and customer understanding of service charges as an area for potential future investigation.

OVH response

OVH agree with this recommendation and will share this with the Service Charge Review Group in November 2024.

Area of concern - Lifeline

Does everyone have access and know how to use the Lifeline system?

Scrutiny findings

Some residents commented that they were unsure how to best use newly installed/upgraded Lifeline telecare panels. This raises concern around customer interaction with the Lifeline service, and a customer's ability to use the service if needed.

Scrutiny recommendation

OVH and the Independent Living service should engage with residents directly and ensure that all residents have appropriate information on how to use the Lifeline service.

OVH response

The provision and understanding of how to use the Lifeline service is crucial. When the new service was fitted all customers were shown how to use the equipment, and new customers are also shown how to use the equipment upon moving into their home. However, given the concern noted, we will engage with customers and provide support/information to customers to ensure that they understand how to use the equipment when needed.

Area of concern - Refurbishments (cylcical replacement of furnishings)

Are customers aware of the lifecycle of OVH refurbishments?

Scrutiny findings

During the review, it was revealed to the Scrutiny Team that residents were concerned over the removal of furniture from communal areas of the scheme properties without prior notice or consultation. This, combined with a feeling of exclusion from the decision-making processes regarding these shared spaces, which residents consider part of their homes, was a major issue identified by the Scrutiny Team.

Scrutiny recommendation

OVH and the Independent Living service should enhance both the information provided to residents and the consultation process with residents regarding significant matters. Even when formal consultation is not required, OVH's Independent Living service should prioritise fostering a culture of engagement with residents, as a default process.

OVH response

We agree with this recommendation and will adopt the principles of engagement as needed.

Area of concern - Scheme Manager hours

Does the Scheme Manager have set contact hours each day?

Scrutiny findings

The Scrutiny Team acknowledge that it must be frustrating for OVH customers, who believe they are paying for a full-time person at the scheme location, to be unable to contact their Scheme Manager during the set hours. The Scrutiny Team did find some positive initiatives during site visits to alleviate this including a suggestion box at reception.

Scrutiny recommendation

OVH's Independent Living service should provide better detailed information to residents with regards to when the Scheme Manager is available and what their duties/responsibilities are. They should also provide information on who to contact if the Scheme Manager is unavailable. We request the Independent Living service periodically consider best practice and constant improvements to engage with residents.

OVH response

Each scheme displays notices indicating when an officer will be on-site. While we cannot provide specific times due to potential emergency responses, the posted information includes the Officer's mobile number for contact during working hours.

Customers may also contact OVH's call centre directly as needed. We recognise the importance of clear communication about the service's purpose and benefits. The introduction of the Welcome Information leaflet will provide detailed information on the Officer's duties and responsibilities, as well as the overall service offerings.

Area of concern - Communal areas

Are there more opportunities to improve the use of the communal areas?

Scrutiny findings

When speaking to residents it was revealed that following on from the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of lockdown, residents felt that there were insufficient activities currently taking place within the scheme communal areas.

Scrutiny recommendation

OVH's Customer Voice team should continue to work with residents to set up and assist Social Committees and activities to encourage greater social inclusion and engagement within the Independent Living schemes.

OVH response

This recommendation is accepted and will form part of the offer from the Customer Experience Team.

Area of concern - Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

How does OVH help with ASB in schemes? How can they help in future?

Scrutiny findings

Residents raised many concerns around ASB. The Scrutiny Team request assurance from EMT that they are going to ensure issues relating to ASB are resolved in a timely manner with appropriate feedback made available to residents.

Scrutiny recommendation

No recommendation from the Scrutiny Team as they have only requested assurance from EMT as outlined above.

OVH response

EMT acknowledges the concerns raised with regards to ASB and will ensure that all findings are addressed through a continuous action plan to improve service delivery in the Independent Living Service.

Area of concern - Maintenance Repairs

General complaints around quality of repairs.

Scrutiny findings

Residents raised concerns around the time to complete, and the quality of some communal repairs. The Scrutiny Team request assurance from EMT that they are going to ensure maintenance issues are resolved in a timely manner with appropriate feedback made available to residents.

Scrutiny recommendation

No recommendation from the Scrutiny Team as they have only requested assurance from EMT as outlined above.

OVH response

EMT acknowledges the concerns raised with regards to repairs and maintenance and will ensure that all findings are addressed through a continuous action plan to improve service delivery in the Independent Living Service.

Acknowledgements

The Scrutiny Team would like to acknowledge the following OVH staff who took part in the Scrutiny Team interviews and questions for their openness and transparency:

Joanna Kenyon (Independent Living Team Leader)
Suzanne Meylan (Head of Independent Living)
Paula Robinson (Director of Housing & Customer Services)
Lee Haugh (Building Safety and Compliance Manager)

One Vision Housing would like to thank the dedicated Scrutiny Panel for helping to complete this Scrutiny Review. We are confident that these recommendations will help us to improve customer relationships and strengthen our service offer.