



CLARION
HOUSING

Clarion Housing Association Limited

Resident Scrutiny 2018/19

At Clarion Housing we champion partnership working with our residents and as part of this, we have five Regional Scrutiny Committees (RSCs) made up of residents and key stakeholders. The Scrutiny Committees hold reviews into specific Clarion services and make recommendations to the Clarion Housing Board to improve and/or develop our approach.

This report is a summary of all of the reviews and the recommendations and actions so far



Clarion Housing Resident Scrutiny – 2018/19

South Regional Scrutiny Committee

Communications with Residents

In February 2018 the South Regional Scrutiny Committee completed a scrutiny review on **Communications with Residents**. The topic was selected as residents stated *'some people felt isolated and that the human aspect of living in a housing association home had gone and some felt disconnected from their landlord'*. The RSC carried out a full review using national research and explored all forms of communication including digital, telephone, face to face and written. The review was facilitated by the resident involvement and governance teams with input from other teams across the business.

The Committee volunteered over 192 hours of their time to:

- Interview key members of staff
- Survey residents digitally using the Clarion Voice website to communicate with over 285 residents
- Visit Clarion Contact Centre
- Attend and received feedback from Clarion Ability Network
- Hold national focus groups at which 66 residents took part
- Run workshops at 2 RED events nationally at which 52 residents took part
- Hold 4 Formal Committee meetings and 6 workshops Committee meetings



RECOMMENDATIONS

1 To involve residents in the compilation of the Clarion resident annual report.

RESPONSE: The Policy & Communications Review Group (PCRG) put their views forward on the forthcoming Resident Annual Report and will now play an active role moving forward.

2 To look at how Clarion Futures is promoted.

RESPONSE: We are reviewing the legal position with Clarion's legal team and have raised awareness of resident support needs with contact centre and frontline staff to increase internal referrals. A digital screening tool has been rolled out to Futures staff so that they can quickly and easily assess a resident's digital skills needs. We are also making use of more 'passive' communication methods such as posters and noticeboards as well as social media where appropriate. Our Digital team also works directly with Live Smart Managers to help residents get online in sheltered schemes. FF2 and the availability of a system for recording residents' marketing preference is also a factor.

➤ **3 For a group of residents to test Clarion's website.**

RESPONSE: Recruitment of residents is planned once we have an agreed website in draft form. We will be following a customer centred design process so testing with residents is the default for any new product or service.

➤ **4 Exploration of a newsletter — how often, the cost and who should receive it.**

RESPONSE: At present, we're exploring options around the layout, format and content of the newsletter. The aim is to have an informative and engaging resident newsletter available on the website, with printed copies available in resident facing offices and communal areas, and an e-newsletter version sent to all residents that have provided an email address. We are unsure of timescales at the moment as we are still exploring options but it is a priority for us.

➤ **5 To include structure charts on website for information.**

RESPONSE: Structure charts for the executive team are available, however due to the changing nature of frontline teams it is not practical to publish these. Clarion will ensure there is a clear explanation of the role of the Contact Centre, Customer Support teams and Neighbourhood teams on the website which explains more about first line enquiries and clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of key teams.

➤ **6 To ensure residents are kept in the feedback loop at different stages of enquiries.**

RESPONSE: Clarion aims to keep the customer in the loop as much as possible and recognise that residents did experience difficulties at the beginning of 2018. We anticipate smoother transactions as our new computer system becomes fully embedded from autumn 2019. Our customer satisfaction scores nationally were 80.5% in April 2019 and we have a clear plan to maintain and improve where possible during 2019.

➤ **7 Internally confirm/reiterate which staff member has responsibility for the upkeep of information posted on notice boards.**

RESPONSE: The local teams have responsibility for the upkeep of notice boards. This could be NOs or estate staff and will be clearly communicated via managers following this review. Spot checks will be made by managers to ensure compliance.

➤ **8 Clarity around contact centre reporting. Make available statistics on person to person contact.**

RESPONSE: Phone call answering times are measured by the industry standard, this is the point after option buttons have been pressed, to human contact. The residents experience will take into account the time it takes to go through the options to ensure the resident speaks to the right person. Typically you will be able to speak to a member of the team after making 2 or fewer choices and it is agreed that a fuller explanation is given when reporting these figures to residents.

➤ **9 To review Clarion Voice.**

RESPONSE: Clarion is currently upgrading the system for Clarion Voice, some of the new features and functionality include;

- The interface will be more dynamic, like a social media feed.
- More analytical data will be available to us to tailor our campaigns and how we use the platform
- A content plan is being devised so Clarion Voice is updated more often
- The site will be much more engaging for customers.

➤ **10 The Board should ensure directors are made aware of the importance of Scrutiny and underline that a service area lead must engage with scrutiny committees.**

RESPONSE: Acknowledged – and discussed with GET to ensure scrutiny is seen as a key part of the HA moving forward.

IN CONCLUSION

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who has responded to all recommendations. The actions and outcomes included in the responses will be tracked by the Regional Scrutiny Committee and monitored by the Senior Management Team and Board.

East Regional Scrutiny Committee

Customer Satisfaction (The Leadership Factor)

In February, 2019 the East Regional Scrutiny Committee completed its first review on **Customer Satisfaction Surveys**. The Leadership Factor is an external service provider who manage and report on 3 Customer Satisfaction Surveys in respect of Clarions customer satisfaction of services to ensure an independent view and reporting to the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH).

Following analysis of performance information, more specifically around customer satisfaction, the East RSC decided to look at how effective Clarion's Customer Satisfaction surveys are. The Committee wanted to ensure surveys were reaching a representative customer base and sample of residents, and understand what is being done with the information following quarterly reports to ensure the data is accurate, adequately details and informs performance data, and continuously drives service improvement.

The Committee volunteered their time, knowledge and experience to:

- Review the service currently being provided
- Compare this to the surveys of nine Housing Associations in the sector.
- Work with internal and external business partners to clarify questions that arose throughout the review
- Look at the three surveys (Transactional, Random and Repairs) compiling Customer Satisfaction Survey reporting, to ensure surveys were conducted in a way that was representative and inclusive of Clarion residents



RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ **1 Residents surveyed are selected by age and gender to ensure representation of resident base; this is currently only possible on Random surveys, but we would like to see this applied to Transactional and Repairs surveys where possible.**

RESPONSE: It is important that we monitor the inclusiveness of responses and include this in the results. The random selection process does not allow us to select surveys on the basis of age and gender. We will consider what actions are possible and monitor issues.

➤ **2 There should be mapping of the regional splits within the East so that those chosen for surveys are representative of the area e.g. heavier weighting in higher stock areas. We would also like you to consider the possibility of facilitating this information through the new CRM system**

RESPONSE: It would be difficult to add weighting as this would indicate that one person's response is more or less equal than another. Everyone should receive the same quality of service regardless of location and their opinion should carry equal weight. The random nature of the survey should mean that the proportion of people surveyed match the proportion of repairs across stock.

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- **3 In addition to the existing introduction statement, we recommend the inclusion of the following wording “Your feedback is important to us and will help us to improve the service we provide to you” We would also like to see the verification statement at the end of the survey moved to the introduction statement.**

RESPONSE: We will explore these wording changes with The Leadership Factor to seek expert guidance and ensure any expansion of this statement does not affect the neutrality of the survey process. We will also ask The Leadership Factor to suggest alternatives. Once amendments are agreed a pilot will be applied to ensure there is no adverse effect in response rates.

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- **4 Broadcast and highlight the outcomes of the quarterly Customer Satisfaction Surveys to residents more broadly using digital platforms and the HA website**

RESPONSE: Agreed and this will be included in the new digital platform when applied. In the interim, the information will be included as part of the end of year RI impact assessment which we will publish on the HA website.

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- **5 Ensure translated surveys are available on the Clarion Website and keep data on the management system regarding the language spoken where English is not the first language.**

RESPONSE: Even though The Leadership Factor have confirmed there are very few times when translation has prevented a survey from taking place, we will ask them to record any instances over the next 12 months to inform our approach.

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- **6 If The Leadership Factor is unable to make contact with the phone numbers available, and the customer is taken out of the survey list, can we ask them to provide lead staff with information so that customer facing staff in direct contact with our residents are able to make contact and obtain up to date contact information**

RESPONSE: The Leadership Factor has advised that completely unobtainable numbers are exceptionally rare. However, if the number is unobtainable or states that the number is out of service, they could send us this information on a quarterly basis. We have requested this be piloted in Quarter 4 of the 2019/2020 financial year.

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- **7 We recommend the first question asked regarding repairs is “did the operative show their ID?” as this is currently omitted from the Repairs survey**

RESPONSE: This recommendation has been agreed and applied to all repairs surveys.

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- **8 We recommend Postal or email surveys to be the fall-back position where it hasn't been possible to make contact by phone, to ensure residents who are working are still able to partake in the survey**

RESPONSE: We are unable to consider email surveys.

The use of postal surveys is not cost effective. It is important that different approaches to the methodology of surveys are not mixed as this can cause inconsistencies in results.

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- **9 There is a need to improve the quality of contact details and equality and diversity data and recommend this is an area that is addressed in the application of the new CRM system**

RESPONSE: Agreed – This is part of a data quality improvement plan. A low priority will be awarded to this action given the complexities in gathering this data and priorities of FF2.

IN CONCLUSION

The Senior Management Team and Board have reviewed recommendations in respect of the Customer Satisfaction Survey Scrutiny. Delivery of the outcomes will be tracked by the committee and monitored by the Senior Management Team and Board to ensure that colleagues across Clarion understand the importance we place on resident involvement.

South London Regional Scrutiny Committee

Fire Safety in Blocks – Six Storeys and Under

In May 2018 the South London Regional Scrutiny Committee completed a scrutiny review of **Fire Safety in Blocks Six Storeys and Under**. The topic was selected in light of widespread national concern about the cause and impact of the Grenfell Tower fire. They carried out their investigations facilitated by the resident involvement and governance teams with input from other teams across the business.

The Committee volunteered over 200 hours of their time to:

- Review performance information, standards and procedures
- Interview key members of staff
- Carry out face to face surveying and interviewing of residents at a cross section of estates
- Survey residents digitally using the Clarion Voice website.
- Undertake benchmarking with 5 of the G15 Housing Associations (the G15 is an organisation of the largest housing associations in and around the city of London)
- Review and consider Dame Judith Hackitt's report and recommendations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **1 Clarion's management information, and associated performance reporting — should provide a robust information path so that it is possible to establish a clear, independent audit trail to track actions through to their satisfactory conclusion and in particular to the Governance and Compliance team to verify that Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) recommendations are implemented in full.**

RESPONSE: We have begun updating the customer management system and how it reports together with an audit of the quality of data it holds to improve the overall picture. We are updating our internal processes to require better and more detailed evidence to be supplied when an action is complete.

- **2 Where Clarion does not have regulatory powers that the local authorities have, they are to ensure that residents who are leaseholders or freeholders are subject to the same standard of safety compliance as tenants.**

RESPONSE: We will develop a leasehold strategy as part of our overall communication strategy to remind leaseholders of the risks within their properties and what they can do to mitigate those risks. Part of this strategy will look at any incentives we can provide with our existing contractors

Clarion is in discussions with the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) regarding the risks highlighted in this recommendation. We would welcome any changes in legislation that gave us more power to enforce leaseholders to carry out these safety checks and associated works were they to be introduced.

➤ 3 Clarion to flag all information it holds on vulnerable residents so that such information can be made available where appropriate to emergency services.

RESPONSE: PCFRAs (person centred fire risk assessments) and PEEPs (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans) will be put in premises information boxes in all sheltered and supported housing schemes. The information boxes are being designed at present and these will be rolled out across our stock on a rolling programme from summer 2019. Currently the LiveSmart managers complete PCFRAs (person centred fire risk assessment) on all those identified as at risk. These are to be completed for anyone considered 'especially vulnerable with risk taking behaviour' in a shared accommodation.

We will make that information available in general needs stock where we are aware of specific vulnerabilities.

➤ 4 Regular fire safety awareness bulletins, together with a reminder of Clarion's fire safety mission statement, to be circulated to residents, with the annual service charge letter and online information so that they are aware of their responsibilities and what is expected of them.

RESPONSE: We welcome this recommendation and will look at this as part of the development of our Communication strategy. Our aim will be to improve awareness of our programme of works and resident responsibilities, through a varied plan of communication.

➤ 5 Refresher training on fire safety awareness issues is to be delivered annually to Clarion's front-line staff by the Fire Safety Team.

RESPONSE: A robust Fire Safety Training Plan has been agreed with Learning & Development. This includes an online mandatory training programme for all staff from the executive team to customer facing frontline staff. The training programme will be reviewed to ensure appropriate, specific training is rolled out for frontline staff.

Non-technical staff, including Caretakers and Housing Officers, who as part of their role spend a significant amount time in and around our properties, will have an online course followed up with relevant targeted sessions deliver by the Health & Safety Fire Team as identified by need.

Fire Safety is covered at induction and will be updated to reflect an annual refresher requirement.

IN CONCLUSION

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who have responded to all recommendations. The actions and outcomes included in the responses will be tracked by the Regional Scrutiny Committee and monitored by the Senior Management Team and Board.

North Regional Scrutiny Committee

Void Standards

In April 2019 the North Regional Scrutiny Committee completed a scrutiny on **Clarion's void standard**. The topic was selected due to negative feedback from Clarion residents regarding low or sub-standard void works (void works is work carried out to empty properties to bring them up to the agreed standard ready for the incoming tenant to view). It was also the reason given by a number of applicants who on viewing had refused a Clarion property.

The Committee volunteered over 200 hours of their time to:

- Review performance information, standards, policies, practices and procedures, refusal information and void pilots currently running in the East region
- Interview key members of staff
- Carry out an activity at the North Resident Engagement Day to gain feedback from residents about the standard of Clarions properties when they viewed their home
- Develop a pre and post void inspection sheet
- Carry out pre and post void inspections with Clarion Response staff
- Survey residents digitally using the Clarion Voice website to communicate with over 223 residents
- Carry out a benchmarking exercise against 10 other housing providers
- Compare the Chartered Institute of Housing guidance documents against Clarions void property offer
- Review and consider all the findings and make recommendations to improve the service offer.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **1 Carry out void pilots in the North region to encourage the incoming tenant to sign up; these may include offering incentives.**

RESPONSE: Work to develop a different process, incorporating gifting and handy men services and/or resident specific offers is being developed. There is also a new void standard being developed in June following the review.

- **2 Send a letter to all out-going tenants advising the cost of void works and that action will be taken to recover the costs of if they leave their belongings in the property or cause damage.**

RESPONSE: This has been added to the list of policies and procedures to be reviewed.

- **3 To have different policies/approaches for vulnerable tenants by offering additional assistance for them.**

RESPONSE: We have reflected on this and we will hold a focus group to scope this out as a full costed proposal that we can give further consideration to. A focus group to move this forward will take place in September.

- **4 Develop a pictorial void standard for incoming tenants to avoid any ambiguity or disrepair claims. This may also be helpful for residents whom English isn't their first language or for residents with dyslexia etc.**

RESPONSE: This was seen as an excellent idea and the team will look to progress and implement this recommendation.

5 Review the voids standard document as currently information published isn't being followed consistently across Clarion, such as 'gifting'.

RESPONSE: Clarification around the legal position is that we can gift items – but there needs to be a clear policy and process and this should be a standard part of any sign up so that it can't be omitted. Gifted items also need to be advised to the resident in advance of the sign up so that they have a clear understanding of what they are signing – so potentially this should be provided to the resident at the time of advertising or viewing as opposed to sign up.

6 Our gas contractor and Clarion Response need to improve communication regarding pre and post gas works on void properties. RSC members who carried out the void inspection thought that the gas hadn't been capped off as part of the void works.

RESPONSE: The gas certificates are checked to ensure that this has been completed as part of the void works. A full gas safety inspection will be carried out when the resident moves into the property and the resident will receive a copy of the gas safety certificate.

7 Remove from the Void Process Description document, section 7.1 "LGSR cap off certificate to be left at the void property". As contractors now provide certificates digitally and therefore a new policy needs implementing and communicating with all staff involved in the void process.

RESPONSE: No contractors work on a paper based system anymore so all documents are sent electronically to Clarion.

The void standard document has been changed accordingly, so the local staff will download the appropriate certificate and give them to the tenant during the sign up process. The new process was promoted on Clarionet – May 2019.

8 Promote the RSC scrutiny topics to all the North region staff.

RESPONSE: The North Resident Involvement and Scrutiny Manager will inform all the North region staff what the scrutiny topic is. The summary report will be sent to all the North region staff as an update on completion of all scrutiny topic. The summary report will also be placed on Clarionet and CHG website. The new scrutiny topic chosen in July 2019 will be promoted to all staff by way of the regional RI snapshot report.





IN CONCLUSION

The Clarion Group Executive Team and Board have agreed all recommendations and implementation has already commenced.

Delivery of the outcomes will be tracked by the committee and monitored by the Group Executive Team and Board to ensure that colleagues across Clarion understand the importance we place on resident involvement.

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