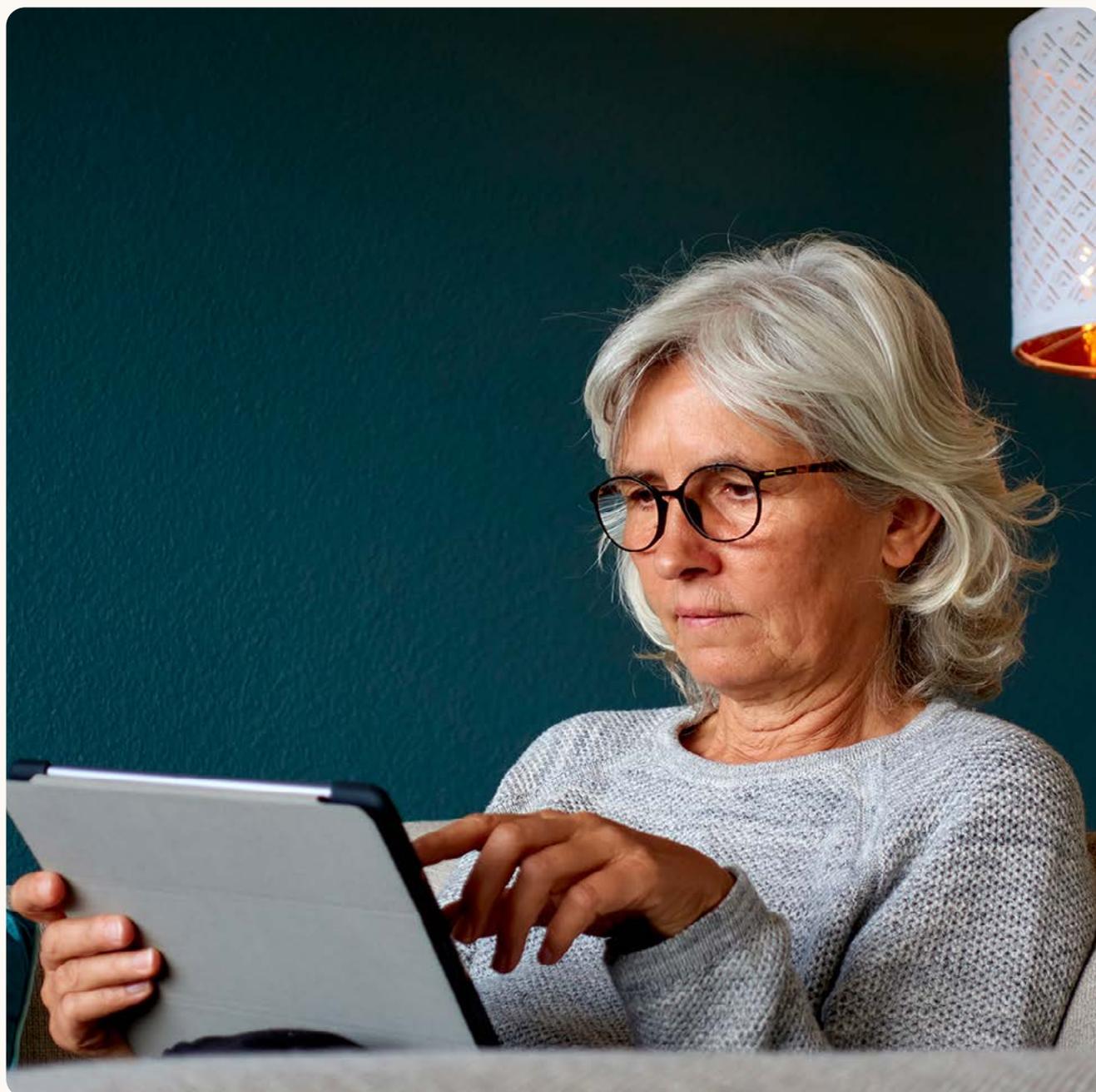


Clarion Housing Group

Resident Scrutiny 2019/20



CLARION
HOUSING



We are working with our
residents to make sure they're heard.

At Clarion we champion partnership working with our residents and as part of this invite scrutiny by our five Regional Scrutiny Committees (RSCs) made up of residents and key stakeholders.

In 2019/20 all five regions carried out scrutiny reviews in key service areas and put forward recommendations agreed by the Heads of Service and noted by the Housing Association Board. The recommendations focused on actions needed to improve and/or develop our approach to the areas of service delivery each RSC reviewed. Delivery of the actions and outcomes is regularly monitored by the Senior Management Team and Housing Association Board.

Following is a summary of all of the reviews and the recommendations and actions so far.

London South Regional Scrutiny Committee

Clarion's Management of Contractual Works

Summary of scrutiny:

In August 2020 the London South Regional Scrutiny Committee completed a scrutiny review on Clarion Housing's Management of Contractual Works. The Committee chose this topic with the intention of:

- 1 testing the extent of Clarion's commitment to ensuring contract compliant service delivery to its residents,
- 2 examining Clarion's commitment to holding its contractors to account for delivering work to the standard specified in contracts; and
- 3 ensuring process in place enabled timely and effective intervention in the event that service delivery fell short of those standards, or failed to meet residents' reasonable expectations for other reasons.

The Committee carried out a comprehensive review using a range of tools including national research, assisted by the Regional Scrutiny Committees in other regions, digital, virtual, face-to-face surveying and a desktop exercise working in partnership with the London South Property Engagement Group. The review was facilitated by the Resident Involvement team with input from other teams across the business involved in the scrutiny (Mechanical & Electrical Repairs, Aftercare, Planned Investment, Asset Management and Customer Solutions). The Committee volunteered 184 hours of their time to:

- Attend 1 residential site and survey residents face to face
- Survey residents digitally using the Clarion Voice website to communicate with 243 residents
- Interview key members of staff
- Carry out a desktop exercise with the Strategic Repairs Manager, Property Services, assisted by the London South Property Engagement Group
- Hold national focus groups 24 residents took part
- Run a web chat on CV at which 4 residents took part
- Attend 12 Formal Committee meetings

Commentary was sought from residents on their experience of contractor work undertaken in their homes. This was collected from two sources, a Clarion Voice survey (243 respondents) and a series of focus groups (24 respondents spread across four groups).



Recommendation 1:

A cross-discipline team approach to programmes of contract work for planned investment, repair and estate services should be widely adopted by Clarion to:

- identify a coherent programme of contract work;
- minimise disruption to residents.

Response:

Agreed and Complete - There are processes in place to ensure teams work together and ensure issues do not fall between teams.

Planned programmes for major Mechanical and Electrical replacements are now jointly developed and reviewed in virtual meetings at Head of Service level before they move forward to project and procurement planning to ensure different perspectives have been understood.



Recommendation 2:

Clarion's 'Exceptional Client Journey' (ECJ) vision is not always reflected in residents' experience of work on the ground; Senior

Management must ensure that ECJ principles are widely adopted by all Clarion staff.

Response:

Partly Agreed - The ECJ (where Clarion is the Client) is a specific set of principles that have been adopted by the Planned team and woven into their procurement processes, in a way that relates to planned works and their specific contracts. This does not translate in to a relevant way of working for all teams.

Clarion will work with the Scrutiny Committee to examine specific elements of the ECJ principles, from which it may be possible to develop working processes around those specific points, designed to specific working methods of those teams' contracts.



Recommendation 3:

Dates and scope of planned investment and repair work must be more accurately communicated in advance to residents, and publicised more effectively through letters to residents and information in Clarion Voice.

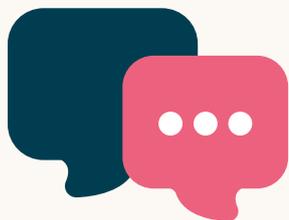
Response:

Agreed - Planned works programmes are drawn up as an outline often several years in advance, and are then reviewed and finalised for each year. There is potential to put this information on the website, but the plans will be subject to change. Leasehold communication follows prescribed formats set out in law.

Dates and scope are communicated currently via visits, for example to plan and design a kitchen and the contractor

will also do a home visit and answer any questions For major works to communal areas residents will be updated when works are being done and letters are provided to residents that are impacted. These updates can also be provided on websites and Clarion Voice and in other languages and formats where accessibility is an issue.

We are aware from feedback that in a lot of cases written communication is not opened or read by residents, however Clarion will work with the Scrutiny Committee to look for ways to get the estate and property specific messages out to residents who do require written communication.



Recommendation 4:

If residents have cause to complain about work, a member of Clarion staff must be identified to support the resident through the complaint process from start to finish; residents must not be advised to take up complaints with contract staff.

Response:

Agreed and Complete - Clarion has a Customer Solutions Team and staff within the team will coordinate the customer's complaint from start to finish. Customer Solutions will work with the relevant business area and contractors to resolve the customer's complaint.



Recommendation 5:

Unannounced spot checks of on-going work should be mounted by Clarion to ensure that contractor performance is of an acceptable standard, and to increase resident confidence.

Response:

Partly Agreed - With voids post inspections are completed and with complex / major works in work inspections are carried out. In addition we have external contractors complete on site and desktop reviews of Landlord Gas Safety Records (LGSR) and electrical inspections, in line with industry best practice.

However, with responsive jobs this is not possible as the operative will arrive, complete the job and leave so a spot check in terms of timing is not practicable without delaying completion.



Recommendation 6:

Priority must always be given to the repair of essential facilities for vulnerable residents, including residents in sheltered accommodation, and Clarion must intervene promptly in the event of difficulties completing associated work.

Response:

Partially Agreed - Repairs are prioritised on the nature of the work in the first instance, and secondly around residents' availability

for access. Repairs are booked for the next available appointment that is convenient for the resident.

As part of the booking process residents are asked to provide any additional information that is relevant about access, household make up and or any other issues they want us to be aware of. In this way the repairs are managed on a case by case basis and take into account the resident's own sense of their personal of vulnerability.



Recommendation 7:

During the scrutiny, there was evidence that complaints from sheltered accommodation residents, about the failure of essential lift facilities, despite repeated repair work, were prematurely dismissed by Clarion staff; decisions to close such complaints must only be made if supported by competent technical evaluation.

Response:

Agreed - Customer Solutions Coordinators will work with staff in each business area and they will provide a full response. The Customer Solutions Team will call our customer as well as providing a written response. This process is followed on all complaints at both stages known as complaint and peer review. It's worth noting that a Head of Service in the relevant business area will provide a response to the Peer Review which is the second stage of our complaints process.



Recommendation 8:

Clarion to review and, where appropriate, enhance the support packages in place in the event that repair work adversely impacts upon vulnerable people.

Response:

Agreed - Where the nature or length of time to complete a repair requires, we will work with a resident impacted in line with the decant policy and make decisions on a case by case basis in line with health and safety policies and our obligations under the tenancy. The outcome is always agreed with the resident, and again takes into account the resident's own sense of impact on their wellbeing and personal sense of vulnerability.



Recommendation 9:

Clarion collect customer satisfaction data on repair work in homes, but not on repair work to communal areas; more effort should be made to measure customer satisfaction with communal repair work.

Response:

Agreed - The Leadership Factor (TLF) survey is a transactional survey and needs to have specific resident contacts to be able to complete the survey. Because of this it is not easy to replicate the existing TLF model for communal repairs, and to provide scoring in a similar way. It is also much harder to do this kind of survey with contractors that complete significantly

fewer repairs, so the statistical reporting may be less reliable as a barometer of overall service delivery.

That said it is possible to review this more with residents and to explore how we could either create a new survey, or expand the current survey.

It would be helpful to hold a meeting or workshop with residents to explore this in more detail and look at options that we have for creating or amending current surveys, but also to understand exactly what residents would want to see as potential outputs and reporting from any communal repair survey. Once we have some requirements and ideas on methods we could develop further with TLF.



Recommendation 10:

The Estate Inspection process provides an opportunity for residents to express views on repair work, both property-based and communal, which could be more fully exploited in line with Exceptional Client Journey principles.

Response:

Agreed – Current guidance is that residents and other stakeholders are not being invited to estate inspections because of Covid-19 restrictions. Clarion households are located across England and this our residents may be living in Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 or Lockdown areas, with status subject to change at any time, dependant on the spread of the virus. Neighbourhood Response Officers will continue the Estate Inspections raising requests for communal repairs via the Regional Operations team. Once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted and residents are again able to attend Estate Inspections and express views on communal repair work, we will advise them

after any inspection they attend, of the communal jobs raised with details of the repair reference number and anticipated completion date.

In terms of repairs to residents' own homes, the optimum customer journey is for residents to report these repairs themselves, via the customer contact centre. This way they can agree a convenient appointment at the point of reporting and be provided with a repair reference number.

In conclusion

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who responded to all recommendations. Delivery of 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

Estate Inspections – Communication of inspections and reporting of outcomes

Summary of scrutiny:

The committee decided to choose this area of the business to scrutinise, as there were concerns about inconsistencies in the way Clarion communicates with residents regarding estate inspections and this was identified as a service gap. The scope for this review is ‘How does Clarion communicate Estate Inspections to residents who might like to become involved?’ and ‘How are the outcomes of their involvement communicated to Clarion residents?’ All recommendations align with the new Neighbourhood Management Framework.



Recommendation 1:

A consistent approach to involving residents in estate inspections.

Response:

Agreed – Residents should have a role in inspecting their neighbourhoods and should be given opportunities to take part in inspections. We believe this opportunity should be open to all residents and can be consistently achieved by publishing. The scheduled dates for estate inspections should be applied to our web site, inviting residents to participate.



Recommendation 2:

As a measure of residents being involved in estate inspections it is recommended that the Estate Inspection Form is adapted to gain and capture resident feedback.

Response:

Agreed - The estate inspection form in use across the business will need to be consistent and provide an option to record residents' comments when they are in attendance. In addition to this attendance of residents to be captured on Local Performance Indicators (LPis).



Recommendation 3:

Results of resident involvement in estate inspections should be communicated to involved residents and the wider customer base.

Response:

Agreed - All non-confidential estate inspection results should be published for residents to comment on. This can best be achieved consistently by publishing the results on our website.



Recommendation 4:

Adapt the Community Inspector RI activity (as detailed in the new RI Strategy) to fit the new Neighbourhood Management Framework prior to roll out.

Response:

Agreed - As recommendations 1 and 3 estate inspection dates should be published in advance so that any resident can attend and provide feedback. There is also a role for Community Inspectors to support this process and opportunities to train in the inspector role and a feed into estate management process should be developed.



Recommendation 5:

Ensure all residents are given the opportunity to engage in Estate Inspections as and when they would like to and not just those who have chosen to become a formally recognised Community Inspector.

Response:

Agreed - As set out in responses to recommendations 2 and 3



Recommendation 6:

Promote the Community Inspector role in all new starter tenancy packs.

Response:

Agreed - All resident engagement opportunities should be promoted to new residents and sign up packs amended to reflect the opportunity to become a Community Inspector.

In conclusion

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who has responded to all recommendations. Delivery of 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

Development, planned decant and development after care scrutiny

Summary of scrutiny:

The Scrutiny Committee chose development, planned decants within regeneration projects and development for their review because:

- Development - There is a higher number of development areas across Clarion and the RSC members felt that they needed to learn more about the development process and the development sites.
- Planned decants - There has been a number of issues raised regarding the planned decant processes as part of the regeneration of the Barne Barton estate in Plymouth.
- After care - There has been a lot of negative feedback regarding development after care.



Recommendation 1:

Remove the words Affinity Sutton and replace it with Clarion on the Home Loss Payment Form. Amend wording.

Response:

Complete - This was changed on 14.02.2020.



Recommendation 2:

The RSC perception was that very few residents applied for the disturbance allowance payments and wanted Clarion to ensure residents weren't getting into debt due to their move. They recommended that one action should be to simplify and number the decant funding forms, clearly indicating what each funding offer available to residents could be used for.

Response:

A high number of residents did in fact apply for the disturbance payment. Clarion's figures show that the majority claimed for disturbance, additionally Clarion paid the removal company and in the case of Barne Barton residents the carpet company direct, as part of supporting residents during their move.

Clarion has since produced a residents offer booklet which details what residents are entitled to in regards to both moving and their new home. This has been approved by Barne Barton residents who thought it was very informative and the booklet bears the 'resident approved' tick.

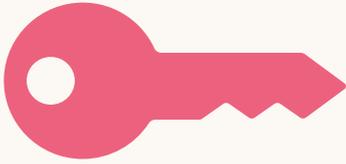


Recommendation 3:

Create an inspection sheet based on the findings from the staff survey which will be completed by a member of staff at the pre void exit visit. Add this to the policy and procedure documents.

Response:

Agreed - This has already been raised by staff and we are looking to add pre void inspections to the process.



Recommendation 4:

Ensure a pre void visit is carried out with the resident before they hand their keys in. Add this to the policy and procedure documents.

Response:

Partly agreed - We are looking to add pre void inspections to the process.



Recommendation 5:

Amend the home loss payment form to state that no payments will be made until the tenant has moved out. Include that any payment for house clearance will be deducted from the home loss payment if the property hasn't been cleared of personal items when it's inspected.

Response:

Declined - This isn't something we can implement. Residents need some money up front in order to move. For example at Barne Barton the properties suffer from extreme damp which has resulted in furniture becoming mouldy (hence why regeneration is taking place!) Without some money up front residents can't purchase new furniture (and on other schemes carpet/removals). If they can't move we

can't offer vacant possession resulting in a delay to the programme which is very expensive. We are looking at splitting the home loss payment so residents will get half when they sign for their new property and half when their old property has been inspected and the keys have been returned.



Recommendation 6:

Create a local staff planned decant role & responsibilities list and add this to the policy, procedure and process documents.

Response:

Agreed - We now invite all teams (including local staff) involved in regen projects to all our project delivery group meetings so they are aware of what is going on and receive regular updates. I will speak to the team about producing a local staff planned decant role & responsibilities list.



Recommendation 7:

Ensure there is a referral process in place to Guideline, team and external agencies etc. if staff identify that a resident needs extra support with the move.

Response:

Agreed - The Regeneration Managers' main responsibility is to ensure our residents are moved as easily and as stress free as possible. They are available at all times

to offer support during the move. If they believe a resident requires extra assistance they will refer to the appropriate agency using the Clarion policies already in place. We already have a referral scheme with Guideline where they contact every resident moving back to the new development to make sure they know how to complete change of addresses etc. with the relevant agencies. We can look to roll this out to residents that have to move temporarily as well.



Recommendation 8:

Consider employing a temporary Liaison Officer(s) who work in the regeneration location and manage the resident process.

Response:

Declined - This is something we did want to do and was considered at length but unfortunately the funds were not available.

In conclusion

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who has responded to all recommendations. Delivery of 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.

South Regional Scrutiny Committee

Resident Involvement

Summary of scrutiny:

The South Regional Scrutiny Committee scrutinised existing involvement options and the wider strategy exploring how well Resident Involvement (RI) opportunities are communicated, whether new RI methods could be added and whether existing involvement methods are fit for purpose.

RSC members also carried out benchmarking with other providers as well as surveys with existing involved residents and separately with non-involved residents.



Recommendation 1:

Institute a Core set of KPIs so all-national RI is reporting in a similar way.

What we have done:

New national RI Key performance Indicators have been produced to include new external reporting factors and to align national RI reporting. National RI team have been trained and all recording same measures in similar way. Update: We are considering the use of 'TP tracker' to ensure a consistency of information recorded including Diversity and Inclusion information. Subject to approval and cost this may be implemented 2022.



Recommendation 2:

Replace Service Improvement Groups (SIGS) with Task and Finish Groups.

What we have done:

The residents suggested that projects should not continue indefinitely. Where appropriate these should be task orientated and have a defined finish date. This is now part of the new strategy 21-24, signed off by Board in March 2021.



Recommendation 3:

Resident Involvement must reach beyond the Housing Directorate.

Response:

The new KPIs are monitoring the team meetings that the RI staff are attending with the aim of attending more outside of the housing directorate the RI team meet monthly with Communications and Communications have a slot in the RISM team meeting. the RI team have put in place a greater internal communications strategy to highlight RI.



Recommendation 4:

Digital Home ownership engagement to enable Home owners and shared owners to be involved in a service area which specifically affects their needs.

What we have done:

We are implementing this in a phased way. Instead of organising a specific panel we are working across the business to consult with residents – in the first instance this has consisted of focus groups on service charges and also Service Charge letters. We have provided a report of the consultation to the special projects team.



Recommendation 5:

National Networks should be more tailored to the needs of Clarion and its residents to ensure value for money and clearly defined outcomes.

What we have done:

The national networks were incorporated into the wider RI strategy. The networks will meet when needed.



Recommendation 6:

Residents were not being involved in the review of customer facing policy and communications consistently. Clarion to create a schedule of customer facing publication consultations which will involve the PCRG. When reviewed the 'Reviewed by Residents' stamp to be applied. We will involve PCRG (now Clarion Voice E-mail) where the review identifies changes that may directly impact on services or where we introduce new policies or new policy criteria, but not where the proposed changes are minimal or legal requirements. We will provide information quarterly on policies that are likely to be reviewed that quarter (please note this can be subject to change if other priority work means we have to re-schedule) giving at least one month's notice e.g. at the beginning of March we will advise on which policies we will be consulting on in the quarter April to June.

What we have done:

We will involve PCRG where the review identifies changes that may directly impact on services or where we introduce new policies or new policy criteria, but not where the proposed changes are minimal or legal requirements.

We will provide information quarterly on policies that are likely to be reviewed that quarter (please note this can be subject to change if other priority work means we have to re-schedule) giving at least one month's notice e.g. at the beginning of March we will advise on which policies we will be consulting on in the quarter April to June.



Recommendation 7:

A review of whether Clarion Voice is the right platform to fulfil residents' digital.

What we have done:

Clarion Voice Email group went live on 1 April 2021. CVE has over 600 resident members nationally and has worked on reviews such as:

- Domestic abuse policy
- Kitchen design
- Neighbourhood management policy
- Clarion relief (new initiative to help residents and prevent enforcement action)
- CVE also have upcoming consultations which include
- The online repairs appointment booking system
- RI merchandise review
- Allocation Strategy.



Recommendation 8:

To introduce a National Property Engagement Group (NPEG) who meet 3 times a year with representation from all regions. Regional sub groups to be organised on an "as needed" basis.

What we have done:

National Group recruited and digital training being provided as group is meeting on Zoom. First meeting has taken place where the national group looked at kitchen

design and will be reviewing the online repair appointments feature on the website.



Recommendation 9:

To consider a greater number of partnership days rather than a single regional Resident Engagement Day.

What we have done:

Collaborative planning nationally for events later in 2021 or early 2022 (in line with Government guidelines) linked to Regional Local Offers.



Recommendation 9:

Set up a mechanism for contact with new residents after a 6 month period from the tenancy starting to discuss involvement in service improvement and enable continued new engagement.

What we have done:

We are piloting a project this year with a view to roll out in 2022.

In conclusion

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who has responded to 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 London Regional Scrutiny Committee

Review of Customer Contact and Enquiry Resolution Processes

Summary of scrutiny:

In February 2019 members of the Resident Scrutiny Committee met to review Clarion's Key Performance Indicator's and received presentations from Clarion staff, which helped the RSC to select a potential area to scrutinise. The RSC decided their first scrutiny review would focus on whether it is easy for customers to contact Clarion. It was agreed by all that customer satisfaction and overall service delivery was directly impacted by ease of contact and Clarion should seek to make improvements where necessary.

Members agreed that the scope of the review would be limited to the following points of inquiry:

- Are customers clear on how to contact Clarion?
- How easy is it to contact Clarion?
- How effective is enquiry resolution?



Recommendation 1:

Introduce Service Level Agreements, which ensure the relevant departments respond within a defined period of time. The SLA will also ensure Contact Centre staff can be clear about resolution times and manage customer expectations.

Response:

Agreed - New Service Level Agreements will be introduced and monitored as the new Customer Strategy is rolled out in 2021

and beyond. The new Customer Strategy is scheduled for review by the Group Executive team in late November 2021.



Recommendation 2:

Introduce activities such as joint team meetings, lunch & learn events, job shadowing etc. to support better partnership working between the contact centre and the various service delivery teams across the business.

Response:

Agreed - This happens on an ad hoc basis today but this could be increased.



Recommendation 3:

Assign individual enquiries to one named person to take responsibility of all actions related to enquiry and then follow through.

Response:

Agreed - This is a proposal within the new Customer Strategy although the precise approach has yet to be agreed. In practical terms, this is not the most efficient way to resolve outstanding enquiries but for 'key moments', we will endeavour to provide customers with a named contact who will handle their enquiry from start to resolution.



Recommendation 4:

Investigate whether residents do struggle to follow Clarion's contact and resolution processes.

Response:

Agreed - The new Customer Strategy will have a greater focus on tracking customer journeys to make them easy for customers by eliminating pain points.



Recommendation 5:

Review and if needed, redefine the customer journey for vulnerable residents. This will ensure they receive appropriate support and consideration when accessing services. It is important for Clarion to be proactive in identifying vulnerable residents through referrals, tenancy audits etc., to ensure they are receiving appropriate support and consideration when accessing services.

Response:

Agreed - New customer segmentation will be optimised within the new Customer Strategy to ensure a differentiated service is available for vulnerable customers.



Recommendation 6:

Introduce periodic focus groups (in addition to satisfaction surveys) to better understand the customer experience since the new ways of working have been introduced.

Response:

Agreed - Customer focus groups will be a critical tool for understanding the key issues our customers face and ensuring we continue to meet their needs.

In conclusion

This scrutiny report was welcomed by the Senior Management Team who has responded to all recommendations. Delivery of 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.

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