

Scrutiny Team Review

Review of start of tenancy

Management Response

Prepared by: Marc Robins

Title: Income and lettings manager

Date: 23 November 2021

1 Introduction:

This is the fourteenth scrutiny team review and is focused around the start of a new customer's tenancy journey with Selwood Housing. The focus of the review is very much on the lettings team, with voids and void works being out of scope.

2 Management response:

The lettings team welcomed the scrutiny team's review of the start of tenancy; and enjoyed the time that was spent with members of the team during interviews and shadowing appointments.

As the service manager, there was some concern at how the scrutiny team would be able to scope a review that did not duplicate previous service assessments or deliver a set of recommendations that would not be lost in the Project Horizon work.

I met with members of the scrutiny team a total of five times. Three of these were around scoping and project initiation, and two were to do with recommendations and the management response. These meetings were held via Teams; and were well-organized and well-Chaired. The meetings were positive; with the work and actions being progressed at every opportunity.

Every member of the scrutiny team offered probity, insight and added value.

3 Findings and recommendations:

The scrutiny team managed to navigate a path between previous service reviews and Project Horizon and have delivered a set of recommendations that balances staff requirements, streamlining process and providing value for customers.

The recommendations have been delivered at a time of significant organizational change; but they are discreet and within the gift of the team to deliver.

4 Conclusion:

The review is a timely reminder that the start of a customer's journey with Selwood Housing is extremely formative and sets a tone for life of that tenancy.

The government's housing white paper has set out that registered providers will be expected to do more for prospective and new customers. In particular, those who are experiencing poor mental health and may require additional support.

It is interesting to see that this sector-wide narrative is true of our local experiences and the increase in lettings that, as a team, we describe as 'complex cases'.

The lettings team would like to thank the scrutiny team for their work, and the income and lettings manager will ensure that the update on progress to the scrutiny team is timely and meaningful.

	Recommendation	Management response	Responsible person	Timescale
1	Selwood Housing provide a higher degree of training relating to:	<p>Ensuring that customers receive a high standard of customer service, via professional development, is a thread that runs through the Housing White Paper.</p> <p>Housing staff will be required to be competent and empathetic, particularly around mental health and vulnerability.</p> <p>Selwood Housing has a very good learning and development offer, which is reflected in our silver investors in people award.</p> <p>The requirements set out in a, b and c have been included in the lettings team's L&D requirements for 2022.</p> <p>The desired outcome is that these courses will run on a specified frequency, acting as a refresher for</p>	MR	End of Feb 2022

		<p>existing staff and essential training for new starters.</p> <p>The training will not have been delivered by the end of February 2022, but will have been agreed and dates will be in diaries.</p>		
a	The personal safety of employees, particularly when they attend a viewing;			
b	The handling of difficult and challenging tenant behaviour and the tenant's understanding of the lettings process, for example where a tenant has a learning difficulty; and			
c	The broad spectrum of benefits and signposting to other services.			
2	The lettings team makes sure tenants know what they need to bring with them to sign up, particularly if they are in receipt of universal credit.	<p>Previous reviews have highlighted the need to clearly guide customers to the next milestone in the lettings process and be very clear around the requirements of the next stage.</p> <p>This recommendation is very clear and straightforward. It also manages to provide a clear action that does not get caught up with previous</p>	MR	End of Feb 2022

		<p>work or the Horizon project.</p> <p>As a team, we will be able to take this principle and incorporate it into our correspondence with customers.</p> <p>As an additional step, we will explore whether we are able to utilise text messaging or email to send this to customers.</p>		
3	That staff make it clear that prospective tenants can only see the property once before they receive the keys.	<p>Providing information and clear steps not only allows prospective customers to make an informed decision, it also sets out what can be expected of Selwood Housing and our lettings offer.</p> <p>Expectation setting will ensure that the customer knows what they will receive and when. It makes good management sense, helping to understand demand and reducing unnecessary contact.</p> <p>This recommendation will be a quick win. We will need to identify where in the process this messaging should sit and will scope this as a team.</p>	MR	End of Feb 2022

4	That a floor plan is made available on request.	<p>The lettings team need to be able to provide prospective customers with enough information about our homes and neighborhoods for an informed decision to be made.</p> <p>The provision of floor plans is increasingly seen as standard information that customers should expect to see.</p> <p>The request to scope the technical requirements of the software and prepare for potential changes to standard operating procedures has been raised with our new Business Analyst team.</p>	MR	<p>End of Feb 2022</p> <p>Nov 2021: user story added to BIP</p>
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