

TOWER SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT



PREPARED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
BLACKPOOL COASTAL HOUSING

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Together Overseeing
Where Excellence is Realised



Welcome...

TO TOWER SCRUTINY'S PROGRESS REPORT

“ We are grateful that the Tower Scrutiny Panel continues to go from strength to strength. Having a dedicated and skilled set of tenants willing to give their time to supporting service improvement has never been more important. The opportunity for our board members and service managers to get a well informed and reasoned view on performance is critical to us all continuing to improve the way we offer services and make sure our customers can be assured they will get good quality, affordable and stable housing ensuring they have the opportunity to thrive.

This report reflects the panel's dedication and hard work in improving the housing services that you receive. I proudly support their efforts and hope you enjoy reading this report. If you're interested in learning more about the panel or joining them, please let them know.

”

Thank you,
John Donnellon

WHAT IS TOWER SCRUTINY?

TOWER Scrutiny Panel is an independent panel of Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) customers who work with BCH and Blackpool Council.

We act as a positive critical friend, assessing and challenging the services that BCH provides on behalf of its customers. As part of co-regulation, BCH is committed to greater involvement of customers in decision making and scrutiny of services. This leads to greater customer satisfaction and the continued delivery of excellent services.

TOWER will agree which area within BCH we wish to conduct a scrutiny exercise on. This involves:

- ▶▶▶ Reviewing policies and procedures
- ▶▶▶ Looking at performance data and data trends
- ▶▶▶ Consulting with other customers and gathering views
- ▶▶▶ Interviewing staff, managers and contractors
- ▶▶▶ Benchmarking with other organisations

Once a scrutiny exercise is completed, we will draft a report with recommendations and timescales which is then agreed by Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Board. Once the recommendations have been agreed, they are monitored until implemented and then reviewed to see what improvements have been made as a result.

We receive ongoing individual training and support by BCH Involvement and Communications Team in order to carry out our duties and BCH will pay reasonable out-of-pocket expenses including things like childcare, travel and refreshments while attending meetings, training or other events.

Scan this QR code more information on scrutiny!



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

With each task, we make a difference to the service for the benefit of customers and BCH as a whole. Here are some of the recent tasks we have completed along with some recommendations we have put forward and changes made.

DAY TO DAY REPAIRS



In December 2022 we looked at the Day to Day Repairs service to investigate a rise in complaints. We wanted to identify a trend in the increasing complaints and put forward recommendations to better the experience for customers and in turn reduce the volume of complaints regarding the service. We made 13 recommendations to BCH. Here are some of them:

WHAT WE SAID

WHAT BCH DID

Take before and after pictures of jobs where a before/after fault is visible

Photos are now taken before and after repair jobs where applicable by BCH staff and contractors

Advertise the Repairs Handbook better to reinforce information about how repairs are undertaken

New Home packs have been created which are left in all properties for new tenants. The Repairs Handbook is one of many information booklets included in this pack. Information from the handbook is also included on the website and in BCH newsletters

Needs to be a clear means of communication between contractor and BCH Repairs team by using the portal to ensure customers have been contacted and appointments have been arranged and attended. Also regular contractor meetings

Monthly meetings are now in place with repair contractors to discuss progress in all outstanding works

Continue to make sure that staff and contractors have ID and show this to all customers

All staff and contractors are to show ID badges at visits and while out in the community

WHAT WE SAID

WHAT BCH DID

BCH Planner to ensure that the operative's diaries are constantly checked and slots are filled as and when required, particularly to alleviate unnecessary travel time that the system automatically allows

Planners update the diary for the operatives constantly to ensure optimum output for operatives

Contractor jobs on the portal to be checked at least weekly and to check jobs that may be missed and still outstanding

The contractors portal now runs weekly reports to identify all works in the system. Jobs are checked to ensure appointments have been booked and monthly meetings are now held with contractors to discuss outstanding jobs

Reminder text to be sent a set number of days before appointment

Text messages sent prior to appointment where possible

No access from contractors to be reported back to BCH after 3 attempts for no access for a decision/action to be taken by BCH.

No access discussed with contractors in monthly meetings. Any job being cancelled is with agreement with BCH.

DAMP & MOULD



We wanted to ensure the health and safety risks of BCH tenants are a priority and upon completing the review in August 2023 this was confirmed. It was apparent that BCH has a comprehensive plan to manage the issues that cause damp and mould within their housing stock. Based on our investigations BCH are in the top of council housing providers in this matter although further improvements can be made. We therefore provided 12 recommendations, some of which are as follows:

WHAT WE SAID

WHAT BCH DID

Launch an education campaign for tenants, including issuing postcards, leaflets, and educational videos

A Damp and Mould Information Guide has been produced and is provided to tenants when an issue is identified. Additionally, a webpage has been created with information for customers including a video, a downloadable version of the information guide and BCH Damp and Mould policy

WHAT WE SAID

WHAT BCH DID

Regularly train staff and new starters on damp and mould management to ensure all team members are knowledgeable

All frontline staff have training in damp and mould management which is to be renewed every 2 years

Staff should carry business or visitor cards to give to tenants

All frontline staff now carry visitor cards so customers know who visited them and how to contact them

Ensure there is detailed recordkeeping

Full details of all damp reports and works are kept in line with retention policies

Ensure that multi-language information is available

BCH has access to several interpretation services and uses Blackpool Council's Print Services for specialised print requirements. This has been promoted to staff and the information is on the Intranet. Website information has translate and browse aloud functionality and customer documents advise that alternative formats/languages can be provided.

BCH should develop and use "next step" leaflets for workflow management

Damp Treatment - What to Expect booklet has been created and is provided to all customers where damp works are identified

Contractors to take before and after photos of jobs where applicable

Photos are now taken before and after repair jobs where applicable by BCH staff and contractors

Tenants to be reminded of BCH's access policy as laid out in their tenancy agreement

Where an access issue is identified from BCH staff or contractors the tenant is reminded of the terms of their tenancy agreement. This is also mentioned within relevant publications and newsletters

Add QR codes to link to leaflets to link to website information

QR codes now used as standard in newsletters, leaflets, surveys and the Annual Report

RENT AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION



Due to the cost of living crisis we came together in February 2024 to assess and improve BCH's approach to Rent and Financial Inclusion provided to their customers. We wanted to see if BCH has anything in place to assist customers that may be struggling to pay rent with the increase in living costs and if so how. It was clear to see BCH offers a thorough approach to helping tenants. Being our most recent scrutiny BCH are still working through our 10 recommendations. More updates will follow but here are a few of changes made so far;

WHAT WE SAID

WHAT BCH DID

More attention to be paid to monthly overpayment report to issue refunds quicker where possible

The Head of Service now carries out adhoc checks of the overpayment report to ensure refunds are being provided where required

Add posters to community centres to include QR codes to link to info website

All community centres have posters advertising the Rents Drop-In sessions along with a QR code linked to the website and contact information.

Add additional information to website

The BCH website now has a page dedicated to rent information and includes links to approved support

Recharges to be added to the rent account sooner and more emphasis on chasing these charges

Text messages are now being sent regarding recharges and The Rents Team are assisting tenants with creating payment plans where relevant



Through these recent scrutiny tasks the panel have found BCH is proactive in ensuring customers are at the heart of everything they do. The recommendations we provide improves on what we find to be a robust and working system for the betterment of all BCH customers.



Scan this QR code to read the full reports and all recommendations.

SCAN HERE

SCRUTINY IN NUMBERS

For the last 3 Scrutiny tasks we have:

- ▶▶ Made 35 service improvement recommendations
- ▶▶ Benchmarked with 19 housing providers
- ▶▶ Interviewed 23 members of staff
- ▶▶ 102 customer surveys returned and reviewed
- ▶▶ Attended 69 meetings
- ▶▶ Volunteered an average of 23 hours per scrutiny

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INPUT!

For every scrutiny we carry out, you as fellow BCH customers are always at the heart of everything we do. We really try to capture your customer journey to look at how well each BCH service did and how they can improve.

We cannot carry out our scrutiny tasks without you, so thank you to those of you who completed surveys or took the time to chat over the phone with us about your personal experiences.

These have really helped us get right to the heart of services so that we can work with BCH staff challenging and improving service and their delivery to us all.

*Thank
you!*

Are you
interested in
having your
voice heard?
We would
love to hear
from you!

Meet the Panel

The Scrutiny Group, which I am currently the Chairman, is an independent body separate from BCH. We address concerns such as damp and mould, tenant issues, and new legislation. Once we select an issue to focus on, we inform BCH and conduct a thorough investigation. The findings are then compiled into a report with recommendations for action. This report is presented to the BCH Board of Directors for approval and implementation. We meet with BCH senior staff every six months or so to ensure progress.

Our group consists of up to nine BCH tenants/leaseholders, and although BCH oversee the group, they do not actively participate. We are all unpaid volunteers and hold weekly or bi-weekly meetings in person or via the Internet.

Recent areas of focus have included; damp and mould, repairs and maintenance, and we have recently finalised a scrutiny on rents and financial inclusion.

We currently have vacancies for additional group members. If you are interested and have the time, we would like to hear from you.

Malcolm



Hello, I'm David, I've been involved in tenant participation for over a decade. I've witnessed many changes in tenant feedback processes and appreciate that tenants' voices are heard.

While participation in the work is voluntary, training opportunities are provided, offering a challenging yet fulfilling experience. The role's significance lies in actively listening to tenants to enhance the efficiency of all BCH departments. The Involvement and Communications Team provides dedicated support, highlighting their unwavering commitment to our well-being.

On a personal level, this opportunity has been transformative for me, shifting from pottering around at home to engagement and increased self-assurance.

Those with spare time who are keen on joining us are welcome to contact the Involvement and Communications Team. Share your thoughts and be part of this rewarding journey.

David



Hello, my name is Dan and I am a BCH Tenant who joined the Scrutiny Panel in 2023.

Following the death of my dog Jasper, I was isolated and rudderless, so I needed an outlet to focus my energy on, somewhere that I could meet new people without feeling pressured.

The Scrutiny Panel appealed to me because I have an interest in researching policies & procedures, terms & conditions, and analysing general performance data of businesses and organisations that I have dealings with. I also like to try to make a positive difference in people's lives and felt that joining the Scrutiny Panel was a good opportunity help achieve that aim.

Since joining the Scrutiny Panel, I have been able to question BCH employees with the confidence that I'll receive accurate information in response. I have also been able to survey customers of BCH about their personal experiences with BCH.

I feel that the Scrutiny Panel members are respected by BCH, and that our independence from BCH allows customers and staff to be honest in their responses, this gives me confidence that we can all work together to improve BCH as an organisation and the experience of it's customers.

For me personally, being on the Scrutiny Panel has allowed me to gain confidence myself and to meet new people from all walks of life. I've also learned quite a bit about housing issues affecting BCH and their customers. I feel I can use this knowledge to help not only myself but my neighbours too.

Everyone who sits on the Scrutiny Panel is lovely, a really good bunch of people who are caring, understanding and forward thinking, they're a real pleasure to be around, I'm very pleased to be a part of the Scrutiny Panel.

Dan



I have for many years been involved in different aspects of local government. I also had a career in publishing a local newspaper for a Lancashire town although I am now retired, I volunteer for several committees and panels which are involved with the care and interests of the people of Blackpool.

I joined the Scrutiny Panel because as a tenant of BCH I feel it is important that there must be constant communication between the organisation and the tenants themselves. It is intended that the organisation becomes closer to the opinions and wishes of tenants and that BCH can continue to liaise and have positive outcomes on the issues involved.



Patricia

My name is Carl and I have been an involved customer for about 2 years on the Scrutiny Panel and was elected as Vice Chair to the panel last year by my peers. I am also on the Complaints Panel, and Procurement Panel where different companies bid for contracts to keep BCH services for tenants running. I have recently been accepted on the Housing Ombudsman Resident's Panel too.

Over the last few months there have been a few government changes in the way that BCH run and offer services to tenants so being on TOWER Scrutiny Panel is worthwhile as we help to change services and policies for BCH tenants.

The work that we do for BCH is all voluntary but all training that I need is provided so I can do each task. What we do on the panel is challenging but also rewarding and satisfying to know that we can shape services for BCH tenants. The Involvement and Communications team look after us and oversee what we do when looking at BCH services and are always on hand if we need help with anything. We are encouraged and supported to go on training events and conferences to learn about the new housing regulations.

To conclude, the work that I do is satisfying as I get to meet different people from within BCH but also tenants and other housing providers.

If anyone has any spare time please contact the team as we are always looking for new people to join the panel.

I suspect there will be many changes upcoming for housing providers all over the country.

Many thanks for reading.

Carl



My name is Suzie and I'm a member of the BCH Scrutiny Panel. I've been a BCH tenant for nearly 4 years.

Scrutinising and being involved in the panel involves examining a service in depth, including looking at performance data, and residents' views, and testing service delivery. Panel members help decide this process and are independent of the landlord. We review and challenge how our landlord performs and delivers service. We review the evidence and make recommendations for service improvements, monitor and review agreed action plans, and inform other tenants what the panel is doing and encourage more tenants to get involved.

I enjoy working on the panel as it means that tenants have a voice about how BCH could improve services to their customers. I'm learning new skills for my CV and increasing my knowledge about housing issues. It's an opportunity to share, learn, and encourage others using my own experiences. I enjoy meeting new people and working as a part of a team.

At BCH Scrutiny we have taken part in various scrutiny panels, including damp and mould, repairs, complaints and communication to name a few. We look forward to new people joining us and taking part in strengthening community ties.

Suzie



My name is Julia and before I joined TOWER I had little knowledge of what was involved but I was given training from BCH and I was very interested to know I could make some difference to not only help other tenants but BCH as well.

Having worked a few scrutiny tasks now, experience comes along the way from other members and of course the BCH Involvement and Communications team.

Training is given throughout via webinars or in person, especially when new standards come into play and we can incorporate and make sure that our recommendations to BCH Board are correct.

Having recently completed a look at Damp & Mould I learned exactly what to look for and how to help stop mould growing in your home. We were able to make recommendations to BCH, who were already doing a great service, to make sure it was dealt with as promptly as possible.

As time went on I became further involved with BCH as a complaint representative. If a customer is unhappy with their complaint response I attend an appeal hearing with a BCH Director to review the complaint and help BCH see the issue raised from the customer perspective. BCH provided me with full training and ensures this stays up to date.

I'm also on the Reading Panel, which simply means I read drafts of correspondence for tenants. I make sure no difficult jargon is there to confuse anyone.

I started all this when I would slowly walk my little dog around where I live and was asked if I could be a Green Warden, another simple thing to do which makes sure your area is kept up well. I said yes straight away. It's important to be a voice for tenants and you can be one too.

I have made friends within TOWER and work great with BCH staff like Claire, who is with us most times and Suzanne, Jen, Beki and Phil.

Mostly it's being satisfied that BCH listens to us and they implement the recommendations that we put forward, helping tenants to live better in the homes and area we live in.

Julia



COME AND JOIN US!

If you would like more information about the volunteer work we do or would like to join us on the TOWER Scrutiny Panel we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please get in touch with the BCH Involvement and Communications Team:

 **01253 477911**



CUSTOMERINVOLVEMENT@BCH.CO.UK



MEETINGS

We meet online or in person at a Community Centre every couple of weeks to discuss how we are undertaking each project and work together to bring out each member's skills while supporting each other. We approach each scrutiny through the customer's eyes and follow their experience and journey to help us see how services work and where they can be improved or developed if necessary. Working with BCH staff and consulting with other customers is key to carrying out a successful scrutiny.

Being a volunteer for BCH means we get involved as much or as little as we like. We take part in as many scrutiny tasks throughout the year as we like but we make sure our own commitments come first and this is supported by BCH. It is entirely up to each member how much time we give and we all feel our involvement is appreciated.

TRAINING AND CONFERENCES

We have an excellent support and training network with both BCH and Tpas. We have a dedicated member of BCH staff to support us throughout each scrutiny and ensure that we have access to all the documents, information and staff we need while also being supported to attend as much training as we feel is required through Tpas or other training providers such as Four Million Homes.

In the past 12 months we have joined Tpas with 39 online and in person training sessions and conference events. We have also attended training sessions and conferences hosted by Blackpool Council, Four Million Homes, Housing Ombudsman Service and National Federation of ALMO's.

These events are with other tenants and housing staff from all over the country to share our knowledge and learn good practice. We can take part in as many of these as we feel are useful and informative to help us carry out our scrutiny and involvement activities. BCH provide support and encouragement to ensure there are no barriers preventing training including financial, transport and technical support.

Some of the training we have taken part in to expand our skills are:

Tpas National Tenant Conference

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Social Housing regulatory requirements

Chairing skills

Effective challenging and questioning skills

Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report on Knowledge and Information Management

Understanding Performance Data and Insight



Did you know any social housing resident can access Four Million Homes training and webinars?
Scan the QR code for more information

SCAN HERE

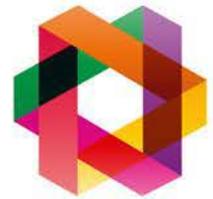
TPAS

TENANTS PARTICIPATION ADVISORY SERVICE

Tpas are England's leading Tenant Engagement experts. They promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England. This year we have joined them with a number of online and in person training sessions and conference events. We meet up with other tenants and housing staff from all over the country to share our knowledge. We can take part in as many of these as we feel are useful and informative to help us carry out our scrutiny and involvement activities.

We were recently involved in the re-accreditation of BCH by Tpas and were all pleased when BCH achieved this for a further 3 years. BCH take every opportunity to involve customers in decision making and this accreditation recognises the commitment BCH has to tenant engagement which we are very proud to be part of.

ACCREDITED
2023-2026



tpas

LANDLORD



Did you know as a Tpas member, it means that you can also access their services and resources.
Scan the QR code for more information



SCAN HERE

READING THIS PROGRESS REPORT



Blackpool Coastal Housing believes in access for all. To ensure the services provided by Blackpool Coastal Housing are accessible, information can be made available in a variety of formats and languages.

For more information about these services please telephone 01253 477900 or email enquiries@bch.co.uk



Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa Blackpool Coastal Housing uznaje, iż świadczone przez nią usługi powinny być ogólnodostępne, zatem informacje na ich temat udostępniane są w różnych formatach i wersjach językowych. W celu uzyskania szczegółowych informacji na temat świadczonych usług, proszę zadzwonić pod numer 01253 477900 lub wysłać e-mail na adres enquiries@bch.co.uk.



En Blackpool Coastal Housing creemos que la información debe estar al alcance de todos. Para asegurar que los servicios de Blackpool Coastal Housing son accesibles podemos ofrecer información en diversos formatos e idiomas.

Para saber más sobre estos servicios, póngase en contacto con nosotros en el teléfono 01253 477900 o por email enquiries@bch.co.uk



Blackpool Coastal Housing 公司相信每個人都有存取的權利。為確保您能使用 Blackpool Coastal Housing 公司的服務，資訊會以多種格式和語言提供。

有關這些服務的詳情資訊，請致電01253 477900，或傳送電子郵件至 enquiries@bch.co.uk

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