

**Muirhouse Housing Association  
Tenant Improvement Group  
Scrutiny Report**

**Kitchen Replacement**

**April 2019**

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## **Acknowledgements**

“The members of the Tenant Improvement Group would like to thank Muirhouse Housing Association Staff and tenants who assisted them throughout the Scrutiny Project, through the provision of support, information, evidence and for organising and taking part in research activities and meetings”

## 1.0. Introduction

### 1.1 Tenant Scrutiny in Context

Tenant scrutiny is about tenants being actively involved in reviewing how housing services are being delivered, and even more importantly, how they can be improved. Since 2013, the concept and emphasis on tenant scrutiny and self-assessment has become embedded in the tenant participation and customer involvement in self - assessment frameworks of the social housing sector in Scotland and represents a very significant opportunity to develop partnership working between tenants and landlords to deliver excellent housing services.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) focuses on outcomes as a basis for assessing landlord performance and requires landlords to involve their customers (tenants, applicants, sharing owners and those who receive a factoring service) in the self-assessment of housing services.

### 1.2 Muirhouse Housing Association Customer Scrutiny Tenant Improvement group

Muirhouse Housing Association (MHA) has an established relationship with the Tenant Improvement Group (TIG) which was formed in 2016. There is a current core membership of six tenants.

TIG forms the central point for scrutiny within MHA which empowers customers to:

- Oversee a range of scrutiny activities
- Integrate these activities with the wider self-assessment activities of MHA
- Make recommendations to challenge and improve the activities of senior officers and members of the governing body.

The Tenant Information Service (TIS) provides Independent Tenant Advice (ITA) and Development Support to the staff and customers involved in the TIG.

TIG members heard presentation and received information on performance management and the Annual Return on the Charter. A review of the information provided, as well as consideration of customer experiences led the group to agree a scrutiny project to review the tenant experience of the **Muirhouse Housing Association Kitchen Replacement Programmes**.

TIG members would like the learning and findings from the kitchen replacement scrutiny project to be rolled out to other investment programmes within Muirhouse Housing Association e.g. bathroom replacement, window replacement.

TIG members met from October 2018 to March 2019, a total of six times. Meetings were facilitated by Lynda Johnstone, Development Director, TIS and were also attended by Association staff, Ainan Groat, Housing Services Team Leader, Muirhouse Housing Association.

## **2.0. Scrutiny of the Tenant Experience of the Muirhouse Housing Association Kitchen Replacement Programmes.**

2.1. The Scrutiny Project followed an agreed detailed work plan (Appendix 1).

TIG Members:

- **Completed a desk top audit** to understand MHA's:
  - Policy on Planned Maintenance
  - MHA communications to tenants
  - Review of MHA:
    - performance information
    - customer satisfaction
    - comments, complaints, complements
  - Examples of good practice from other Housing Associations
- **Researched legislative and policy context:**
  - Scottish Social Housing Charter relevant outcomes
  - The Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- **Staff Discussions**
  - Staff discussions to further understand the roles of Housing Officers and Maintenance staff. Copies of questions are included in Appendix 2.
- **Tenant Feedback**
  - Telephone discussions with 6 tenants who have recently had a kitchen replacement

### **2.2. What the TIG Liked**

- 2.1.1 Kitchens were fitted to a high standard and the quality and specification of components was satisfactory to the majority of tenants
- 2.1.2 Information on the kitchen programme is provided to tenants in the MHA newsletter. This is broken down into phase and address
- 2.1.3 There appears to be an effective team approach to the works including MHA relationships with the contractor
- 2.1.4 MHA provide the “personal touch” with tenants supporting individuals on a one to one basis where required before, during and after the work is undertaken
- 2.1.5 Ongoing monitoring throughout a contract takes place with Manor Estates and the contractor. MHA Senior Management are involved if the contract is facing difficulties or not running to plan
- 2.1.6 The opportunity , as part of the project to find out more about the staff role within MHA
- 2.1.7 Staff identified that learning and development has taken place through the partnership work with Manor Estates

## 2.3. Findings and Recommendations

The TIG research raised a number of issues which this report highlights and suggests recommendations for change. These recommendations were agreed by TIG when all the review information was collected, considered and analysed.

TIG members would like the learning and findings from the kitchen replacement scrutiny project to be rolled out to other investment programmes within Muirhouse Housing Association e.g. bathroom replacement, window replacement.

Findings	Tenant Improvement Group Recommendations
<b>Policy Review</b>	
<p>The MHA Repairs and Maintenance Policy is due for review in April 2019.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The policy includes a reference to the following as part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard 2 Communication</li> <li>• Standard 13 Value for Money.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Consideration is given to EESSH 2 within the reviewed policy.</li> <li>3. Terminology within the policy is reviewed so that it is consistent with other documents e.g. large scale works / planned maintenance works.</li> <li>4. Any changes in the reviewed policy are reflected in the Fact Sheet for tenants (see below).</li> </ol>
<b>Communication, Information, Support and Advice to tenants</b>	
<p>MHA provide information to tenants through regarding works to be carried out in the following financial year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The newsletter</li> <li>• Individual letter.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The current practice continues. In addition up to date, accurate and easy to access information is also provided to tenants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the MHA website</li> <li>• By email</li> <li>• Through phone calls</li> <li>• By face to face</li> <li>• Using social media etc.</li> </ul> <p>Communication methods should be effective and meet the needs of the individual tenant.</p> </li> </ol>
<p>The “Planned Maintenance Works – Boiler and Kitchen Upgrades Fact Sheet” lacks essential detail for tenants.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. A review of the factsheet is undertaken and the following is taken into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the tenant with information relating to the order of events, who will be in contact and what information will be provided and when</li> <li>• Explanation to tenant about what is expected from them in terms of preparation before the work takes place</li> <li>• Opportunity to the tenant to indicate or ask for help where needed</li> <li>• Explanations of what MHA expects from the tenants and what the tenant can expect from MHA and contractors</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of code of conduct or acceptable behaviours</li> <li>• The need to have gas/electricity available for the work to take place</li> <li>• Details of redecoration (walls, floorcovering etc.)</li> <li>• How the tenant can communicate concerns</li> <li>• Frequently asked questions (FAQs)</li> <li>• Relevant contact details</li> <li>• The tone of the communication should be warm, friendly, jargon free</li> </ul>
<p>Tenants appreciate the opportunity to choose kitchen finishes.</p> <p>The small sample colour blocks are unsatisfactory and difficult for tenants to make a fully informed choice.</p>	<p><b>7.</b> MHA should provide mock up demonstrations in the office for tenants to view components on a day to day basis at a certain time or at an open day.</p> <p>TIG feel this approach will facilitate social interaction with MHA and the tenant and is a chance to meet and reconnect with tenants where there is little or no contact with staff.</p> <p><b>8.</b> Tenants who have recently had a kitchen replacement could be invited to these demonstration sessions to develop an opportunity of “tenant talking to tenants” support and advice, explaining what to expect, answer questions etc.</p>
<p>MHA staff were praised by the TIG members for their support to vulnerable tenants or to those who were anxious about the planned work.</p>	<p><b>9.</b> The support available to tenants needs to be better communicated through the notification of works letter, website, newsletter, information to carers etc.</p> <p><b>10.</b> Tenants are made aware of the Care and Repair Scheme Edinburgh as part of all Planned Maintenance communications.</p>
<p>It was noted in the majority of cases, the layout of the new kitchen does not change to the one which is being replaced. However in other cases changes may be made.</p>	<p><b>11.</b> Tenants are shown and provided with a 3D plan of their new kitchen before work begins. This should be on a lap top or a paper copy.</p>
<b>Tenant Satisfaction</b>	
<p>The Repairs and Maintenance policy details that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tenant satisfaction surveys are issued with a covering letter</i></li> <li>• <i>A free prize draw incentive (£30 love to shop voucher) is offered to tenants who return completed satisfaction surveys</i></li> <li>• <i>A pre-paid envelope is also provided.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>12.</b> The reviewed policy and reviewed fact sheet for tenants is consistent in the approach taken by MHA.</p>

<p>The Fact Sheet for tenants outlines: <i>Tenants should receive a fact sheet before the start on the works. The sheet explains that following the work, there will be a satisfaction visit from MHA and a survey completed then.</i></p> <p>However TIG have determined that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MHA have posted out the surveys rather than visiting each tenant</li> <li>• It has not been possible for staff to visit each tenant with the inspectors, due to timing and staff resources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>13.</b> MHA undertake a thorough review of this process to agree an approach to the issue of the fact sheet and the role of staff in ensuring completed satisfaction surveys are returned (this cross references to recommendation 19).</p> <p><b>14.</b> All relevant MHA staff are trained on the agreed process.</p>
<p>Collating tenant satisfaction is explicitly detailed in the Repairs and Maintenance Policy. <i>The 11.3 of the Policy notes that outcomes from all survey responses are collated with specific reference to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Concerns with works carried out</i></li> <li>• <i>Negative responses highlighted</i></li> <li>• <i>Remedial action taken</i></li> <li>• <i>System improvements</i></li> <li>• <i>Outcomes followed up and summarised in quarterly performance reports.</i></li> </ul> <p>TIG ascertained that MHA receive a low and disappointing rate of returns from the satisfaction survey following the completion of work.</p> <p>The following facts were established by TIG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MHA has refurbished 195 kitchens</li> <li>• 162 satisfaction surveys were sent out by MHA</li> <li>• There are 122 properties MHA have no information about either when the surveys were sent, where the surveys are or the results, if any</li> <li>• Assuming the surveys were sent out, of the 162 surveys sent,</li> </ul>	<p><b>15.</b> A target response rate is set to ensure that satisfaction levels are at a significant level and more reliable. TIG recommend MHA aim to work to this target over the next three years by 2021. TIG recommend a response target of at 100% is set. The scrutiny report action plan should detail the MHA approach to achieving higher results.</p> <p><b>16.</b> In analysing the results of a greater sample of survey returns in the future, MHA should ensure all measures and action are taken to achieve improvements. Measures and results should be shared with tenants detailing what action was taken and what improvements were made i.e. <i>“You said, we did”</i>.</p> <p><b>17.</b> Explanations are provided to tenants on a regular basis through a range of methods highlighting why and how their views can influence standards and delivery, improve services and allow MHA to learn from their customers.</p> <p><b>18.</b> The process of distributing surveys and collecting survey returns is thoroughly examined and reviewed to improve efficiency.</p> <p><b>19.</b> Performance information should also be provided to the MHA Board for monitoring purposes.</p>

<p>MHA has received 11 returns which is a return rate of 7%.</p> <p>Information provided by staff explained the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All returned surveys are collected then scanned and saved. This contradicts the above factual information.</li> <li>• MHA arrange with the contractor to provide the voucher and then a staff member arranges to contact the tenant and takes photos.</li> </ul>	
<p>The survey is issued <u>after</u> the contract is completed OR <u>per investment works</u></p> <p>e.g. If MHA are working on bathroom, kitchens and boilers at the same time, satisfaction surveys are sent out at the same time all together, regardless of phases at the end of completed works. Then all returns are put in the same free prize draw.</p> <p>This impacts on survey returns which can be weeks/months after the individuals' kitchen is completed.</p>	<p><b>20.</b> The timing of the survey issue is reviewed to encourage feedback. TIG ask that this is on completion of the work done to the property NOT on completion of the contract. Options for survey circulation include: at the inspection visit, paper copies on request, website etc.</p> <p><b>21.</b> MHA create a range of ways that tenants can complete and return satisfaction surveys including web based survey monkey, paper form, through face to face discussions with staff etc.</p> <p><b>22.</b> A free prize draw takes place for each individual phase and works completed</p>
<p>Tenants often have regular and easy access to Housing Officers, Maintenance Officers and contractors. They are able to express dissatisfaction on the kitchen replacement. However, it is not clear how this feedback is managed and recorded.</p>	<p><b>23.</b> All formal and informal feedback should be captured and recorded by MHA staff and contractors to reflect tenant opinion and inform improvements to the process.</p> <p><b>24.</b> Tenants should be made aware of the MHA Complaints Procedure.</p>
<p>At present, collated survey information seems sporadic and records are patchy within MHA with significant data and information regarding satisfaction surveys missing and or not recorded.</p>	<p><b>25.</b> A system is devised to ensure that MHA collect, record and learn from maximum survey responses.</p>
<p>The Repairs and Maintenance Policy notes that <i>MHA undertake telephone surveys for a sample of</i></p>	<p><b>26.</b> Follow up telephone, email and text surveys and reminders are undertaken to further gather views of tenants who have received improvements under</p>

<p><i>tenants having an emergency or call out repairs, to ask their views about the service.</i></p> <p>The TIG found no evidence that this happens.</p>	<p>planned maintenance. (Not those who have returned their satisfaction form).</p>
<b>Disturbance Allowance</b>	
<p>The fact sheet outlines the detail of the disturbance allowance payment. <i>“On completion of the contract we will arrange to visit you to carry out a satisfaction survey. We will pay £50 into your rent account as a disturbance payment.”</i></p> <p>MHA have reported that if a tenant is in rent arrears, £50 is credited to the account and a Housing Officer phones the tenant to update them.</p> <p>For those in credit, the Housing Officer makes arrangement with the Finance Manager for a cash payment to the tenant or a deposit into their bank account.</p> <p>TIG have been able to determine that disturbance allowance payments are outstanding for phases 7,8,9,10,11 and 12.</p> <p>The disturbance allowance payable to all tenants who return the satisfaction form and differs from the Free Prize Draw.</p>	<p><b>27.</b>MHA review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timing of the automatic disturbance allowance payment for tenants who have had a kitchen replacement i.e. immediately following the completion of the phase</li> <li>• How the disturbance allowance payment is communicated to and confirmed with tenants</li> <li>• How disturbance payments are recorded by MHA</li> </ul> <p><b>28.</b>A clear distinction is made to the FREE PRIZE DRAW and the disturbance allowance. The former is an incentive for those tenants who return the satisfaction survey. (see previous section)</p>

### 3.0. Next Steps

TIG members considered this report in April 2019. The final agreed report will be submitted to Muirhouse Housing Association. Thereafter a meeting will take place to allow:

- Staff and tenants who were involved in the scrutiny project to evaluate the process
- Muirhouse Housing Association to meet with TIG to discuss responses and agree specific actions to the recommendations
- TIG to present the report to the Muirhouse Housing Association Board
- TIG to agree the actions required to publicise the work of the Project and attract new members.

To demonstrate MHA’s commitment to scrutiny TIS recommend MHA work with tenants and customers to develop a Strategic Scrutiny Framework which clearly defines the opportunities and

benefits of tenant led inspections as an approach to customer involvement in self-assessment and scrutiny.

#### **4.0. Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is essential that this scrutiny project is monitored and evaluated to find out if agreed objectives have been met, to recognise what works well and what may need to be adapted to meet the changing needs and priorities of MHA and its customers. This is about evaluating the effectiveness of the scrutiny project itself but also monitoring that the implementation of the agreed action plan has been carried out.

TIG recommend that an exercise to review the action plan takes place no later than October 2019.

# Appendix 1

## Muirhouse Housing Association: TIG Scrutiny Action Plan

### Kitchen Bathroom Replacement Tenant Satisfaction

September 2018 to March 2019

Task	How to do it	Outcome required
Identify what the Scottish Social Housing Charter says about Standards and Planned Maintenance?	Presentation - TIS	Information and Understanding
To review Muirhouse Housing Association Policy on Planned Maintenance	Presentation and Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure policy and procedure meets regulators requirements.</li> <li>To consider areas for improvement at this early stage</li> <li>To ensure the policy is clear and consistent</li> <li>To ensure that tenants are provided with adequate information regarding the process</li> </ul>
A reminder: The Scottish Housing Quality Standard and MHA Letting Standard reference to kitchens and bathrooms	Presentation and activity TIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand the detail of the standard</li> </ul>
Review performance information	Presentation from MHA and benchmarking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenants understand how Muirhouse perform in this area</li> <li>Understanding of how this compares to other landlords</li> <li>Identify key differences in performance and understand why they happen</li> </ul>
Customer Complaints, Comments , Complements on Kitchen Standard for last 3 years	Presentation from MHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify any common themes</li> </ul>
Approach to planned maintenance and how contractors are selected, managed, monitored	Presentation from MHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand how MHA achieves value for money and a high quality service</li> <li>To show quality control measures in place</li> </ul>
Customer Satisfaction Survey	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify any issues that tenants have experienced in the process of bathroom and kitchen replacement</li> </ul>
To scrutinise the communication approaches informing tenants of the planned work.	Presentation and activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through a desk top analysis look at the communication approaches and identify strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul>
To review material used by other RSLs in their communication with tenants re planned maintenance	Desk Top Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand different communication approaches</li> </ul>

Task	How to do it	Outcome required
To understand staff role in the kitchen replacement process	Staff discussion session with cross section of relevant staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify how staff understand and are involved in the process ensuring a positive experience for tenants</li> <li>• Identify good practice and areas for development</li> </ul>
To consult with tenants who have recently received a new kitchen	Telephone Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand tenant experience</li> </ul>
To consider all findings, agree the timetable and process to produce a scrutiny report and recommendations.	Working with TIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify if there are other areas of the service tenants want to assess (or reassess)</li> <li>• To agree on the recommendations to be included in the report</li> <li>• To prepare a report for MHA Management and Board</li> </ul>
To review the first scrutiny task	TIS to support the group to review the scrutiny activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify what worked well in the scrutiny process</li> <li>• To identify areas that could be improved for future scrutiny activities</li> <li>• To begin discussions about future activities</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Muirhouse Housing Association Tenant Improvement Group

#### Kitchen Replacement Scrutiny Project

#### Staff Discussions Questions

1. What is your role in the kitchen / bathroom replacement programme, particularly in relation to your contact and support to tenants?
2. What are the challenges you face in ensuring an effective service?
3. How can you overcome these challenges?
4. What are the key actions you can take to ensure tenant satisfaction throughout the kitchen / bathroom replacement programme?
5. How is quality monitored?
6. Is there anything you would like to add or tell us?