

Tenant Advisory Group Annual Report 2019/2020



West of
Scotland
Housing
Association

Welcome

Welcome to the third annual report of the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG). We hope that you find it informative and interesting, and that you can find out about some of the work we have been doing to represent the tenants of West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA).

We would like to start by thanking all the tenants who have been involved in any way over the past year, whether by responding to our surveys, or by attending meetings.

We have had a busy year working with WSHA to improve the services they deliver to you. You can read more about this in section 3 of the report. Our Scrutiny Group continues to work to review specific policy areas and TAG has been involved in giving feedback to WSHA on eight different policy areas.

We have continued to develop and improve our relationship with both staff at WSHA and the Board, and attended two joint sessions with the Board to review WSHA's performance compared to other landlords. We also attended a joint training session on equality and diversity.

The Tenant Advisory Group is always looking for new members, so if you want to get involved then please get in touch.

Enjoy our report.

Lynn Clark,
Chair,
Tenants Advisory Group

What is TAG (Tenant Advisory Group)?

TAG is the main vehicle to engage and involve tenants in the operation of West of Scotland Housing Association. TAG is responsible for overseeing and scrutinising the performance of WSHA in how they deliver services to tenants and reporting findings and recommendations to Board. TAG also has a role in overseeing the development of our approach to tenant engagement and supporting the development of new initiatives and approaches.

TAG is also the body that oversees the approach that WSHA takes when reviewing policies and procedures that impact tenants. TAG will agree the approach for each review, and where required oversee specific working groups.

TAG generally meets every two months in the WSHA office however we would be happy to meet elsewhere if tenants from other areas wanted to find out about the work we do.

Over the coming year one of our key aims will be to improve how our tenants can engage with TAG and WSHA using digital technology which you can read more about in section 4.



Achievements throughout the year

Tenant Engagement Strategy

The primary aim of TAG remains to oversee the progress that is made with the Tenant Engagement Strategy which was developed in 2017. The main themes of this Strategy remain to increase the opportunities for tenants to give us their views, to improve how we provide feedback to tenants who give us their views, and to be open and transparent when engaging with tenants. TAG receives a quarterly report on the progress made, and are involved in developing the annual action plan.

Tenant Scrutiny

The approach to tenant scrutiny continues to be developed with the Group undertaking a further two activities in the past year. The Group have been reviewing WSHA's approach to reletting void properties. The Group have reviewed how other landlords adopt different approaches, have reviewed how WSHA's performance compares to other landlords, and have interviewed staff across WSHA who are involved in the void process. The Group will look to undertake surveys of new tenants before finalising their recommendations.

The Group have also been reviewing how WSHA handles and responds to complaints received. They have reviewed the model complaints handling procedure, examined performance information and reviewed how WSHA performs in relation to good practice. They will continue to monitor complaints as the new model complaints handling procedure is introduced.

Policy Reviews

TAG has welcomed involvement in a number of different policy consultations and reviews in the past year. The Group have provided feedback on the following policies:

- Estate Management Policy
- Abandonment Policy
- Rent and Service Charging Policy
- Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Housing Allocations Policy

For each policy the relevant Manager or Director will attend a TAG meeting and talk through the policy and answer any questions that the Group has. For a number of policies TAG has asked WSHA to undertake more detailed tenant consultations.

Housing Regulation

The way that WSHA is regulated has changed and TAG received regular updates about the progress in developing the Assurance Statement that is signed off by the Board.

Rent Consultation

This year TAG worked with WSHA to improve how they consulted with tenants about the proposed rent increase. This involved adopting a simpler approach to explaining any changes, and the requirement to host local meetings throughout the areas where WSHA has homes. TAG was pleased to see the volume of responses increase this year and was also pleased that WSHA agreed a lower increase than proposed based on feedback from tenants.

Readers Panel

TAG has worked with WSHA to develop a Readers Panel. This provides an opportunity for tenants to work with WSHA from their own homes. We will further develop this scheme in the year ahead.

Training and Development

We have undertaken a number of training sessions throughout the year. We attended a joint training session with the Board following the adoption of the Equality and Diversity Policy mentioned above. We also had the Director of Finance and Corporate Services attend on of our meetings to talk through in more detail about WSHA's finances and how these are projected for the medium and longer term. Some of us also attended the Tenant Participatory Advisory Service Annual Conference where we were able to meet with tenants from other landlords, and learn about some of the developments in social housing throughout Scotland. Finally, we undertook a study visit to Aberdeen where we were hosted by tenants from Aberdeen City Council, Langstane Housing Association and Castlehill Housing Association. We were able to find out about how these tenants worked with their landlords to improve services to tenants.

Customer Service Training

TAG members have worked in partnership with staff from WSHA to deliver customer service training to over 40 members of staff. Further courses will take place in coming year.

Ongoing Monitoring

On a quarterly basis TAG receives an update on how well WSHA has performed against agreed key performance indicators and are able to challenge performance where targets are missed. The Group also receives an update on progress against the Value for Money Strategy on a quarterly basis, and in particular the efficiencies plan.

Challenges

As with previous years we have not always agreed with decisions made by WSHA but we are pleased that we continue to have the opportunity to raise our concerns and have our questions answered.

In the latter part of the year we have faced the same challenge as all of you with the situation relating to Coronavirus. We are investigating methods to continue our engagement with WSHA digitally, and will continue to work to represent tenants interests.

Priorities for 2020/21

Tenant Scrutiny – we want to continue to develop our approach to tenant scrutiny by increasing the membership of the Group and by increasing the use of different tools we use to assess how well WSHA is performing. We will undertake a review of how effective the group has been to date, and undertake further training to improve our skills.

Involving younger tenants – a priority in our Tenant Engagement Strategy is to involve younger tenants in our work. We will work with WSHA to identify options for involving younger tenants, in a way that suits them. We will make this a key focus in the year ahead and examine how we can link this in with our approach to digital engagement.

Digital Engagement – WSHA has invested in a new housing management system and we will explore how we can use aspects of this new system to improve how we engage with tenants digitally. We will work with WSHA to identify methods to gather feedback from tenants about services and use this feedback to improve how services are delivered.

Readers Panel – we will continue to build on our Readers Panel, embedding this approach across WSHA and increasing the number of tenants involved.

Groups in different communities – we will continue to support tenants to have the opportunity to meet in their own communities to improve the housing and environmental conditions.

Rent Policy Review – we will work with WSHA to undertake a review of how they set their rents, and ensure that tenants have a range of opportunities to give their views.

Thank You!

We would like to thank all tenants who have given time over the past year to support our work whether by attending meetings and events, or by completing surveys that formed part of our activities.

We are really keen to grow the membership of TAG and to increase our representation from all the communities that WSHA. If you are interested in getting involved do please get in touch on haveyoursay@westscot.co.uk or 0141 550 5060.

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