



# **Women's Pioneer Housing**

## **Resident Scrutiny Panel**

### **Communications Scrutiny Report**

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## **Acknowledgement**

The scrutiny team would like to record thanks to Women's Pioneer Housing staff involved in this scrutiny process for their assistance and co-operation.

## **I INTRODUCTION**

This report sets out the findings of the fourth scrutiny review conducted by the Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP) together with recommendations following the investigations into how Women's Pioneer Housing communicates with residents. Denise Fowler, Chief Executive for Women's Pioneer Housing asked the RSP to look at communications; what is working well, what is not working well and at potential new communication methods. The scope of the scrutiny focused on the following:-

- 1) Women's Pioneer Housing Website
  - a. How easy is it to use?
  - b. How often is the website updated?
  - c. What are residents looking at on the website?
  - d. How does Women's Pioneer Housing website compare to other websites?
  
- 2) Pioneer Press
  - a. What is the resident involvement in the content of Pioneer Press?
  - b. How many residents receive Pioneer Press by email?
  - c. How many residents receive Pioneer Press in hardcopy?
  - d. What is the cost of printing and posting Pioneer Press?
  - e. What do residents like and dislike about Pioneer Press?
  - f. Is there a section for residents to feedback on each issue with a published response?
  
- 3) Notice Boards
  - a. Who is responsible for the notice boards?
  - b. What are the notice boards used for?
  - c. How often are the notice boards checked and updated?
  - d. Is it clear to residents what can be displayed on the notice boards?
  
- 4) Telephone Calls
  - a. What are people calling Women's Pioneer Housing about?

5) Face to Face contact

- a. How many residents visit the office each week?
- b. What do residents visit the office for?
- c. How many home visits are undertaken each week?
- d. What are the reasons for the home visits?
- e. Are the home visits instigated by residents or WPH staff?
- f. How many 'Meet the Manager' sessions took place in 2017?
- g. How many residents attended the 'Meet the Manager' sessions?
- h. What were the reasons for residents attending the 'Meet the Manager' sessions?
- i. Are satisfaction surveys / feedback collected after the 'Meet the Manager' sessions?
- j. Are resident's queries / questions recorded and published, for example in Pioneer Press?

6) Text Messaging Service

- a. What is the cost of using a text messaging service?
- b. Does Women's Pioneer Housing know whether residents would like to receive text messages, for example to remind them about paying their rent, to remind them about repairs appointments?
- c. How many residents does Women's Pioneer Housing not hold mobile phone numbers for?

7) Use of Social Media

- a. To investigate the use of Facebook and Twitter as consultation / engagement tools.

**The Scrutiny Team members involved in undertaking this scrutiny were:-**

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### **Womens Pioneer Officers:-**

Matthew Wicks, Housing Manager

Symone Clark-McGuire, PA and Communications Officer

### **Independent Mentor**

Samantha Goodwin, Tpas Senior Associate Consultant

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The panel agreed the scope of the review and then a plan of key actions that would be needed. The scrutiny took place after agreeing the following key stages:-

- A desktop review of information provided to the scrutiny panel. This included:
  - Customer Service guide for staff
  - The Learning Factor Telephone survey results
  - The responses to the questions asked about:
    - the WPH website
    - Pioneer Press
    - the WPH notice boards
    - telephone calls received by WPH
    - WPH face to face contact with residents
    - The use of social media by WPH
    - A text messaging service
  
- A review of WPH's website and a look at the websites of other comparable organisations in terms of their size and them being based in London:
  - Westway Housing Association
  - Innisfree Housing Association
  - Keniston Housing Association

- Researching the provision of newsletters by other organisations. These included Notting Hill, Octavia, One Housing, Shepherds Bush and Wandle.
- A review of the content of the notice boards in WPH blocks of flats.

### **3 SUMMARY**

#### **WPH Website**

The WPH website gets approximately 300 hits a week. With the news page being the most visited page probably because the waiting lists are advertised here. Information on the website is not updated regularly. The Scrutiny Panel feel that the website is currently not fit for purpose; it is unappealing, has no clear links to things that are important to residents (e.g. reporting repairs online, paying rent online, information about planned works, being able to make a complaint online) and is hard to navigate.

The Scrutiny Panel looked at other websites:

Westway HA – the Home page is colourful. There are a number of links in the Home page that making navigating the site easy. These include:

- Your Rent - this gives information on ways residents can their pay rent and allows them to pay online.
- Tenants – this gives information on the way residents can be involved and how residents can make a complaint
- Repairs – this allows residents to report a repair on line and look at what planned works are being done

Innisfree HA – the Home page gives information about the organisation, it advertises staff vacancies and has news/information items. Also on the home page are clear links to paying rent online, reporting repairs and FAQs.

Keniston HA – the Home page has a link to a tenants portal. There are links to enable residents to report anti-social behaviour online, report a repair online and get advice if they are struggling to pay their rent or would like advice about reducing bills and switching suppliers.

## **Pioneer Press**

Pioneer Press costs £873 per issue to print (12 pages in colour, 1100 copies). It is posted out alongside the quarterly rent statements, except for the winter issue, and costs 85p if sent first class and 65p if sent second class.

There is an Editorial Panel that agrees the content of each issue of Pioneer Press. Two residents are invited to attend these meetings and can suggest ideas for content and can write articles herself. There is anecdotal evidence that residents read and are happy with the content of Pioneer Press, but WPH has not actively canvassed resident opinion.

Currently 800 residents receive a hard copy of Pioneer Press whilst 204 residents have requested an electronic copy.

## **Notice Boards**

There are notice boards in every block of flats. On reviewing the content of the notice boards within the blocks that they live, scrutiny panel members found that a lot of the information was out of date. It is unclear who is responsible for the content of the notice boards, also how often the information on the notice boards is updated or added to and how residents go about getting information put on the notice boards.

## **Telephone Calls**

WPH received 63,098 telephone calls between 1 May 2017 and 30 April 2018. These are internal and external calls; WPH are currently unable to separate out the calls. However, it is estimated that 70% of calls are from residents. The majority of resident's calls are in relation to rent, tenancy matters, neighbour disputes, transfers, mutual exchanges, requests for additional keys, adaptations, parking benefit queries and complaints.

The Panel received an update from WPH that explained how the telephone system currently works, for example the various teams such as housing and finance are assigned to groups and can be picked up by other staff members. The Property Services team (repairs) are set up so that a call will pass through the group until it is picked up. It made it clear that the reporting of call numbers and missed calls is inaccurate, as internal calls are counted in the total and calls that are moved on through the group are classed as missed. Despite being introduced in 2012, the system does not allow for accurate performance reporting, therefore this Panel report does not have any information on call handling such as total number of calls, missed calls and average waiting time.

## **Face to Face contact**

### **Visitors to the Office**

The number of people that visit the office each week varies (50 - 100) and this can be attributed to a number of factors:

- Tenants being decanted from Browning House visiting for updates and queries
- Tenants who live locally are more likely to pop in rather than call
- Contractors
- Tenants with appointments with WPH staff
- Potential applicant enquiries

### **Home Visits**

Roughly 4 home visits are carried out per week in addition to the scheduled 6 week / 6 month visits for new residents. Appointments will be to see tenants about rent arrears, incidents of anti-social behaviour and transfers.

### **Meet the Managers events**

Two 'Meet the Managers' events were held in 2017 and proved popular with residents. Residents attended these events to talk to staff about property and estate services (repairs and service charges) and tenancy issues (transfers and ASB). Specific queries are recorded by each manager and responded to individually.

There were also two fire safety events held which attracted 65 residents.

### **Text Messaging Service**

WPH does not currently operate a text messaging service. However, the results of The Learning Factor survey of 250 residents, shows that 54 residents (20%) would like to be communicated with by text. Also WPH currently holds mobile phone number for at least 650 residents.

The cost of a text messaging service is between 3p-8p per text depending on the company used and how many 'text credits' are brought as a unit.

Research shows that text messaging is being used by a number of organisations, housing and other (hairdressers, dentists, garages etc.), to remind people of appointments, to pay their rent / accounts etc.



### **Use of Social Media**

WPH does use Twitter but does not use facebook.

### **Customer Service Standard**

There is an out of date Customer Service Standard guide for staff but nothing for residents. Research shows that other housing associations have a Customer Service Standard for residents that has been put together with residents.

### **Residents Survey**

The Scrutiny Panel carried out surveys with 13 residents about how they communicate with WPH. See Appendix I for a summary of the questions asked.

- 10 out of the 13 residents read Pioneer Press.
- all 13 residents said they looked at the notice board in their block.
- only 1 of the 13 residents looked at the WPH website.
- 9 of the 13 residents said they didn't think WPH should have a facebook page.
- 8 of the 13 residents had contacted WPH by email but had not always received a response.

### **4 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Scrutiny Panel would like to offer the following issues for discussion and put forward recommendations which it feels will enhance the experience of the tenant and support the good practice already in place.

### **TO CONCLUDE**

In this report the scrutiny panel has endeavoured to point out areas of good practice already in place, whilst at the same time highlighting areas of concern to the scrutiny panel members.

**WPH RESPONSE TO FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN RSP COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

<b>FINDINGS</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS</b>	<b>WPH RESPONSE</b>
<b>Customer Service Standard</b>			
<p>I. There is an out of date Customer Service Standard guide for staff but nothing for residents</p>	<p>I.1 WPH should develop a Customer Service Standard for residents with residents.</p> <p>I.2 The Customer Service Standard staff guide should be updated in line with the resident’s version.</p> <p>I.3 WPH should introduce KPIs for their customer service standard that are measurable and are monitored regularly.</p>	<p>A Customer Service Standard for residents will clarify for them, the level of service they can expect from WPH.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer Service Standards for residents are being developed.</li> <li>- KPIs for customer service already exist. These are based on customer satisfaction with the quality of our service and are tracked quarterly.</li> <li>- Tailor Acuity survey questions to focus on speed and quality of customer services</li> </ul>

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS	WPH RESPONSE
<b>Women's Pioneer Housing Website</b>			
<p>2. The WPH website is unappealing, outdated and hard to navigate.</p>	<p>2.1 There should be a Tenant Portal on the website that allows residents to pay their rent, report repairs and gives information about proposed works/improvements to their home / the area where they live.</p> <p>2.2. There should be links on the home page to make it easier for residents to report anti-social behaviour and make complaints</p> <p>2.3 There should be a diary of upcoming events on the home page of the website.</p> <p>2.4 There should be a 'You said, We did' section on the website that could address general issues raised by residents at 'Meet the Managers' events, pop up events etc.</p> <p>2.5 WPH should put a Notice Board feature on their Home Page that links to further information.</p>	<p>There will be greater use of the WPH website by residents who will be able to access information on line through the tenant's portal and reduce the number of telephone calls to the office.</p>	<p>We are developing an IT project plan including a Tenant Portal and a new website. It should be up and running next year. We asked for residents to volunteer to help us design the portal and website in the last issue of Pioneer Press.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>We will have a "latest news" feature.</p>

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS	WPH RESPONSE
<b>Pioneer Press</b>			
<p>3. There is a lack of resident input in the content of Pioneer Press. WPH does not know whether residents read Pioneer Press. The events listed on the back page of Pioneer Press are often out of date by the time residents receive it.</p>	<p>3.1 WPH should invite 2 or 3 residents to take part in the editorial Panel responsible for Pioneer Press.</p> <p>3.2 WPH should undertake research to find out:  - do residents read Pioneer Press and if not, why not.  - what do residents like about Pioneer Press  - what would residents like to see included in Pioneer Press</p> <p>3.3 There should be a 'You said, We did' section in each edition of Pioneer Press, that could address general issues raised by residents at 'Meet the Managers' events, pop up events etc.</p>	<p>This will help ensure meaningful involvement in the content of Pioneer Press.</p> <p>Residents will see that they are listened to and that WPH is responding to their problems.</p>	<p>This is in place; we have 2 residents and advertised in the last edition for more resident input.</p> <p>SMS surveys on Pioneer Press are planned.</p> <p>Agreed.</p>

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS	WPH RESPONSE
<b>Notice Boards</b>			
<p>4. Information on the notice boards is not always up to date. There is no named member of staff responsible for the notice boards. Residents are unclear about the purpose of the notice boards and how they can go about putting something on the notice board</p>	<p>4.1 Information must be kept up to date and every notice board checked once a week.</p> <p>4.2 There should be a named responsible person / people for the content of notice board. The RSP suggests that this role could be undertaken by the Estate Support Officers and Scheme Managers.</p> <p>4.3 Information put on the notice boards could be more concise.</p> <p>4.4 Information on the notice board could be a different colour each month.</p>	<p>Residents are more likely to read up-to-date information</p> <p>This will ensure that the information on notice boards is kept up-to-date. Residents will know who to go to if they would like something put on the notice boards.</p> <p>Residents will be more likely to read concise information.</p> <p>Changing the colour of the paper each month will make the notice boards more eye catching and encourage residents to look at the notice boards.</p>	<p>System in place for inspecting notice boards to ensure information is relevant and up-to-date.</p> <p>This is the responsibility of the Estate Services Officers for each patch and the Scheme Manager in sheltered accommodation</p> <p>We now have standard templates for WPH noticeboard posters in place. This drives clear and concise info and enables residents to see new info from WPH quickly. We will consider changing the colour each month but there are also advantages to a standard WPH colour to distinguish WPH info.</p>

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS	WPH RESPONSE
<b>Telephone Calls</b>			
<p>5. The current telephone system does not allow for accurate performance reporting e.g. total number of calls, missed calls and average waiting times</p>	<p>5.1 The telephone system needs to be updated so that accurate performance information can be garnered. This should include total number of calls, numbers of missed calls and average waiting times.</p> <p>5.2 The telephone system should also have the facility for residents to request a call back.</p>	<p>WPH will be able to monitor the number of telephone calls not picked up.</p> <p>Increased resident satisfaction</p>	<p>We may update our telephone system when we move to a new office in 2-3 years but the cost would not be justified at present. Changes to the existing telephone options (i.e. allowing residents to be put straight through to duty housing officer) will cut down on missed calls. Monitor through quarterly Acuity surveys</p> <p>We will introduce a voicemail services to allow residents to leave messages within and outside office hours.</p>

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS	WPH RESPONSE
<b>Face to Face contact</b>			
<p>6. 'Meet the Manager' events are very popular.</p>	<p>6.1 WPH should hold more of this type of event e.g. ESO surgeries, themed drop-ins etc.</p> <p>6.2 WPH should feedback via Pioneer Press, the website and the notice boards on issues that are commonly raised through these events.</p> <p>6.3 WPH needs to keep clear records on the reasons for people visiting their office</p> <p>6.4 WPH should make better use of the reception area for displays e.g. for the historical project, to display details of the redevelopment of the Browning House site,</p>	<p>Increase number of residents that WPH engages with.</p> <p>Resident will see that WPH is listening to them and responding to their concerns.</p>	<p>Meet the Managers are scheduled for the next year. ESO/HO/SM surgeries will be held monthly from September.</p> <p>Agreed. Feedback was included in last month's edition. We will develop this further.</p> <p>Our upgrade to our IT system will allow all contacts, including the reason, to be logged,</p> <p>Some work has already been done to improve the reception and we will keep this under review through our Communication Working Group</p> <p>The Browning House redevelopment details will be placed in reception once the contract is let. Residents will be invited to comment on the design of the new office reception area.</p>

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS	BENEFITS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO WPH AND RESIDENTS	WPH RESPONSE
<b>Text Messaging Service</b>			
7. WPH holds mobile numbers for 650 residents but does currently not operate a text messaging service	<p>7.1 WPH should ask for residents mobile phone numbers at sign up.</p> <p>7.2 WPH should check residents mobile numbers each time they speak to them to ensure they have the correct number.</p> <p>7.3 WPH should invest in a text messaging service that could be used to remind residents about repairs appointments, to pay their rent and to tell them about upcoming events.</p>	<p>This is a quick and easy method for contacting residents. It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increase the number of residents that are home when repairs operatives call</li> <li>- help to reduce rent arrears figures</li> <li>- help promote events and activities</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed. We will make sure this is consistently applied.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>This is part of our IT upgrade plan but will be dependent on cost and potential to integrate with our other systems.</p>
<b>Use of Social Media</b>			
8. WPH uses Twitter but does not operate a Facebook page	<p>8.1 WPH should use Twitter to publicise resident engagement activities such as 'Meet the Managers' events and pop up events.</p> <p>8.2 The Scrutiny panel would like to see WPH pilot the use of a closed Facebook page as part of their resident engagement activities.</p>	<p>This will mean that there will be a greater awareness and greater input into consultation exercises from the wider resident body.</p>	<p>Agreed. The Service Charges pop up and EqualiTeas events were advertised in this way. We are using Twitter more and building a profile. We advertised our twitter profile in previous Pioneer Press.</p> <p>We sought wider resident feedback in the last edition of Pioneer Press and will report back to the Scrutiny Panel on this.</p>



