



Summary report

Review period August-November 2019

Role of Housing Officers & Phoenix's Approach to 'At Risk' Residents Review

Welcome to our tenth review. The Scrutiny Panel explore, examine and test Phoenix services on behalf of residents. We make recommendations to improve services and satisfaction.

We chose to investigate the role of Housing Officers because they are a critical frontline service for Phoenix and are the main contact for many residents. We wanted to understand how much Housing Officers have to deal with on a daily basis.

How we carried out the review

We examined the service through a document review and requested key documents.

We interviewed the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Director of Customer Services), Housing Managers, Housing Officer and Tenancy Support Advisor. We also observed a 'new tenant' induction session.

The scope for the review was:

To review the role of Housing Officers and Phoenix's approach to residents 'at risk'.

To measure the success of the review we set out to understand:

- How the role of the Housing Officer links with tenants and how this is carried out.
- Identify the types of support offered to 'at risk' tenants and how this is communicated and accessed.
- Identify how Housing Officers are supported to deal with 'at risk' residents and complex cases.

Definition of: 'at risk'

An individual or household that needs enhanced services or additional support to enable them to live independently, sustain their tenancy or lease and/or to prevent social exclusion.

Meet the panel

Five members of the Scrutiny Panel contributed to this report.

Join us!

If you'd like to help put Phoenix under the microscope, improve services and satisfaction, please get in touch.



Eileen Davies



Karen Stokes



Gwen Smith



Deirdre Kennedy



Simon Barlow

Our key findings

There are approximately 5,300 general needs homes that nine Housing Officers must provide services to and support.

5,300
general needs
homes

9
Housing
officers



Each Housing Officer manages a patch of around 600 properties and are also the contact person at Phoenix for issues including:

- Tenancy and rehousing
- Antisocial behaviour (ASB) and noise nuisance
- Parking/abandoned cars
- Neighbour disputes
- Harassment
- Domestic abuse
- Hate crime and racially motivated incidents
- Graffiti
- Identifying residents 'at risk'

600
properties
per Housing
Officer



Housing Officers also organise small functions for residents to promote a sense of community, for example, organising coffee mornings. This can create an extra workload for Housing Officers on top of the other tasks that they have to complete.



Phoenix also provides adjusted services to 'at risk' residents. Phoenix does not have a statutory duty to provide these services but choose to. These services include energy advice, gardening service and support to people who hoard.

Phoenix adapts and adjusts services to support residents to access services. This can include producing documents in larger print, and using contact advice stored on their database, for example knocking loudly and giving additional time for the resident to answer the door.



When interviewing ...we noted

Designated Safeguarding Officer & Director of Customer Services, David Westworth

The Phoenix Safeguarding Panel promotes and supports Phoenix's responsibilities towards Safeguarding to ensure that everyone they work with is kept safe and protected from harm, neglect, abuse and injury.

Housing Officer, Jeffrey Williams

A typical day for him involves:

- checking emails, messages and confirming appointments.
- attending appointments and visits (safeguarding visits, occupancy checks and probationary visits)
- making referrals and signposting to other organisations and agencies.

Any cases allocated to him are categorised into priorities. Those prioritised as high could be ASB or domestic abuse related, require legal action such as serving notices, referring cases to the London Borough of Lewisham emergency rehousing panel or responding to complaints and correspondence in target timescales.

Tenancy Support Advisor, Christine Dearden

Her role is to deal sensitively with resident hoarding and take action on hoarding issues. Christine assesses when people have hoarding difficulties and provides support to help them access services including repairs and clear their property.

Recommendations

Our top recommendations

At the end of our review in November, we made four recommendations which can be viewed in our full report. These are our recommendations:



- 1 Increase the number of Housing Officers and have an additional Tenancy Support Advisor. As Phoenix develops new properties, the number of Housing Officers should be increased to manage workloads, helping to improve the service provided to all residents.**
- 2 Housing Officers should hold local drop-in surgeries.**
- 3 Develop a communications campaign so that residents know who their Housing Officer is which should include:**
 - Requests for repairs should be made directly to the Contact Centre.
 - Introduction to the Housing Officer and their roles and responsibilities.
- 4 Provide Housing Officers with Stress Management, Conflict Resolution and Mental Health Resilience training to support them in their role and help them to manage resident expectation effectively.**

Constraints

- The majority of our understanding was developed through interviews, rather than direct observations of the Housing Officers / Tenancy Support Advisor 'live'
- Panel membership changing during investigation.

What we've learnt

- The broad remit of the officers, but this can lead to confusion if more emphasis is placed on specific aspects by different officers.
- Tenancy Support Advisor role has an amazing impact on the residents being supported.

Resident satisfaction!

97%
very or fairly
satisfied

97% of tenants said that were very or fairly satisfied with the lettings process in 2018-19.

54% of tenants in 2018-19 were very or fairly satisfied with the way their ASB complaint was handled compared with 51% in 2017-18.

54%
very or fairly
satisfied

Traffic light monitoring

0

13

54

1 not started

To make sure that services are improved for all residents, we monitor recommendations from our previous reviews to track when actions have been completed.

We use a traffic light system to help us:

- red (delayed)
- amber (in progress)
- green (completed)

Phoenix and regulatory standards

At the core of every scrutiny review, we look to improve services for all residents in line with the Phoenix Standards and regulatory code set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

In this review, we found that the Housing Team keeps the promises made under Phoenix standard 1 (Tenant Involvement & Empowerment) and standard 3 (Tenancy).

Farewell

Congratulations to former scrutiny panel member Simon Barlow who has left the panel and been elected to the Phoenix Board!



What's next

- Follow the progress of recommendations from past reviews.
- Continue communications and engagement with residents to increase panel membership.
- The panel are planning to visit other scrutiny panels as part of good practice and networking.



The Phoenix Standards are available on the Phoenix website. If you require a hard copy, please get in touch with Phoenix.



More info

This is a summary version of our full report. If you'd like to read the full report, please call 0800 0285 700 or visit the Phoenix website.

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