

Meeting	Customer Committee	
Date of meeting	27/04/2023	
Agenda number and title of report	Consumer Standard report – Tenancy Standard	
Author name and role	Jim Scollen Stream Lead	customer.engagement@thirteengroup.co.uk
What do you want the board/committee to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note (for information) - Consider and approve recommendations 	

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has set consumer standards which all registered providers (housing associations and housing organisations) must comply with. This is our assessment of how Thirteen meets these standards.
- 1.2 We are required to present this assessment to Thirteen Customer Committee and publish it on their website so all customers can view it.
- 1.3 There are four consumer standards:
1. **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment**
 2. **Home**
 3. **Tenancy**
 4. **Neighbourhood and Community**
- 1.4 Within Thirteen’s Customer Involvement Framework, a group of customers are dedicated to testing Thirteen’s compliance with the Consumer Standards
- 1.5 This report gives details of our customer reality checks against the Tenancy Standard.

2 SUMMARY OF THE DECISION

- 2.1 This report and supporting evidence show that through our assessment, we have rated this standard as being met in all areas.

3 ASSESSMENTS OF THE TENANCY STANDARD.

- 3.1 The customer group consisted of myself as stream lead and 10 customers who met on a regular basis depending on the needs of the group members and the activities to be carried out.
- 3.2 All the checks carried out were to ensure that Thirteen is compliant with the Tenancy Standard.

Process

- 3.3 We held our first meeting to review the standard, agree the scope and plan the project. In this meeting we agreed the methods to be used to establish compliance.

Project Plan

- 3.4 The project plan was made up of 62 checks/tasks to be carried out.

4 CONSULTATION & COMMUNICATION

Group Meetings

- 4.1 Meetings were held either using Microsoft Teams or in a hybrid format with a choice of joining online or in person.
- 4.2 Following the initial meeting there were five further meetings held for the full group to attend. During these meetings we met with the Head of Housing and the Head of Care and Support.
- 4.3 Prior to meeting with the Head of Housing, we composed six questions which we asked to be answered. During the meeting we were given information on fixed term tenancies and the reasons why a customer would be offered one, how customers can access a mutual exchange, the process that Thirteen follows and how many exchanges had taken place during the previous 12 months. We were also given the opportunity to ask questions during the meeting. We found that the number of mutual exchanges completed were quite low and although the opportunity to mutually exchange a property is advertised, this could be improved to increase the number of customers benefitting. We therefore recommend that a service project is carried out on mutual exchanges.
- 4.4 During our meeting with the Head of Care and Support we were given information on how decisions are made to let properties in sheltered, extra-care and supported accommodation and how Thirteen work closely with the

Local Authorities to provide this. We were also given information on the support offered to customers where English is not their first language or customers who are unable to read or write. We were given the opportunity to ask questions throughout the meeting.

4.5 As part of the Customer Involvement Framework, meetings have taken place with managers and involved customers over the last 12 months and have been recorded. We are happy to use these meetings as evidence as no other questions were deemed necessary. These meetings include:

- Performance Monitoring
- Complaints Monitoring
- Service Project – Housing Services 1 Year On

Journey Mapping

4.6 Customer journey maps were created documenting the experiences of eight customers who had moved into a Thirteen home over the past 12 months. The experiences of the customers highlighted a need for better communication and a more personal service for customers moving into their new home. We therefore recommend that the next stage of the In-Depth review on communications is on the communication a customer receives from Thirteen from the time when they bid on a property to when they move in.

Job Shadowing

4.7 Job shadowing was carried out with the Touchpoint team by five members of the group. The job shadowing took place in the Touchpoint stores in Stockton and Hull and with the Touchpoint team in Hudson Quay. The customers who carried out job shadowing in the stores observed the interactions a member of the Touchpoint team had with customers visiting the store. The customers who visited Hudson Quay listened to incoming calls as well as observing how the members of the team respond to emails and messages via social media. The purpose of the job shadowing was to identify if customers are given the correct information and guidance on the actions they need to take when registering to bid for a property, bidding for a property and moving home. There were several examples of good practice whereby customers were well advised. Some examples included, a customer being given help to bid for properties and another being given advice on the information they would need to register to bid for properties. Overall, the job shadowing was successful and provided good evidence of customer service and information sharing to customers and potential customers.

Mystery Shopping

4.8 Mystery Shopping was carried out through website checks:

- We checked the website for information on mutual exchanges and found easy access to the website 'House Exchange' on which a customer can register and search for properties.
- We found help and advice for customers who find themselves homeless.
- We found help for customers whose first language is not English.
- We found information on what help is available for customers to enable them to sustain their tenancy such as help with employment opportunities and money advice.

Policy Consultation

4.9 The Tenancy Policy was due for review during our project therefore we were able to ensure that the information included in the policy was relevant to the Tenancy Standard. As part of the policy consultation the policy was sent to the involved customer database along with a link to a survey to complete. The results of the survey showed that the policy was easy to read and understand and covered all points in the Tenancy Standard. It was noted that the information on mutual exchanges was short and the information on sustaining tenancies was not clear to some customers. As a result of this the Director of Operations agreed to amend the policy to include more information on mutual exchanges and further information on the Tenancy Support Service.

Surveys

4.10 We carried out two surveys during our evidence gathering:

- A survey was sent to the involved customer database to ascertain what they knew about mutual exchanges and if they had ever moved home by way of mutual exchange. We received nineteen responses. The majority of customers had some knowledge of mutual exchange and a handful of customers had moved home this way, however, this was not recent.
- A survey was sent to the Housing Services Coordinators (HSCs) via a Housing Services Manager. We received nine responses. The questions asked on the survey were around mutual exchanges, allocations, overcrowding, under occupancy and the communication with customers prior to them moving in. We found that the HSCs answered in a customer friendly manner. They gave information on the checks that are carried out prior to a customer being allocated a property, how they deal with overcrowding, under occupancy and

subletting and the actions they take to ensure that a property is not empty for long periods of time.

Document Checks

4.11 The group members agreed that they needed to check a range of documents to support their work. We looked at:

- Lettings policy
- Repairs and Maintenance policy
- Tenancy Agreement
- Void Standard
- Allocations Process
- CORE Process
- Succession Process

Other Information

4.12 To support assurance other information was shared to be used as evidence. This included,

- New Lets Customer Experience presentation – we were given satisfaction information collated by the Customer Experience Team from customers who had recently moved into a new home. We found the majority of customers were happy with the service however there were some who felt that communication could have been better.
- Tenancy Support info – we were shown information on the new helpline available to Thirteen staff members on Channel if they need advice on the support that is available to customers to help them sustain their tenancy.
- Welcome Video – we are aware that this is in the process of being updated and a group of involved customers will be set up to support this.

5 CONCLUSION(S)

5.1 The group members were happy that the information and supporting evidence received demonstrated compliance with the standard. We are therefore happy to give assurance that all elements of the Tenancy Standard are being met.

6 RECOMMENDATION(S)

6.1 **We recommend that the following service project groups are initiated:**

Mutual Exchange – to investigate ways to promote this and increase customer take up.

In-Depth Review - Communications – The final step of the Communications to enhance the service received by customers when moving into their new homes.

Contact Details: Jim Scollen (Customer Stream Lead)