



**Investigation
into
Engaging
Young Tenants
in Rotherham**

Interim Report October 2016

Rotherfed Tenant Scrutiny formed in April 2016 and this is their first investigation.

Tenant Scrutiny provides an opportunity to build effective partnership between Rotherham's tenants and the Council in the spirit of co-regulation, resulting in a joint-win for all. The process can challenge landlord's services, standards and performance leading to better performance, value for money and tenant satisfaction.

STAR survey results

Younger tenants (16-34s) living in Rotherham Council housing generally feel more dissatisfied and out of touch with their landlord (STAR survey);

- **30%** say that they are dissatisfied with the landlord listening to their views and acting on them (another 20% were unsure).
- **24%** say that they are dissatisfied with opportunities to make their views known (another 30% were unsure).
- **18%** felt dissatisfied with being kept informed by their landlord (34% were unsure).

Progress so far

The Tenant Scrutiny panel has met five times over the past few months. Achievements so far have been;

Scoping and preparing a time plan for the investigation

The investigation is planned to run up to February 2017 and is to include meetings with officers and engagement events with younger tenants to get a rounded view on how services and opportunities can be improved.

Designing and circulating a survey for younger tenants

The surveys asks for the views of younger tenants on whether they would like to have more of a say on housing services and what things the Council could do to get them more engaged. 44 surveys have been returned so far.



First meeting with officers

Officers from Rush House, Wilmott Dixon, Mears, Rotherham Council (Neighbourhood Development) and Rotherfed were invited to share their views on why younger tenants are more dissatisfied and what the barriers to engagement are for them. Examples of good practice were also discussed.

Younger tenant engagement event - Pizza Chips & Chat

Younger tenants were invited to come along and chat about ways of engaging them and their feelings on how they are treated by officers. There were different activities such as a website challenge, plain language tester followed by a focus group session over lunch. Attendance was low (six younger tenants) but as a result of this there was opportunity for deeper questioning.



Second meeting with officers

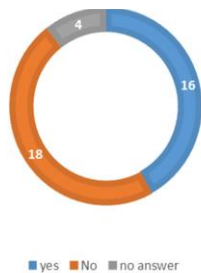
Discussions took place with officers from various teams across Rotherham Housing Services. Themes for the meeting were based around the results of the engagement event i.e. Plain Language, Online services, Reception Areas, Sign –up Experience and ideas to improve general engagement with younger tenants.

Findings so far

Survey

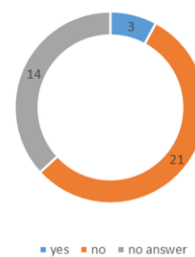
The highlights from the survey so far are:

Would you like to have more say?



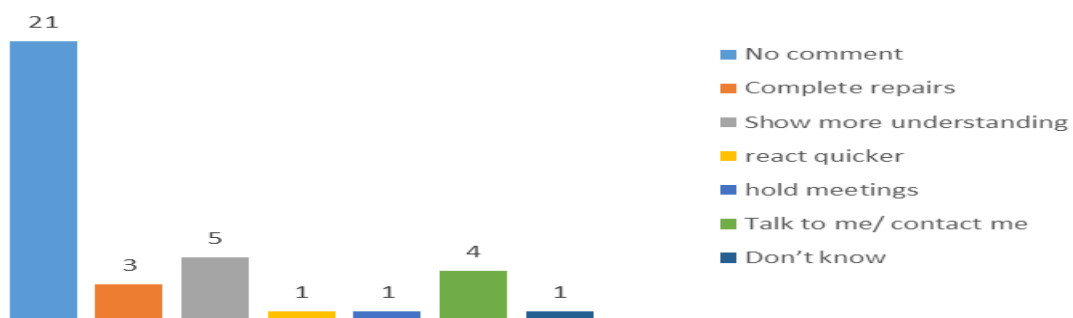
42% would like to have more say.

Do you read Home Matters?



Only 8% read the magazine.

What can the Council do?



Young people wanted to be shown more understanding and be contacted more often.

Discussions with younger tenants

The Pizza, Chips and Chat event found that:



All those using the housing reception recently found their experience to be poor due to waiting times, screens not working, and being unable to hear properly. Two people felt patronised by the member of staff they spoke to.

Applying for a Council house was easy on the website but other transactions were found to be difficult, in particular telling someone that you were moving home.

The tenancy agreement and annual report were good, but all documents were too long and contained too many statistics.

The magazine should include more stories about younger people, local communities and events.

Younger tenants thought the communication could be improved particularly by sending things through the post as well as using social media. They would also like more visits from housing officers and more events in their local area.

Rush House had helped respondents massively during their sign-up experience. One person had never received a follow-up visit.

Next steps

- To find ideas for good practice for engaging younger tenants used by other housing providers.
- To connect with other younger tenants by visiting existing groups where there are concentrations of younger tenants.
- To map out existing support and engagement services and identify any gaps.
- To get more surveys completed and carry out a final analysis of the responses.
- To submit final report and recommendations in February / March 2017.