



Prospect Scrutiny Group

Report on Scrutiny of Prospect Community Housing's Stair Cleaning Service

August 2017



1. Prospect Scrutiny Group

In response to the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, Prospect Community Housing began exploring how to develop its own scrutiny programme. Following committee approval of a Scrutiny Framework in 2015, housing management staff worked with a range of tenants to develop interest in the concept.

By late 2016 a group of tenants had committed to taking part in the process and agreed to undertake a series of six training sessions during January and February of 2017. The training followed the Stepping Up to Scrutiny Programme as advocated by The Scottish Government and covered areas such as:

- Understanding Scrutiny and the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Getting to grips with performance
- Scrutiny Action Planning and the remit of a scrutiny group.

Following completion of the training we decided to call ourselves the Prospect Scrutiny Group or PSG. We have five members and agreed a terms of reference which has been approved by Prospect Committee. Our aims are:

“To collaborate with Prospect for the success of Prospect Community Housing to help ensure it provides services of the highest standard which meet the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

To develop greater tenant influence in decision making on services.”

We see ourselves as a “critical friend” to Prospect.

Following completion of our training, we looked at the recommendations from the 2016 Prospect Tenant Satisfaction Survey and the Tenant Satisfaction Survey Action plan. We agreed to choose stair cleaning as our first scrutiny topic as we felt it would be:

- Useful and interesting to Prospect tenants and Prospect Community Housing for us to identify ways to improve satisfaction
- An area with lower satisfaction ratings in the satisfaction survey (although we recognised satisfaction levels had improved significantly)
- A topic which isn't too wide ranging and therefore easier to scrutinise for our first exercise.

The Prospect Scrutiny Group consists of:

Eunice Main

Cheryl Mabon

Isaac Adejumo

Sylwia Bogusz

Heather Horribine

2 Scrutinising Prospect's Stair Cleaning Service

We began by looking at the stair cleaning procedures and specifications and prepared questions for the stair cleaning team. We then carried out a number of inspections of stairs which had recently had a weekly clean as well as an annual clean and checked the cleanliness of the stair against the specification. We found this interesting to gain an understanding of how the process works. Also, we spoke to residents to hear their views of the service and we checked notice boards and lighting. In addition, we compared the Prospect service to City of Edinburgh Council service by inspecting a council stair. Importantly, we also spoke to the stair cleaning team, asking them questions about the service and their views of it. Finally we looked at the cost of the service to establish whether it is value for money by comparing Prospect's service with two other Edinburgh Housing Associations (Manor Estates and Muirhouse).

We would like to thank the members of the Stair Cleaning team, John Nairn and John Smith, for spending time with us and answering our questions so fully.

3 Findings and Recommendations

Based on the work we undertook, we would like to share our findings and make the following recommendations:

A. Stair Cleaning

Findings:

- The service is very good. We found that the stair cleaning team do a really good job. We thought they are a great team which focuses on the quality of the job rather than the time. We felt they seemed to be quite well managed.
- We found the stairs were clean and tidy with secure doors. This helps to prevent incidents of human/dog waste but if this does happen it is cleared up straight away due to the flexibility of the team.
- We found out about the challenges the team face (getting hot water to the stairs, how they cope with one person short, dog hairs, sweetie wrappers, dumped rubbish, children playing in the stairs especially during school holidays)
- In comparison to the Council service we felt the Prospect stairs were cleaner, had no graffiti, smelt fresh, had up to date information and secure door entries.
- We found that the cost of providing the stair cleaning service compared well with other Housing Associations.
- We recognised that it is a positive that Prospect employs local people to the team, we felt this encouraged people to take a pride in the area.
- We appreciated the investment in good quality flooring and the painting programme.
- For these reasons we decided it's a value for money service.

Recommendations:

1. Although most of the specification was met, we didn't find that the windowsills are dusted and wiped with a damp cloth. This should be introduced.
2. Tenants should be encouraged to report issues with lighting to Prospect.
3. Give the team appropriate equipment to reach to remove cobwebs in the stairs.
4. We noticed lots of cobwebs at the outside of the entrances. Consideration should be given to removing these over the summer months.

5. Consideration should also be given to cleaning the bin chute area once per month as these are not cleaned.

B. Stair Notice boards

Findings:

- We found that the notice boards would benefit from improvements.
- Currently leaflets etc. are packed into many of the noticeboards and are ineffectual as you can't read them.
- The position of the noticeboards are often in areas with no natural light and far from stair lighting.
- It wasn't clear what residents should expect from the service.
- Fire safety information was hidden and we were concerned about this.

Recommendations:

6. A revised tick sheet would help to clarify expectations of the service – this should include when the stair cleaning is taking place, include the specification for the service and ask that children are supervised when stair cleaning is being done.
7. Replace current noticeboards with larger ones so there is room for fire safety information.
8. Reposition the notice boards where there is better lighting

4 Next Steps

We look forward to hearing from Prospect's Management Committee what they think of our report. We would like to work with Prospect staff to agree an action plan to deliver the approved recommendations of this report.

We would also like to invite Management Committee to make any recommendations for a future scrutiny topic which we will take into consideration when deciding our next exercise.

Eunice Main, Cheryl Mabon, Isaac Adejumo, Sylwia Bogusz

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9 August 2017

