

# Scrutiny Panel Report – BHA Website

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Prepared February 2015 and presented to Jean Gray BHA Communications Group

Draft for Scrutiny Panel 11-02-15

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## Executive Summary

Energy efficiency was selected as the first area for investigation by the Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) Scrutiny Panel (the Panel) following the 2014 Tenants Satisfaction Survey. Whilst carrying out this initial investigation, a number of recommendations were specifically made regarding the website<sup>1</sup>. It became clear that communication was a key area of concern to tenants, particularly in regard to the low level of utilisation of the BHA Website by tenants.

Rather than tackle the very wide topic of communication as a whole, it was decided by the Panel that an investigation of the website would be the next topic. At the time of writing a Communication Group within BHA has been established and has met once. This group is made up of staff from all departments. The Scrutiny Panel and Board have not been invited to make up part of this group, and it is the key recommendation of this report that representatives from both groups should be invited to join.

The Tenant Satisfaction Survey identified that:

- 51% of tenants have internet access<sup>2</sup> but only 11% had used the BHA website during the last year (this means that 89% of tenants have not used the website);

12 tenants (2%) made recommendations for features/information that might be included in the BHA Web site.

We were provided with statistics of the usage of the site and the pages visited. The website is not the easiest to find. We have rebranded as BHA, but we do not come up on Google immediately we are 8th below the British Horse Racing Authority and British Humanist Association!

The Panel would like to better understand the reason for low level use of the site by tenants but has not extended the remit of this review to include tenant interviews and / or focus groups as the on-going work of the Communications Group may mean tenants are invited to comment on a website that will change in the near future anyway.

### What are the aims and objectives of a Website?

We believe there are two major aims:

- To provide information to current and potential tenants;
- To promote and market the services BHA offers to its customers.

The BHA website primarily intends to be a means of communication to tenants. The purpose of the scrutiny exercise was to examine how effective the website is in meeting this aim. The fact that only 11% of tenants have used it, while 51% have internet access suggest it is not effective communication channel to reach tenants. The Panel took the opportunity of looking at the effectiveness of website from two perspectives; as a member of the general public and as a Tenant.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Knowledge Partnership presentation of findings of the Tenant Satisfaction survey to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and BHA Board on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014

The conclusions reached are that the website is not fit for purpose, which may account for the low level of tenant use, and it does not reflect the ethos of BHA.

The Panel requests confirmation from management that these are the main aims of the website, before making recommendations to incur costs to implement a level of quality that does not achieve a business goal, as this makes little sense. For this reason, the recommendations we have made have been limited to the content of the website

The aims of BHA stated on the website home page are:

“Thriving neighbourhoods full of choice and opportunity for all ages and where future generations will choose to stay and prosper.”

The Panel’s review of the website content indicates that there could be far more information of a higher quality offered to potential and current tenants to assist them in accessing BHA’s services, thus promoting BHA’s aims. The Panel were impressed with Thames Valley Housing Association<sup>3</sup> stated aims of their website, as follows:

The website will aim to always:

- Provide information that is important, relevant and helpful to all its audiences
- Provide a range of online services that are easy to use and reliable
- Provide content that is timely and kept regularly updated
- Provide content that can be found easily through an intuitive web structure, organised in a way that is meaningful to its audiences
- Provide the user with well designed, easy to view pages and other types of content.
- Ensure all text will be written in plain English
- Ensure that the website conforms to AA accessibility rating as a minimum standard
- Use new technology (including social media and other digital technologies) to provide the best possible service

If we were to adopt similar aims for BHA and then compare them to the actual content of the BHA website, the panel are of the view that the BHA website is most definitely not fit for purpose.

We have made a number of observations about the website in the following pages. We would recommend that Link Housing Association’s site is viewed as we found this to be very useful and informative with a series of films showcasing aspects of what they do for their Tenants.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Panel would like to thank all the staff involved for their time and to thank the Board and Management Team for their continued support of the scrutiny process. We look forward to hearing responses to the findings and recommendations and a positive programme to address identified shortcomings. The Panel proposes a review date for March/April 2015.

## Introduction

### 1.1. What is Scrutiny?

“Tenant scrutiny is an approach rather than a process. It is flexible in terms of context and application. There will be differences from one organisation to the next in the composition, administration and resourcing of scrutiny arrangements. It is important that local conditions are taken into account when deciding on reporting structures or the location of groups within the corporate structure of an organisation, relationships with other tenant involvement activities; and the scrutiny activities to be undertaken. In addition, capability and capacity to undertake tenant scrutiny activities will vary from one organisation to another”.

### 1.2. How Did BHA Get Involved?

BHA, in 2013, became part of the Early Adopters Programme of “Stepping Up to Scrutiny” a programme commissioned by the Scottish Government, aimed at improving organisations and tenants understanding and awareness of the scrutiny intentions contained within the Scottish Social Housing Charter and related regulatory framework.

### 1.3. Scrutiny Panel Composition

BHA tenants decided to establish a Scrutiny Panel with members coming from The Tenants Volunteer Panel, The BHA Board and BHA staff.

Initial meetings were called with open discussions. It was decided that the first year of the Scrutiny Panel will be chaired by a member from the Board, with the following year being chaired by a member from the Tenant Volunteers. We were concerned that asking a member of staff to chair would place them in a conflict of interest position, however having members of staff would add to the panel with their expertise on the operational workings of BHA.

The initial panel consisted of 4 Tenant Volunteers, 2 Board Members and 3 members of staff one of whom acts as Secretary to the Scrutiny Panel and arranges room bookings, minutes and other administration tasks. Since undertaking the initial scrutiny review in 2014 the Panel membership has been expanded to include another tenant.

The Scrutiny Panel members are:

- George Pickering, Nigel Seaward, Rodney Short, Brian Walker and Pauline Seaward (Tenant Volunteers);
- Maria Peers, Jo Pawley (Board);
- Kimberley Hoddinott, Julia Graham and Julia Keddie (Staff).

### 1.4. What are the Benefits of Scrutiny?

Scrutiny allows the monitoring of performance of BHA. It allows tenants to be able to give a perspective on the workings of the association as well as allowing Tenants to have the ability to have a say on and improve the services tenants receive as they have a unique and valuable perspective on the actual delivery of those services.

It also allows the Panel to work in a manner where everyone has a voice. Everyone is equal.

#### 1.5. Selecting a Topic for Scrutiny

When the Scrutiny Panel was established it decided to await the outcome of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014 to help inform the choice of topics to review.

A presentation to the Board was held on the results in May 2014, as mentioned above, to which the Scrutiny Panel members were all invited. Following this the report on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2014 was circulated to all members so everyone had a copy.

#### 1.6. Scope and Review Activities

We held our first meeting on the 19th March 2014 to agree the terms of the Scrutiny Panel and it was decided that Tenant Satisfaction Survey results would be used to set the initial programme of work for the Panel.

We looked at the areas of concern and decided that we would look at 3 areas:

- Energy Efficiency including Fuel Poverty. This has been reported on in October 2014;
- Communications;
- And another area to be decided.

The Panel undertook a review following the completion of the first scrutiny exercise and decided to narrow down the scope of the second review from the wider topic of communications to just the BHA website and its role in communications to tenants. The review did not consider the design of the website but limited itself to review of the content. Observations were made on the quality of the content, ease of finding it, its relevance and its ease of use. Observations were also made about content that was not present that the Panel would like to see.

#### 1.7. Scrutiny Process.

For our second report on the website content, we asked for information regarding the recently established BHA Communications Group and received a detailed presentation by Colin Turner. We were also provided with data regarding the total number of views of each page of the website together with the number of unique page views.

We set aside time to meet with the opportunity of looking at a number of other websites and comparing the same with BHA.

We looked at the following Housing Association/ RSL websites:

- SBHA;
- Link;
- Lochalsh and Skye;
- Eildon;
- Four Housing;
- Waverley; and
- Cairn.

Following this meeting a draft of the report was prepared and circulated for comments and approval to Jean Gray and the Communications Group.

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## Findings Recommendations and Actions:

Website area	No	Scrutiny observations and Recommendations	Priority H M L	Communication Team and MT Response	By	Response of Scrutiny panel
A Website						
Welcome Screen	1	<p>This does not appear to work. It would be good if there was some text on this. Maybe who we are, what are aims are: See Four Housing: <a href="http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/Extended_Content.aspx?pg=9">http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/Extended_Content.aspx?pg=9</a></p> <p>Or Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association <a href="http://www.lsha.co.uk/lsha/introduction.htm">http://www.lsha.co.uk/lsha/introduction.htm</a></p> <p>Eildon give a brief History and list achievements and awards: <a href="http://www.eildon.org.uk/2/11/Brief-History-and-Achievements.aspx">http://www.eildon.org.uk/2/11/Brief-History-and-Achievements.aspx</a></p> <p>Homepage is dated and the pictures do not reflect BHA, its people or the area in which we operate.</p>		Agree and looking at alternative designs now. Linked into the internal project		Perhaps question should read "What BHA Aims Are?" Group would like update on how are alternative designs looking? What do they look like? Home page could be a lot better, this is our window to the outside world. Not only tenants view this.
Useful Information	2	<p>This contains the following: <b>BHA Update.</b> This was last updated Summer 2013! We are now in 2015 nothing happened then!</p> <p><b>BHA downsizing leaflet</b> with a pdf button. Nothing to say what it is about. No picture of a house or indeed big house to little house, just a pdf button. Pictures would be better.</p> <p><b>Policies.</b> It would appear we only have one policy, allocations.</p>		Better Comms Group champions will have ownership of content and this will ensure nothing should slip out of date in future.		Group suggest an early Scrutiny Panel/TV representative inclusion in the Better Comms Group. Both Pauline and Nigel Seaward have been nominated by the SP

		<p>See:  <a href="http://www.lsha.co.uk/lsha/policies.htm">http://www.lsha.co.uk/lsha/policies.htm</a>  which contains the following policies :</p> <p>Access to Information Policy  Adaptations Policy and Procedures  Anti-Social Behaviour Policy in the process of being reviewed  Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures  Estate Management Policy  Highland Housing Register - Allocations Policy  Membership of the Association Policy in the process of being reviewed  Membership of the Management Committee Policy  Repairs and Maintenance Policy  Rent Arrears - Prevention, Management and Recovery  Rent Setting Policy under consultation  Sponsorship Policy  Tenant Participation Policy  Void Management Policy</p> <p><b>Thriving Communities Grant Application award:</b>  Word and pdf Document. Nothing to indicate what this is. Information on what the Grant is and for. Link to Tenant Volunteer site as this is now under their remit for decision making.</p> <p>Annual Report. This does contain the last 3 years annual reports but would this not be better in a Publication part of the website.</p>			<p>and TVP to attend but have yet to receive invitation/dates</p> <p>Useful Information – the BHA update keep up to date with what we are doing in your community still shows only BHA update from summer 2013(as at 26<sup>th</sup> July 2015). When will ownership start?</p>
BHA Homes Seton Care BHA	3	<p>There are 3 sections devoted to these on the left hand side of the screen. There is nothing to indicate click here for more information or to put mouse over them for information.</p>		Agree. Will pick up in redesign once	Please clarify the Response. It seems to suggest that

Enterprise				project is fully scoped by December 2015	nothing being done until the project is scoped in December 2015.
About us	4	<p>About us states:  <i>"BHA people are positive, ready to lead on new ideas and solutions, see the workplace as somewhere to value and stay focused on our exciting vision of 'thriving neighbourhoods full of choice and opportunity for all ages and, where future generations will choose to stay and prosper'".</i></p> <p><i>From our award-winning childcare to our star-rated care home BHA is about building on our role as a home provider and developing new opportunities for people in the borders to live a life that is healthy, fulfilled and rewarding.</i></p> <p><i>We take responsibility and make things happen and everything we do is geared to making life better, easier and more plentiful for our customers. In doing so, we demonstrate by our words and actions the importance and value of what we do and encourage our customers to accept their share of responsibility to home and neighbourhood"</i></p> <p>But who are we? What do we do? See point 1 above</p>		Will review the way we display our info as part of redesign Dec15	Comment As above
Our Board	5	<p>Black and white photos. The Board look as though they have escaped from somewhere! Nothing to indicate more info if you click on a picture. Needs to be kept updated. Ian Jarvie is no longer a Board Member. Maria Peers needs to be identified as Convenor.</p> <p>For a better way of presenting Our Board please see:  <a href="http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/OurBoard.aspx">http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/OurBoard.aspx</a></p>		The black and white pics were chosen as they look better than colour. Only way to get good colour pics is to do a set photo shoot at same	Noted re black and white pictures. Board seems to be in alphabetical order of Christian name rather than surname? David Melrose has Bob Boltons biography. Ian Jarvie still

				time, same light with same camera. Historically we have had a lot of difficulty getting pictures taken		showing as a trustee.
Our People	6	<p>There are colour pictures of the Senior Management Team followed by a list of nearly all of the people who work at BHA with their telephone number listed and email. We would suggest that careful consideration of who is listed needs to be made. Why do we list everyone? Why would Tenants want to know that George Bell is one of our handymen?</p> <p>Four Housing lists only the Executive team and gives a brief CV.</p> <p>See <a href="http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/Extended_Content.aspx?pg=194">http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/Extended_Content.aspx?pg=194</a></p> <p>Alternatively Lochalsh and Skye lists all but gives no numbers <a href="http://www.lsha.co.uk/lsha/staffpictures2.htm">http://www.lsha.co.uk/lsha/staffpictures2.htm</a></p> <p>Other RSL's give details of the Housing Officers and the areas in which they work ( Geographical areas) <a href="http://www.eildon.org.uk/2/31/Operational-Managers.aspx">http://www.eildon.org.uk/2/31/Operational-Managers.aspx</a></p>		<p>We will communicate with other similar HA's possible representatives from Rural Housing Forum of which we are members. Part of being approachable is being visible. Better Comms find this comment fairly disrespectful in regards the comment about George. George is a key member of our front line staff</p>		<p>No disrespect to any individual was intended . the point suggested is to decide on which category of staff (ie Board/Executive/Staff dealing with customers) and how they should be identified and where each group should be fitted into the website.</p> <p>In particular reference to the handy men, can you confirm that the representatives when visiting people are attending at a pre-arranged time</p>

				<p>who visits people in their homes therefore important people can check who he is.</p> <p>Idea of grouping staff into areas is good idea and we will do this.</p>	<p>and have photo ID with them.</p> <p>Perhaps for those staff who visit tenants in their homes regularly there should be a photograph of them on the website if tenants wish to check identities?.</p>
Job Opportunities	7	<p>There is nothing on this page.</p> <p>We would recommend that something is written to reflect that we do have job opportunities, we may not have any current vacancies but we do have job opportunities. Something to reflect what it is like to work for the organisation.</p> <p>See Four Housing:  <a href="http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/Extended_Content.aspx?pg=6">http://www.fourhousing.co.uk/Extended_Content.aspx?pg=6</a></p> <p>Four Housing have a descriptive page with links to an overview, Current vacancies, case studies, benefits and training, living wage.</p> <p>See Link Housing: <a href="http://linkhousing.org.uk/careers/">http://linkhousing.org.uk/careers/</a></p> <p>Our page does not currently promote an organisation that people would wish to work for.</p>		<p>Agree. Content to be developed</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>BHA Group has an impressive array of awards which should/ could be cited.</p>

New to the Borders	8	<p>If this page is clicked it comes up with an error message and a Talk Talk logo.</p> <p>SBC has a link to Visit Scottish Borders Website;  <a href="http://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/scottish-borders/">http://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/scottish-borders/</a></p> <p>SBC have the following information:  <a href="http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/1464/attractions/652/visiting_the_borders">http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/1464/attractions/652/visiting_the_borders</a></p> <p>We do not need to reinvent the wheel, but link to existing sites and then check them once a month to make sure they still work.</p>		Agree. Link deleted.	Noted that the link is being deleted, but is the suggestion of the SBC link being considered?
Contact	9	<p>This would be better as Contact Us?  When you click on this page the first item you get is a large contact Inquiry form. This is not what is required. If people want to contact us they want details of how to get in contact with us:</p> <p>Address, Telephone numbers; email address; fax number; opening times; directions, map.</p> <p>We would recommend that the Contact Inquiry form is put somewhere else</p>		Better Comms Group agreed to swap info around and look at having contact numbers on home page.	Noted
BHA Homes button  My Home  My repair  My Voice	10	<p>We recommend that this needs changing asap. The English can be improved and the tone changed to a more collaborative one</p> <p>Information is good, but needs to be in a different place.</p> <p>Information is ok. Needs to be in a different place.</p>		<p>Will look at language and amend to be less 'you and us'</p> <p>We believe that the best way to find out</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>With regard to the Link housing videos the panel felt that there was value in them and that they may save time and costs. It was to show</p>

	<p>Link Housing has a tenant Zone: <a href="http://linkhousing.org.uk/">http://linkhousing.org.uk/</a></p> <p><a href="http://linkhousing.org.uk/tenants-zone/">http://linkhousing.org.uk/tenants-zone/</a></p> <p>Which contains all the information you could ever need:          Tenant Handbook;          Tenant News;          Welcome to your new home;          Living in your new home;          Paying your rent;          repairs and improvements;          Change of circumstances;          Our Service your views;          Save money and Energy;          FAQ's;          Useful links for Tenants and          Get Involved</p> <p>Link Housing is an innovative site. It has created a series of short films which give information.          For example repairs and improvements:  <a href="http://linkhousing.org.uk/tenants-zone/repairs-and-improvements/">http://linkhousing.org.uk/tenants-zone/repairs-and-improvements/</a></p> <p>We would recommend that Link Housing Films are watched. There is a section on Saving Money and Energy, which was our concern in our first report.</p>	<p>what tenants want is to complete a full consultation exercise and this will be done later on in this calendar year.</p> <p>Better Comms Group actively looking at grouping tenant info together in one area and making it easier to access info.</p> <p>Our only comment here is that some of the bigger organisations have teams</p>	<p>what else is out there,</p> <p>We were not suggesting that this is what we must do.</p>
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				dedicated to this area. We believe that it is more important that we use tenants money for the benefit of the tenants and that we show value for money.	
Seton care	11	We have not commented on Seton Care		agreed	Noted
BHA Enterprise	12	Windfarm.  This needs to be more Generic. What our aims are and hopes.		Will review by Jun 15	Noted
News	13	There is nothing on the site to give news of what is going on in the area.		Better Comms feels that this is done through social media and replicated on Home page of website now.	Noted, the latest news section is good.
News for Tenants	14	Nothing on the PV installations? Nothing on current projects?  Could we not link to SBC weather watch?		Better Comms group will start to collect and publish updates on	Noted

		News for each area?		projects. Also use social media where we are getting responses		
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Further points for consideration.

The Communications Group were formed to change our website and look at communications. The Group have indicated that they are going to do some of the Scrutiny Panel suggestions. We would wish an opportunity to review using the initial findings.

This also raises the issues of timescales and deadline as non are indicated.

From information received meetings seem to be getting postponed and rescheduled and we feel we should ask for some timescale information please?

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## Appendix 1 Reproduction of Energy Efficiency Website Recommendations:

Finding	No	Scrutiny Recommendations	Priority H M L	Executive Team Response	By	Response of panel
A Energy Efficiency						
B Energy Cost						
Contents of induction pack in regard to energy efficiency are numerous, with assorted branding and some duplicated information. Collectively they present too much information that is unlikely to be read. The pack contained no information on managing condensation in homes.	5	<p>The contents of the pack should be simplified to a single document. The Panel's view was that the Energy Saving Trust leaflet would suffice.</p> <p>The pack contents should include advice on managing condensation, damp and mould.</p> <p>The packs contents should include a BHA number to call for assistance with energy efficiency.</p> <p><b><u>This recommendation links to the website recommendations at 6, 13 and 16.</u></b></p>	H	<p>Agree</p> <p>However Section 7 of the Tenant Handbook does outline information about condensation; damp and mould.</p> <p>Information is handed out at sign-up, however we did have more detailed leaflets which we can reproduce and circulate to all.</p> <p>Again we have trained officers within BHA so can ensure that this information is circulated.</p>		<p>Noted and accepted re condensation.</p> <p>There is too much overload and a danger of the important information being missed</p>
The Tenants' Handbook contained some good information about assistance with energy affordability.	6	The energy efficiency information in the handbook needs to be drawn to tenants' notice in a more proactive manner.	H	Tenants Handbook currently under review so we will improve		Noted but we are concerned that we are now entering

<p>However, it is buried in the handbook and few tenants will read and act on it.</p>		<p>Panel suggestions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mailshots / leaflet drops to remind tenants of simple steps to take to save energy and stay warm in the coming winter.</li> <li>• A section in the tenant newsletter to remind them of a few basic good practices;</li> <li>• Ensuring all staff who visit tenants can offer small advice on energy saving or refer tenants to more specialist staff;</li> <li>• If handbook can be online make sure updates on energy efficiency are highlighted once updated;</li> <li>• <b>Make the information available on the tenants' website as well as the BHA site.</b></li> </ul>		<p>energy efficiency section. Already use mailshots; calendar and newsletters but will make sure we send something out on any full mailshots we do. Website should have improved information and this will be addressed by a staff group reviewing the website.</p>	<p>the coldest time of the year. More information needs to be put on the Website. See points</p>
<p>The reasons supplied for not offering tenants advice on tariffs were confused and ill informed, with staff citing the regulations surrounding offering Independent Financial Advice as being applicable when they are not. Offering assistance with finding a competitive tariff is no different to offering assistance in understanding benefits a tenant may be eligible to receive.</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>Housing and Financial Inclusion Team staff should be trained to offer tenants proactive advice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their rights to change supply company and tariff;</li> <li>• The range of tariffs and suppliers available;</li> <li>• The different payment methods available and the advantages each may offer the tenant;</li> <li>• How to find a competitive supplier and tariff for the tenants' energy use patterns;</li> </ul>	<p>H</p>	<p>We cannot do this as legislation does not allow us. Would need to employ specialist with ability to deliver this service; cost implications to achieve this.</p>	<p>Please see comments above. We need clarity here as the panel have received input suggesting that other RSL's make very positive recommendations to tenants regarding different suppliers, rates etc. as they have</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to change to their chosen supplier and tariff;</li> <li>• The on-gong benefits of shopping around for suppliers and tariffs;</li> <li>• <b>Some of this can be put on our website. See later Point 16.</b></li> </ul>			<p>considered that this is reasonable in line with organisations such as Compare the market.</p> <p>Please clarify what Legislation?</p>
The Financial Inclusion Team identified that just 3% of the tenants they assist are in fuel poverty. However, no specific assistance was offered to these tenants regarding finding a competitive tariff to assist in their financial management.	14	The Financial Inclusion Team should go back to the tenants they have identified as being in fuel poverty and offer to assist in offering the services outlined in recommendation 13 above. The team should seek to proactively contact tenants most likely to be at risk of fuel poverty and target them with offers of advice.	H	See comments above	See above
Although information about the Warm Home Discount (WHD) is included in the Tenants' Handbook, none of the teams the Panel spoke with offer any proactive assistance to tenants to claim WHD offered by the big 6 energy companies.	15	The Financial Inclusion Team should proactively mailshot all tenants who may be eligible for the discount of £140. The communication should clearly explain the nature of the WHD and eligibility criteria and telephone or face-to-face support to tenants who believe they may be eligible and require assistance.	H	We already offer assistance to those identified but not all customers want to engage with our teams. We are customer profiling again within the next 2 months so maybe we will be able to identify more target groups.	If we wish to address fuel poverty, we were advised that we have the information for those who qualify for the Warm Home Funds. These tenants are potentially losing £140 if we wait a year!



## Follow Up Plan

The Panel proposes the following next steps.

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Issue to Communications Team	Early March 2015
2	Response issued to Panel	End March 2015
3	Panel discussion with Team to agree actions	April 2015
4	Final response and action plan issued	April 2015
5	Progress review	August 2015