

Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report: Knowledge & Information Management

Recommendation	Title	Details	Current Status	Actions (Due dates)
Governance and Culture				
1	Define the oversight role of governance for knowledge and information management	Governance should seek assurance that the landlord knows its products, services, and residents well, and that it uses this data to inform business and financial planning	<p>Governance is driven by our strategies, policies, processes, and service standards. These provide direction and structure.</p> <p>All managers are clear about the importance of KIM, and this is a standing item at team briefs.</p> <p>Staff understand their roles and responsibilities (both individual and collectively), are aware of the standards and expectations they must work to and are held accountable when expectations are not met.</p>	<p>Ownership of the policy register, ensuring strategies, policies and procedures are monitored and kept up to date through monthly monitoring.</p> <p>To ensure governance by introducing reporting quarterly to the Risk Assurance board.</p> <p>Update to the internal housing induction programme to ensure KIM compliance.</p>
2	Implement a knowledge and information management strategy	<p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defining knowledge and information management • clear definitions of which data repository is to be used for which datasets • the implementation of an Information Asset Register so you know what data you already have, what you don't have, and what you need 	The Strategic Head of Housing is drafting a KIM strategy for presentation to Housing Committee.	March 2024

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outcomes-focused data mining: what you are trying to achieve and what do you need the data for? • how it aligns with the overall business strategy and the need for continuous service improvement • what the expected standards are, how they will be monitored, and the consequences of failing to adhere to them 		
3	Benchmark against other organisations' good practice in knowledge and information management.	This should underpin a continuous improvement approach to service delivery.	<p>As members of Housemark, we make use of on time, in context, and evidence-based data, to inform decisions and improve performance in all areas.</p> <p>Housemark Pulse reports also benchmark our data against peers on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Some staff will be attending the Housing Data and Analytics Summit in November 2023 to help us unlock the value and potential of data. Key summit themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving performance with data • Data analysis as a basis for strategic decision-making • Understanding our customer through data • Cultivate data culture and data-based approached to diversity, equality, and inclusion. 	Continuous
4	Review safeguarding policies and procedures	To ensure data analysis forms part of a landlord's proactive activities to satisfy their duties.	We have robust safeguarding policies and procedures for adults and children.	Regularly reviewed and updated

			<p>https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/1939184/safeguarding-guide.pdf</p> <p>https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/1874749/safeguarding-policy.pdf</p> <p>All staff complete mandatory Safeguarding training and have access to the County Council portal for safeguarding referrals.</p> <p>The Council's safeguarding policy and procedures are being scrutinised through audit during 2023.</p>	
5	Train staff on the requirements of the Equality Act 2010	Particularly with relevance to the importance of knowledge and information management as a tool for compliance	All staff complete mandatory Equality and Diversity elearning annually and attend live training sessions twice a year.	Ongoing
6	Review internal guidance around recording vulnerabilities	Particularly to ensure temporary, as well as permanent, vulnerabilities are recognised, recorded, and then removed from records once no longer appropriate	<p>We record vulnerabilities and disabilities on our housing management system (HMS); these show as a Key Detail, so all staff are aware.</p> <p>We regularly carry out data cleansing as per our Records Retention Schedule.</p> <p>The process for recording vulnerabilities is currently under review, to allow us to improve on and retain all household members vulnerabilities/disabilities. This piece of work is part of a wider project implementing a new HMS</p>	Continuous
Devise key recording standards				
7	Develop organisational key data recording standard requirements	This should set out the minimum standard to which data must be	We are currently in the process of implementing a Customer Service module in our HMS. Scripts will then be in place, so staff can ask our residents the correct	April 2024

	that will ensure good records that support the business and demonstrate compliance with national standards	entered in the various databases owned by the landlord	<p>questions when they contact us, to ensure key details are captured/updated and entered within the HMS.</p> <p>Toolbox KIM talks are being prepared and will be rolled out across the service within the next 3 months.</p> <p>Data cleansing is carried out in compliance with GDPR regulations</p>	
8	Make adherence to the minimum standard for knowledge and information management part of the service level agreement with third parties	The quality of information sharing should form part of the assessment at procurement stage	<p>This standard formed part of the recent procurement exercise for the new HMS.</p> <p>Our Tenancy Agreement (<i>Section 1, Security of your Tenancy, Schedule 1.4 Information sharing – in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR</i>) makes provision for information sharing.</p> <p>Our Privacy Notice also covers our contractual obligations with our residents.</p> <p>https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/access-to-information/privacy-notice-and-cookie-policy/housing-council-tenancies-and-property-maintenance</p>	Reviewed annually
9	Have a clear categorisation system for ATIS (<i>Access to Information Scheme – HAs only</i>)/FOI requests	This allows quick identification of whether the question has previously been answered and analysis of which systems require refinement to answer questions in future	<p>A Corporate FOI register is maintained.</p> <p>https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/transparency/registers/foi-register</p>	Continuous

10	Publish FAQs on websites and keep them updated	This allows for information self-service and reduces resourcing requirements	<p>We are currently in the process of updating the FAQ section on our website.</p> <p>We will be launching “Housing Online” which offers an extensive range of digital customer services to enable our customers to access a range of services and information via our website.</p> <p>The service will be available 24/7 and accessible on any device (tablet, mobile phone, or PC).</p> <p>Our customers will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View rent account information • View details of repairs and logging new repair requests • Identify options available, which could be related to housing needs, or other available services • Complete forms • Make general customer service requests, such as reporting anti-social behaviour, requesting forms, etc. <p>They will also be able to log on to Housing Online using a Facebook profile, or their corporate website account.</p>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>December 2025</p>
Ensure appropriate systems are in place				
11	Review existing databases for capability and capacity to record those key data requirements.	To ensure databases are capable of adequately capturing information about residents – e.g., vulnerabilities. To ensure databases are capable of	We are in the process of integrating several systems into one HMS, NEC Housing.	December 2025

		adequately capturing information about homes – e.g., repairs and stock condition.	Once fully implemented, we will be able to capture information across all modules with a 360-degree view of our customers	
12	Train staff on using systems	Including minimum data standards, performance measures and quality assurance processes	All staff are due to receive training for the new HMS	
13	Ensure databases are easy to interrogate, and that the data can be extracted and used	Staff should be able to easily access the information they require. This is essential for evidence-based practice and informed decision-making. Where systems can be interrogated effectively, this produces crucial insight regarding patterns, themes, and potential shortfalls	Ad-hoc reports are currently run to maintain an overview. However, the new HMS has a Dashboard with business intelligence capability which will provide immediate access to key performance outcome measures. Staff will be able to drill down themselves, to view and act on specific records that are causing issues, so we can see trends and easily dig deeper to find the reasons why and respond accordingly.	
14	Schedule appropriate sensitive information reviews	Resident information and personal characteristics change on a regular basis. Records should be appropriately reviewed to ensure a landlord continues to know its residents – disability or illness, financial difficulties, and family composition	We are in the process of carrying out tenancy audit checks to ensure the data we hold is correct and up to date. This covers the whole household, not just sole/joint tenants. A “household profiling” form has recently been implemented and will be used at all tenant contact, to enable the service to capture and record all household details within the HMS	ongoing
Mergers and other structural changes				
15	Stress test systems prior to change	To identify whether they can ‘talk’ to each other; data can be securely transferred, and staff	We are in the process of integrating several systems into one HMS, NEC Housing.	September 2023

		from each landlord can access the data they need	A Privacy Impact Assessment has been completed and the risk of personal data transfer is managed. This is being achieved by a mix of: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oracle in-Transit and resting encryption • Access and Security controls mirroring the live environment • Most of the comms mechanisms being disabled • Clear segregation between the Live and Test environments 	
16	Undertake a risk assessment regarding knowledge and information shortfalls before the change	This should be a living document with clear risks and mitigations documented, incorporating a review cycle and emerging risk identification. This document should continue beyond the date of change	Risk management forms an integral part of the HMS which stores all KIM in relation to our customers. Controls and escalation processes are in place to ensure any risks receive attention as follows: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management and board members; maintain an overview of the risks inherent in the business and take executive action. • Internal audit provides assurance that our risk processes operate effectively and provide a level of assurance for external auditors. • We share knowledge about security and compliance across the business, including Data Protection. 	
17	Proactively investigate incoming datasets during mergers as part of due diligence	Identify gaps in the knowledge of incoming stock and residents, and work to fill those gaps	Please refer to point 6	

18	Establish clear data exception reporting processes	This allows the new organisation to identify issues post-change quickly	Using BOXI, data checking will be carried out post HMS implementation, to identify missing/duplicate information. Data cleansing will then be implemented, and household details routinely updated as per point 14	
Repairs				
19	Set out clear requirements of operatives before they are allowed to record an appointment as missed	This should include ensuring that the appointment was notified to the resident, it was made at a time they could attend, checking that any contact requests were adhered to, guidance on what level of contact (e.g., Two door knocks, calling the resident) etc.	This is set out in our Contractor service standard and is adhered to. The operative wait time is currently 15 mins, with contact made back to the Resource Planners to ensure information is captured before leaving a “visit” card. This process is currently being revised in line with the new HMS implementation.	Ongoing
20	Conduct wastage analysis on missed appointments	Use the insight generated by accurate records of missed appointments to identify efficiencies and action plans, including whether a broader time range of appointments would be of benefit.	Ad-hoc reports are currently run to maintain an overview. However, using the Dashboard functionality in the new HMS, we will be able to extract and report on data, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency repairs completed within target time • urgent repairs completed within target time • routine repairs completed within target time • all reactive repairs completed within target time • Average end-to-end time for all reactive repairs • Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made • Appointments made as a percentage of repairs orders 	

			This will allow managers to identify, monitor, and implement measures to improve appointment attendance.	
21	Implement an automated appointment reminder system	This could take the form of text messages the day before	<p>We recognise that our customers are more likely to read and respond to a text message rather than an email communication.</p> <p>We send automated SMS messages to customers when an appointment is created for them, including reminders*.</p> <p>*Our customers will have full control over the setup and business rules used for issuing SMS messages.</p>	