Leeds Tenant Scrutiny Board

The training and induction of new Housing Officers.

April 2026

Introduction

This report describes the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Board (TSB) and its review into the training and induction of new Housing Officers.

This review took place between December 2025 and March 2026 and includes recommendations for improvement from the TSB to Housing Leeds.

This topic was selected following the board's reflections about how all recent reports from the board had included recommendations relating to communications and how communications was a recurring theme. The board also debated what aspect of communications it could review and how broad the overall theme of communications was. The board shared their sometimes-different experiences of contact with local housing teams, prompting the board to focus on trying to improve the quality and consistency of communication given to tenants by them.

Communications as a theme is a large one and the board were aware they could start to look at too many issues in too many services that would make it difficult for the board to produce a timely and accurate report. The board managed this by focussing on the communication from local housing teams (which is narrower) and the support, training and induction given to new Housing Officers as something that is likely to influence how able local teams are to effectively communicate and respond to tenants enquiries.

By undertaking this review, the Board seek to achieve:

- An improved overall customer experience when interacting with their local housing teams
- Customers feeling more informed and updated on the status of their service request or query
- A reduction in complaints about a lack of communication related to local housing teams
- A reduction in avoidable contact from customers
- Improving overall levels of satisfaction with services

The TSB are a group of volunteer tenants and leaseholders who are supported to review any aspect of the service given by Housing Leeds. For this review, they were joined by members of the Tenant Voice Panel, strengthening the membership and tenant input into the review and

allowing more tenants to take part in the process. Towards the end of the review the board were also joined by new tenants and leaseholders appointed to the board following a recruitment exercise.

Ahead of selecting this review the board considered the latest tenant satisfaction information and a summary of complaints trends. The Board were also briefed on current issues and priorities outlined by Councillor Jessica Lennox, the Executive Member for Housing, Adam Crampton, Head of Asset Management and Mandy Sawyer, Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services. Shortly prior to this review the board also supported Housing Leeds to help test the services self-assessments against the four regulatory Consumer Standards and took part in a meeting with the Regulator as part of the inspection of Housing Leeds.

This report is focussed on the training and induction of new Housing Officers, however, the board encourage Housing Leeds to reflect and share any learning in this report to help support other roles in Housing Leeds and more widely that may benefit.

What the Board did and what we learnt:

At the start of the review the board met the Area Housing Manager responsible for leading on developing the citywide approach to training and development for local Housing Management staff. This gave the board an initial overview of the training and induction given to new Housing Officers and local housing teams as a whole. The officer shared that new Housing Officers were trained using a combination of formal e-learning, some classroom-based learning and ‘job shadowing’ to help bring new Housing Officers up to a level to be able to undertake the role. This typically lasted for four weeks.

Training of new Housing Officers should be over-seen by Team Leaders and Housing Managers, who have a role in making sure the training is being delivered and the Housing Officer is learning and progressing sufficiently to be able to be independent in the role.

The board learnt that each new starter has a training log to record all their training activity and to confirm that a certain level of understanding or competence has been achieved.

The board heard how more experienced Housing Officers were ‘buddied up’ with new Housing Officers to help with on the job training. This at times can result in some resourcing pressures in local teams but the

feedback from new Housing Officers was that staff supporting them had all been helpful and were keen to support the new staff to learn and develop.

When meeting with a range of new Housing Officers and through discussion with staff the Board have met it has been highlighted that whilst on the job training/shadowing is helpful, there was an observation that there was a risk that over-reliance on job shadowing may lead to local differences in how services were given. For example, the more experienced staff giving the support, may or may not be following the most up to date process or may have developed over time some ‘habits’ that were not the current process.

The Board learnt that some staff preferred on the job training, where others preferred a more formal learning environment, or ‘classroom’ learning. Staff that the Board spoke to, acknowledged that each Housing Officer will have their own preferred learning style. The feedback was that Housing Leeds could do more to deliver training and support for new staff (and existing staff) by tailoring their approach to meet individual learning styles.

During the review the Board were informed about how training and development is recorded and logged. The Board heard the service has accepted that they would like to improve their quality assurance that the training was being delivered consistently and that the required level of knowledge was being learnt by the new starters.

Officers also shared in discussion with the Board the positive way that teams responded to any gaps in a team's knowledge by devoting team meetings to certain topics to help ’fill any gaps’.

The Board heard about how some staff felt a dedicated training team would be useful for Housing Leeds to help strengthen the approach to training and give new and existing staff access to a dedicated resource – which has the added benefit of being able to then give citywide consistency in the content, skills and knowledge learnt.

The Board viewed the standard Customer Care training given to all staff. Whist the video had a number of valuable learning points around communication styles and skills such as being able to actively listen, the Board felt the training was dated and was a missed opportunity to cover more housing relevant content and some of the lived experiences tenants have. It was also lacking in some of our more recent work to

embed Housing Leeds' values about putting the customers at the heart of everything we do and to also highlight other work including the Stop Social Housing Stigma commitments Housing Leeds have made.

Of the many new Housing Officers, and some with more experience that the Board also met, there was common feedback from staff about the different periods of time staff were waiting to be set up and receive ID's, a log-in, laptops etc. The Board heard how the service was able to access well established processes for acquiring new ID's and laptops etc, so feel that Housing Leeds needs to ensure the close and tight management of this to avoid any delays in providing the equipment that new staff need and to help with a positive 'on boarding' experience.

In conversations with officers the issue of consistency was highlighted in terms of making sure all new Housing Officers had the basic level of knowledge required, consistency that some felt could be more reliably achieved by adopting more classroom type of learning.

Whilst not directly linked to the scope of the review, the Board heard how staff were interested in how we can ensure their safety and well-being. The Board are aware of current activity to identify a lone working safety solution for the council as a whole (e.g. a panic button on a staff members ID badge that could show the officers location). The Board are supportive of any enhancement that can help improve staff safety.

The Board asked a number of questions about our contractors approach to training and are interested to know if there is good practice amongst partners such as these in terms of training and development that can be shared. Similarly, the Board feel there could be opportunities to work with other councils or housing associations to share training resources and good practice.

Towards the end of the review, the Board met with the training and development lead for Customer Services, training staff who work in the Contact Centre and the Community Hubs. The training approach by Customer Services was well received by the board, in that it looked to be a comprehensive programme of training using classroom and shadowing with a high level of support given to individual members of staff. This approach felt robust and likely to give a good overall baseline knowledge of the service ahead of new officers working independently.

As part of the general research of the Board, they also looked at the Job Description for the Housing Officer role and the Housing Officer role as

described in the job advertisement. The Board felt the advertisement could give a different picture on what the role was about compared to the Job Description – this could raise false expectations about the role and job dissatisfaction leading to higher turnover of staff.

Representatives from the Board are grateful to be invited to the next Housing Leeds induction for new starters on the 22 April 2026. As this is outside the timeframe of this report, the board will share any feedback from this separately.

The Board spoke to a number of local housing staff during this review and would like to thank all these staff for their engagement with us and their open and honest feedback. Staff attending the Board represented the service well. They were professional and demonstrated a good level of knowledge and awareness. They also reassured the Board that the culture, practices and support for staff in local housing was strong, with all staff being happy to help and develop each other. Team Leaders and Housing Managers that spoke with the board also gave the board confidence that they take an active role in supporting new starters and making them feel valued and supported.

Acknowledgements

The Tenant Scrutiny Board would like to thank:

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- Bethan Crampton – Housing Officer, Burmantofts
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- Georgia Morris – Team Leader, Moortown
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- Councillor Mary Harland – Executive Member for Housing

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Recommendations

Tenant Scrutiny Board Recommendation	Response from Housing Leeds	'Accepted', 'Partially Accepted', 'Rejected' or 'Further Information requested'.
1. Due to the current mixed training approach of on the job and classroom style learning, there is a risk that training is not consistently delivered and a standard baseline level of knowledge given to ensure common practices are adopted across all teams. The Board would therefore like Housing Leeds to outline how it will ensure a baseline level of knowledge is provided to help ensure a consistent service across the city.	There is a training log that we ask all Team Leaders to go through with new Housing Officers and Housing Assistants. This log is filled out and signed by the team member and the manager when they are both comfortable that training has been completed, *and* that the training has been applied properly. We already have the tools to do this, however, to ensure this is consistently used and applied across all teams we will quality check that this is happening – and give feedback to Team Leaders on good practice or any gaps identified on a three-monthly basis from the end of June 2026 onwards.	Accepted
2. The Board heard how different staff have different learning styles. The Board ask Housing Leeds to review its approach to provide a range of training styles to best meet individual learners and team needs. What learning styles suit people best could also be asked before a new officer starts.	As part of the current approach, we have a learning reflections form in which questions around learning style are asked and captured, so that Team Leaders can adapt their approach as appropriate and	Accepted

	respond to any feedback about learning progress. These training reflection comments are captured throughout the new members of staff induction period, rather than before a new officer starts so that feedback is on real life training examples and some staff don't know how best they will learn new practices until put in that environment.	
3. To address concerns and feedback over the consistency and quality of training - that Housing Leeds consider creating a dedicated training resource. The Board accept this will require additional resources but ask Housing Leeds to develop a business case and bring the outcome of this along with a preferred option(s) back to the Board. The Board would ask that staff are consulted about this and that any potential new resource benefit as many Housing Leeds staff possible.	We accept the potential benefits of this recommendation and are happy to commit to developing a business case with options for a dedicated training resource. The intention would be to present this to the Senior Management Team by end September.	Accepted
4. Some new Housing Officers suggested that the role wasn't what they thought it would be. We ask the service: a. Clearly link/include the Job Description in any advert b. Consider creating an 'Information pack' for people interested in the Housing Officer role so that the service sets clear expectations on what the role is in practice. c. Ideally the information pack would include a short film about the role of the Housing Officer and involve tenants in this. This would be helpful to support recruitment and help show tenants more widely the day-to-day work of a Housing Officer.	The job description is included on any advert. The recommendation for the information pack we would like to take forward in the first instance by offering applicants a online presentation/information session with question and answers. We hope this will achieve the same outcome as a hard copy 'information pack' and the presentation we develop could then become a 'pack' or shared with applicants who couldn't make the call. As per the discussion at the	Partially accepted

	board on the 23 April, the service will seek to create a separate video about the role of a Housing Officer for tenants, to help show tenants (and potential new staff) what we do and to present our service in a caring/supportive way. We'd like to keep the board updated with our progress on this.	
5. That Housing Leeds reviews it's quality assurance practices for its training and development of new Housing Officers to ensure all new Housing Officers have the same experience and are given the same opportunities to learn and grow into the role. The Board would also like to see training materials clearly date stamped with a review or expiry date.	We do review the training package periodically but agree that this could be scheduled in for set dates. Within this agree it would be useful to sample the use and application of the training materials across the city to ensure take up and consistency. We would like to more formally quality check this on an annual basis during April and May each year.	Accepted
6. The Board asks Housing Leeds to connect with its main contractors, and internal partners like Customer Services, to explore opportunities for shared learning and or the sharing of training content or resources.	Our repairs service has already put us in touch with the Mears national training co-ordinator and we will arrange a meeting with them to learn more about what training Mears provide to their staff (not practical training, but training that might cross-over, like customer care, or EDI training etc) and to explore what possible sharing or collaboration we can do to help both parties improve the quality of their training content related to	Accepted

	general customer care and communication.	
7. Similar to above, the board asks Housing Leeds to consider the opportunities to share training and development practices with other council's and/or housing associations.	We suggest a way to start this would be to promote and share this report with other landlords for information so that we can build links with others. We can do this through sharing this report with our existing networks e.g. TPAS with an ask to share/connect about our training approach.	Accepted
8. To ensure that existing/well established processes are followed so that all new starters have ID's, logins, phones and all IT equipment they need at the very start of their employment.	This is in place as part of the corporate induction process. We will remind recruiting managers of the importance of using these processes to ensure the smooth onboarding of new starters.	Accepted
9. That Housing Leeds create a new customer care training package that is used for new Housing Officers and other new staff, as well as a refresher for existing staff. This mandatory training should include: a. Social housing stigma and our commitment to tackle stigma in all its forms. b. Our values about putting customers at the heart of everything we do c. How we consider a customer's individual needs. d. The importance of giving regular updates and ongoing communication with tenants and leaseholders about their service requests (in line with the customer care service standards) e. The value and examples of proactive communication – so that tenants and leaseholders feel informed and updated (not forgotten about) f. Cultural awareness – how cultural differences can impact on communication and staff awareness of this.	The service welcomes this recommendation as an opportunity to further embed our customer focussed values. It's helpful that the board have highlighted a number of specific points that make up the training package and we agree/accept the content suggested. We will need some time to develop this and to also roll this out to all staff/teams. Initial thoughts are that this training will be delivered by managers to their teams. We would also be keen to make the training as engaging and	Accepted

g. The practical expectations on teams in terms of managing customer contact – and what this looks like in practice giving relevant examples The board would like to preview this ahead of its release.	interactive as possible with different types of content and group work/discussion that was captured. We will aim to share a draft of the programme by September 2026 to seek the boards feedback before starting to deliver the programme in the Autumn of 2026.	
10. The board are aware of work by LCC to consider the different solutions (like panic buttons on ID's) to support the lone working of staff. The board are welcome and supportive of this, and ask they be kept updated on the adoption of any new technology or solution.	We appreciate the boards support and interest in the safety and well-being of staff and we will keep the board updated with progress.	Accepted
11. To ensure that everyone is aware of their role specific risk assessment related to lone working (and that this is commonly understood by staff) and that this is re-enforced by a key message/reminder to staff about the importance of following lone working arrangements	The service is happy to remind staff of lone working processes and proposes doing so as an item in a forthcoming Housing Leeds Matters (our internal staff bulletin) by the end of May 2026. This can include making staff aware of the TSB, it's role, this latest report and the ask that everyone is familiar with lone working arrangements and the importance of being familiar with the risk assessments in place for their role/team.	Accepted