

Scrutiny Panel Report – Internal Communal Spaces

Project Group

JW (Scrutiny Lead)

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Review Period

January 2026 – March 2026

Schedule:

Meeting 1 – 28th January 2026 (meet with John Downs, agree scope, methodology & desktop review evidence)

Meeting 2 – 25th February – update on progress

Ongoing communication between Scrutiny Lead and Customer Engagement Specialist

Background

Recent TSM results noted some dissatisfaction about internal communal areas, particularly from shared owners. The TSM question asks:

TP10: Proportion of respondents with communal areas who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

TSM Perception Measures		Housemark mid-year Median	NCHA year end 23-24	NCHA year end 24-25	NCHA mid-year 25-26	NCHA difference 24-25 to now
TP10: Proportion of respondents with communal areas who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	LCRA	72.6%	58.2%	74.8%	74.0%	-0.8%
	LCHO	51.6%	50.4%	47.7%	50.0%	2.3%

From the mid-year update, the TSMs are within NCHA’s benchmarked group median quartile and the mid-year results show some improvements.

A more in-depth investigation is required, linking to the Communal Services Thematic Plan.

Project Scope

Considering the response to TSM question TP10 and the communal services survey, are there issues with internal communal spaces and how can these be addressed to improve satisfaction levels.

Key Questions for this review

- What are the issues with internal communal areas that have had a negative impact on TSM and communal services survey results?
- How can these issues be addressed and resolved?
- Are communal repairs a major reason for dissatisfaction, eg how quickly repairs are dealt with, how easy it is to report a communal repair, how is satisfaction gauged?

The Review Stages

The stages of the review are set out below:

Stage 1 – *Background work; research and informing*

The Panel will explore the following in this stage:

- The rationale for choosing internal communal spaces as a project and what research needs to be undertaken
- Which Teams to speak with
- Desk top review of relevant documents: TSM results – including further investigation feedback from calls carried out by the Services Team (for customers who scored dissatisfied); communal repairs data; NCHA Services communal services survey results; Customer Engagement: Shared Ownership TSM Feedback Follow-up Report; Communal Services Thematic Plan
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Stage 2 – *Gathering of existing and additional evidence*

The Panel will explore the following in this stage:

- Gather and review all of the desktop information outlined in stage 1.
- Compile feedback from staff interviews.
- Begin to form broad findings from evidence gathered so far.

Stage 3 – *Review of evidence gathered*

The Panel will explore the following in this stage:

- Compile possible recommendations and check with relevant staff. Suggested recommendations not required to be referenced in the report.
- Agree final recommendations and put together our report, identifying positive practice and recommendations for the service.

Stage 4 – *Final report drafted*

The Panel will explore the following in this stage:

- Draft report and recommendations viewed by senior management.
- NCHA response to recommendations agreed with timescales.
- Recommendations presented to Customer Committee for approval.

Methodology

- Desktop review of relevant documents and data
- Interview with Head of Housing Services

Research**Staff Interviews**

Interview with John Downs (Head of Housing Services)

Desktop Review Documents:

TSM results – including further investigation feedback from calls carried out by the Services Team (for customers who scored dissatisfied)

NCHA Services communal services survey results

Customer Engagement: Shared Ownership TSM Feedback Follow-up Report. The dissatisfaction recorded with shared owners was found across all questions and not focussed on internal communal areas

Communal repairs data

Communal Services Thematic Plan

Findings and Recommendations

What are the issues with internal communal areas that have had a negative impact on TSM and communal services survey results? How can these issues be addressed and resolved?

Findings	Recommendations	Benefits of recommendation to customers and / or management	Management Response
<p>Tenant Satisfaction Measures Feedback</p> <p>The TSM feedback examined was around the TP10 question about communal areas. Many of those surveyed responded about external communal areas and services, eg grounds maintenance, and did not live in blocks with communal internal spaces.</p> <p>There were 217 responses to the communal services question: Affordable Social Housing (ASH) – 113 Shared Ownership (SO) – 97 Intermediate Rent (IR) – 7</p>	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Window cleaning specification Feedback suggests that window cleaning standards are inconsistent. Check the specification is accurate and states what is expected and communicate with customers so they're aware of what service they should be receiving.</p> <p>Internal cleaning There is some dissatisfaction around internal cleaning. The service has been poorly rated in the past, but has improved recently with the intervention</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <p>Keeping customers fully updated with what service they should expect will alleviate complaints around the standards. Where complaints are justified, the Services Team will liaise with the contractors to ensure issues are discussed and resolved in future.</p> <p>As above.</p>	

<p>Services Coordinators contacted respondents who scored neither satisfied/dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied to gain further insight into the scores:</p> <p><i>Please add further insight into what you think is wrong and what we need to do to improve</i></p> <p>47 comments were recorded with only 12 specifically about internal communal areas. Some of the comments related to more than one issue, including repairs and the standard of the internal area.</p> <p>Issues included: Window cleaning – poor quality, inconsistent with which windows are cleaned (eg front windows cleaned, not back windows) Communal cleaning – not cleaned often enough; cleaners don’t have enough time to do a reasonable job Internal communal areas – poor upkeep and areas degrading, not being updated, eg need painting; carpets in poor condition Communal repairs – long wait times for repairs to communal doors and / or lighting Not being listened to when report issues with internal communal areas so nothing changes or improves Unresolved issues</p> <p>The same issues appear across tenures, which doesn’t explain the difference in the TSM scores.</p>	<p>of NCHA Services Team. Continue to closely monitor the cleaning service and ensure customers are aware of the level of service they should receive.</p> <p>Communication There is a general feeling that customers aren’t kept updated on issues they report. Improved communication plan with timescales for visits and works when problems are reported and feedback to all customers affected.</p> <p>Asset Plans Feedback from Head of Housing Services - linking to the upcoming Leasehold & Freehold Reform Act, each block has an asset plan and states what works will be carried out to each block over time. A plan of works is already in place. Ensure that residents in the blocks are effectively involved in the process and are given the opportunity to comment on proposals using multiple channels (eg in-person, online, social media). All residents need to be consulted with and to give their views.</p> <p>Upgrades to internal communal areas Feedback suggests that many internal communal areas are “past their best” and degrading over times (eg carpets, painting). Regular visits to all blocks with internal communal areas (eg 6-monthly) to check the quality of the areas and speak with residents. This</p>	<p>Effective communication and keeping customers fully updated on their reports of issues will reassure customers their concerns are listened to and acted on. This should improve satisfaction levels.</p> <p>Many reports of the poor standard of internal communal spaces should be addressed with the asset plans. However, customers need to be involved in the process.</p> <p>Monitoring of internal areas and listening to residents will help identify areas of concern and where improvements need to be made.</p>	
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<p>The Customer Engagement Team carried out a similar exercise with shared owners, but with a broader remit to look at all TSM responses. Much of the dissatisfaction was around communication with NCHA and not feeling they were being listened to or issues being resolved. Several recommendations were made in the report to the Home Ownership Team (Customer Engagement: Shared Ownership TSM Feedback Follow-up Report).</p>	<p>could be an MSO or Services Coordinator.</p> <p>Customer Engagement: Shared Ownership TSM Feedback Follow-up Report</p> <p>This document made a number of recommendations for next steps. An action plan to be produced which will list issues and monitor progress and outcomes, with a mechanism for giving feedback to the customer. Outcomes to be used to inform learning and improve services.</p>	<p>Ongoing commitment to contacting shared owners about the TSM satisfaction scores will identify any trends and inform improvements required.</p> <p>Having an action plan to record and monitor concerns will offer a single place to check that issues are resolved - communicating consistently with shared owners will provide a basis for improved trust and satisfaction.</p>	
<p>Communal Services Survey</p> <p>There were 230 responses to the communal services survey:</p> <p>Affordable Social Housing (ASH) – 160 Shared Ownership (SO) – 33 Almshouse - 6 Intermediate Rent (IR) – 31</p> <p>Two questions were asked about internal communal areas:</p> <p><i>1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the internal communal areas are well maintained and clean (ie staircases, floors, corridors, ceilings, light fittings)?</i></p> <p><i>2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the cleaning of communal windows, window sills and internal frames?</i></p> <p>Responses graded: 0 = very dissatisfied</p>	<p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Recommendations as above.</p> <p>Window cleaning</p> <p>Audit the quality of the service (as suggested by a customer) as noted that window cleaning is an inconsistent service, is this being monitored?</p> <p>Internal cleaning</p> <p>As above, suggest customers “audit” the service each time and report back to NCHA.</p> <p>Specifications</p> <p>Currently only available online. Consider posting out the relevant specification to all customers every year.</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <p>The people who live in NCHA blocks are best placed to report a poor service which can be acted upon.</p> <p>Customers have easy access to a paper specification they can refer to. Ensures all customers have the same information as many don’t have access to the internet or digital skills.</p>	

1 = dissatisfied
2 = fairly dissatisfied
3 = Neither
4 = fairly satisfied
5 = very satisfied

Question 1 – 65.1% satisfied with the service
Question 2 – 60.9% satisfied with the service
Overall satisfaction – 53.9%

Question 1
Either dissatisfied or fairly dissatisfied
ASH – 40%
SO – 50%

Either fairly satisfied or very satisfied
ASH - 46%
SO - 21%

Question 2
Either dissatisfied or fairly dissatisfied
ASH – 39%
SO – 58%

Either fairly satisfied or very satisfied
ASH – 32.5%
SO - 24%

Free text issues from ASH:
Communal window cleaning – often clean outside
but not inside
Cleanliness
Length of time cleaners spend – not long enough
to clean effectively
Main door security
Lifts untidy
Jobs not done quickly enough
Poor condition of carpets

<p>Poor lighting Deep clean of flooring required Communal entrance door repairs Communal areas look clean and smell nice immediately after they've been cleaned Quality of cleaning doesn't correspond with the amount paid</p> <p>Free text issues from SO: Window cleaning Dirty communal areas, cleaners not spending enough time for the money charged Paying for services that don't receive, eg building manager Repairs – eg leak outside door Carpets Perception that the service charge is high for the service received Communal areas are hoovered, but the sills aren't cleaned or cobwebs removed</p> <p>Similar issues reported by almshouse and intermediate rent customers.</p> <p>As with the TSM follow-up contact, the same issues are recorded regardless of tenure, therefore doesn't explain the difference in the satisfaction scores. More effective acknowledgement of issues reported and ongoing communication and feedback on improvements may improve the scores.</p>			
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Are communal repairs a major reason for dissatisfaction, eg how quickly repairs are dealt with, how easy it is to report a communal repair, how is satisfaction gauged?			
Findings	Recommendations	Benefits of recommendation to customers and / or management	Management Response
<p>Communal Repairs Reporting Internal communal repairs can be reported by residents, MSOs and other NCHA staff.</p> <p>The question was asked if customers are kept updated on the progress of a communal repair and if they receive the satisfaction survey following the repair. The response from a Team Leader was: <i>If Customer Experience don't put the details in the description or access details we would not know and they wouldn't be kept updated or surveyed.</i></p> <p><i>If the details of the tenant who reported the issue are recorded on the job, for example their number has been added into the reported by box, then they will be kept updated. Most of the time if a tenant reports a repair they are used for the access into the communal area if needed.</i></p> <p>This response suggests the approach is inconsistent therefore NCHA isn't offering a standard service to customers.</p> <p>Data from Capita and MRI suggest that the majority of repairs have a quick turnaround, though it seems some repairs can take considerably longer, may re-occur or be reported multiple times.</p>	<p>Recommendations: To ensure a consistent service, all reports of internal communal repairs made by customers should be recorded to include the customer's details and request for feedback on progress to be made to them.</p> <p>This would also automatically generate the satisfaction survey to the customer, giving more accurate data.</p> <p>Internal repairs communication Keep customers updated on how long internal repairs will take and reasons for the delay - eg communal doors that took a long time to repair; storage heaters in ILOPs communal lounge. Extend this to MSOs and ILOPs Scheme Managers.</p>	<p>Benefits: Improved satisfaction.</p> <p>Lack of communication prompts multiple reports of the same issue and frustration and mistrust that the problem won't be resolved. Keeping customers and key staff updated will help people understand why the issue can't be sorted quickly and re-assure that it's being dealt with.</p>	

Communal Services Thematic Plan

“Where are we now” – update to remove reference to Homes & Neighbourhood Panel, replace with Customer Oversight Group (COG).

“Key Objectives” – Community Voice is no longer an involvement option. Taking into account the recommendations around involving customers in improvements, consider involving local residents who have a stake in their block and COG working with the Services Team to meet with contractors and customers on-site where appropriate. COG members to be involved in quarterly contractor meetings where appropriate.

“Procurement” – include customers in the procurement process – utilising COG and the Community of Customers.

“Delivering the Plan” – include the COG chair in the bi-monthly meetings about delivering the plan.

Conclusion

An analysis of the TSM follow-up feedback and the communal services surveys highlights that whilst there are significant differences in the satisfaction scores recorded by ASH and shared owners, the issues reported are the same across tenures. Conversations the Customer Engagement Team had with shared owners about the general TSM scores indicates that a major issue is around a perceived lack of communication and not being listened to by NCHA, which could account in part for the lower scores. A more formal communications plan to highlight how customers will be kept informed of reports of issues in their communal areas may in part alleviate the perception that customers aren’t listened to and their concerns acted upon. Even where issues such as repairs are ongoing and take time, simply by keeping customers updated may satisfy customers that issues aren’t being ignored and are being acted upon.

A commitment to continue contacting customers who’ve given dissatisfied scores in the TSMs and communal services surveys will gain better insight into the poor satisfaction scores sometimes given. Linked with improved communication customers may feel listened to and their issues taken seriously and resolved quickly, leading to improved satisfaction.

Proposed monitoring:

1. Action plan with management response to recommendations to be shared with the Scrutiny Task Force once finalised.
2. Monitoring of progress against deadlines to be conducted by Customer Committee.
3. 6-month update to Scrutiny Panel on progress of actions.

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Jill Barrett (Services Team Leader); John Downs (Head of Housing Services); Steven Hitchen (Business Support Coordinator (Property Services)); Andy Bush (Senior Data Analyst)

Documents referred to:

- The desktop review documents outlined above in this report