**Tenant-Led Scrutiny Report Number 7**

 **Executive Summary** 



**Overview**

This scrutiny exercise was produced by the Tenant-led Scrutiny Pool known as SIFT (Scrutiny, Involvement For Tenants) supported by an Independent Tenant Advisor.

The first topic of the 2019/20 financial year chosen by SIFT to scrutinise was the Tyne and Wear Homes application form. The scrutiny question was “Is the application form easy to complete for most people?”

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| The purpose of the exercise was to:* To explore if the Application process is compliant with the Regulatory Standards
* To identify if the Application process is in line with the intention of the Equalities Act 2010
* To assess if support to complete the Application process is readily available
* To assess if the Application process can be completed in a timely manner
* To recommend, where appropriate changes to the service.
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**Methods used to Scrutinise the Service**

The methods used on this first scrutiny included:

* Briefing by allocations and lettings officer
* Desktop review of relevant policies, procedures, complaints and performance information
* Benchmarking other organisations’ application forms
* Work Shadowing
* Interviews with Disability North staff
* Focus Group of applicants and Mystery Shopping exercise
* Assessment of compliance against the Tenancy Standard.

The main findings included:

* Staff are either unaware that a paper application still exists or are reluctant to offer that option
* Staff do generally offer to help applicants with the online application
* Applicants cannot save sections of the online form and return to it later, meaning that they have to complete the process in one sitting, which is not always convenient
* 15 minutes to complete each section of the form is not long enough for many
* The application form complies with the Regulatory Tenancy Standard. However, one element of the Standard is efficiency, but SIFT’s judgement is that it is not efficient
* The time applicants have to wait before being told they could bid is too long, particularly for people who are homeless or sofa surfing
* Vulnerable applicants should be able to apply face-to-face with a member of staff’s help.

SIFT’s main recommendations are:

* Staff should be reminded that there is a paper-based application form and that they should issue this to people requesting the paper version by handing it to the person or send it by post
* Applicants requesting to complete the application by telephone should be able to do so, or the invitation to do so should be removed from the paper version
* The online application should allow the applicant to save and return to the application so that it is efficient
* The time allowed to complete each section of the application should be extended from 15 minutes
* The time applicants have to wait before they are allowed to bid on properties should be reduced and set as a Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
* If applicants identify as vulnerable, they should be offered a session where they can complete the application form face-to-face with a member of staff.

**The full report details the findings and recommendations of this scrutiny exercise, which took place during . The report can be accessed by contacting Eileen Adams at** **eileen.a@engage3.org** **or telephoning free phone 0800 612 8280**