

Housing chief executives - WhatsApp summary

September – October 2023

A note to readers

These notes summarise recent discussions on Campbell Tickell's WhatsApp group for Chief Executives of housing associations and ALMOs across all four UK jurisdictions and the Republic of Ireland. A full summary of discussions from the inception of the group is available on request.

This is a closed group, open only to CEOs in housing associations and ALMOs. It currently has around 250 members.

While discussions are confidential and unattributable, members of the group are keen for the content themes and issues to be shared widely to assist with broader understanding.

Please note:

The following digest highlights matters that have been discussed in the group. None of the content should be treated as representing the collective views of the group as such, or be attributed to any of its members. The group is an information-sharing forum and not a policy-making body.

Contact us

If you are a housing CEO who would like to join, please email james.tickell@campbelltickell.com or greg.campbell@campbelltickell.com.

For any media enquiries, please email Zina.Smith@campbelltickell.com

Latest highlights, September – October

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

1. The group discussed recent TSM results, focussing on whether organisations were seeing an upwards trend in their results. The conversations showed on the whole mixed results, with a number seeing satisfaction go up and others noting a decline.
2. It was queried whether other providers had noticed different levels of satisfaction between transactional and perception survey results. Of those that replied, transactional satisfaction was cited as being higher than perception.
3. The group shared when and how often they are collecting the TSMs, as well as the methods of collection, and any third-party companies used.

Building safety

4. Following the risks identified from RAAC in school buildings, the group discussed how their organisations are reacting and mitigating risk.
5. Landlords shared how they are updating their risk registers and validating their approach with a structural engineer, as well as carrying out self-assessments of their stock through desktop

reviews and specialist surveys. Landlords also shared that they were preparing communication plans to residents and stakeholders.

6. There were discussions and clarifications about the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) data collection on 11m plus buildings, with members sharing their understanding and intel on what actions and data is needed.
7. Group members also discussed who within their organisations is identified as the Health and Safety Lead. It was explored how this is decided from an operational and strategic approach, as well as compliance with any legislation and regulation.

Rent modelling

8. Members used the group to explore what assumptions other providers are modelling rents at, as well as a discussion around whether a rent cap may be implemented. The assumptions shared included CPI only, CPI+1%, 6.7%, 7% and 7.7%.
9. The group also discussed approaches for Shared Ownership properties.

Complaints and disrepair

10. Discussion took place on the number and complexity of complaints, with some members noting an upwards trend.
11. A few members of the group expressed frustration regarding the Ombudsman's handling of compensation orders, feeling that there is a lack of a structured rationale to how they are issued. Concerns were also raised about a recent Ombudsman campaign which tells residents they could be claiming high levels of compensation from their provider. Disrepair cases were also discussed as part of this conversation.
12. Members acknowledged, however, the importance for social housing providers to ensure they consistently meet fundamental standards and services, adhere to policies, and take responsibility when these standards or services are not met.

Colleague well-being, hybrid working and salaries

13. Members discussed various initiatives they have implemented to monitor and improve the well-being of their colleagues. These initiatives included offering lunches, introducing a well-being survey app, and organising coffee mornings.
14. The group discussed increases to staff salaries. One member presented findings from an annual report on housing association salaries. It was noted that there has been a median salary increase of 5%. Some members expressed that they were considering prioritising staff in lower salary ranges when reviewing pay increases and bonuses.
15. Members also discussed the regularity of staff working from the office and if there was a trend in busiest days. Group members shared their views on senior leaders needing to be regularly visible in the office to encourage other colleagues to come in.

General / sharing of knowledge and good practice

16. Discussion took place on different housing and finance software solutions, with members sharing their experiences of switching providers and seeking feedback from others in the group.
17. Members sought feedback on pet policies in light of legislation around XL Bully dogs.
18. Group members discussed organisational approaches to safeguarding including sharing which role/s are designated safeguarding leads.
19. The group continues to be used as a venue for sharing good practice across a wide range of topics such as sustainability initiatives, performance metrics, governance, policies and strategies, and HR matters.