



**Date:** 6 April 2013

**Subject:** Estate Services Scrutiny Recommendations

**Report Author:** **SAHA Resident Inspectors**

**Purpose:** To provide findings and recommendations from residents scrutiny of estate services

## Background/Introduction

SAHA has piloted a scrutiny approach to developing and improving services.

The group was formed as part of our STAR satisfaction survey, where we asked residents if they would like to be involved in scrutinising SAHA services. **23%** of general needs and **24%** of sheltered housing residents said that they were interested in participating in the scrutiny groups. However, once contacted by staff to arrange the initial meeting, this figure dropped dramatically to **7%** for both general needs and sheltered housing residents. It was also decided that in order to manage the geographical spread of SAHA services, we would have a North and South scrutiny group managed by the BSI officers.

The initial meetings took place in early March 2013 for both the North and South groups, where residents met to decide how scrutiny should take place at SAHA and to pilot this. Residents were also asked for suggestions on how to brand the scrutiny group and came up with a few suggestions, from which it was unanimously agreed that the scrutiny group should be called **Residents 2 Residents (R2R)**.

The resident inspectors decided on estate services as the first topic to be scrutinised by the groups. The report outlines the key findings from the scrutiny group and provides a number of recommendations where resident inspectors feel that the services could be improved.

## Methodology used for the scrutiny of Estate Services

Site Visits: The resident inspectors decided that a visit to various schemes would be the best approach for the pilot in the North. This would allow the group to get a feel for the schemes and allow them to meet residents and spread the reputation of the resident inspectors.

The group agreed on an informal approach to the inspection, which would involve observing the schemes and reporting back observations and recommendations.

Scheme Profiles: The resident inspectors agreed that it would be helpful to have a scheme profile prior to any scheme visits, giving an overview of the scheme and identifying any trends in the management areas. The scheme profiles contained information on the history of the scheme, the number and type of properties, arrears, ASB and complaints. An example is set out in Appendix A.

## Overview of scrutiny findings

The resident inspectors visited:

- Kitty Wheeldon Gardens
- Brandon Close
- Millgreen Close
- Caister Close
- Thornham/Burnham Close
- Victoria Court
- Catherine Baird Court

### **Kitty Wheeldon Gardens:**

Overall, the group was impressed with the scheme. All commented that there seemed to be a very nice atmosphere and that residents had created a good feeling of community.

#### Positives:

- Positive comments regarding two members of the CSC team (Ashraf and Kirsty)
- Well maintained scheme
- Beautiful gardens – a mixture of both residents and contractors
- Clean and tidy scheme

#### Negatives:

- Some comments from residents that the electricity can be expensive to run (storage heaters)
- Some confusion regarding the scheme manager's absence

#### Residents' comments

The inspectors met with some residents at the scheme and were able to discuss their feelings and comments about the scheme. The majority of the comments were very positive, not just about the scheme but about SAHA in general (resulting in two compliments being recorded about staff members).

### **Brandon Close:**

The group's first impression of this scheme was that it looked mildly unkempt. A settee had been left next to the site office and a microwave and kettle left outside a property.

#### Positives:

- There is a site office at the scheme that could be used by outside agencies / resident groups

#### Negatives:

- Scheme felt dirty
- There were broken fences that needed attention
- The scheme gave the impression of going back in time
- Lots of use as a public cut through to the estate behind
- Bins were out front as there is no way to access the gardens from the front of the scheme
- Christmas decorations still on one property made the rest of the scheme look unkempt

#### Residents' comments

The inspectors did not speak to any residents at this scheme. The inspectors held a general view that the dumped furniture and some of the rubbish at the scheme gave a very negative feel, especially as these were the first things the inspectors saw as they arrived. More could be done with the communal grass spaces. Although there is not a lot of garden space, colour could be added to brighten up the scheme.

### **Millgreen Close:**

The group's first impression of this scheme was that there were some very nicely looked after properties. The scheme is family friendly with only one entrance / exit.

#### Positives:

- Positive feel to the scheme
- Family friendly
- Number 16 (bungalow) was in particular very nice and well maintained
- Gardens are well looked after
- No rubbish at the scheme

### Negatives:

- Some of the fencing was in disrepair with some fence panels missing completely – although they were on the ground next to the gaps
- The three flats appear out on a limb on their own
- Front doors need painting

### Residents' comments

The inspectors did not speak to any residents at this scheme. The general view held by the inspectors was that this was a nice scheme; there was a feeling of pride with some of the properties who had maintained their garden space and the exteriors.

### **Caister Close:**

The groups' first impression of this scheme was that it had a nice atmosphere and appeared to be very family friendly.

### Positives:

- The scheme is very family friendly and has once entrance, so it is safer for the children to play
- The scheme is clean and tidy
- Appears very well maintained by residents

### Negatives:

- Broken glass which appears to be from a car window in one of the spaces
- Shrubs can be a little high in front of the windows
- Issues with the cost of heating in the properties

### Residents' comments

The inspectors spoke with a few residents at the scheme, who were complimentary of the homes and the Association. There are some issues around the costs of heating. Two residents mentioned that they were paying up to £70 per week for their heating. One resident in particular was very concerned that she has to make the decision either to heat her property or buy food for her children.

Whilst at the scheme, the inspectors looked at a void property. The general consensus was that the void was ready to let, although there was some mess in the property around the corners of the floors. The residents did say that they would expect a resident to clean the property on moving in anyway. There were some scribbles on the wall in the hallway from the previous children, but

residents were aware that the new resident may be issued with a decorating pack, which would resolve the issue. Residents were impressed that the previous tenant had decorated to a high standard and that wooden flooring had been fitted, which would save the new tenant money.

### **Thornham/Burnham Close:**

The group's first impression of this scheme was that it had a nice atmosphere, was very well maintained and the residents at the scheme were very friendly.

#### Positives:

- The scheme is very approachable and fits nicely with the local area
- The scheme is very clean and tidy
- The use of dummy cameras is a good idea and would act as a deterrent

#### Negatives:

- None

#### Residents' comments

The inspectors spoke with two residents at the scheme who were complimentary of the homes and the Association. They were very happy with their homes, including their heating bills. Residents commented that it was a very happy place to live.

The inspectors' comments included: "we had saved the best till last" and that it was obvious that the residents were active and cared about where they lived.

### **Catherine Baird Court:**

Our overall impressions of the service were that it was very tidy, clean and well maintained (no maintenance issues). The service felt secure, comfortable and a nice place to live.

It was especially nice to hear that some of the residents were involved in looking after the garden, i.e. getting involved in planting flowers as this made the scheme feel warm and comfortable and beneficial to all the residents.

The scheme has its own laundry room, which was well looked after, i.e. tidy not like the one at Victoria Court

The art work on the ground floor made the scheme feel more homely and inviting, the residents made the place feel like home, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors with the individual touches of flowers, paintings etc.

#### Positives:

- A warm sense of feeling comfortable, safe and secure when entering the services
- Good art work created by residents makes it feel more homely
- The communal garden is well maintained and it is nice that residents get involved in maintaining the garden (flower pots)

#### Negatives:

- The skylights on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor need cleaning as they have yellow / orange stains
- Issues with car parking as external people seem to use the car park. Possibly enforce the car parking facilities to stop this happening, and mark each bay with CBC.
- TV currently does work, however the service has a big screen TV in the cupboard!

#### Residents' comments

- Met with 4 residents; 3 residents were happy with the services at Catherine Baird Court and enjoyed living at the service – they had been living there for over 10 years!! And no issues or concerns about the service.
- One resident had a complaint about the security of the service. He felt that there was a blind spot between the front/lounge entrance area as “you can’t see people in the reception lobby area until you get to the door”. He said that this was a concern because visitors would want to be let in. The resident said that this was raised with the housing officer and asset manager but was not taken any further. The resident said there seemed to be a problem where residents let strangers into the building and nothing was done about it. Alfred asked how often this happened. The resident said quite frequently. Alfred asked how often this happened, 1, 2, 4 times a week?? The resident said 5 times over the last 7 months!! It was suggested that security could be raised at the residents meetings, possibly a standard agenda item??
- It was felt that next time the service is redecorated, perhaps SAHA could adapt the colour scheme idea from Victoria Court, i.e. different colours per floor to help differentiate between the floors.
- General feedback from all the resident inspectors was that residents were happy about the service at CBC

## Victoria Court:

Our overall impressions of the service – “It was a pleasure to see the project and to meet the tenants who welcomed us and gave freely of their time to talk to us. There is a lot of good work at Victoria Court to support tenants”.

### Positives:

- The colour scheme and painting of the stairs and corridors at the service is a very good system of indicating the different floors by different colour paint. It is very beautiful and colourful, and should be adopted at other SAHA schemes/services
- We saw the flat of one tenant that he had decorated to a very high standard and in an artistic way. It was a pleasure to see it and it is a credit to him
- The tenants were all very pleased with the new lighting in the corridors and stairs. They said it was economical and also acted as a safety measure as they knew when someone was in the corridor when the light came on
- All residents we spoke to had no issues with the repairs service as they are done promptly when reported
- Premises are electronically secured, i.e. need a fob key to enter the service
- Tenants reported an improvement in the cleaning as the contract had recently been changed. Some of the skirting boards need a deep clean but this will probably be done once the cleaner is more established at the project
- A tenant said that if he needed anything done and he reported it to the housing officer, she got the work done as soon as possible and chased it up if there were any delays. He was very pleased about the help he received
- There are regular tenants’ meetings which are chaired by one of the tenants
- There is good access for disabled people

### Negatives:

- The entrance and reception areas leading into the building smell a bit stuffy and unpleasant as there is not much ventilation i.e. lack of fresh air
- The connecting glass walk way between the two main buildings needs cleaning, especially the glass roof as it has moss growing on it
- There was litter in the car park area, which made the scheme look very untidy
- The laundry room was very untidy and messy, not sure if its been cleaned in ages
- The lift lobby area between flat 35-36 has not been painted properly (paint flaking near the radiator)
- We noticed that some of the lino floor covering was marked and made the scheme look untidy. It would enhance the scheme if it could be replaced when funds allow
- The bin areas (for Victoria Court) could do with a shelter over them especially when it rains
- The bin area (for Booth House) needs to be looked at as the metal door slacks are broken and the smell from the bins is coming into the rear of the building (not very nice or pleasant for residents living in that part of the scheme)

- There are some problems with visitors, especially those of tenants who had recently moved from next door (Booth House). Their friends do not seem to respect the scheme. The problem is mostly located with some of those living on the ground floor
- The outside area is under used. There are some large pots which are going to be replanted now the weather is starting to improve and this will greatly enhance this area, which is a valuable outside space
- Some residents are still not living up to the standard expected from them (i.e. untidiness)
- One regret was expressed by a resident that they had lost the use of the workshop. This is now being used by The Salvation Army to run their recycling of furniture, which is a good idea and should be extended to SAHA services

#### Comments from Residents:

- We spoke to 6 residents at the scheme and almost everyone we spoke to said they were happy with their flats
- One tenant said that he finds his flat is value for money
- One tenant said he has no issues with Customer Services
- Some tenants have lived at Victoria Court for a long time and are happy and established there after previously being homeless. They seemed pleased to talk to us and that we were interested in their views.
- There was a feeling that some older tenants do not get enough support. I know this is a social service problem and hard for some tenants to understand that SAHA cannot do anything about this apart from informing the relevant organisations.

#### Recommendations

R2R inspectors recommend the following action:

1. Use the standard of gardening at both Kitty Wheeldon Gardens and Thornham and Burnham Courts as the yardstick for all communal gardens.
2. Look at maximising the use of SAHA offices on site for outside agencies that may be of benefit to residents in the neighbouring schemes.
3. Look at minimising the use of schemes as a cut through to other private estates.
4. Look at the fencing at some schemes and how we can maximise the life cycle of the materials.
5. Explore alternative heating systems for schemes that have high electricity charges.
6. Investigate further energy efficiencies (insulation, solar etc) for schemes with high heating costs.
7. Investigate window/door replacements for schemes with high heating costs.
8. Make better use of communal facilities, e.g. Catherine Baird Court has a wide screen TV, but it is only used for special occasions such as shows or themed nights. It would be nice if the residents could use the big screen TV all the time - as it would help residents with poor eye sight.

9. To look at the blind spot near the reception and lounge area in terms of security and safety for residents at Catherine Baird Court.
10. Enforce the parking facilities, especially where external people are using the facilities over residents and staff at Catherine Baird Court.
11. For SAHA to look at the ventilation at the scheme as some parts seem stuffy due to lack of air circulation, i.e. reception area and ground floor.
12. For SAHA to look at the cleaning of the scheme, i.e. car park, laundry room and glass roof between the main building and back building of the scheme.
13. Bin Areas – to look at creating a shelter for the bins at Victoria Court and to fix the bin areas from the Lifehouse next door as the metal slacks are broken.
14. Issues with new residents' visitors, to ensure that all residents understand the responsibilities of their tenancy agreement and ensure they meet it. Possibly look at introducing a resident good neighbour charter.
15. Outside communal roof garden – SAHA/residents to make more use of the outside space for residents.
16. One regret was expressed by a resident that they had lost the use of the workshop; this was now being used by The Salvation Army to run their recycling of furniture, which is a good idea and should be extended to SAHA services.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Scheme Profile</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Kitty Wheeldon Gardens</u></b></p>	
<p><b>SCHEME INFORMATION</b></p>	<p><b>DETAILS</b></p>
<p>Name of scheme</p>	<p>Kitty Wheeldon Gardens, Ashton Lane, Sale</p>
<p>Number of units on scheme</p>	<p>24 flats</p>
<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>Trafford Council</p>
<p>Percentage of properties allocated through the LA</p>	<p>50% through Local Authority</p>
<p>Percentage of properties allocated through a waiting list</p>	<p>50%</p>
<p>Profile of Scheme</p>	<p>24 flats (11 ground floor and 12 first floor). Each flat has its own front door onto the complex. The ground floor flats also have a patio door opening onto a well established communal garden, which is maintained to a very high standard by a contracted gardener, together with residents who also like to get involved. The garden is fenced off providing privacy and security. Each property has its own lounge, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. The ground floor flats have level access showers and the first floor flats have a bath. The flats are all electric off peak economy seven, and all flats have a lifeline alarm for help in an emergency. The scheme is supported by a resident Scheme Manager, who works 25 hours per week. The off duty time is covered by Trafford Mobile Warden Services and Trafford Control Centre.</p>
<p>Tenant Profile</p>	<p>Residents aged over 55.</p>
<p>Resident Involvement</p>	<p>Resident involvement is high at this scheme with the majority of the residents getting involved in the annual Britain in Bloom competition. Residents regularly attend coffee mornings and scheme inspections with the housing officer.</p>
<p>ASB</p>	<p>0 cases of ASB reported in the last twelve months.</p>
<p>Complaints</p>	<p>0 complaints received in the last 12 months.</p>
<p>Scheme Inspection Results</p>	<p>Two repair issues raised by resident. No further comments about the scheme.</p>

**Appendix A**

Current Weekly Assured Rent	Basic rent £103. 33
Current Weekly Service Charge	£18.19
Current Tenant Arrears	£4592.75 (3.18%) The majority of arrears are due to the cycle of HB payments.
Former Tenant Arrears	0.00 (0.00%)
Asset Management	The asset manager for this area is Colin Hale.
Housing Management	The housing management for this area is undertaken by the North housing team. The housing officer for this area is Shirley Grayson.
Housing Demand	13 applicants on the waiting list.
STAR Survey 2012	<p><b>Star Satisfaction Survey</b>            Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) commissioned the STAR survey to be run in-house in the Spring of 2012. General needs tenants, sheltered tenants and supported housing tenants were included in the postal survey, which took place between April and June 2012. The aim of the survey was to provide data on tenant satisfaction, which would allow SAHA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present an up to date demographic and socio-economic profile of SAHA's tenants</li> <li>• Provide an up to date picture of tenants' satisfaction with their homes and with the services SAHA provides</li> <li>• Compare the performance of SAHA as a landlord with that of other social landlords who have undertaken STAR surveys</li> <li>• Inform decisions regarding service reviews.</li> </ul> <p>There was a 48% response rate from KWG. Those who responded stated that they were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 91% satisfied with the overall service provided by SAHA</li> <li>• 90% satisfied with their home</li> <li>• 100% satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.</li> <li>• 82% satisfied that their rent provided VFM</li> <li>• 82% satisfied that their service charge provided VFM</li> <li>• 91% satisfied with repairs and maintenance</li> <li>• 73% satisfied with how SAHA listens to their views and acts upon them</li> </ul>

<p><b>Scheme Profile</b></p> <p><b><u>Victoria Court</u></b></p>	
<p><b>SCHEME INFORMATION</b></p>	<p><b>DETAILS</b></p>
<p>Name of scheme</p>	<p><b>Victoria Court, 177 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1DW</b></p>
<p>Number of units on scheme</p>	<p>43</p>
<p>Local Authority</p>	<p>London Borough of Tower Hamlets</p>
<p>Percentage of properties allocated through the LA</p>	<p>Not applicable – as all nominations for accommodation come directly through The Rough Sleepers Initiative (The Clearing House, Broadway)</p>
<p>Percentage of properties allocated through a waiting list</p>	<p>All nominations for accommodation come directly through The Rough Sleepers Initiative (The Clearing House, Broadway)</p>
<p>Profile of Scheme</p>	<p>Victoria Court provides 43 one-bed, self contained flats within our general needs portfolio of accommodation for former rough sleepers between the ages of 18-65+ in Whitechapel, London.</p> <p><u>Accommodation:</u> The building comprises 3 tower blocks (front tower block with 5 floors, and main and rear tower blocks both have 3 floors each). Each flat comprises a lounge, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.</p> <p><u>Support:</u> Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST – Look Ahead) provides a support service to some of the residents at the scheme (as required), i.e. to help sustain their accommodation and draw up support plans etc. Night Security Service is provided from 11 pm – 6 am.</p> <p><u>Facilities:</u> Residents have access to laundry facilities in the basement and car parking facilities which are shared with The Salvation Army hostel next door.</p>
<p>Tenant Profile</p>	<p>General Needs Accommodation</p>
<p>Resident Involvement</p>	<p>Residents at this scheme are very involved in the scheme inspections at Victoria Ct.</p>

**Appendix A**

ASB	9 closed cases of ASB in the last 12 months.
Complaints	2 complaints received in the last 12 months.
Scheme Inspection Results	Light fitting, handrail, cobwebs, laundry room pipes not wiped, stained sink in laundry room and dirty skirting and fittings in laundry room. Rubbish on floor around the bins. Unkempt.
Current Weekly Assured Rent	Basic rent £110.48 - £112.21
Current Weekly Service Charge	£42.13
Current Tenant Arrears	£18,305.98 (5.47%). The majority of arrears are due to the cycle of HB payments
Former Tenant Arrears	£13,291.11 (3.97%)
Housing Demand	All nominations for accommodation come directly through The Rough Sleepers Initiative (The Clearing House, Broadway)
Housing Management	The housing management for this area is undertaken by the South Housing Team. The housing officer for this area is <b>Jackie Antoine</b> .
Asset Management	The asset manager for this area is <b>Stephen Burbridge</b>
STAR Survey 2012	<p><b><u>Star Satisfaction Survey</u></b></p> <p>Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) commissioned the STAR survey to be run in-house in the Spring of 2012. General needs tenants, sheltered tenants and supported housing tenants were included in the postal survey, which took place between April and June 2012.</p> <p>The aim of the survey was to provide data on tenant satisfaction, which would allow SAHA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Present an up to date demographic and socio-economic profile of SAHA's tenants</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide an up to date picture of tenants' satisfaction with their homes and with the services SAHA provides</i></li> <li>• <i>Compare the performance of SAHA as a landlord with that of other social landlords who have undertaken STAR surveys</i></li> <li>• <i>Inform decisions regarding service reviews</i></li> </ul> <p>There was a <b>30%</b> response rate from Victoria Court. Those who responded stated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>82%</b> are satisfied with the quality of their home</li> <li>• <b>83%</b> are satisfied with the services provided by their landlord</li> <li>• <b>69%</b> feel that SAHA takes their views into account</li> <li>• <b>75%</b> are satisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live</li> <li>• <b>74%</b> are satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service</li> <li>• <b>69%</b> feel they obtain good value for money from their rent and service charge</li> </ul>

