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WAO/WHQS – L001  
10<sup>th</sup> August 2018  
Sean O'Donnell  
01352 701642

Dear Sirs,

**The Service User Perspective - the Welsh Housing Quality Standard - Flintshire County Council**

Thank you for the WAO report which we have found positive and constructive in terms of its content and suggestions. We would wish to pass comment on certain aspects of the report, which we feel provides additional clarity and identifies our commitment moving forward.

Firstly, the Council proposes to complete all WHQS Upgrade works by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. The report refers to a target date of March 2021.

Secondly, through our WHQS Programme, tenants and members of the Tenants Federation are invited to participate in the interview process when we are procuring WHQS contractors.

We agree that the Tenants Federation is not a sufficiently representative group in the context of delivery of the WHQS works, however tenant engagement has now shifted towards the individual tenants through pre-entry surveys at which the works are discussed and where applicable the tenants are able to select styles & types of finishes etc. This is then followed up with visits during the works by the contractor's representatives and FCC's Tenant Liaison Officers to ensure the works are delivered as smoothly as possible.

Although the number of tenants groups has declined, the individual engagement has increased significantly to the extent that through the delivery of the WHQS works, every tenant receives personal engagement which allows the Council to shape the services it delivers to their individual needs and requirements.

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Moving forward, we believe the tenants will be able to influence services and engage more proactively through social media and the Council's internet based services i.e Twitter, Facebook, Council's webpage.

In addition we have also redesigned many of our internal forms along with the questions we ask tenants during the satisfaction survey. The Capital Works Team achieved a score of 95.8% as an overall score for 2017-2018 for all WHQS Upgrade workstreams combined.

Each workstream is scored from 10 Questions and this maps the tenant's journey through the upgrade works. Each FCC TLO completes the Tenant Satisfaction Survey face to face and asks for honest feedback that can help the team and service to improve moving forwards. Some tenants prefer to complete the Survey in their own time and can return it via Free Post or can have it collected.

This important part of the process enables the team to gather Key Performance Data that is used to correctly measure the Contractors Customer Focus onsite.

We feel this method demonstrates our commitment to tenant engagement and how tenants can become involved and assist us to improve the customer focus aspect.

Thirdly, since the report was completed; we have now confirmed that our overall stock has increased to 7219 properties due to the new build programme. We have also confirmed that 1288 properties now achieve a 'WHQS full compliance status' as opposed to 24 properties that were reported the previous year. In addition to this, 727 properties are subject to the 'Acceptable Fail' criteria which further increases our compliance stock figure. Due to a major data cleansing exercise that was completed recently by our team, we have now seen our overall stock compliance percentage increase to 28%.

Finally with regards to the proposed improvement, an extensive consultation programme was undertaken during 2010 with key stakeholders (tenants, local members, and staff) on how the Council's Sheltered Housing Warden Service could be improved. Based upon the outcomes from the consultation programme the Council took the decision that a large-scale service improvement programme needed to be developed and implemented in order to transform the Sheltered Housing Warden Service into a Community Based Accommodation Support Service.

The aim of the improvement programme was the introduction of a support service that operated from within Flintshire's local communities and delivered an in-person accommodation support service to any older person, irrespective of tenure, who needed support to live independently and safely within their own homes and delay the need for more intensive (and more costly) interventions from other Council services.

The improved service delivery model aspires to deliver support services that are aligned, as far as possible, to the individual needs of service users and is flexible so the service provided can fluctuate as a service user needs fluctuate. To attain this aim it was necessary to introduce an objective needs assessment process that enables



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the individual needs of service users to be identified and support plans to be produced for all service users, outlining the support that they will receive.

As a result of the needs assessment process, the level of support a service user is able to receive has increased. For example, some service users are able to receive several support visits throughout the day (The previous service model was a one size fits all approach with all service users receiving a morning visit only). Other service users, who used to receive one support visit per week, are now receiving support five days a week. The improved service model has been designed as a customer focused service that places service users at the centre of service delivery and the service planning and improvements processes.

A full review of the support plan is carried out on an annual basis for every sheltered tenant, however, service users are made aware that they can request a review at any time or if their circumstances change. This ensures that every sheltered tenant has the opportunity to discuss their circumstances with the Support Officer and feelings of loneliness and social isolation will be addressed as a support need.

Following the withdrawal of the warden service in 2011, further consultation events have taken place whereby all sheltered tenants have been given the opportunity to attend an event. The outcome of the events show that that 95% of those who attended an event, have stated that they are happy with the support that they receive from the Community Based Accommodation Support Service and all efforts are being made to address the discontentment of the remaining 5%. These concerns are predominantly around the change from the daily, good neighbour service that the previous warden service offered to a visit based on assessed need with tenants stating that the warden may have been the only person that they saw from one day to the next. In order to address this concern, the Community Based Service engages the befriending services of third sector agencies to drop in and chat and provide the good neighbour services, which the Community Based Support Service can no longer offer.

An independent assessment was been carried out by Flintshire County Council's Supporting People Reviewing Officers randomly selecting residents to interview about their experience of the new service. Thirty residents were selected to take part in the initial evaluation, however further reviews are due to be undertaken as part of an on-going evaluation of the support service.

The Community Based Support Service remains committed in continuing to learn from customers as to what is working well and what may remain as an area of concern. In order to provide the means by which tenants are encouraged to remain engaged in the continued development of their support service, it is intended that regular feedback sessions will continue to be held. A programme of consultation events is planned for September 2018 with sheltered tenants and as part of these events, tenants will have the opportunity to discuss their support services. The purpose of these sessions is to encourage tenants to feel confident in voicing their opinions on the new service model and where further improvements to the service can be openly and transparently discussed.



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It is only by listening to our tenants and their expectations of their support service are we able to determine what areas can be assessed and improved. This continues to be a critical and central component of our service improvement plan. From this we will continue to ensure that service user involvement and feedback sessions, drive forward our on-going service improvements.

We trust the above reinforces the positive report the Council has received and hope it assists to clarify the recommendation made within the report.

Yours sincerely,



Neal Cockerton  
Chief Officer, Housing and Assets  
Flintshire County Council

Copies to:  
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