

## Mears Group's drive for customer service excellence continues

2 years ago



[Mears Group](#) is continuing to focus on providing the best service to its residents and service users as it releases its Annual Customer Scrutiny Board Report and is working with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to develop a scrutiny accreditation which will be the first of its kind.

Mears Customer Scrutiny Board is an independently chaired panel of representatives from its tenant community which holds Mears to account and helps ensure it delivers the best possible service for all customers. The Annual Customer Scrutiny Report reflects on progress made by Mears over the past year to improve its customer experience and sets out recommendations for 2023-24.

The trial of a new app to make it easier for customers to diagnose, report and receive self-help advice on property repairs was identified as a key achievement in the report, as well as the introduction of a translation service to assist customers with additional language and communication needs.

There was also a focus on decarbonisation and fuel stress, which included the development of resident toolkits on Healthy Homes with support on managing fuel costs. Efforts to destigmatise, proactively search for, and report cases of damp and mould were also welcomed by the board.

Terrie Alafat, Independent Chair of the Customer Scrutiny Board, said: "We are so grateful to all the residents and members who work with us to ensure that the board is effective and makes a real impact on how we provide our services. We will continue to look at where improvements can be made and ensure that the people we support are represented – this is an absolute focus for us as we work across many vulnerable groups and we want to make sure that they always have a voice."

Established in 2020, the Scrutiny Board is comprised of customer representatives who reflect the diverse

demographic, social and ethnic groups that make up the Mears customer base. This includes a service user living in asylum seeker accommodation, whose insight and lived experience is helping Mears to improve its services in this area.

Having made a series of recommendations for 2023-24, the Scrutiny Board will track the progress made in areas such as the creation of a resident training programme, looking at how it can better use technology to improve customer communication, and what further practical support can be provided to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) has worked collaboratively with Mears Group since the board was established, providing independent guidance on how to ensure it operates effectively and provides valuable scrutiny. With this in mind, Mears and CfGS have recently worked with Scrutiny Board members to develop a methodology for independently assessing the impact of scrutiny that is specific to housing suppliers. CfGS will now use the methodology to carry out annual Independent Scrutiny Impact Assessments (ISIAs). The ISIAs will provide an independent, expert view from CfGS on the extent to which the Scrutiny Board is achieving positive impact in line with its terms of reference.

Commenting on this latest development, Andy Fry from CfGS said: “We believe that introduction of our new independent assessment process is a unique and positive step forward. Reports of the Assessments will be an important mechanism for securing assurance on the Scrutiny Board’s performance – both in terms of what it’s doing well and where there is potential for improvement. We look forward to trailing the approach and continuing to support the crucially important work of the Board.”

To find out more about the Mears Customer Scrutiny Board and its annual report, please visit <https://www.mearsgroup.co.uk/good-governance/mears-scrutiny-board-annual-report>