



Diversity and Inclusion Panel Notes

Friday 21st June 2024

10:30 am – 12:30 pm

Staff Attendance

Annmarie Flynn	- Tenant Voice Team Leader
David Pye	- Tenant Involvement Officer
Ann-Marie Robertson	- Policy & Initiatives Manager

Attendees

Redacted for sharing

Meeting Notes

1.Introductions, Welcome, Agree Previous Notes

Notes from previous meeting agreed. New panel member Will Gill was welcomed.

2. Recommendations Actions Log

Annmarie Flynn, Tenant Voice Team Leader gave update on questions raised at previous Diversity and Inclusion Panel meeting on 19.04.24 and gave panel Torus response to queries raised.

It was agreed that at the next panel the Recommendations Actions log would be shared with attendees prior to meeting.

3. Mental Health Awareness Week (13th May) Torus promotion

David Pye, Tenant Involvement Officer discussed how the Torus Group promoted the Mental Health Awareness week 13-19 May 2024.

Every year, 1 in 4 of the population will experience a mental health problem Torus recognise that looking after our mental health is as important as looking after our physical health and it's essential that you know you have someone you can talk to about how you are feeling.

There are more than 50 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) across the Torus Group trained through a recognised body in Mental Health First Aid. The MHFAs offer first aid support and have the skills to spot signs of people experiencing poor mental health and can sign post colleagues to appropriate support.

Throughout the week staff were made aware of mental health support, tips for different ways support their daily routines and an overview of different mental health illnesses to increase our knowledge.

4. Retro-Fit program – Discussion led by Thomas Case

Torus are increasing the energy efficiency of our existing homes and over the next two years £22 million will be invested in retrofitting energy-efficient improvements for 695 homes across Torus communities over the next two years. Including Cavity Wall Insulation, loft insulation, windows, external doors, ventilation, wall tie replacement (where required), and external decoration.

Thomas welcomed the Retrofit program however commented.



“The work on the Kirk Street site has been completed, however we haven’t heard from the tenants there what are their views”.

“The tenants views are not represented in Torus promotional videos regarding retrofit and they are far too corporate”.

“What additional support is there for those with neurodiverse needs or disability especially as works are disruptive and noisy”.

“Kirk Street would have been an ideal site for tenant inspectors to review and report on”.

“Subcontractors should all have and show branded I.D.”



“The retrofit program will save tenants money on their utility bills, make their homes warmer which is a good thing, especially now while we are in an energy crisis. It’s also good for the environment”.

Torus Retrofit Information available on website :

<https://torus.co.uk/my-torus/your-home/planned-improvements/shdfretrofit>

Action: A Flynn to refer to Scrutiny Panel to seek permission to include the retrofit programme on Scrutiny Workplan for Tenant Inspection.

Vulnerability & Reasonable Adjustment Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment

Ann-Marie Robertson the Policy & Initiatives Manager led discussion around the Vulnerability Policy annual review.

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is an evidence-based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.

The current policy can be found on the Torus website.

<https://www.torus.co.uk/storage/app/media/torus/Documents/Policies/Vulnerability%20Policy.pdf>

The panel have previously been consulted on the Vulnerability Policy and prior to meeting received copy of policy along with an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

Panel members heard how EIA's are used to understand the potential impact of policies both positive and negative and put in place actions to remove or reduce the impact of any negative consequences. Panel were informed that the Vulnerability & Reasonable Adjustment EIA will help ensure that no one is disadvantaged.

AMR advised panel that Torus have an EIA to reflect the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and that all staff attend mandatory training

Panel members completed an EIA of the Vulnerability & Reasonable Adjustments Policy. It was agreed that any additional comments could be sent to David Pye Tenant Involvement Officer

See Appendix 1 for the panel's contributions to the completed EIA

Action: *Tenants contributions to EIA will be added to existing EIA for the Vulnerability & Reasonable Adjustment Policy.*

Panel General Comments

Panel comments here also include those received by Tenant Voice team via email and telephone.



“The complaints Easy Read document is so simple and easy to understand. Well Done”

“Royal British Legion offer great support to ex service personnel and their families”

“The Diversity and Inclusion panel allows me to have my say on issues that affect me and others with vulnerabilities that’s an important improvement.”

“Knowing that an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and tenants have been directly involved is reassuring”



“All Torus staff should be aware of the Equalities Act”

“Torus should support elderly tenants who may be hard of hearing and with no or limited knowledge of online options”

“Unknown telephone numbers make the vulnerable uncomfortable.”

“Staff should leave a voicemail, if possible, when they don’t get answer on phone”

“The general standard of CAB support and service offer has declined over recent years.”



“Torus must create a database of vulnerable Tenants based upon previous information obtained, representation of advocacy & self-referrals.”

“United Utilities who are the Water supplier for North-West England gave me the option of Emergency Contact which I accepted; Torus could develop this option for vulnerable tenants”.

“Torus needs to realize that self-referral can sadly be made for fraudulent reasons therefore Torus need to reach out to organisations such as The Whitechapel Centre who can give advice on tactics used by individuals to exploit Torus assistance.”

“Torus needs to acknowledge that tenants with disabilities face daily struggles combined with likely life-time psychological trauma for many & as a Registered Social Landlord it needs to work alongside tenants to deliver the best quality of life as possible through a number of ways.”

“Every four years a meeting should take place between the designated Housing Officer & Tenants who are classified as needing support”.

“Torus could create a professional relationship with the award-winning West Kirby School and College who deliver education to children with disabilities. This way, Torus can enter an environment that they have one-to-one contact with young people they can show people with disabilities how to become a Torus tenant.”

“Torus has no YouTube video explaining how to register for social housing, what the Property Pool is & what additional support can be given from Torus other organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau”

“Easy Read doesn’t tackle the text size issue for tenants with sight impairment. Digital versions of the original document via email would be a better option so I can alter the text size on a monitor”.

Actions:

Q. Thomas Case requested if Torus Tenant Inspectors could be given badges and lanyards indicating they are tenant inspectors so they are easily recognisable when out on inspections.

A. 24.06.24: lanyards and badges (no photo) have been created for use by Tenant Inspectors in future inspections.

Q. Will Gill asked if there was any additional support that can be given to Torus Shared Owners who may be vulnerable. Is it possible to provide a paid for HMS repairs service to Shared owners.

A. 25.06.24 DP had meeting with Dawn Grocott, Leaseholder Team Manager unfortunately this is not possible as a shared owners are responsible for all their own repairs including the annual gas service. Full guidance on shared owners responsibilities, Q&As and signposting to useful contacts available on Torus website

Q. Is it possible for Torus future promotional videos used in presentations and held on Torus website always have subtitles for those that are hard of hearing.

A. 26.06.24 DP contacted Communications Team who advised that subtitles will be factored in going forward on all new Torus promotional videos subject to budget availability, but there are no resources currently to do it retrospectively for existing videos.

Q. The panel requested sight of the Easy Read Complaints Policy

A. 24.06.24: Easy read version of Complaints Policy to all panel members.

Q. Torus Retrofit promotional videos are too corporate, don't feature tenants.

A. 26.06.24: Julie-Ann Parker, Energy and Coordinator Lead advised retro-fit videos currently only in pre-editing mode and panel views will be incorporated into the finished videos before release.

Q. Remi Baublys stated CAB provided poor service and on occasion felt was not treated with respect.

A. 27.06.24: contact and contract specification details for CAB requested from Elaine Ball, Income Service Lead and Susan James, Income Manager.

CAB will be invited to attend future D&I panel.

Q. Subcontractors continue not to share I.D. badges, use unmarked vans, and don't wear branded uniforms.

A. At the involved tenants visit to HMS on 5th June 2024 Gail Farley Customer Experience Manager informed group that all subcontractors that HMS are instructed to show I.D. at all appointments and do reinforce this message when made aware.
DP 27.06.24 Contacted Gail Farley HMS with panels feedback.

Q. Thomas Case asked if there was potential for HMS to provide a Handy Person repair scheme like that offered by LIVV. This paid service could also potentially support shared owners.

A. 26.06.24 DP contacted Gail Farley, HMS Head of Customer Experience contacted for view and will share response with panel.

Q. Darren Williams said Torus has no video explaining how to register for social housing, what the Property Pool is & what additional support applicants could receive.

A. 27.06.24 DP emailed Jackie Atherton Torus Communications team for response will share with panel when received.

Any Other Business

No other business.