

Tenant scrutiny panel – Lettable standard review

Introduction

In March 2026, the Tenant Scrutiny Panel agreed to undertake a review of North Yorkshire Council's Lettable Standard. The Scrutiny Panel selected this topic following feedback from tenants and a shared interest in understanding whether empty properties are being prepared and handed over to new tenants in line with the standards set by the Council.

The Lettable Standard plays an important role in ensuring that homes are safe, secure, clean and ready for when a tenancy begins. As the condition of a property at the start of a tenancy can have a significant impact on a tenant's experience, the Scrutiny Panel wanted to assess whether the standard remains fit for purpose and whether it is being delivered consistently across the housing service.

Over the course of the review, the Scrutiny Panel gathered evidence through examining policies and procedures, reviewing performance information, speaking with tenants and staff and visiting empty properties. The review focused on three key areas: do the properties meet the published Lettable Standard, tenants' experiences when moving into their homes, and whether the current standard strikes the right balance between quality, tenant satisfaction and efficient re-letting of properties.

This report sets out the findings of the review, highlights areas of good practice, and makes recommendations aimed at improving the service and enhancing the experience of future tenants.

Approach

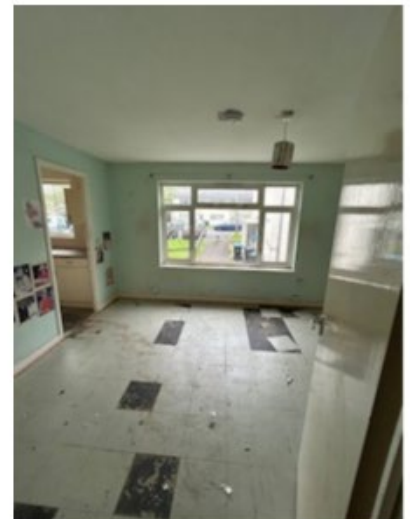
Our approach to gathering findings was to see a selection of properties before works are completed and then going to see the same homes after works. We would then use the lettable standard checklist to assess whether the home meets the standard before it is handed over to the incoming tenant.

We then wanted to speak to tenants who have moved in after the improved lettable standard to gather feedback on their experience of the standard of their home.

Findings

Do the properties meet the published Lettable Standard?

As part of the project, the Scrutiny Panel members visited eight properties across Selby and Harrogate prior to works being completed. This provided valuable context and insight into the condition of homes before improvement works commenced, helping the Scrutiny Panel understand the scope of repairs and upgrades required to bring properties up to the lettable standard.



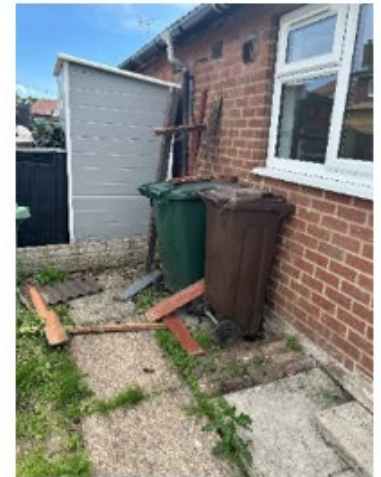
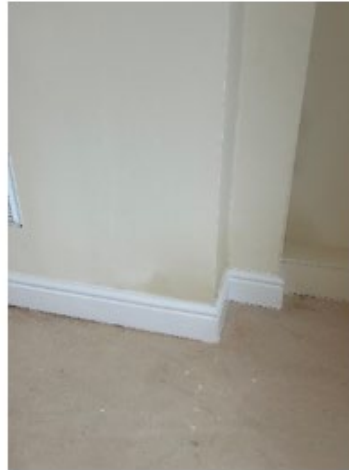
Due to project timescales, it was not possible to revisit these same properties once works had been completed. Instead, the Scrutiny Panel visited 10 completed properties across Harrogate and Selby to assess the quality of finished works. Overall, feedback from panel members was positive. The properties were generally found to meet the lettable standard, with a good standard of work evident throughout. The decoration was noted to be a big improvement.



One area that could not be fully assessed was the heating system. As gas supplies are capped, Scrutiny Panel members were unable to test heating and hot water systems during the visits. This has been highlighted and will be reflected within the report recommendations to ensure there is appropriate assurance that heating systems are fully operational before a property is re-let.



The Scrutiny Panel also visited two finished properties in Selby earlier on in the project. These did not meet the lettable standard fully. Issues identified included cleanliness concerns, outstanding snagging items and garden maintenance requirements. Karl provided context regarding why these issues had not yet been addressed and apologised that they had been missed prior to the visit. The panel acknowledged this explanation whilst noting that these properties would require further attention before being considered ready to let.

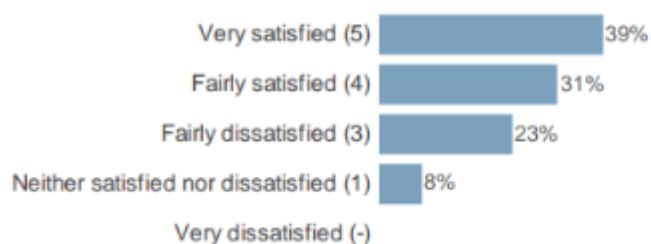


Tenants' experiences when moving into their homes

To gather more evidence, the Tenant Scrutiny Panel surveyed tenants who had recently moved into a North Yorkshire Council property to understand their experience of the standard of their home when they moved in. A total of 14 tenants responded to the survey online.

Overall satisfaction was positive, with 70% of tenants reporting they were satisfied with the condition of their home when they moved in. Most respondents also felt their property was clean, and kitchens, decoration and electrical fittings generally received positive feedback.

Overall, how satisfied were you with the condition of your property when you moved in?



However, nearly half of respondents felt their home was only partly ready, or not ready at all, when they moved in. In addition, 85% reported identifying repairs or defects shortly after moving into the property. Common issues included heating and hot water problems, faulty showers and ventilation, door and window repairs, flooring concerns, and garden maintenance issues.

The survey also found that 54% of respondents were not given clear instructions on how to operate their heating system, highlighting an opportunity to improve information provided to new tenants.

Were you given clear instruction of how to use your heating appliance?



Despite the issues identified at the start of tenancies, satisfaction improved over time, with 85% of respondents reporting they were satisfied with the condition of their home at the time of the survey.

The Scrutiny Panel concluded that while the Lettable Standard generally delivers good-quality homes, there are inconsistencies in delivery and quality checks which can affect tenants' initial experience when moving into their property.

From the evidence gathered, the panel identified several themes:

- Overall satisfaction with the Lettable Standard is good, with most tenants happy with their homes once any initial issues have been resolved.
- The standard generally delivers clean, safe and well-presented homes.
- A high proportion of tenants reported repairs being required shortly after moving in.
- Communication regarding heating systems and utility arrangements could be improved.
- Heating systems, flooring, and ventilation were areas most associated with concerns. In some cases, tenants felt that heating systems had not been adequately checked or explained prior to the start of the tenancy, leaving them uncertain about how to use them effectively or in some cases waiting for parts as the boiler isn't working once it's uncapped. The panel considers that greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring heating systems are fully operational, energy efficient, and supported by clear guidance for incoming tenants before a property is let.
- Garden conditions and external areas were identified by several tenants as a significant concern. Tenants reported that some properties were not always handed over in a condition that could reasonably be maintained by the incoming household. Issues raised included overgrown gardens, mature trees, large

hedges, and established shrubs requiring substantial work and expense to bring under control. This contradicts the safe, Secure and Clean – Exterior – Gardens, Outhouses, Driveways and Patios section of the lettable standard. The Scrutiny Panel noted concerns that expectations regarding tenant responsibility may not always reflect the practical and financial constraints faced by many low-income households. In the current economic climate, undertaking major garden clearance or landscaping works can place a considerable burden on new tenants, and greater consideration should be given to ensuring external areas are handed over to a reasonable and manageable standard at the start of a tenancy.

Conclusion

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel's review found that North Yorkshire Council's Lettable Standard is generally effective in ensuring that homes are safe, secure and ready for letting. Evidence gathered through property visits, tenant feedback and discussions with staff demonstrated that, in most cases, properties are being prepared to a good standard and that tenants are ultimately satisfied with their homes.

The review also identified opportunities to improve consistency in the delivery of the standard. While many tenants reported positive experiences, a significant number identified repairs or defects shortly after moving in, particularly relating to heating systems, ventilation, flooring and external areas. The panel noted that these issues can have a considerable impact on a tenant's first impression of their new home, their overall start to the tenancy and their first impression of their landlord.

The findings suggest that stronger quality assurance processes, improved inspections for letting and clearer information for new tenants would help reduce the number of issues experienced following sign-up. Attention should be given to ensuring heating and hot water systems are fully operational prior to letting and that gardens and external areas are left in a condition that is reasonable and manageable for incoming tenants.

Overall, the panel is satisfied that the Lettable Standard remains fit for purpose but believes that implementing the recommendations set out in this report will help achieve greater consistency, improve tenant satisfaction and provide all new tenants with the best possible start in their new home. The panel would like to thank the staff, contractors and tenants who contributed to the review and supported the scrutiny process.

Scrutiny Panel members – Adrian Van Toren, Barbara Rickards, Kim McBride, Leonard Boydell, Teresa Fox.