

Spotlight on: Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) – Brent Housing self-assessment – Sep 2023

| | Recommendation | Detail | Brent current position | Proposed action |
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| Governance and Culture | | | | |
| 1 | Define the oversight role of governance for knowledge and information management. | Governance should seek assurance that the landlord knows its products, services and residents well, and that it uses this data to inform business and financial planning. | <p>The new Data and Insight Strategy (due to be published later this year) for Brent Council includes specific commitments to developing a strong data culture across the organisation.</p> <p><u>Existing governance structures:</u> In terms of governance structures, the internal Data Ethics Board, consisting of senior council officers and independent, external data experts ensures the Council uses data in the right way, in accordance with legal, ethical and best practice guidance.</p> <p>The Information Governance Group, comprised of senior representatives from each service area, sets standards and develops the Councils approach to information governance, including sharing protocols.</p> <p>The Housing Digital Board (HDB) meets monthly to discuss digital and data challenges and opportunities specific to the housing service, escalate areas of concern and direct the digital transformation programme for the service.</p> <p>The Brent Data Network, a cross-council staff-led group open to all officers, meets regularly to share best practice and discuss and collaborate in resolving common data challenges.</p> <p><u>Examples of work ongoing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of data quality work has started in Housing, with a cleanse of void property data in Northgate Housing as the first priority area and intention to move on to wider property / asset management data as a next step. • New True Compliance system has been procured so that all compliance information can be held in one place. Full transfer to this system is set for September 2023. • Engagement officers have been utilising door knocking and estate roadshow events to improve the contact data held for our tenants, specifically focusing on areas where there are gaps in contact data. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of the remit and update to terms of reference for the HDB to ensure focus is aimed at priorities for the service 2. Shape the digital programme for housing around improving data quality across the service and prioritise the work starting on Northgate Housing re. BHM housing stock, agree governance of this project with HDB. 3. Ensure BHM is in a position to meet regulatory requirements from April 2024 which requires accurate, individual property level reporting for decency, compliance and repairs and maintenance. 4. Embed a refreshed tenancy verification visit programme and ensure it is used as an opportunity to update tenant contact, socio-demographic and household information, including vulnerabilities / support needs. |
| 2 | Implement a knowledge and information management strategy | This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defining knowledge and information management • clear definitions of which data repository is to be used for which datasets • the implementation of an Information Asset Register so you know what data you already have, what you don't have, and what you need | <p>The new Data and Insight Strategy for Brent Council defines knowledge and information management across the organisation and sets out a delivery plan for improving data quality, the culture around data management, the technology being used and staff skills.</p> <p>The strategy includes actions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map data architecture across the organisation • Ensure 100% of information Asset Register reviews are completed annually • Improve consistency in system usage / integrate systems where possible to provide improved, more joined-up services | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. HDB to invite the Head of Change and Insight and the Strategic Data Manager (once in post) to a meeting for an overview of the new Data and Insight Strategy and a discussion re. what this means for the housing service. 6. Include reference to consistent and effective record keeping / data and information management as part of the updated JD's under the planned re-organisation. |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> outcomes-focused data mining: what you are trying to achieve and what do you need the data for? how it aligns with the overall business strategy and the need for continuous service improvement what the expected standards are, how they will be monitored, and the consequences of failing to adhere to them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop data quality standards / measures | |
| 3 | Benchmark against other organisations' good practice in knowledge and information management. | This should underpin a continuous improvement approach to service delivery. | <p>Brent Housing Management is a member of Housemark and submits benchmarking data annually. Once a year, a tailored feedback session is also held with the Housing senior management team and Housemark data specialists with outputs from this being used to inform improvements and service plans for the following financial year.</p> <p>BHM have also recently engaged with a cross-London benchmarking group for the Ombudsman KIM report, the first meeting being due to take place at the end of September 2023.</p> | <p>7. Better utilise our membership to Housemark Clubs where there are networking and learning opportunities re. best practice by ensuring attendance from service representatives and any key learning is fed back effectively.</p> <p>8. Attendance at the London Councils KIM benchmarking group and report best practice to HDB</p> |
| 4 | Review safeguarding policies and procedures | To ensure data analysis forms part of a landlord's proactive activities to satisfy their duties | <p>The Housing Service follows corporate policies and approaches regarding safeguarding policies and procedures. There is functionality in CRM to record vulnerabilities and the tenancy audit function allows for safeguarding referrals to be made where needed.</p> <p>London safeguarding protocol*</p> | <p>9. Ensure all housing staff and contractors are trained in when and how to make a safeguarding referral</p> <p>10. Consider how safeguarding and safeguarding referral data can be better used to ensure the housing service is satisfying safeguarding duties and provide more targeted / tailored services</p> |
| 5 | Train staff on the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 | Particularly with relevance to the importance of knowledge and information management as a tool for compliance | <p>Brent Council facilitates corporate Equality and Diversity training, however it is not widely known about or attended.</p> <p>There is also training available, at request, regarding carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA).</p> | 11. Recommend that the corporate Equality Act training becomes mandatory as a refresher course, similar to that of data protection |
| 6 | Review internal guidance around recording vulnerabilities | Particularly to ensure temporary, as well as permanent, vulnerabilities are recognised, recorded and then removed from records once no longer appropriate | There is functionality in Housing Management CRM to record tenant vulnerabilities, however this is not kept updated in a consistent way and so is not well utilised to inform service delivery. | <p>12. Review (and update as needed) functionality re. recording vulnerabilities in Dynamics, ensuring this is considered for both permanent and temporary vulnerabilities.</p> <p>13. Ensure all Housing staff are aware of the functionality and how and when to update this on customer profiles (including when to remove)</p> <p>14. Develop reporting on vulnerabilities / ensure steps are included in processes i.e. repairs that encourage checking of vulnerabilities data so service delivery can be tailored where needed</p> |
| Devise key recording standards | | | | |
| 7 | Develop organisational key data recording standard requirements that will ensure good records that support the business and demonstrate compliance with national standards | This should set out the minimum standard to which data must be entered in the various databases owned by the landlord. | <p>The new Data and Insight Strategy sets out an action for generic data quality standards / measures to be developed for use across all services in Brent Council.</p> <p>There are no specific standards currently in place for the housing service.</p> | 15. Consider utilising the HACT data standards, as recommended under the Better Social Housing Review, to set out the requirements for housing service data management. |
| 8 | Make adherence to the minimum standard for knowledge and | The quality of information sharing should form part of the assessment at procurement stage. | This is not in place across some contracts / SLA's and, where it is, it is light touch and not rigorously managed as part of ongoing contract / SLA management. | 16. Review knowledge and information aspects of ongoing contracts / SLA's and agree more robust approach for all future contract procurement / SLA's. |

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| | information management part of the service level agreement with third parties | | | |
| 9 | Have a clear categorisation system for ATIS/FOI requests | This allows quick identification of whether the question has previously been answered and analysis of which systems require refinement to answer questions in future. | CRM functionality in Brent does not currently allow for clear categorisation of FOI requests. | 17. Consider enhancements to CRM functionality to improve categorisation of requests coming in or look into use of AI to assess themes across FOI's. 18. Agree process for publication of FAQ's, including regularly refreshed data on key asks. |
| 10 | Publish FAQs on websites and keep them updated | This allows for information self-service and reduces resourcing requirements. | This isn't currently happening in Brent but there is the infrastructure available to do so. Moving forward, the incoming regulatory requirements to publish performance information will also support information self-service for residents. | 19. Identify regular asks coming in through FOI's / service requests and publish these on Brent Open Data or the BHM pages on the website. 20. Finalise approach to publishing BHM performance data |
| Ensure appropriate systems are in place | | | | |
| 11 | Review existing databases for capability and capacity to record those key data requirements | To ensure databases are capable of adequately capturing information about residents – e.g. vulnerabilities. To ensure databases are capable of adequately capturing information about homes – e.g. repairs and stock condition. | A number of systems are used to capture housing stock data including Northgate, Lifespan, Dynamics and True Compliance. Resident data is held in Dynamics. | 21. Consider and confirm that systems currently in use are adequate and capable of requirements moving forward re. data capture, maintenance, and reporting for residents and housing stock information. 22. Ensure the 'golden thread' re. the Building Safety Act 2022 can be effectively delivered on through systems in use and, if not, identify alternative solution |
| 12 | Train staff on using systems | Including minimum data standards, performance measures and quality assurance processes | Training on systems takes place at the point of new systems / a change being implemented but there is currently no infrastructure in place for ongoing refresh training or structured training for new starters. There is a lack of guidance available for staff to refer to re. system use. | 23. Offer to be finalised and agreed at HDB re. handover of new systems / system change which includes training to be delivered, how and by who, as well as guidance and its format i.e. 'how to' videos, written documents etc. and ownership of expertise handover to super users in operational teams. 24. Agree approach for new starter induction re. system training |
| 13 | Ensure databases are easy to interrogate, and that the data can be extracted and used | Staff should be able to easily access the information they require. This is essential for evidence-based practice and informed decision-making. Where systems can be interrogated effectively, this produces crucial insight regarding patterns, themes and potential shortfalls. | Whilst dashboard and reporting functionality is available in CRM to both officer and manager level staff, data quality in the system significantly impacts the value these currently offer and training for improved staff understanding of how to use them would be beneficial. Data quality is also a challenge in Northgate Housing which impacts effective interrogation. | 25. Prioritise improving data quality across Northgate and CRM and embed exception reporting in manager dashboards so they can more easily manage case work standards across their teams. 26. Include dashboard training in any agreed training programme / ongoing training approach for the service. |
| 14 | Schedule appropriate sensitive information reviews | Resident information and personal characteristics change on a regular basis. Records should be appropriately reviewed to ensure a landlord continues to know its residents – disability or illness, financial difficulties and family composition. | Key resident information is collected at sign-up but is not consistently updated throughout the tenancy with BHM. | 27. Embed a refreshed tenancy verification visit programme (detailed action under recommendation 1) 28. Embed operational performance monitoring tools so managers have oversight of tenancy verifications due, completed, overdue etc. 29. Promote how residents can update their own information and why this is important |
| Mergers and other structural changes | | | | |
| 15 | Stress test systems prior to change | To identify whether they can 'talk' to each other; data can be securely transferred, and staff from each landlord can access the data they need | Whilst there are no mergers planned for BHM it is noted that, as part of the digital transformation process in Brent, stringent user-acceptance testing (UAT) and risk monitoring takes place when implementing any change to systems and/or data migration. | NA |

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| 16 | Undertake a risk assessment regarding knowledge and information shortfalls before the change | This should be a living document with clear risks and mitigations documented, incorporating a review cycle and emerging risk identification. This document should continue beyond the date of change. | As above | NA |
| 17 | Proactively investigate incoming datasets during mergers | Identify gaps in the knowledge of incoming stock and residents, and work to fill those gaps. | As above | NA |
| 18 | Establish clear data exception reporting processes | This allows the new organisation to identify issues post-change quickly | As above | NA |
| Repairs | | | | |
| 19 | Set out clear requirements of operatives before they are allowed to record an appointment as missed | This should include ensuring that the appointment was notified to the resident, it was made at a time they could attend, checking that any contact requests were adhered to, guidance on what level of contact (e.g., Two door knocks, calling the resident) etc | Agreement with contractor that appointments should only be logged as 'missed' when they have been previously agreed and confirmed with the tenant. Operatives will knock multiple times and wait 15 minutes before leaving. | 30. Review approach to managing missed appointments with input from key stakeholders (including tenants), and ensure approach is documented and communicated to Brent staff, contractors and tenants. |
| 20 | Conduct wastage analysis on missed appointments | Use the insight generated by accurate records of missed appointments to identify efficiencies and action plans, including whether a broader time range of appointments would be of benefit. | There is no existing reporting or analysis being carried out on missed appointments. | 31. Introduce reporting on missed appointments |
| 21 | Implement an automated appointment reminder system | This could take the form of text messages the day before. | There are 3 types of appointment slots available for BHM repairs (8am – 1pm, 10am – 2pm and 1pm – 5pm). Tenants receive an automated text message to confirm appointment once it is booked and a further automated message when the operative is on route. | NA |