

Scrutiny Panel

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25



The customer
scrutiny Panel

Learning from the past, steering the future.

It's been a successful year

The Scrutiny Panel has delivered another impactful and successful year, completing four high-quality reviews on topics that matter most to Stonewater customers.

Our 10 panel members, including current chairperson Gareth Morgan, continued to work together as a strong team, demonstrating a blend of skills, perspectives and lived experiences.

This year, we were really pleased to welcome four new members, enhancing the Panel's skills and diversity of experience.

The Panel carry out in-depth service reviews and have a strong commitment to delivering clear, actionable recommendations and improvements that benefit all Stonewater customers.

This year, the Panel introduced Spotlight reviews, which are targeted, time-efficient reviews (completed under eight hours) that shine a light on specific service areas. These reviews compliment the in-depth reviews, which are informed by Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and other performance data. It's really important to the Panel that we also seek out service areas not typically captured by standard measures. This process makes sure we have every opportunity to make each step of the customer journey better for all our customers.

Damp and Mould Reasonable Adjustments in-depth review

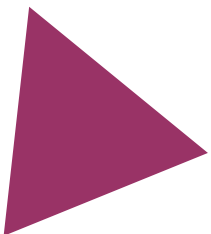
In 2023, the Scrutiny Panel took a deep dive into customer feedback, complaints, and performance data, and it became clear that damp and mould issues were generating a lot of customer concerns. We also recognised the growing importance placed on Housing Associations to effectively address damp and mould, especially in light of Awaab's Law.

The Panel focused on the initial contact and response when customers report damp and mould issues to Stonewater, as well as how well Stonewater manages customer vulnerabilities. We made 14 recommendations, all of which are now completed.

We identified three priority recommendations to help improve the overall experience for customers when reporting Damp and Mould issues to Stonewater. Here is an update on the progress against them.

1. Explore a system flag for no access instances – Stonewater found this will be possible and has added to the list of requirements for CRM updates. We understand this is a longer-term goal.
2. Provide more training for colleagues on Damp and Mould and Reasonable Adjustments – Stonewater continue to roll out digital training to all colleagues and the e-learning is reviewed regularly to make sure it includes up to date guidance and regulatory practice. The surveyors in the Damp and Mould team have also received external training specifically on reasonable adjustments.
3. Raising awareness for colleagues to check customer management system before a colleague contacts a customer – Stonewater are continuing to work with colleagues and contractors to make sure the right information is recorded on their systems. We're also aware of the census which has improved Stonewater's knowledge of customers' needs in this area.

We have been kept updated on this review by Kate Rollinson and Hannah Saltonstall and will work with them to review anything created as a result of our recommendations.



Somerset Pilot Spotlight review

Eager to learn from Stonewater's best practice, we asked to explore a service area that had proven to be a success at Stonewater, with high levels of performance and customer satisfaction. The objective was to identify what's working well and how Stonewater can apply that good practice across other services. We were really impressed by how well the Somerset service model was working and was intrigued to find out how and why it was working so well.

We made eight recommendations in this review and we're pleased to say that six are complete, with the remaining two to be completed in the future.

We had three priorities for this review:

1. Roll out multi-disciplinary team pilot to other locations – we're really pleased that Stonewater have decided to continue the success of the pilot in an additional location of Herefordshire and Shropshire. We're looking forward to hearing updates on the progress of the new roll out.
2. Utilise multi-disciplinary working model across Stonewater – we wanted to make sure the model was used across Stonewater as it has proved beneficial to both colleagues and customers in Somerset. We're pleased to hear the benefits of the approach in groups such as Customer Promise Group, Complaints Delivery Group and through the partnership working to host community days.
3. Provision of suitable technology – we felt it was important for Customer Partners to have the right technology to support them in their role when visiting customers on site. We understand this is a longer-term goal and are keen to receive an update in the future.

Repairs Communications in-depth review

As a Panel, we really enjoyed focusing on an area that was going well and we're pleased that the recommendations have had a ripple affect across Stonewater. We are keen to continue completing Spotlight reviews alongside our in-depth reviews.

Repairs are one of the most essential services Stonewater provides, as they have a direct impact on customer safety, satisfaction and overall wellbeing. As customers, we value being kept informed about the progress of our repairs from the moment the issue is raised to its resolution. We made 10 recommendations in this review and we're pleased to note that three are complete, with the remaining seven to be completed by April 2026.

We had three priorities for this review:

1. Customers to understand who to contact when they have a concern and explore local point of contact.
2. Contractors to send prompt updates throughout repairs journey.
3. Investigate the most effective ways to provide customers with clear details about their repairs appointments.

We understand Stonewater is currently working on the above recommendations, and we look forward to receiving an update when they're due.



Engagement Spotlight review

We know how important it is for Stonewater to make sure customers' voices are heard and that our feedback helps to improve services. We wanted to make sure that as many customers as possible knew what opportunities there are available to get involved and for the information to be easy to access. Once customers are recruited, we want to make sure they have a positive experience and stay engaged with Stonewater.

We made 10 recommendations in this review and we're pleased to note that six are complete, with the remaining to be completed in the future.

We had three priorities for this review:

1. Scrutiny Panel to be more visible
2. Utilise customer volunteers and colleagues on the ground to promote engagement
3. Incentivising customers

We are working with the Engagement team to deliver some of the actions from the recommendations, including two of the priority ones above, and we look forward to hearing updates about the others.



Learning and developing

It's really important to us as a panel to keep learning. Different members of the panel have done this by:

- Meeting for our annual learning and development day
- Attending the TPAS National Tenant Conference
- Completing online courses centred around housing and consumer regulation
- Introduction to Scrutiny training for newer members
- Taking part in We Are Group digital training
- Working with Stonewater's specialist team to gain employability skills



Scrutiny Panel recruitment

We were pleased to welcome an incredible four new members to the panel in 2024/25. Since joining Trevor, Fiona, Bernie and Shaniece have all made their mark by offering their unique perspectives and skills. We have vacancies for five members and two co-opted members, so we will continue to work with Stonewater to recruit to these posts.

Trevor: Since joining the panel in July 2024, it's been a truly meaningful experience for me. I didn't know exactly what to expect at first, but I've found it really rewarding to be part of something that gives everyday people like me a voice.

I've met some great people, shared my thoughts, and learned so much from others. It's opened my eyes to how decisions are made and reminded me that our opinions really do matter. Being on the panel has made me feel more connected to my community and more hopeful about making a difference.

Fiona: Being on the scrutiny panel has given me a far better understanding of the responsibilities and challenges currently faced by Housing Associations.

I've been made very welcome by everyone and enjoy how valued everyone on the Scrutiny Panel feels being part of a process that not only improves the customer experience but assists Stonewater in its quest to become the best Housing Association in the UK.

Shaniece: Since being on the panel, I've found that my confidence in general life has been good and since I'm a Stonewater resident who is a bit younger, I can give feedback on how Stonewater can improve for younger people.

Bernie: I've found that being on the panel, we have a chance to review and make recommendations for service improvement. It has helped to build trust between the organisation and tenants and owners. We actually have a voice, and it is being heard.

What does 2025/26 hold for the Panel:

We're currently wrapping up our Grounds Maintenance: Somerset Pilot scrutiny review and can't wait to share our findings with you in the coming weeks! This review has been a valuable opportunity to explore how we can improve the communal areas our customers see and use each day.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures continue to guide our work. This data helps us to understand where Stonewater customers feel supported and where improvements are needed, allowing us to remain focused on key topics that matters most to customers.

We're also happy to be getting involved in more training and events, including National Involvement Week, which gives us a great platform to connect with more colleagues and customers.

One of my highlights for 2025 so far is welcoming a young voice onto the panel, something we've worked incredibly hard for and are proud of. Bringing in younger perspectives is important as it helps us to become a well-rounded panel and therefore be able to better reflect our communities. This is why recruiting more young voices will remain a focus for 2025/26.

And finally, we're looking forward to another impactful year of collaboration with our great colleagues at Stonewater. Together, I feel we're making meaningful changes for Stonewater customers.

Gareth Morgan
Chair of the Scrutiny Panel.