



Nomination Form

Excellence in Scrutiny Danny Mullen: **Working in partnership**

TIS National Excellence Awards 2024

The **TIS National Excellence awards** recognise and celebrate housing organisations, staff, volunteers, tenants, residents, and community groups **who are leading the way and making positive change in the Scottish social housing sector.**

Categories honour excellence in everything **from partnership working, tenant participation and scrutiny practice, to digital creativity and innovation.** Hotly anticipated, the awards offer a seal of approval for the most outstanding work.

Finalists are selected by an expert and independent judging panel, and **winners announced at an awards ceremony on Thursday 7th November 2024 at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.**

The closing date for applications is 5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024. TIS accepts submissions in more than one award category.

Category Overview

The **Excellence in Scrutiny Danny Mullen** award recognises housing organisations, and their tenant scrutiny groups, who have demonstrated excellence in **working collaboratively** to achieve an exceptional standard of scrutiny that has made a real difference to the lives of tenants, delivery of housing services, and improvement of satisfaction levels.

Submissions **must evidence how the organisation and group have worked in partnership** to embed scrutiny within the organisation's strategic approach and have demonstrated an outstanding contribution to empowering tenants to work together, have their say, and influence decisions about housing policies, services, and standards.

Who you can nominate

This award is open to housing organisations and their tenant scrutiny groups – working in partnership.

About you

Please note information about the individual, organisation, or group submitting the application:

Name	Gavin Wiffen
Position	Customer & Community Engagement Officer
Organisation	Riverside Scotland
Email address	Gavin.wiffen@riverside.org.uk
Telephone number	07970 348 724

About the nominee

Please note information about the housing organisation and tenant scrutiny group you are nominating:

Housing Organisation	Riverside Scotland
Tenant Scrutiny Group	Riverside Scotland Service Improvement Group
Email address	Gavin.wiffen@riverside.org.uk
Telephone number	07970 348 724

Background

Maximum 250 words

Please outline background information about the housing organisation and tenant scrutiny group that you are nominating.

For example, detail:

- The background of the organisation, including: total number of homes, total number of employees, and the geographical areas the organisation covers, etc.
- The background of the tenant scrutiny group, including: when the group was established, total number of members, etc.
- A brief overview of the partnership approach.

Established in 1993 as Irvine Housing Association, Riverside Scotland has been housing and supporting people in local communities across Southwest Scotland for over 30 years.

People are at the heart of Riverside Scotland – the people who we provide homes to, the people we support in the communities we serve, and our skilled and experienced team of employees of 42 employees.

We have more than 2,500 properties housing thousands of people across North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway and most recently expanding into South Ayrshire.

Our Service Improvement Group was formed in June 2023 and there are currently five tenant members on the group. These tenant members have varying degrees of experience when it comes to tenant participation. For some of the tenants, this was their first time getting involved in scrutiny and wider tenant participation, whereas others brought a wealth of experience with them. This created the perfect balance for the Service Improvement Group and all tenants work well together and are constructive in the work they do.

From the onset of the Service Improvement Group, Riverside has been clear that we are committed to working in partnership with the Service Improvement Group and will do all it can to assist them with their work.

Within the constitution of the Service Improvement Group, is an agreement between Riverside Scotland and the Service Improvement Group – setting out a clear commitment that we will strive to work together, with the aim of delivering improvements to services.

Actions

Maximum 500 words

Please outline specific actions the housing organisation and tenant scrutiny group have taken to achieve an exceptional standard of scrutiny.

For example, outline:

- How the organisation and tenant scrutiny group have worked collaboratively to embed scrutiny within the organisation's strategic approach.
- How the organisation and tenant scrutiny group have made a real difference to the lives of tenants and improvement of satisfaction levels.
- How the organisation and tenant scrutiny group have contributed to empowering tenants to have their say, and influence decisions about policies, services, and standards.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

The Riverside Scotland Service Improvement Group was established in June 2023 – with help from TIS. In recent years, Riverside Scotland has noticed an increase in the length of time to turn around our void properties, as well as increasing costs. The first project of the Service Improvement Group was to review our approach to Void Management, and work with Riverside Scotland to find areas in which we could improve.

They have recently completed their review and will present their findings and recommendations to our Board in May 2023. Throughout the process, the Service Improvement Group have shown a commitment to working in partnership with Riverside Scotland and engaged constructively with us throughout their first scrutiny project. Working in partnership with staff from Riverside Scotland, the SIG were able to carry out a thorough review of our policies and procedures, as well as getting staff and tenant feedback on our approach to Void Management.

Their work has provided Riverside Scotland with new ideas in how we could improve our performance in relation to Void Management and how we could improve customer's satisfaction with their home. Their ideas provided us with a tenant's lived experience, giving us new ideas and recommendations on how to improve. They made 17 recommendations in total. A few of these include clearer and more transparent communications with tenants about their responsibilities, re-using floor coverings and white goods wherever we can to help customers moving into their home and an increased focus on pre-termination inspections to identify any issues sooner.

Staff from across the organisation were happy to be involved in the scrutiny project, making themselves available to speak to SIG members, as well as providing any information they required. This has helped embed scrutiny across the organisation and helped change staff perceptions of what scrutiny is. Their work has shown that it is a partnership working arrangement, with a common goal of improving service for all tenants.

Riverside Scotland is fully committed to taking the views of our tenants on board and encourage customers to get involved and influence decisions about policies, services and standards. This is demonstrated in the Board's interest in the work of the Scrutiny Group and them inviting the group to come and present their findings to them – with a commitment that we will implement these wherever possible. We have facilitated hybrid meetings, and encouraged tenants to get

involved, regardless of their experience – with a view of working with them to build confidence and empower them to have a say in how we deliver our services.

Outcomes

Maximum 700 words

Please outline positive outcomes the housing organisation and tenant scrutiny group have achieved as a result of their scrutiny activities and partnership approach.

For example, detail the impact on:

- The delivery of housing services.
- The improvement of satisfaction levels.
- The strategic approach of the organisation.
- The culture of the organisation and core values.
- Communication, strengthening relationships, and partnership working.
- The inclusion and lasting benefits of tenants, residents, and communities.
- The skills and knowledge of tenants, residents, and communities.
- How others can learn from the individual's good practice now and in the future.

Although it is too soon to see the real impact of the SIG's work, through their discussions with staff, it has sparked conversations about how we could improve our approach to Void Management. It has given staff the opportunity to give their feedback on how they would improve the service and give their feedback on things that aren't working well.

The Service Improvement Group has complemented our commitment to improving services and has us now looking at new ideas or initiatives we could offer to tenants, such as working with our contractor to re-use floor coverings and white goods, change the paint we use when carrying out decoration to a void property and provide a more comprehensive list of tenant's and Riverside Scotland's responsibilities in relation to repairs and terminating a tenancy.

When it comes to tenant satisfaction, it is too soon for Riverside Scotland to measure the impact the work of the Service Improvement Group will have on this. However, it is hoped that by adopting the ideas and suggestions of the Service Improvement Group, that we can deliver a service more in line with what customers expect from us, as we will have factored in tenant's lived experience of our services. With this lived experience and through the work of the SIG, it is anticipated that we will see an improvement in tenant's satisfaction with us as a landlord.

At Riverside Scotland, we have taken a more flexible approach to scrutiny – with the aim of encouraging more tenants to get involved. Sometimes tenants can be put off from getting involved in scrutiny for reasons including a lack of confidence and thinking that they need to have certain skills or experience to get involved. However, at Riverside Scotland, we welcomed interest from any tenants who wished to get involved in the SIG, with a commitment that we would support tenants wherever we can. Ways in which we done this included offering an informal drop-in session for tenants to come along and find out more about scrutiny before getting involved. We also enlisted the help of TIS for our first project – to offer support to tenants. We were also flexible when it came to SIG meetings, facilitating hybrid meetings. Due to the large area in which we operate, this was especially important to encourage engagement. Riverside Scotland also offered support to tenants who may need a device or internet access to take part in scrutiny – and although this hasn't been required so far, shows that we are committed to supporting customers to get involved. Now the group has completed their first project, we will soon start to look at what area of service they will focus on for their next project. As well as this, working with the SIG,

Riverside Scotland will promote the recent work of the group, and use this to recruit new members.

When it comes to other organisations starting their own Service Improvement Group, or reviewing how theirs operates, I would say the main thing others could learn is to be flexible. Flexibility when it comes to recruiting members, arranging meetings and being mindful of tenant's other commitments is something we feel has worked well for us here at Riverside Scotland. As mentioned, sometimes tenants can be put off by the formality of getting involved – this is something we hoped to address through being flexible. We also feel that getting a third party in, such as TIS can help with building initial trust with the landlord that they will work in partnership and take on board the views and opinions of tenants. This help from TIS has proved invaluable for Riverside Scotland to building a trusting and constructive relationship with the Service Improvement Group.

This demonstrates Riverside Scotland's commitment to working with the Service Improvement Group to deliver positive outcomes for our tenants.

What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?


Maximum 100 words

Please provide a short testimonial on why this housing organisation and tenant scrutiny group deserve to win.

Riverside Scotland and our Service Improvement Group (SIG) exemplify exceptional collaboration and commitment to tenant-led scrutiny. Our rigorous review of Void Management policies resulted in **17 valuable recommendations**, including transparent tenant communications, resource optimisation, and early issue identification. By actively involving staff, tenants and TIS and adopting a flexible approach to scrutiny we've fostered a culture of partnership and continuous improvement. Riverside Scotland's dedication to empowering tenants and implementing the SIG's insights makes us a deserving candidate for recognition.

Declaration

As the proposer I have completed this nomination form to the best of my knowledge, and the information provided is a true representation of the nominee's achievements.

Name	Gavin Wiffen
Signature	
Date	10/05/2024

Thank you for taking the time to complete this nomination form.

Please submit your nomination by **5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024** to TIS by email at: info@tis.org.uk or by post to: **TIS – Clockwise Offices, 77 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3BZ.**

Next steps

- **All applications will be acknowledged on receipt by TIS.** If you do not receive acknowledgement within 3 working days, please contact us to ensure your application has been received.
- An **independent judging panel** will rate your application against the award criteria. The panel will consist of representatives from organisations across the Scottish social rented sector.
- Your award submission will provide the basis for both the shortlist and final decision of the winning entry.
- **TIS welcomes applications in more than one award category.**

- Please ensure you answer all questions as fully as possible and keep the content of your nomination focused – avoid exceeding the suggested word count.
- **TIS will inform all proposers of the outcome of their application Thursday 29th August 2024.**
- Finalists will be invited to the **TIS National Excellence Awards Ceremony**, as part of the TIS National Housing Conference and Exhibition, on **Thursday 7th November 2024** at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.