

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	Jennifer Anderson
Position	Strategy and Support Assistant
Organisation	South Lanarkshire Council
Email address	Jennifer.anderson@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
Telephone number	N/A

About the nominee

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

Housing Organisation	South Lanarkshire Council
Tenant Scrutiny Group	Repairs Sub-group
Email address	N/A
Telephone number	N/A

Background

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.

The South Lanarkshire Repairs Sub-group was established by South Lanarkshire Council tenant representatives in 2008 with the aim of ensuring the effective operation of the council's housing repairs service and development and review of the Housing Repairs Policy.

Working as a sub-group to the main Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group, the group have effectively engaged with the council's Housing Services and Property Services to provide ongoing independent monitoring of the repairs service, alongside the delivery of a range of scrutiny activities on specific aspects that were identified through reviewing performance or as result of new guidance and legislation.

Membership of the group has remained consistent for a prolonged period, allowing the tenant representatives to build up detailed knowledge of the service and how it can provide the best outcomes for tenants. The group currently has nine members from different parts of South Lanarkshire, ensuring fair representation of the needs of all tenants and ability to recognise the different challenges that are faced across both urban and rural housing maintenance throughout the council's 25,000 domestic properties.

Senior strategic and operational officers from the council, including the Repairs Manager, attend the group with the tenant representatives supported by the South Lanarkshire Tenants Development Support Project, facilitated through the Tenants Information Service.

Actions

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.

Since its formation in 2008, the Repairs Sub-group have contributed to the consistently high levels of satisfaction experienced by customers who utilise South Lanarkshire Council's Repairs Service. This contribution has been built around the positive relationships they have developed with frontline and senior council officers, stemming from their common goal of ensuring improved outcomes for tenants.

As part of routine performance monitoring by the council, tenants who have been involved with the Repairs Service are asked to complete a satisfaction survey on the outcome of that involvement. The Repairs Sub-group have involvement in determining what questions to ask on this survey, as well as the opportunity to review and scrutinise the results. The current rate of 89% of tenants responding to the survey as being satisfied in the repairs process is a direct result of the dedication of each team member to ensure that tenants have a voice within the services they use.

Scrutiny of service has been at the forefront of the groups drive to improve standards, with tenant members fully invested in the process and the need to ensure buy-in from council officers. In advance of each exercise the group take the time to introduce themselves to the officers involved in that particular service area, visiting the offices or business units to talk through the exercise and appease any concerns officers or managers may have around the potential outcome. This has led to more meaningful results, with increased detail being shared by staff and more in depth conversations occurring on aspects of service that could be improved or supported.

The group are also keen to ensure other tenants have the opportunity to join them, taking time at local meetings or tenants' events to publicise the work they do. This includes writing articles for the council's Housing News publication delivered to all council tenants on the outcome of their work and the impact it has made.

It is clear from all services and partners who have worked with the Repairs Sub-group that there is a genuine interest from members to achieve improvements for this challenging area. The group's longstanding approach has made them not just a consultee for any service changes proposed, but an embedded part of the process and a key component of successful service delivery.

Outcomes

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.

Through working together over the past fifteen years, the Repairs Sub-group and council's Housing and Property Services have enacted real change in the delivery of housing repairs in South Lanarkshire. Key highlights from recent years include:

Refreshed tenant's handbook

Following recommendations from a previous scrutiny exercise led by the group on the council's legislative requirements around gas servicing, members worked with council officers to co-produce a new 'Tenants Guide to Repairs Handbook'. This aimed to:

- Provide clear and concise instructions on how tenants could report repairs.
- Provide updated timescales that tenants and customers can look to when expecting repairs to be completed.
- Clearly set out what constitutes as a repair the council is responsible for, and what tenants would be expected to repair themselves.

As a result of their work, the refreshed handbook has been positively received by tenants who have utilised it to date and by officers involved with the Repairs Service.

Focus on customer service

The group recognise the value of good customer service and a long-term focus for them has been to ensure tenants receive this no matter the reason for contacting the council. To gauge levels of customer service the group led 'mystery shopping exercises' as a method of market research, anonymously contacting front line services to report fictional issues and record the response and standards of service received. Feedback from the exercises is then shared with the relevant staff teams in the council with recommendations made that aim to help improve the customer's experience.

Repairs Policy Review

The group are currently working in partnership with council services to undertake a review of the council's Housing Repairs Policy. To be delivered within timescales set through the council's agreed Committee schedule, this work has included liaising with council officers to produce a consultative draft of the policy, aligning the legislative requirements of services with preferences

and improvements that will have a positive outcome for tenants but remain affordable. A key priority for the group through this review has been to make the policy as accessible and easy to understand as possible, ensuring the council take the time to clearly set out the implications to service provision from any changes.

Overall, the group utilise their combined knowledge of tenants, residents and the council's housing stock to influence both the projects they undertake and the positive outcomes they achieve. Each member of the group brings valuable knowledge of their experiences as longstanding tenants resulting in continued improvement of the overall service.

The group have also supported the Repairs Service to react to significant challenges driven by circumstances out with the council's control. This includes during the Covid 19 pandemic where access to properties was restricted and only emergency repairs completed, leading to a backlog of maintenance issues for council homes. Throughout the pandemic the group continued to meet virtually and offered suggestions to senior management of how services could be delivered and what the priorities should be. In addition, during periods of extreme weather in late 2023, the group were instrumental in ensuring appropriate communication was issued from the council to tenants who may have been impacted by burst pipes or boiler breakdowns.

A tenant representative from the group said:

'The Repairs sub-group have gone from strength to strength over the past few years and are really making a difference to tenants by ensuring they receive the best repairs service possible, whilst recognising the challenges faced by the council'

Alison Graham, Repairs Manager at South Lanarkshire Council said:

'We value the input of the group to helping us improve our service and together we have achieved some excellent improvements over the years. The time and dedication the group members put in is really commendable'.

What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?

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

The South Lanarkshire Repairs Sub-Group have contributed to the improvement of South Lanarkshire Council's Housing Repairs Service for over fifteen years. Throughout this time tenant satisfaction for the service has only increased, despite significant challenges presented and ever increasing standards and legislative requirements set.

This achievement has only been possible through the dedication and commitment of the groups tenant representatives who volunteer their own time to achieve real change for South Lanarkshire Council's 25,000 council tenants, making them a worthy nominee for this years TIS Excellence Awards.

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	Jennifer Anderson
Signature	<i>Jennifer Anderson</i>
Date	25 July 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.