



# 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:

<b>Name</b>	Louise McNeilage
<b>Position</b>	Tenant and Community Engagement Facilitator
<b>Organisation</b>	Scottish Borders Housing Association / Scottish Borders Tenants Organisation
<b>Email address</b>	louise.mcneilage@sbha.org.uk
<b>Telephone number</b>	07811 295688

## About the nominee

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

<b>Housing Organisation</b>	Scottish Borders Housing Association
<b>Tenant Scrutiny Group</b>	Scottish Borders Tenants Organisation
<b>Email address</b>	c/o louise.mcneilage@sbha.org.uk
<b>Telephone number</b>	07811 295688

## 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.

**Created by Tenants for Tenants, Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA)** is a dynamic and innovative not-for-profit Housing Association with a mission to enhance lives and communities across the Scottish Borders. Providing quality, affordable homes and inclusive services that meet the diverse needs and expectations of Tenants and communities.

Established in 2003, SBHA is a Registered Social Landlord and Scottish Charity (SC030751), with over 5,650 homes across 49 settlements. The main concentrations of homes are in Hawick, Galashiels, Peebles, Selkirk, Kelso, and Jedburgh. SBHA has an Annual Turnover of over £27.5million and employs c.150 team members, including an in-house property team.

SBHA works in partnership with **Scottish Borders Tenants Organisation (SBTO)**, also created in 2003, and is the constituted group of SBHA set up to represent the interests of all Tenants, and membership is open to all Tenants. Their main remit is to seek, represent and take forward Tenants' views in relation to SBHA's Policies and Procedures to ensure Tenants get the best possible housing service.

Members, from across the Borders, are supported by SBHA's Tenant Engagement & Communications Team, have their own office space, meet monthly, are provided with a budget from SBHA each year to fund their Tenant Participation activities, including: consultation events and surveys, Newsletters, Tenant Calendar, annual Tenant Gardening Competition, working with SBHA on projects to improve services.

SBTO members have direct access to senior leaders at SBHA, and also receive training and development, plus other incentives as part of their membership. There are currently 13 members and 3 honorary members.

## 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.

**Scrutiny has been a feature of Tenant involvement since 2015, when we launched our Scrutiny Model – we have now delivered eight projects together.**

- Each year, a service area or standard to be scrutinised is agreed by SBHA and SBTO.
- A Customer Audit Team (CAT), generally led by members of SBTO with involvement from the wider Tenant population, examines an aspect of SBHA's service against the published standard and presents recommendations for improvement to SBHA Leadership Team and Customer Board.
- The Leadership Team provides a formal response to each of these suggestions – where a recommendation is not to be adopted, a full explanation is given to the CAT.
- Where recommendations are adopted, SBHA's Customer Board monitors the implementation of these on an ongoing basis until completion, with regular updates provided to SBTO.
- Scrutiny outcomes are publicised to all Tenants through the quarterly newsletter, via SBHA's website and social media channels.
- There have been over 100 improvement recommendations taken forward by SBHA, based on Tenant feedback to help improve services and Tenant satisfaction.
- We widely promote Scrutiny opportunities via a range of channels: Tenant sign-up packs, newsletter, website, social media, community events, SBTO word of mouth, plus via emails and calls to Interested Parties obtained from our independent TSS.
- Tenants who get involved in Scrutiny often chose to join SBTO after the project is completed. We also offer incentives to take part, including training and development for CAT members, and catering and prize draws for those who complete surveys and attend consultation events.

As well as our yearly Scrutiny, we also have a longer-term Repairs Working Group, which includes team members from each department and Tenant members. We have introduced digital transactional surveys immediately following Repairs, following a successful pilot in April 2024. This suggestion was made by Tenants and is being delivered by SBHA Operatives while out in Tenant's homes, giving Tenants the opportunity to give feedback straight after they receive the service.

The CAT is supported by a student intern, with additional support provided by the Tenant & Community Engagement Facilitator, and experienced CAT members providing 'buddy' support to

newer members. CAT members receive sustenance, travel and other expenses. Plus, SBTO and Tenants have access to their own dedicated office within SBHA where they can come in and use the space for projects and meetings. They also have full use of the Boardroom and IT facilities to be able to conduct independent meetings.

The projects are designed to be inclusive, and Tenants are able to participate to the extent that suits them best. We offer a range of ways to give feedback; over the phone or in person, while surveys can be provided online or in paper format, or in other formats, including digital link or via QR code. We also conduct 'Mystery Shopping' which is a fun way for Tenants to get involved with various scenarios created for customers to interact with team members and 'test the system'.

## 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.

**Key improvements from the last three Scrutiny projects:**

#### **Customer Complaints Handling (2021)**

- We reviewed the 'Do you have a Complaint?' guide for Tenants, updating this to adopt the SPSO's new guidelines (April 2021). [Do-you-have-a-complaint-leaflet.pdf \(sbha.org.uk\)](#)
- Our updated Complaints Process is clear and easy for customers to make a complaint and get relevant responses; with the new SPSO outcomes fully explained to them.
- Complaints, Performance and Tenant Satisfaction data is now reported quarterly in our Tenant newsletter and on the SBHA website.
- Info on the website has been clarified to include a chart showing the complaints process – providing transparency for customers.

#### **Neighbourhood Standards (2022)**

- We have fully reviewed and amended SBHA's STANDARD FOR MANAGING NEIGHBOURHOODS – CREATING GREAT PLACES, based on feedback from the CAT, some of these are highlighted below. [Neighbourhood-Standards-08.02.24.docx \(live.com\)](#)
- The programme of Estate Walkabouts is posted in advance on Facebook, on our website, and via posters in neighbourhoods (displayed by Housing Officers).

- We conducted a pilot of evening and weekend Estate Walkabouts to increase options for Tenants who are unable to attend during the day.
- Clearer information is provided on our website regarding estate work, grass cutting and planned maintenance projects to be undertaken, including expected start dates.
- Calling cards are left with Tenants to inform them about work that has taken place outside their home, including contact info for them to report any issues if need be.
- A key recommendation was around improving lighting in blocks – communal lighting being replaced by environmentally-friendly, motion-sensitive LED lights.
- Communal stairwells have also been repainted in lighter paint to make them brighter and more safe feeling for residents.
- All homes now have their gutters cleared once a year – following Tenant feedback during the project.

### **Customer Contact (2023)**

- Following a review of our Customer Service Standards 'Contacting us' section, the CAT asked SBHA to implement a number of recommendations. [Customer-Service-Standards-updated-05.01.24.pdf \(sbha.org.uk\)](#)
- Our Freephone number, previously used only for Repairs, has now been expanded so that customers can use it when contacting SBHA for any reason. This eliminates any cost for Tenants to contact us, especially if they have no mobile phone credit.
- Our Solutions (call handling) Team has undergone additional training, resulting in a significant drop in abandoned calls.
- Our communication channels have grown over recent years – we have reviewed them to ensure response times are consistent and that all customers receive the same level of service, no matter which method they use to contact us.
- This project has reinforced that all contact with customers; face-to-face, via telephone, digital or paper must be consistent, professional, ensuring expectations are clear, and all information is recorded on our CRM system for accurate and timely responses.
- Teams actively share best practice and celebrate successes; this is to help with delivering excellent customer service and ensuring team job satisfaction.

**Since Scrutiny of our Neighbourhood Standards was carried out, Tenants' Satisfaction with SBHA's Management of the Neighbourhood has increased from 61% to 70%.**

**Following recommendations from the Customer Contact Scrutiny, we have cut call abandonment rates from 22% to 6%.**

**Since 2022-2023, Tenants' Satisfaction with being kept informed has increased from 71% to 83%.**

Scrutiny plays a significant role in ensuring that Tenants are given opportunities to engage meaningfully with decision-making at SBHA – providing excellent insight and knowledge from their experience.

**Tenants' Satisfaction with their opportunities to participate currently sits at 94%** - significantly above the Scottish national average of 86%. SBHA values the importance of Scrutiny and works in partnership with SBTO and SBHA's Customer Board to ensure that Tenants' views are heard at every level of the organisation.

Ensuring the customer is at the heart of everything we do is reflected in our **Values: Everybody Matters, Delivering Excellence Together, Always Improving, Being Responsible.**

This summer, the CAT is reviewing **SBHA's Repairs Service**, our ninth Scrutiny project. We know that repairs is a key Tenant satisfaction driver, generating the majority of customer complaints.

We want to make sure that our Scrutiny model evolves and as part of our **Tenant Engagement Strategy 'Voices Together'** we will review it and keep it up-to-date with best practice through work with TIS and benchmarking with fellow Housing Associations. We are happy to collaborate with others – sharing outcomes and best practice.

## What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?

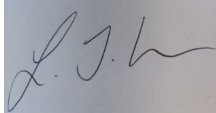
### Maximum 100 words

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

SBHA and SBTO's approach to Scrutiny is robust, inclusive and transparent. Since 2015, the CAT has completed eight Scrutiny projects, incorporating over 100 Tenant-driven recommendations. Our model, reviewed and updated regularly, involves Tenants in every step, from identifying areas for Scrutiny to presenting findings and monitoring implementation. The successful integration of Tenant feedback has led to significant improvements, such as increased Tenant satisfaction, reduced call abandonment rates, better customer service, and enhanced neighbourhood standards. With high participation rates and satisfaction levels well above the national average, we believe we exemplify effective and meaningful Tenant involvement through Scrutiny.

## 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.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Louise McNeilage</b>
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>01.08.24</b>

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

Please submit your nomination by **5:00pm on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August 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.