

# MEETING SUMMARY

## Independent Living Group



**Tuesday 7 Jan  
2025**



**1.00pm  
to 2.30pm**



**Microsoft  
Teams**

<b>Attendees</b>	<p>Angeline Cheetham – Customer          Babs Trainer – Customer          Callie Lancaster - Customer Engagement Manager          Chris Lynn – Customer (Vice-Chair)          Gary Milner – Customer          Kim Tinneny – Specialist Housing Manager          Lyn Nelson – Customer (Chair)          Pauline MacGregor – Customer          Nick Apetroaie – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)          Victor Reid – Customer</p>
<b>Apologies</b>	<p>David Ryder – Customer          Lizzy Robinson – Specialist Housing Manager          Lynne Nicolson – Customer          Lynne Whalley – Customer          Marie Strike – Customer          Martin Elliott – Customer          Michael Crook – Customer          Paul Smith – Customer          Susan Sellers – Customer          Tanya Scott – Head of Specialist Housing</p>
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Led by</b>
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>Lyn Nelson</b>
<p><u>Lyn</u> opened the meeting and lead the introductions around the virtual room.</p>	
<b>CEO Welcome</b>	<b>Nick Apetroaie</b>
<p><u>Nick</u> opened with an introduction about himself and his positive first year at Accent.</p> <p><u>Nick</u> provided an overview of Accent’s structure, emphasising that independent living schemes are a core service at Accent, not an auxiliary, and that consistent standards across all schemes are a priority. He acknowledged current inconsistencies and apologised, committing to improvements.</p> <p><u>Nick</u> explained that Accent’s current corporate strategy is ending in 2027, making 2026 a pivotal year for shaping the future direction, including the role and development of independent living schemes. He highlighted the importance of customer input in this process and noted the upcoming 60th anniversary as a milestone for the organisation.</p>	

Nick addressed concerns about repairs, communication, and investment in both new and existing stock. He noted that repairs and communication are frequent sources of feedback and that Accent is working to improve contractor performance and responsiveness.

Lyn thanked Nick, on behalf of the group, for taking the time to join them.

**Independent Living Service Update**

**Kim Tinneney (on behalf of Tanya Scott)**

Kim presented performance data on specialist housing, including arrears, antisocial behaviour, safeguarding, and complaints, and responded to questions from Babs and others about ongoing challenges and initiatives.

Kim reported that arrears in specialist housing are currently at 0.97%, slightly above the target of 0.77%, largely due to the migration from housing benefit to Universal Credit. She explained that this transition is causing temporary payment issues but expects figures to improve as the migration completes.

Kim explained since April 2025 there have been 56 cases of antisocial behaviour and 108 safeguarding cases in specialist housing. She noted that safeguarding is likely underreported and that staff training is being increased to improve reporting and monitoring.

Kim provided an update on the current performance of our contact centre, which consists of two teams: the Housing Hub and the Technical Hub (responsible for repairs and maintenance queries). She explained that the ‘average speed to answer’ is higher in the Technical Hub, at 187 seconds, due to the volume of calls and the complexity and time required to resolve the queries they receive.

Kim explained that we have a Complaints Resolution Team, established last year, which handles formal stage 1 and stage 2 complaints. She noted that only 2 out of 67 complaints have escalated to stage 2, indicating that most complaints are being resolved effectively at the first stage.

Kim gave the group an opportunity to ask questions.

Babs expressed frustration about raising concerns regarding verbal abuse within her scheme, involving both colleagues and customers. She noted that these incidents are not being reported and there has been no update on plans to address or prevent this behaviour.

- Kim confirmed that Tanya is involved in a wider Accent project reviewing the organisation’s approach to verbal abuse. Tanya was due to provide an update but was unable to attend the meeting due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Callie apologised for the delay in providing a comprehensive response, reassuring the group that this action remains on the tracker and will not be lost.
- Babs appreciated the honesty and was satisfied with receiving an interim update ahead of the next meeting.

**Action:** Tanya to provide an interim update on the “No Excuse for Abuse” campaign.

**Overview of Specialist Housing Partner role**

**Kim Tinneney**

Kim explained the specialist housing partner was redesigned two years ago based on customer’s feedback: They wanted visibility, customer-led support, and increased responsibilities so they could be seen as a ‘one stop shop’. The role includes creating health and wellbeing plans, building compliance, rent management, antisocial behaviour case management, quarterly resident meetings, partnership working with outside agencies,

Kim explained the role does not include providing personal care, financial advice, or managing social activities and committee funds. Specialist Housing Partners also do not typically apply for benefits or handle legal documents, except in exceptional cases for vulnerable residents.

Kim gave the group an opportunity to ask questions.

Vic asked if there's still a booklet which outlines Specialist Housing Partner duties.

- Kim explained there isn't currently an up-to-date handbook for customers, but this is something which Accent are starting to work on, and this will include a scheme specific insert with this kind of information.
- Callie confirmed that customers will have opportunities to be involved in co-designing the content and appearance of the new handbooks.
- Vic expressed that customers would welcome a physical copy of the handbook.

Vic commented on low attendance at residents' meetings on his scheme.

- Kim acknowledged Vic's feedback, noted the need to try different engagement approaches, and agreed to pass the comments to Kayley, Ramsey Parks Specialist Housing Partner.

**Action:** Kim to work with Kayley on trying different ways to engage customers at Ramsey Park.

Gary shared that his scheme faces similar challenges with customer engagement, noting that the residents' room is often empty. He also explained that customers are getting stuck in their rooms due to the lift being out of order, and while Andrew does his best to help, the situation is not acceptable.

- Kim confirmed that a stair lift is scheduled to be installed at Gary's scheme to prevent these issues in future. She agreed to get an update on the installation's progress, and Andrew will liaise with Gary on an update as soon as possible.

**Action:** Kim/Andrew to provide Gary with an update about progress of the lift being fixed and the stair lift being installed.

Lyn confirmed that scheme-specific issues should not be raised in this forum, as it is a national group. Lynn also requested that the slides Kim shared be circulated to the group.

**Action:** Callie to share the slides explaining the Specialist Housing Partners' role with the group.

Lynn questioned what qualifications they look for when recruiting for Specialist Housing Partners

- Kim stated that while there is currently no formal qualification requirement, staff are expected to have or work towards a Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 qualification, in line with upcoming legal requirements. She also confirmed personality and people skills is a huge part of recruitment.

Pauline asked for clarification of how this information will be shared with customers and how she feels there may still be some disconnect since the role was changed two years ago in terms of what they should and should not be doing.

- Kim confirmed that this will be included in the new customer handbook, but she was unsure about the progress and the timescales for when the handbook will be shared with customers.
- Callie confirmed there will be an opportunity for group members to help design the new customer handbook.

**Action:** Kim to provide an update on progress with customer handbook.

Pauline raised concerns about the new job title, stating 'scheme manager' is clearer for residents than 'specialist housing partner.' She also expressed her concern after receiving a letter about her Specialist Housing Partner working from home on Wednesday's as it's a face-to-face role.

- Kim explained the rationale for the change, emphasising a partnership-based approach, but acknowledged that communication could have been better. She confirmed that we do not allow working from home in this customer-facing role, so this arrangement must have been made due to employment law requirements and reasonable adjustments

## Groups Aims and Planning

Chris Lynn

Chris emphasised the importance of open communication within the Independent Living Group and acknowledged that some members feel their concerns are not always heard. He reassured the group that feedback has **not been dismissed**, even where conversations have been redirected. Chris explained that the intention is to create a respectful environment where everyone feels listened to, while keeping discussions focused on issues that can benefit multiple schemes rather than individual sites.

Chris explained Accent are aiming for a **consistent brand and feel** across all Independent Living schemes, comparing it to the likes of Marks and Spencer's where there is a consistent image and service. He confirmed Tanya would like customers involved in shaping and designing the 'brand.' He also discussed the vision of having resident-led tours for new customers.

Chris expressed his passion for ensuring everyone has a **safe home** and outlined opportunities where customers could contribute including safety walkabouts, comfort audits, support groups to help vulnerable customers and joining together with local and national support groups. He acknowledged frustrations raised about safety and comfort at individual schemes. He reassured members that serious issues raised are taken away and followed up through the appropriate channels.

Chris explained how Accent would like to **understand their customers and communities** in more depth. He spoke about the importance of understanding residents' experiences across schemes, including those who may not always speak up. He highlighted that resident feedback plays a critical role in identifying where support is needed and reassured members that their lived experiences help shape service improvements, even when changes take time to materialise.

Chris reflected on comments raised by members about how schemes feel on a day-to-day basis. He reiterated that the Independent Living Group is helping to influence how Accent thinks about **atmosphere, community, and engagement** across schemes, rather than focusing on isolated examples. He acknowledged this can be frustrating for members dealing with immediate issues.

Chris explained that some changes are influenced by wider organisational priorities and government requirements, which can slow progress. He reassured members that Independent Living is not being treated differently to other parts of Accent, and that **future planning work** is ongoing even when results are not immediately visible.

Chris supported Kim's comments by reinforcing that ideas raised by residents — including **equipment and low-tech solutions** — are valuable in shaping future service design. He encouraged members to continue sharing suggestions, as these inform longer-term planning and investment decisions.

Chris reinforced that the group's purpose is to influence how Accent improves existing schemes before expanding further. He encouraged members to see their contributions as shaping priorities across schemes, even when improvements are not immediate or visible at their own site.

Chris reassured the group that change is happening, even if it is not always obvious. He acknowledged feelings that “nobody is listening” and clearly stated that people are listening and that resident feedback is influencing decisions. He confirmed that Kim would follow up where possible and ensure responses come back from the appropriate colleagues when she cannot answer directly.

Lyn thanked Chris for the significant amount of work he has done behind the scenes and asked members to treat some of the information shared as confidential. She shared that there are positive developments underway that the group hopes to discuss in more detail at the next meeting in April.

**Action:** Chris to check with Tanya if slides can be shared.

**AOB**

**ALL**

Lyn confirmed the next meeting will be Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April, 12.00 to 13.30 and Nick has been invited to attend again.

Lyn asked the group how they would like to communicate between meetings.

Babs suggested the group meeting monthly and Lynn agreed.

Callie confirmed Accent will organise and formally document meetings on a quarterly basis however encouraged the group to meet as often as they would like. She also clarified if the group would like to request Accent colleagues to attend their meetings to go through herself.

Babs asked for clarification on the meeting invites she’s already received.

- Kim confirmed the meetings sent out using the Accent Engagement email are correct and will still take place, however Lynn will be adding some additional meetings in between these ‘formal’ quarterly meetings.

Callie confirmed reminders, with the link to join the meetings, will be sent prior to the meetings.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
<u>Tanya</u> to provide an interim update on the “No Excuse for Abuse” campaign.	Tanya Scott	27 February
<u>Kim</u> to work with Kayley on trying different ways to engage customers at Ramsey Park.	Kim Tinneney/Kayley Irvine	Provide update at next meeting
<u>Kim/Andrew</u> to provide Gary with an update about progress of the lift being fixed and the stair lift being installed.	Kim Tinney/Andrew Tetley	Provide update at next meeting
<u>Callie</u> to share the slides explaining the Specialist Housing Partners’ role with the group.	Callie Lancaster	21 January
<u>Kim</u> to provide an update on progress with customer handbook.	Kim Tinney	Provide update at next meeting
<u>Chris</u> to check with Tanya if slides can be shared.	Chris Lynn	21 January