

Response to the first report of the Housing Improvement Task Force

The service offered by property managers – a personal view

Communal Repairs/Complaints Process

1. We believe that in general, the service offered by property managers is unprofessional, unaccountable and unfair.
2. One major area of dissatisfaction is their undertaking of common repair work. We appreciate that to take into consideration the views of up to eight households requires a certain level of skill and experience. However, there would appear to be a tendency to appoint the cheapest available contractors irrespective of their suitability or expertise. For example, we recently have been forced to pay for communal stairwell window repairs that we insisted were not completed in accordance with the contract. Our property manager claimed that because the majority of owners had already paid, we had no legitimate grounds for objection. When we persisted with our complaint, we received threatening letters from sheriff's officers. We are bewildered that a genuine complaint received this response from an organisation that was supposedly acting on our behalf.
3. After seeking legal advice we commissioned a report by an independent window specialist, at our own cost, who agreed that the repairs were substandard and did not fulfil the terms of the contract. Despite the property managers having a copy of this report, they issued a further threatening letter demanding payment. We felt so isolated and vulnerable that we paid up in full but pointed out that this did not demonstrate our satisfaction with the repair.
4. Our property managers seem unwilling and unable to operate a fair complaints process. We believe it is time they embraced quality levels of service and care. At the moment it seems our options are extremely limited - contacting the Press or embarking on costly legal action.

Contracts

5. We are surprised that no contract exists between our property managers and ourselves. In response to our request, we were advised that the contract that exists 'is not a formal written contract but is based on dealings over a period of time.' We have asked for help in constructing a proper legal agreement but were told to consult with other tenants and to draft our own proposal. Being neither expert in property law nor management, we are at a loss as to how to even begin drafting such a document.
6. We sought assistance from the Property Managers Association but had no confidence that self-regulation by other property managers would result in a fair consideration of our complaint.
7. In Glasgow the factoring service dates back to early last century but in our experience it has not changed with the times. We would recommend a drastic overhaul of their complaints process and an introduction to some twenty first century customer care.

The name and address of this respondent have been withheld by the Secretariat