



WDC Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Repairs and Maintenance Scrutiny exercise 2015/16

Report for HMT

This is the second scrutiny exercise carried out by the Scrutiny Panel which was set up in 2014 to act as a 'critical friend' and take a tenant's view of housing services performance.

The Panel reviewed the Council's ARC report from 2014/15 and identified Repairs and Maintenance as an area to focus on as performance in terms of timescales, had fallen along with tenant satisfaction (96.3% to 93.1%) however 95.7% of reactive repairs were completed right first time up from 88% in the previous year and so performance seemed inconsistent.

Following a review of more in-depth repairs performance information provided and a visit to the Cochno Street Repairs Centre, the Scrutiny Panel decided to focus specifically on the Right First Time Charter indicator. As a new Charter indicator, it brings together value for money and the customer focus. The Regulator has also emphasised the Right First Time role in underpinning an "effective, efficient and customer focused repairs service " so is a key measure of performance for tenants.

Scrutiny Process

The Scrutiny Panel carried out background research on repairs performance information, procedures as well as specific tasks,

- had 2 meetings with the Repairs Manager
- received written responses and further information to questions that they had
- visited Cochno Street contact centre where the Repairs customer service team is based
- carried out a small phone survey to tenants who had had repairs completed in the last 3 months.

Summary of evidence collected and recommendations

How does the Repairs and maintenance service demonstrate Value for Money?

Service Level Agreement (SLA) provided as evidence. The objectives laid out in section 4.1 of the SLA do reflect the repairs service the Panel and tenants would want however there are some concerns that they have not had resolved.

Section 20.1 recognises the customer focus and VFM requirement to be measured on an on-going basis however the Panel have not been satisfied by the minutes from the DLO Board meetings provided that this is done on an on-going basis.

Satisfaction levels, neither complaints nor customer experience were discussed or at least not minuted in the 3 DLO Board minutes presented to the panel therefore there was no evidence that customer focus is part of the monitoring process.

Section 22.5 and 22.6 outline a joint annual review process of the service but there is no evidence that this is done or reported to tenants.

The APSE report provided does show that WDC measures well against other 'family group' authorities. However there are 2 key indicators that from a tenants perspective, where WDC do not perform well against family groups,

1. Percentage of non-emergency jobs undertaken by appointment.
2. Target time (non -urgent jobs) these both have an impact on the tenants' experience.
3. No subsequent defects identified

The Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN) performance report shows the Council performing well against other Local Authority's .However one indicator which when looked at in isolation reflects well but when looked at in detail the numbers are less impressive. Specifically the reported figure for repair appointments kept is 94.3%, above the peer average of 92 % - but this is 94% of only 6684 appointments made which out of 40 000 reactive jobs is not a significant number.

Recommendations to Improve Value for Money

1. The annual review of the service as specified in section 22.5.1 of the SLA should be carried out and made available to tenants to ensure that the objectives of the service are achieved.
2. Monitoring of the items specified in section 22.6 should also be carried out, made available to tenants and reported regularly to the Housing Management Team for the duration of the SLA (i.e. until 2020).
3. The new VOIP system is envisaged to greatly improve the Repairs service's ability to monitor contact as stated in section 8.1.3 of the SLA. The Panel wants to ensure these results are measured and monitored so that there is sufficient staff to answer calls and help improve tenants experience of getting through to the repair centre.
4. The Panel appreciate that the new integrated housing management system (IHMS) will facilitate an extensive appointment service being made available and its implementation should be prioritised for the benefit of tenants as well as improving performance. In the meantime the number of appointments made should be increased and that the number of appointments arranged should be reported alongside the number of appointments kept when reported through Housing News and council website.

5. Target times for non-urgent repairs should be reviewed in consultation with tenants to improve performance and bring in line with other authorities in 'family group'.

In order to meet the definition of "completed right first time" a reactive repair must be completed;

1. Within the appropriate target timescale agreed locally.
2. Without the need to return a further time because the repair was inaccurately diagnosed and/or, the operative did not resolve the reported problem – WDC reported 95.7% of repairs meeting these criteria in 2014/15.

Due to current system limitations in automatically identifying repeat repairs, the Council is relying on a work-around process to identifying these failures. Evidence of process RRC1, RRC3 and ZR code usage were seen by the Panel but these were not thought to be robust enough. The staff processes make no reference to RFT and only mentions 'to avoid duplication'. The use of ZR codes where the HRA is then not charged for the repeat work rely on these being codes being used in the first instance and so if not used, jobs will get charged again. Evidence of ZR codes being used on 19 occasions was provided but during a small sample survey undertaken by the Panel, only 65% of respondents said their repair was completed on the first visit. The recently completed independent 3 yearly report also reports that 67 % of respondents stated their repair had been completed on the first visit. Therefore there is concern that the 95.7% reported by the Council is unrealistically high and the ZR codes are not always being used correctly.

RFT should also apply to work carried out by contractors on the Council's behalf but the Panel have not seen evidence to support this happening.

Recommendations to improve Right First Time

The Panel appreciates that the new Housing Management system will resolve some of these issues but between now and implementation there is much more that could be done to ensure that the work-around system is more accurate.

6. Staff processes should be rewritten emphasising the RFT definition, prompt checking if the same repair had been completed in the same year and specify when the ZR code should be used.
7. RFT criteria should be more widely promoted so that tenants know the significance of when a repair has 'failed' so they can more actively identify to staff when reporting a repair that it's a repeat job or more work is needed, as original

repair not completed. This will help ensure that the performance recorded is more accurate.

8. Monitoring of all contractors' compliance with jobs being completed first time should also be carried out and monitored.

Satisfaction levels

Tenant satisfaction levels through the phone and pink slips are reported as very high but this was not reflected in the small survey the Panel completed as a lower rate of 65% satisfaction was recorded. The response rates for getting tenants views is very low and so these figures have to be considered with caution. The Panel appreciate the rationale in combining the repair receipt with the survey in terms of reducing postage costs however this means that few tenants return the pink slip survey – particularly for non-urgent repairs when the time between receiving the repair receipt and the job getting completed could be considerable. For external jobs, where the tenant doesn't need to give access to the property, they may not know when the work is completed and aren't then triggered to use the pink survey.

The phone survey is a good pro-active way of getting tenants views but is dependent on staff resources being made available and so the numbers completed are still relatively low (1112 surveys completed in 2014/15).

The last 2 Independent surveys carried out in 2013 and 2016 both also show high satisfaction levels but at a lower level of 80% and so this figure maybe more realistic. There was no evidence of any specific improvements made as a result of the 2013 survey which seemed like a missed opportunity. If asking for tenants views, it is essential that these views are used to improve the service otherwise tenants will be reluctant to give their view which could be one of the reasons of the low return rate of the pink slip survey.

Recommendations to Improve Satisfaction Levels

9. A minimum target response rate is set to ensure that satisfaction levels are at a significant level and hence more reliable. Following discussions between Repairs and the Scrutiny Panel a response target of 10 % will be set.
10. Repairs should promote the importance of customer feedback and provide incentives to encourage tenants to give feedback to increase response rates.
11. From the results of the on-going surveys as well as the 3 year independent survey, Repairs should analysis and make improvements from the results. They should also promote to tenants what action they have taken and measure if the improvements make a difference to help encourage tenants to keep giving their feedback.

12. The repair receipt and survey should be separated out so that tenants are getting the survey when the job is completed and so are more likely to complete it. Following discussion with the Repairs manager this is not possible to do cost effectively just now however the new Housing Management system will automatically generate a survey once a job is completed. This system should be in place within the next 1-2 years however in the meantime Repairs staff should remind tenants when reporting repairs to complete and return the survey once the job is completed.
13. Until the new automatic survey can be implemented, repairs involving external work should be targeted for phone surveys to encourage feedback where the tenant might not realise the work is completed.

Thanks and Appreciation

The Scrutiny Panel were grateful for the co-operation of Repairs staff in providing information and assistance in completing this scrutiny exercise.

The Scrutiny Panel members involved in this project were;

Paul Moore
Ian Blair
Liz Stewart
Rita Howard

Gary McBain
George Rowe
Martin Hollern
Arthur McCrory

The Panel were supported by Jane Mack, Tenant Participation Officer and Stefan Kristmanns, Performance & Continuous Improvement Officer.





West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel

Repairs & Maintenance Scrutiny exercise focusing on Right First Time criterion

Action number	Action description	Date	Officer responsible
1.	The annual review of the service as specified in section 22.5.1 of the SLA should be carried out and made available to tenants.	March 2017	Martin Feeney
2.	Monitoring of the items specified in section 22.6 of the SLA should be carried out, made available to tenants and reported regularly to the Housing Management Team for the duration of the SLA(ie until 2020)	March 2017	Martin Feeney
3.	As soon as the new VOIP system is operating, the monitoring as specified in section 8.1.3 of the SLA should be carried out. The Panel wants to ensure these results are measured and monitored so that there is sufficient staff to answer calls and help improve tenants experience of getting through to the repair centre.	TBC	Suzanne Bannister
4.	The number of repairs carried out by appointment should be increased. Also the number of appointments arranged should be reported alongside the number of appointments kept when reported through Housing News and council website.	Oct 2016 and then ongoing	Suzanne Bannister

5.	Target times for non urgent repairs should be reviewed in consultation with tenants to improve performance and bring in line with other authorities in APSE‘ family group’.	Mar 2017	Suzanne Bannister
6.	Staff processes should be rewritten emphasising the RFT definition, prompting staff to check if the same repair had been completed in the same year and specify when ZR should be used.	Oct 2016	Suzanne Bannister
7.	RFT criteria should be widely promoted so that tenants know the significance of when a repair has ‘failed’ and they can more actively identify to staff when reporting a repair that it’s not been Right First Time to ensure the work around process is more accurate.	Oct 2016	Suzanne Bannister
8.	Monitoring of all contractors’ compliance with jobs being completed first time should also be carried out and monitored.	Oct 2016 and ongoing	Tom Black
9.	Target response rate for surveys should be set as 10% and action taken to increase the number of survey responses received.	Oct 2016 and ongoing	Suzanne Bannister
10.	Repairs should promote the importance of customer feedback and provide incentives to encourage tenants to give feedback to increase response rates.	Oct 2016 and ongoing	Suzanne Bannister
11.	Following analysis of the 3 year independent survey, an improvement plan should be created. Tenants should also be told what action they have taken to show what gets done with their feedback.	Dec 2016	Suzanne Bannister

12.	Until new Housing Management system is in place and surveys can be will automatically generate once a job is completed, Repairs staff should remind tenants when reporting repairs to complete and return the survey once the job is completed	July 2016	Suzanne Bannister
13.	Until the new automatic survey can be implemented, repairs involving external work should be targeted for phone surveys to encourage feedback where the tenant might not realise the work is completed.	Oct 2016 and ongoing	Suzanne Bannister