



Scrutiny exercise 8 – Tenants repair journey from reporting a repair to it being completed.







Introduction.

This is our 8th Scrutiny Exercise and was started in January 2024. Repairs was chosen following a review of WDC performance information. Performance is relatively good, reporting an average of 9.31 days to complete a non-emergency repair but as most tenants use the repairs service at some point, it was seen as a significant area and the focus was to be on the process that the tenant experiences when they report a repair. As it was the process being scrutinised, we decided to look at non-emergency repairs rather than emergency repairs.

WDC performance and benchmarking.

The table below shows that the average time to complete repairs have increased slightly in 2023/24 and compared to other landlords, WDC is in the second bottom quartile. When we started this exercise, the average time was 9.31 days but still in the second bottom quartile.

Tenant satisfaction with Repairs has improved and the figures put WDC in the top quartile but the number of surveys completed has been reduced and when we completed our survey, none of the tenants said they had received a satisfaction survey. We have been assured that this issue is now resolved, and satisfaction surveys are being issued as soon as a repair is completed but means that this increase in satisfaction is not necessarily a representative reflection of increased tenant satisfaction.

Performance indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Trend	Comparison
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	5.8 hours	4.5 hours	5.1 hours		
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	10.16 days	9.31 days	10.94 days		
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	87.7%	83.7%	94.8%		

Scrutiny process.

We began by requesting information on the processes carried out from when a tenant requests a repair to when it was completed. Analysing these processes gave us an understanding of what should happen with requests. We also requested timelines for 10 recent examples of completed non-emergency repairs so that we could look at specific examples and then contact tenants to verify their experience.

We also checked the reality of the process by Panel members shadowing staff carrying out different parts of the process and this included a session with staff processing online and email repair requests, staff at the call centre processing phoned in repair requests and staff carrying out visits to tenants to assess repair requests. We also had a meeting with the Corporate Admin Support (CAS) manager, Richard Butler and the Building Services Manager, Martin Feeney who answered questions we had.

What works well

Staff were seen to check the contact details with tenants to ensure those on the computer were correct. Still room for human error as we saw a call centre operative trying to get in touch with a tenant about access but the number on the system was wrong so couldn't get them and a Building Services Officer (BSO) had to be sent out. It would be worth reiterating to staff regularly or even having something on the system that prompts them to ensure contact details are correct.

We did meet knowledgeable staff in the contact centre and those doing online/email requests -they seemed conscientious and had an awareness of the 'Right To Repair' criteria and the dampness process and timescales.

Within the process for scheduling jobs, a worker symbol on green slots means there is already an appointment scheduled for work to be done on that day so staff are encouraged to pick that for tenant convenience and worker productivity – we thought that was a really good initiative.

The process also sets out a series of messages that tenants should get confirming their appointment, reminders about appointment, 'en route' text, and satisfaction surveys once the repair is completed and this is a great process to keep tenants informed and should really reduce no accesses.

Outcomes from the reality checking and recommendations for improvements

1. Repair reporting

There is a range of ways that tenants can report a repair which at first sight seems like a good thing. Staff at the call centre were able to check the contact details with tenants to ensure they had up to date contact details. They were also able to arrange with the tenant a suitable appointment and agree that with the tenant. Staff processing online and particularly email requests spent a lot of time having to go back to tenants to get more specific information before they could log the repair. They also assigned appointments without any discussion with the tenant.

We were also advised by CAS staff that they contacted tenants using their own personal

mobile phones and withheld the number and could only leave voicemails. Many people will not pick up withheld numbers and also means they can't text so this causes delays. Managers did advise that all staff have access to 'jabber' and should use that. The online form also did not always collect all the necessary information. Examples given were for shower problems, online form doesn't ask if it's a standalone shower or over a bath or for front door issues, online form doesn't ask if it's a PVC or wooden door and this affects who carries out the repair. 3500/4000 emails a month are reportedly received but there is no assessment of how many are follow ups enquiries or initial requests as the data from call handling does.

Improving the information collected via the online form and emails will help reduce staff time going back to tenants for more information and get repairs logged quicker so this a key area we think needs to be improved. An assessment of how effective email requests are could also identify if this option is still necessary.

Recommendation 1. Review with staff the online form to ensure it captures all necessary information to process all types of repair requests e.g is front door PVC or wooden, shower over bath or standalone shower etc.

Recommendation 2. Staff say one thing about using their own phones and Managers say another so need the correct process for contacting tenants confirmed and then embed this with staff so that they have phone and texting options.

Recommendation 3. Carry out an assessment on the breakdown of emails to inform the benefits of retaining email as an option for reporting repairs.

Recommendation 4. If retaining the email option, create an email template to help ensure tenants provide all the necessary information to process their repair request.

2. Arranging appointments

When we shadowed in the contact centre, appointment days were agreed with tenants, but they did not specify AM or PM and the reason given was to help manage the workload as if they get no access in the morning, it helps if they can go to afternoon appointments early or if work overruns, means morning appointments can be done in the afternoon. We can understand why that helps Repairs but it isn't good for tenants and means they have longer to stay in and more likely to 'pop out' and could result in no accesses. Managers however confirmed specific time slots should be given and they weren't aware that wasn't being done - the specific time slots are noted below.

Recommendation 5. Ensure that tenants are told their specific appointment slot of 8am – 12pm, 9.30am – 2.30pm, 12pm – 4pm or 8am – 4pm.

Agreeing the appointment slot with the tenant for when it best suits is ideal but in reality, this is only happening for repairs that get phoned in – it doesn't happen if reported by email or via online form or if a pre-inspection is done. Martin Feeney confirmed that BSOs have access to the scheduling system so they should be agreeing appointments with tenants while on their visit. There is also a rollout of tablets which will make this easier for staff to use when out on visits.

We were also advised about a proposed development to the tenant self-service portal which will help identify repairs and allow the tenant to pick an appointment slot. We appreciate that a timescale couldn't be given for this but this would be really convenient for tenants and efficient for Building Services and could free up resources to focus on ensuring that staff are at the right

place, at the right time so is something we think that Building Services should pursue.

Recommendation 6. Ensure that BSOs use the scheduling system they have access to and make appointments with tenants at visits so that the appointments are agreed with the tenant there and then.

Recommendation 7. Keep the Scrutiny Panel updated on the development of the option that lets tenants book a suitable appointment.

While our exercise was being done, there were system issues that meant that the 'en route' text and the text with the survey link weren't being sent. It is understandable that system issues can occur and that these have been resolved now but this is a critical part of the communication process for tenants and needs to be prioritised. Managers were unsure how many tenants didn't have a mobile or email but thought it would be small number and it would be manageable to phone or leave voicemail or text messages to landline numbers. We are keen to ensure that all tenants can benefit from this communication so think the communication for tenants without a mobile or email could be improved.

Recommendation 8. Quantify how many tenants don't have a mobile or email and create a process that they get calls/messages to their landlines reminding them of repair appointments or BSO appointments.

3. Getting the repair done

It was confirmed that a suspended job is 'a planned job that becomes no longer scheduled (i.e. taken out of a workers diary) and the status changes from planned to suspended.' The process provided says 'suspended jobs remain so until they are either rescheduled or deleted' and we were curious about how that is done and Martin confirmed that Planners would contact the tenant and try to re-arrange another appointment and if they couldn't get them, the job would be cancelled down and they have a 'data cleansing' process done each week. Cancelling a repair must be a last resort and everything done to make sure it's not necessary.

Recommendation 9. Ensure all suspended repairs are reviewed weekly and appropriate action is taken. If a job is cancelled because they couldn't contact the tenant, then ensure the tenant is advised in the same way that tenants are advised for no access jobs.

Having a repair appointment not kept by Building Services has been experienced by Panel members and is very annoying and frustrating for tenants. Martin confirmed that the system does flag if an operative hasn't turned up and they can see progress at each stage of a repair and is monitored so would be picked up by Planners if a job hadn't been done. If an operative is running late, they should phone in and tell the planner who then contacts the tenant, but Martin acknowledged that that doesn't always happen. This is a key area of dissatisfaction and frustration for tenants so needs improved for tenants to trust and have confidence in Building Services.

Recommendation 10. Make sure that staff do review stages of repairs and that they pick up where an operative hasn't turned up or if follow-on work is still to be done.

We can appreciate that getting no access when an appointment has been made is frustrating for Building Services and very inefficient. However, we think it is important that Building Services can evidence when they have been at a property and not got access. The process maps provided shows a process for taking a photo and uploading it to their system but the

Manager confirmed this wasn't used and photos were taken but not linked to an address or job.

Recommendation 11. Embed the system process already available and use it instead of a manual process to evidence when you have been at a property.

The average times reported for completing non-emergency repairs should include the time from when it is reported by the tenant to when it is completed. Therefore, the time taken to collect all the necessary information should be counted as well as the time taken when a pre-inspection is arranged. From the process map we can see that BSOs should go into their work tray and update their inspection request with whatever repairs are needed. It's not monitored whether they do this or not but they do get told this is how they should do it. Not linking the inspection to the repair will give a false picture of the timescale which we think this is a real concern and gives scope for human error which we think needs to be minimized.

Recommendation 12. Review the system and create a process so that pre-inspections need to be closed down with either follow on repairs or have to specify when no follow-on repairs are needed (e.g. when just gives advice about dampness).

Thanks and appreciation

The Scrutiny Panel are grateful for the co-operation of Martin Feeney (Building Services Manager), Angela Taylor (IHMS Business Change Officer), Euan Kennedy (Team Leader, Corporate Admin Support) and Richard Butler (Section Head, Corporate Admin Support) in providing information, assistance and their time to help in this scrutiny exercise.

The Scrutiny Panel members involved in this project were; Rita Howard, Fiona McClymont, Gary McBain and Ian Blair.

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Referenced documents.

REP REF 1 -Process Guide for Non Urgent Single Trade Repair

REP REF 2 – Sample of completed non urgent repairs

REP REF 3- 1stTouch /Versaa Guide

REP REF 3a - How to Schedule a New Job in DRS

REP REF 4 – How to Appoint a Single Trade Job

REP REF 5 - Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs – background data

REP REF 6 - Repair responses to follow up questions 17 4 24

REP REF 7 - Follow up questions from meeting 2 5 2024 with responses

REP REF 8 - WD Scrutiny Panel – repair process survey to sample

REP REF 9 - Follow-on queries 11/7/24 and responses

REP REF 10- Online/email repair request processing – staff shadowing 22/5/24, Church Street.

REP REF 11 - BSO inspections – staff shadowing 27/5/24, Cochno St depot

REP REF 12 - Repair contact centre –phone repair processing – staff shadowing 12/6/24, Cochno street.

REP REF 13 - Online/email repair request processing – staff shadowing 26/8/24, Church Street.

REP REF 14- Follow on question to Martin Feeney/ Angela Taylor 8/10/24 plus response.