



Trust Customer Panel findings and recommendations
Scrutiny of Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcome 5 –
Repairs and Maintenance

March 2019

1 Our scrutiny topic

Since June 2018, we have been examining how well Trust meets SSHC Outcome 5:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done. This outcome describes how landlords should meet their statutory duties on repairs and provide repairs, maintenance and improvement services that safeguard the value of their assets and take account of the wishes and preferences of their tenants. This could include setting repair priorities and timescales; setting repair standards such as getting repairs done right, on time, first time; and assessing tenant satisfaction with the quality of the services they receive.

2 Work undertaken by us

Panel members undertook a comprehensive scrutiny of Trust's Repairs and Maintenance services through:

- Meeting with senior staff in the Property Team
- Shadowing operational Property Team staff to understand Trust's repairs reporting process
- Visiting a repairs contractor (R & J at Holytown) to understand how they manage and schedule our repairs
- Visiting another housing association to understand their processes
- Studying repairs policies and procedures
- Undertaking mystery shopping of our repairs service
- Surveying many other tenants to understand their experience of the repairs process.

3 Our key general findings

Panel members made some general findings:

- Many tenants are very satisfied with the repairs service.
- Many commented positively about Trust staff involved in the repairs process.
- It seems some repairs contractors provide better services than others.
- There is inconsistency in terms of information (job lines) provided to tenants relating to each repair, which means tenants' ability to provide satisfaction feedback is also inconsistent.
- Satisfaction is only tested following completion of repairs (although it is not always tested as not everyone gets a job line); dissatisfaction may be higher where jobs are still not completed.
- Tenants are not always aware that they can arrange an appointment for a tradesman to call.
- Where work is not completed at the first visit, tenants are not always kept informed of progress towards the repair being completed.
- Some tenants wait for long periods before they query whether the follow-up work they are expecting will happen.
- Some repairs are repeated but this does not always seem to get picked up, so that a replacement or a more comprehensive repair is then ordered.
- The handyperson service which was offered at some developments in the past was greatly valued by tenants at those locations.

- Some tradesmen are not respectful enough of tenants' homes.
- Some tenants are unaware that they could claim compensation where a tradesman damages their home.
- Some tenants (especially in Amenity housing) have had a better experience through reporting their repairs directly to the Repairs Team, rather than through their local staff.
- Not all tenants know how to use their heating system as effectively as possible.
- It seems difficult for Property Officers to keep tenants and local staff up-to-date.
- Some tenants appear reluctant to express their "true" satisfaction levels (in relation to repairs and other Trust services). They don't want to "rock the boat" and fear repercussions (although this fear is not justified, it is still their perception). They don't seem to understand that they have a Secure Tenancy.
- There appears to be a level of dissatisfaction in relation to grounds maintenance / leaves / snow clearance (Outcome 6) which may need to be explored through our next scrutiny project.

From these findings, we wish to make the following recommendations, which have been discussed with key staff.

4 Our recommendations:

	Customer Panel recommendations - Outcome 5:	Staff response:
	Reporting repairs	
R1	All tenants should be made aware that they can report their repair directly to the Repairs Team and should be provided with the relevant telephone numbers, including for emergencies.	<p>The “Report a Repair” tab on our website, gives details on calling the Repairs Team direct, and an article was included within the Winter 2018 Edition of Trust Talk – to inform tenants on how to report a repair directly to the Repairs Team.</p> <p>Currently as part of the tenancy allocation sign up process, details are given on how to report a repair at time of sign up with the tenant.</p> <p>Following the panels contribution, we have created a tenant’s guide to “Repairing and Maintaining Your Home” which will include further information on Repairs.</p> <p>The relevant telephone numbers will be included, as will any emergency contact numbers – which are also available on the website and discussed at sign up.</p>

		<p>Fridge magnets, or some other promotional item will also be produced for tenants with the key phone numbers for ease of reference.</p> <p>As part of our Digital Strategy, we are seeking to move to on-line services which will give tenants the option of further ways of reporting repairs directly, with a target for implementation within the following 2 to 3 years.</p>
R2	<p>Tenants / staff should be helped to give really full information to the contractors, so that there is the best possible chance that the tradesmen bring all the necessary “kit” so that the job can be completed Right First Time. This should include ladders etc so contractors do not rely on tenants’ equipment. This full information needs to reach the tradesmen.</p> <p>Maybe a template form to be filled in and shared with contractors / tradesmen? This form could be copied onto the website too so that full information is provided every time there is an online repair report.</p> <p>This form should also include improved information on tenants’ particular needs (and why this job may be an</p>	<p>The Repairs Team are trained to ask the relevant questions when a repair is phoned into the system, to give the best information to the contractor.</p> <p>The webpage format for reporting a repair is a standard template, and if possible we will be seeking the option to add photographs / videos etc., to give further information to the team from both tenants and site staff. We will also identify whether the form can be updated to take account of any access requirements such as ladders required etc as suggested.</p> <p>Again as part of our Digital Strategy roll-out, we will be seeking to use video clips to inform</p>

	<p>emergency for <i>this</i> tenant) and access / contact arrangements (including hours when staff are on-site).</p>	<p>tenants of repairs / types, and whether there is anything that can be done before a contractor arrives.</p> <p>Our system holds tenant vulnerability information which may highlight whether a tenant has sight difficulties or be hard of hearing etc.</p> <p>Improved information is being gathered as part of our Bright Future Core Housing System re-implementation, with the person centred information being collected by the Customer Services Team for upload within the system – which will inform the Repairs Ordering system.</p> <p>All personnel information is subject to data protection regulations known as the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) – which may determine the information that we hold.</p>
R3	<p>Tenants need to be helped to have a better understanding of what is truly an “emergency” repair.</p>	<p>This information is held on the webpage as indicated in R1 above – and also this was included within the Winter Trust Talk article to raise awareness.</p>

		As mentioned under R1 – the booklet that we have prepared will also list the different repairs categories and give examples.
R4	A system should be put in place to ensure that repeated reports to the same issue are picked up and a better “fix” is then put in place.	Agreed – as part of our core module reimplementation project, we are moving towards improved reporting that will give increased visibility and a more proactive approach. Hopefully this will be available during this year.
	Communication and Information – for tenants	
C1	Everyone should have the opportunity to get a job line (with satisfaction slip) for every job.	<p>Job lines are emailed to staffed development co-ordinators daily, who should then print and forward to the tenant.</p> <p>Amenity tenants job lines are emailed daily to their Local Reps for distribution, who should then distribute to tenants.</p> <p>General needs tenants receive their job lines via post or email where requested.</p> <p>We will continue to remind site staff of the importance of their role in forwarding the job line to tenants, and have also introduced training for</p>

		<p>co-ordinators during last year to continue to raise this awareness.</p> <p>As we move forward digitally, the opportunity will be available to send and receive this information directly to tenants where requested, via on-line services.</p>
C2	<p>Wherever possible, the job line should be emailed directly to the tenant and to the coordinator, rather than just to the coordinator. This is also true in relation to repairs for Amenity and General Needs tenants.</p>	<p>We agree with this aim, however currently our Core People Housing module does not have the relevant contact details for all tenants, with the data held being subject to the GDPR legislation as mentioned at R2.</p> <p>As part of the core module reimplementation, contact details will be gathered via the Customer Services Team and uploaded onto the system with the appropriate tenant authorisation.</p> <p>Once this information is in place we can then move towards achieving this aim.</p>
C3	<p>Where a job is not completed Right First Time, the tenant should get an agreed return date from the tradesman.</p>	<p>As part of our tender requirements for our new Reactive Repairs contractors covering the Central / Glasgow West / Glasgow East / and</p>

		<p>Ayrshire contract areas – we have introduced a requirement that if a repair cannot be completed at initial visit as it is deemed a “complex repair” eg needing a shower replacement etc which may need to be ordered – that the contractor will agree a return date at point of visit.</p> <p>We are presently reminding contractors of this requirement discussed via the Focus Groups last year.</p> <p>Out-with these areas we will be working with the smaller contractors throughout the year to achieve a similar process.</p>
C4	Tenants should be made aware that they can claim compensation where tradesmen damage their home.	<p>Yes – we will highlight this on the webpage and include within the booklet being introduced for the tenancy sign up process.</p> <p>In the first instance, tenants should make site staff or Repairs Team aware so that this can be recorded and pursued at earliest point of notification.</p>
C5	Tenants should be <i>offered</i> the opportunity to make an appointment for each repair. Appointments should be offered every time, and not need to be requested.	<p>Yes – we can include within a standard template a request / offer of an appointment where this is available.</p>

		<p>Currently we only have a contractual basis for doing this to around 60% of our properties where work is delivered via the term contractors.</p> <p>We will seek to extend this in future years to the more rural areas where feasible.</p>
C6	All contractors should show ID, including senior staff. This is especially important in Amenity and General Needs housing.	Agreed – this will be reinforced with contractors.
C7	Information should be easily available on repairs, including on local Care & Repair type schemes. This should include information on how tasks previously undertaken by handymen will be progressed – for example clearing leaves and snow.	We will take this forward with Customer Services colleagues regarding publicising the Care and Repair schemes locally etc.
C8	<p>Communication is key – it should be ongoing and straightforward until the job is completed. All communication coming from the Property Team or contractors should be simple and jargon-free. Although the Assets Team’s key skills are technical, they should be encouraged to understand how important it is that tenants receive good customer service and good communication – tenant liaison is very important.</p> <p>It is very important that tenants understand that if they leave a message, Trust staff will call back.</p>	<p>Fully agree with these comments, and indeed the Repairs Team strive to keep tenants updated when they are informed that there has been a problem – which is reliant on feedback from both our own site staff and tenants.</p> <p>Within the new repairs contracts being introduced, we are seeking to give development staff access to a “contractor portal” – which will inform site staff of the progress of any jobs identified for a particular development. We are</p>

	<p>Ideally, tenants and staff should be able to “track” repairs on-line to see progress.</p>	<p>seeking this to be implemented between July and December 2019 – which will allow site staff to update any queries that tenants may have in relation to the progress of a repair.</p> <p>Also, we have introduced an option under the new contracts for tenants / site staff to receive TXT messaging updates.</p> <p>Trust HA do not currently have the facility to TXT tenants, however through the contractors systems we can forward information relating to a job being booked, a date for completing the work and other such stages as required. Our initial plan is to trial this from July to December 2019 – using only the development staff site contact telephone/ mobile numbers.</p> <p>In terms of extending this to individual tenants, as per R2, the contact details are not yet available and following completion of the core module project, we will then consider extending this to tenants directly.</p> <p>Whilst this information is currently using the contractor facility, it is anticipated that as we move to on-line services via our digital strategy,</p>
--	--	--

		that this functionality will be available through a “tenant portal” and enhanced further.
C9	Even where there is no progress, tenants should be kept informed and updated.	Agreed
C10	Alternative ways of working (or more Property Officers) should be explored to improve communication / speed of response / inspection of jobs as the POs seem to have too many conflicting demands. Although many tenants are happy to be “their own Clerk of Works” they don’t have the necessary expertise.	<p>Covering the large geographical area that we have, as well as the volume of repairs completed throughout the year, can be particularly challenging to property staff – however delivery of repairs and planned works does involve site development staff and team working and support to tenant’s is a key part of making this work.</p> <p>We encourage any tenant feedback or raising of unsatisfactory contractor performance so that appropriate remedial action can be taken.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor staffing levels and performance, with value for money in terms of tenant’s rents being a priority.</p>
	Testing satisfaction	
S1	Satisfaction should be tested shortly after the target date, not the completion date, to ensure that	We were hoping to move to a model of “pulse satisfaction surveys”, where tenants could be contacted directly for feedback at a relevant

	<p>dissatisfaction with jobs that are not completed is also caught.</p> <p>Maybe local staff could test satisfaction / completion for repairs in their development, meaning Repairs staff can concentrate on Amenity / General Needs?</p>	<p>stage in the process eg completion or target completion – however this has been deferred, and with new GDPR legislation in place we await the data gathering to move forward (as per R2).</p> <p>What we will introduce during the current year is a trail that will involve development staff seeking feedback on repairs completed, using a smaller more slimline satisfaction template.</p> <p>For General Needs / Amenity tenants – this can only be progressed by attaching the satisfaction form to the jobline, until such times as the tenant personal data has been gathered and uploaded into our core housing system (as per R2).</p>
	Procurement	
P1	<p>Tenants should be helped to understand procurement law and why the “local guys” might not be able to be used.</p> <p>It is also important that tenants understand that Trust cannot take account of previous performance when awarding future contracts.</p>	<p>We will include an article in Trust Talk – the tenant magazine, highlighting the procurement regulations and how these impact on how we select contractors for specific areas of work.</p>
P2	<p>Some tenants should be encouraged to become more knowledgeable about the decision-making process in</p>	<p>We have some tenant volunteers from the Focus Group discussions held throughout last</p>

	procuring contractors, including being part of selection panels when sufficiently trained.	year – the aim to re-establish a tenant sounding board for reviewing our kitchen / bathroom general specifications etc going forward. The aim of this would be that this would allow some tenant representation on selection panels (which is what have done on the previous kitchen/bathroom supply contracts).
	Heating	
H1	Easy-read, large font heating control manuals would be very helpful.	We will investigate this further, and also look into the possibility of creating a video that could possibly be located on our webpage for tenants to use for reference.
H2	Clear guidance should be given on what usage will result in increased domestic electricity bills (eg boosters).	We will seek any energy advice information and create a leaflet for information, where possible with indicative costs along with a calculator if available.
H3	Tenants find storage heaters (even modern ones) hard to control to provide heat when required. Alternative heating systems should be installed wherever feasible.	This can be budget dependent or where energy sources are not available eg no gas network. As alternative solutions to off gas grid locations, we are investigating options such as Air Source Heat pumps etc.
	Other	

O1	Work should be undertaken to minimise the impact of lift breakdown / replacement, including clarifying how tenants can support one-another.	<p>We will raise the awareness with Service Managers and Site Development Staff. In such situations we have Development Continuity Plans in place which detail what actions should take place including assistance from nearby developments or decanting tenants to alternative accommodation if required.</p> <p>We are also stock-piling a limited supply of lift parts with our service contractors, to minimise delays in accessing key components where practical.</p>
O2	Tenants are aware that there are some repairs that they might be charged for – for example if they leave a property in a bad state. More information should be available on this, with likely charges.	Within the booklet discussed at R1 – we have included a section on Rechargeable Repairs and will include an indicative price list for typical recharges such as decoration, lost keys, cleaning etc.
O3	Workmen should treat every home and communal area “as if it was their own home”. This should include using shoe covers to protect carpets and clearing up <i>completely</i> when the job is finished.	<p>Agreed – this is part of the contractor service conditions.</p> <p>We will remind contractors of this requirement, and seek feedback from any site staff / tenants so that any incidents can be addressed.</p>

	Customer Panel recommendations - General:	Staff response:
G1	Tenants would appreciate some information on what Brexit might mean for Trust, and what Trust is doing to minimise the possible impacts. Eg. Repairs – parts and staffing / staffing generally / insurance / costs generally / food costs and availability	An article will be included in the next edition of Trust Talk.
G2	Work should be done to help all tenants to understand that they should all feel free to voice their opinions and speak out and that their tenancy will still be secure. Tenants need to be helped to understand how important it is that their knowledge of what is happening locally is shared with the appropriate staff across Trust.	This will be a key focus in developing the next Customer Involvement and Influence Strategy later this year.