

**East Leeds Repairs Service
Tenant Scrutiny Board Inquiry
April 2017**



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Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

Desired Outcome – To reassure tenants that Housing Leeds aim is to get it right first time

Recommendation 1 – That Housing Leeds provide dedicated repairs training for new staff as part of their induction and regularly review training needs of existing staff. In addition, that Housing Leeds supports the Contact Centre's training programme.

Desired Outcome – Increased service improvements, efficiencies and opportunities for savings

Recommendation 2 – Implement and roll out the Total Works system.

Desired Outcome – Optimum use of operative time and ability to create additional appointment slots and reduce waiting time for repair appointments

Recommendation 3 – Implement new working practices through Total Works, in relation to creating additional appointments, by reducing waiting times and increased tenant satisfaction. We also request that this Board be provided with an update on progress.

Desired Outcome – Improve customer satisfaction

Recommendation 4 – Improve customer satisfaction by using and act on learning from complaints. Improve the process and communication where follow on work is required including follow up work after accessing out of hours service. Take ownership of complaints and enquires and see through to conclusion.

Desired Outcome – Improve ease of finding information and getting it right first time

Recommendation 5 – That Leeds Building Services, work with the Contact Centre, HUBs and local housing offices to ensure staff know how to identify key properties types such as heating type, to enable more accurate repair reporting. Ensure staff are adequately trained and information is readily available on systems to enable accurate reporting in relation to dual communal heating systems, for example; gas boiler but with electrical components in individual flats, to ensure the correct trade is allocated. Provide portable heating for tenants when repair is not possible.

Desired Outcome – Administration of repairs ordered is carried out effectively

Recommendation 6 – Administration on repairs performance is improved – so that orders are closed down in a timely manner on systems, including sub-contractor orders. This will ensure that performance reporting is not adversely affected.

Desired Outcome – Improve tenant access to repair service

Recommendation 7 – Make repair raising more accessible online. Whilst this is currently available, it is not actively promoted or widely utilised. Ensure that systems are user friendly, use Plain English and make use of photographs. Utilise involved tenants to critique the service and ensure all follow up enquiries are dealt with promptly.



Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

Desired Outcome – Improve Officer knowledge, get it right first time

Recommendation 8 – That there is a named contact at Leeds Building Service for new and existing staff to reference complex repair enquiries, including support with communal repairs.

Desired Outcome – Manage operative capacity

Recommendation 9 – Where a trade has a shortfall in operative numbers, Leeds Building Services consider apprenticeships in these trades and continues to work to upskill operatives in multi skilled trades.



Introduction and Scope

Introduction

1. This is our third Inquiry report since the amalgamation of the scrutiny panels previously established under the three ALMOs.
2. Our first Inquiry report looked at Annual Home Visits. The second report focused on Environment of Estates. This report focuses on the responsive repairs service in East Leeds, provided by Leeds Building Services.

Scope of the Inquiry

3. The Board chose this topic as there was compelling performance evidence and feedback from key stakeholders that indicated there was a need to improve performance and service for tenants.
4. The Terms of Reference for this Inquiry were agreed on 31st August 2016 when it was concluded that the purpose of the Inquiry would be to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
 - Current policies and processes
 - Consultation with tenants (questionnaire)
 - Co-ordination of services and agencies
 - Developing and delivering standards
 - Performance measuring
 - Customer satisfaction
5. The Inquiry was conducted over five formal evidence gathering sessions which took place between September 2016 and February 2017.

5. Members of the Board also undertook a site visit to Leeds Building Services depot based in Seacroft.
6. Board Members also attended a demonstration of the repairs system currently being used, and its replacement.
7. The Board also conducted surveys with local Ward Members and involved residents and tenant groups.
8. The Board would like to thank all those involved in this Inquiry. A full list of those who participated is detailed at the end of this report.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Accurate Repair Raising

1. The Board have noted from their evidence gathering that a large number of repairs are taken through the Contact Centre, and this is reflected in the number of Officers which take these calls, as well as providing an Out of Hours service.
2. The Board also note a number of repairs are raised by Housing Officers, and a smaller number online.
3. The Board recommend that all new staff, in particular Housing Leeds staff as part of their induction, should have dedicated repairs training. The Board acknowledge this is provided to Contact Centre staff and it is felt that Housing Leeds staff would benefit from this training at the beginning of their new role.
4. Whilst the report focuses on East Leeds repairs service, it is acknowledged by the Board that this recommendation will benefit the entire city and will have additional benefits in improving customer satisfaction, providing value for money, and importantly getting repairs right first time as officers will be more skilled within their role.

Recommendation 1 – That Housing Leeds provide dedicated repairs training for new staff as part of their induction and regularly review training needs of existing staff. In addition, that Housing Leeds supports the Contact Centre's training programme.

IT Systems

5. It has been a theme during the Boards previous inquiries that IT systems have been raised as an issue in providing a quality and efficient service. In this inquiry, at each meeting, Officers from Leeds Building Services raised issues with the current IT system.
6. Following on from this, the Board were invited to Leeds Building Services in November to observe both the current IT system (Orchard) and its replacement (Total Works).
7. Officers also explained to the Board how the current IT system used is not easy to use and inefficient for ensuring operatives best use of time. The current system used also has a number of limitations.
8. It was explained there is a time consuming process where things need to be changed within the system, and often the Council have to rectify any IT problems themselves as there is no supplier support.
9. It was explained tasks such as having to reallocate work, for example, due to operatives being on sick can be difficult on the current system.
10. It was also explained when staff use one screen and a new call comes through then staff have to close the current window in order to move on which means that more time is spent going in and out of different screens.
11. It was noted that officers from Leeds Building Services spend a lot of time managing workloads. The Board noted that the Total Works system will allow a



Conclusions and Recommendations

more efficient service to be provided to tenants including reducing the number of no accesses and moving away from paper job tickets.

12. The Board were advised that Trade Unions had raised concerns about the implementation of Total Works and the potential change to conditions of employment for staff. The Board recognises the need to work on collective bargaining and recommend continued discussions with Trade Unions and staff. However, the Board feel the service needs and likely improvements of the repair service for tenants should be the key driver.
13. During the demonstration of the Total Works system it was shown how a planner can see the capacity of the service, so when booking appointments Officers can see at a glance if there is capacity to book the job at that time or if it would cause problems. The system also takes into account any priorities of jobs.
14. The new system also gives text message confirmation of the appointment the night before and when the operative is on the way to the property. The Board feel this would help with reduction of no accesses.
15. The system also accounts for travelling time to make the most effective use of the operative's time. It can reallocate jobs where one is overrunning and thus causes other appointments in the day to be delayed.
16. This means jobs are moved throughout the day and if they get to the point where they cannot be carried out on the appointed day, they are returned to a

workqueue and a planner would need to make alternative arrangements.

17. The new system is much more visual and makes it easy for a planner to intervene as required. The system also allows management to see if an operative has been active recently as it flags where there has been no contact for a period of time.
18. Board Members asked officers what happens if a follow on trade is required, as officers indicated this is an area where the current service is likely to fail. The Board were told that forms would be used on the operatives PDA which sends the request for another trade to attend and then the planners work this through and make contact with the tenant.
19. It was noted the new system is easier for management to analyse targets and factors such as time spent travelling to jobs and time spent on jobs which within the current system isn't as easily available.
20. It was noted that the current system and Total Works can be run parallel; this allows the initial changeover to be gradual with both systems 'talking to each other'.
21. The Board are supportive of this approach given the issues faced when introducing new IT systems into an organisation. They felt from their demonstration of the new system there are benefits to replacing the existing system.

Recommendation 2 – Implement and roll out the Total Works system.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Efficient Working Practices

22. Officers raised concerns about the lack of flexibility within the existing system to allocate work to operatives where an unexpected change occurs, for example sickness or other event.
23. Whilst the new IT system will resolve this issue, there is an acknowledgement by management this will cause changes to the way operative's time is allocated.
24. The Board were made aware the Total Works system will contribute to more effective working, with conservative estimates of 30 minutes additional productive time per day per operative.
25. The Board considers this to be a more efficient way of working and would be of benefit for both the Council, who can complete more jobs with the same resource and most importantly, tenants who will receive a quicker repairs service due to having more operatives available to carry out jobs.

Recommendation 3 – Implement new working practices through Total Works, in relation to creating additional appointments, by reducing waiting times and increased tenant satisfaction. We also request that this Board be provided with an update on progress.

Customer Satisfaction

26. The Board received performance information which showed that customer satisfaction with repairs was lower in

East Leeds, in comparison to West and South Leeds areas.

27. The Board were also advised by the Director of Environment and Housing there had been significant changes to the internal repairs service in the East area, and there were concerns at that time that the timeliness of repair completion was not as good as expected.
28. The Board received evidence from both Officers and tenants, via a questionnaire which was carried out but also directly of members on the Board who had their own personal experiences of the repairs service.
29. These viewpoints were supported by the survey which the Board commissioned which raised concerns about the quality of work being carried out and also timeliness of repairs being completed. A number of respondents raised concerns about the time taken to complete a repair, and also the quality of the repair which was being carried out.
30. The Board during their visit to the Seacroft depot asked if the new system had a survey function. It was explained it does, and it was explained a piece of work is currently underway to establish how Housing Leeds will gather customer feedback.
31. It is the Board's view that work should be carried out to look at and improve performance on service failures.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Learning from Complaints

32. The Board understands the improvement of customer satisfaction is a large piece of work. The Board also acknowledges that not every tenant would be satisfied with the service regardless of process being correctly followed.
33. The Board acknowledges some tenants responded to the satisfaction survey as satisfied; but there was a significant number who were not. Feedback provided to the Board indicated that work continues to improve tenant satisfaction. The Board noted that some issues raised during the survey continue to occur even though they have been ongoing for some time.
34. In this vein, the Board want to ensure that Leeds Building Services have guidance from this report in the way that they can improve this.
35. One of the key ways organisations learn from their mistakes is to ensure that complaints are learned from. This is a 'free' way to gather information about why tenants are not satisfied with the service and whilst implementing some improvements may take time, there will be quick wins which could have an immediate impact on the performance of customer satisfaction.
36. A common theme the Board were informed about were problems in relation to follow up work, either due to parts not being available, or where a follow on trade is required to be used.

37. Tenant feedback indicated that it is at this point there is often a breakdown in communication, with tenants often left in the dark as to what is happening and when their repair will be completed, with the tenant then having to chase up any follow on work. In light of this the Board would recommend that a proactive approach is adopted with taking ownership and that enquiries and complaints are pro-actively monitored through to completion
38. Officers explaining the process to the Board noted this shouldn't be the case yet the Board note this is a common occurrence and it is important Leeds Building Services ensure processes for follow on work are improved and this is followed by all operatives.

Recommendation 4 – Improve customer satisfaction by using and act on learning from complaints. Improve the process and communication where follow on work is required, including follow up work after accessing the out of hours service. Take ownership of complaints and enquiries and see them through to conclusion.

Repairs Ordering Process and Performance

39. How repairs are raised is the first element of the repair, and therefore first point in which the service can go wrong, causing issues further in the process.
40. The Board found from speaking with Officers at Leeds Building Services that orders which are raised by the Contact



Conclusions and Recommendations

Centre being raised against the wrong trade, in particular where there are communal heating systems in multi storey blocks.

41. Because of this, the Board asked the Contact Centre officers during their evidence session their views on this. It was explained to the Board that feedback is welcomed and is given by Leeds Building Services.
42. However, the Board felt there was an underlying issue which didn't seem to be addressed at present and a way to help resolve this could be more information which is more readily accessible to enable Contact Centre staff to make more accurate decisions, given the pressure they are under taking many calls a day.

Recommendation 5 – That Leeds Building Services, work with the Contact Centre, HUBs and local housing offices to ensure staff know how to identify key properties types such as heating type, to enable more accurate repair reporting. Ensure staff are adequately trained and information is readily available on systems to enable accurate reporting in relation to dual communal heating systems, for example; gas boiler but with electrical components in individual flats, to ensure the correct trade is allocated. Provide portable heating for tenants when repair is not possible.

43. The Board were provided performance information which indicated that the performance of Leeds Building Services was not being met. When receiving evidence during their inquiry, the Board noted from officers that there have been issues with the closing down of some

repairs on the system, leading there to be repairs showing as outstanding when this wasn't the case.

44. The Board were informed that Leeds Building Service plans to introduce an Officer to carry out a client function which would provide a clear structure to monitor the service rather than the previous approach of self - regulation.

Recommendation 6 – Administration on repairs performance is improved - so that orders are closed down in a timely manner on systems, including sub-contractor orders. This will ensure they performance reporting is not adversely affected.

45. The Board also noted the facility for tenants to report repairs online through the Leeds City Council website.
46. The Board felt promotion of ordering online repairs could be improved and this would be of benefit to tenants who could report repairs at a time convenient to them.
47. Given the above, the Board are of the view better publicity around benefits of reporting repairs online would help to improve the tenant experience, as well as reducing the number of calls coming into the Contact Centre.

Recommendation 7 – Make repair raising more accessible online. Whilst this is currently available, it is not actively promoted or widely utilised. Ensure that systems are user friendly, use Plain English and make use of photographs. Utilise involved tenants to critique the service and ensure that all follow up enquiries are dealt with promptly.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Staffing Issues

48. The Board was informed by the Contact Centre there are issues around staff turnover and that in some ways the Council is a victim of its own success in being able to train up officers who then feel confident enough to move onto more senior roles within the Council.
49. However this causes issues with more knowledgeable staff leaving the Contact Centre and less experienced staff being left who may be struggling with some repair raising, particularly unusual or complex repairs.
50. The Board were informed there has been a higher grader post created in an attempt to retain staff but there still needs to be further work in this area.
51. The recommendation below should enable better partnership working between the two teams.

Recommendation 8 – That there is a named contact at Leeds Building Service for new and existing staff to reference complex repair enquiries, including support with communal repairs.

Apprenticeships

52. The Board were provided with evidence that each year Leeds Building Services take on 18 apprentices. The apprenticeship is a 14 month scheme where participants do 2 days a week at college and 3 days training on site, giving them a taster of the whole service and they receive a recognised qualification.

53. Whilst the Board acknowledges Leeds Building Services are looking to increase the opportunities for apprentices, the Board feel it is vital that recruitment to the trades with a shortfall of operatives is of paramount importance.
54. It was noted during evidence sessions that Leeds Building Services are a growing organisation which they hope will enable them to take over some of the works currently done by outside contractors, providing further value for money opportunities.
55. The recommendation below will help to achieve this.

Recommendation 9 – Where a trade has a shortfall in operatives numbers, Leeds Building Services consider apprenticeships in these trades and continue to upskill operatives in a multi skilled approach.



Evidence and Witnesses

Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Terms of Reference for the Board's inquiry into East Leeds Repairs
- Questionnaire on Leeds Building Services and responses to tenants and tenant groups
- Questionnaire on Leeds Building Services and responses to Elected Members

Witnesses Heard

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| • Neil Evans | Director of Environments and Housing |
| • Simon Costigan | Chief Officer Property and Contracts |
| • Tony Butler | Head of Leeds Building Services |
| • Simon Jarman | Repairs & Adaptations Delivery Manager |
| • Shannon O'Brien | Planner |
| • Amy Rogers | Planner |
| • Sharon Guy | Housing Manager |
| • Lee Ward | Neighbourhood Services Officer |
| • Nik Carter | Performance Officer |
| • Debra Harding | Operations Manager, Contact Centre |
| • Rachel Murray | Customer Services Officer |

Dates of Scrutiny

Tenant Scrutiny Board meetings on:

- 1 June 2016
- 29 June 2016
- 3 August 2016
- 31 August 2016
- 28 September 2016
- 26 October 2016
- 30 November 2016



Evidence and Witnesses

- 21 December 2016
- 1 February 2017
- 1 March 2017

Site Visits

- 16 November 2016 Tour of Leeds Building Services Depot, Seacroft
- 16 November 2016 Demonstration of Total Works System, Seacroft

**Tenant Scrutiny Board
East Leeds Repairs April 2017
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