

**To: Senior Management Team**

**Subject: Tenant Scrutiny & the Use of Handheld Devices**

**Report by: The Tenant Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

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The Tenant Involvement Group (TIG), working with Lynda Johnstone, Tenant Information Service (TIS), have carried out a scrutiny exercise into the effectiveness of the handheld devices in getting repairs done right first time.

This is the first scrutiny exercise carried out by the Tenant Involvement Group's, Scrutiny Panel (TIG – Scrutiny, referred to as 'TIG' in this report). Using the TIS framework for Scrutiny, the TIG have met on a number of occasions during the last 8 months and carried out the following work:

### **Stage 1: Fact Finding and Research**

The TIG considered legislation, ELHA policies and background information by:

- Considering what the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) states about repairs
- Reading policy and procedures, including the Maintenance Policy and Complaints Handling Procedure
- Considering performance information and satisfaction survey results

### **Stage 2: ELHA Corporate Approach**

The TIG reviewed ELHA's systems and processes by:

- Reading leaflets, the tenant handbook and website in relation to what is stated about the repairs process
- Looked at several case studies where real repairs had been ordered. The Panel considered how these were handled and how well staff communicated with tenants
- Interviewed the Director of Asset Management/R3 and the R3 Manager to gain an understanding of R3 procedures and how the handheld devices worked, examples of some of the questions asked:
  - How does the scheduling system work?
  - How many repairs are completed 'right first time'?

### **Stage 3: What Actually Happens**

The TIG considered what is happening on the ground and the customer experiences by:

- Interviewing the R3 Planner and a Property Officer. Examples of some of the questions asked:
  - What are your day-to-day duties?
  - What is the most challenging aspect of your job?
- Reviewing the satisfaction surveys of customers who have had a repair carried out in the last 12 months
- Their own experiences of being tenants and ordering repairs
- A 'Your Last Repair' survey carried out by staff during routine visits to tenants (see Appendix A).

## Findings

Scrutinising the handhelds, in respects to repairs being completed 'right first time', means that this project fits into:

Outcome 5 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, which deals with repairs, maintenance and improvements:

- Tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done.

And Indicator 13:

- Percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time.

In 2013-14, 82.68% of repairs were reported as being completed 'right first time'. During the interview with the Director of Asset Management, the TIG was assured that this figure would improve going forward.

The TIG found that the services ELHA deliver meet policy and SSHC requirements, but clearer communication is required for tenants on how R3 operate and R3 operatives need to understand the requirements of the SSHC. Improving these lines of communication should result in an improved service and greater adherence to the Charter requirements.

The TIG also found that a small minority of tenants were abusive towards R3 and ELHA staff, which they felt was unacceptable. They felt that greater communication between staff and tenants, and awareness of this problem and the consequences of being abusive should be raised through publications and web content.

There seemed to be a lack of awareness that evening repair calls had been offered, with few tenants and ELHA staff members knowing about it, and that this should have been more widely publicised.

It was highlighted that, although orders passed through the system to Travis Perkins were handled in an acceptable manner, this was the least smooth part of the system upon which R3 needed to concentrate in order to improve efficiency.

The TIG also discovered that efficiency could be compromised due to the following handheld issues:

- There being insufficient network coverage in some parts of East Lothian, resulting in operatives often having to drive out of an area to get enough signal for their next job to load, and in some cases being sent back to the area they have just left.
- Some staff having problems with using a small screen. In particular Asset Management staff who have to complete long and complex forms, where a laptop or tablet would be a better match.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Improved communication**

The TIG felt that the main concerns and frustrations people have with the repair service are due to a lack of information. They felt that wider publicity regarding the repair service, and any potential changes to the repair service was needed, and that internal communication between departments could be improved.

- Wider publicity and consultation regarding changes to the repair service, eg: the introduction of evening repair calls.
- Raise awareness about the 'right first time' recording for the ARC via an R3 team meeting with operatives.
- Improve tenant awareness of the handheld devices and the need to complete satisfaction surveys.
- Further promotion of the Freephone number through newsletter and Facebook.
- Newsletter article on rudeness towards staff.

### **2. Target setting**

The TIG would like to see an official target set for the 'right first time' percentage.

### **3. Repair ordering**

The TIG felt that although there are a wide range of options for reporting a repair, there is room for improvement:

- Where possible, special orders for parts to be raised at the point of the repair being ordered. The option should be explored for the digital repair portal being able to 'flag up' non-standard parts which may be required and which are not routinely carried as part of the van stock.
- The ability to upload photos of non-standard repairs via the digital repair portal on the website.

#### **4. Staff tools**

The TIG acknowledged that for a very small number of staff, the handheld was not always the most effective tool for the job:

- Staff who need to fill in large amounts of data given the option to switch from handhelds to larger devices, e.g. tablet or laptop.
- Regular checks should be made for the best network(s) for mobile coverage in East Lothian.

## Tenant Scrutiny Report Action Plan: Use of Hand Held Devices in Repairs Management

Audit Number; 1 June- September 2014

*Relevant Charter Outcomes and/or Indicators: 5 "Tenants Homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done"*

*13 "Percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time"*

Rec.	Finding	Recommendation	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer (Job Title)
1	Lack of information can lead to tenant frustration- for example some tenants unaware that evening repair calls are an option. This can result in customers being rude to staff which is unacceptable.	<p>Wider publicity required if changes made to the repair service</p> <p>Raise awareness of Right First Times requirements amongst operatives</p> <p>Improve tenant awareness of the handheld devices and the need to complete satisfaction surveys</p> <p>Promote the Freephone number through the Newsletter and Facebook</p> <p>Publish a Newsletter article on rudeness towards staff and the potential consequences.</p>			
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