

## **IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION**

**Date and Time :-** Tuesday 19 July 2022 at 1.30 p.m.

**Venue:-** Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.

**Membership:-** Councillors Wyatt (Chair), Tinsley (Vice-Chair), Atkin, Aveyard, Bennett-Sylvester, Browne, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, T Collingham, Cowen, Ellis, Havard, Hunter, Jones, Khan, McNeely, Monk, Reynolds, Taylor.

**Co-opted Members:-** Mrs. K. Bacon, Mrs. M. Jacques.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view [via the Council's website](#). The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

### **AGENDA**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

#### **2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 June 2022 (Pages 3 - 8)**

To consider and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 June 2022 as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

#### **3. Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

#### **4. Questions from members of the public and the press**

To receive questions relating to items of business on the agenda from members of the public or press who are present at the meeting.

#### **5. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

**6. Tenant Scrutiny Review - Aids and Adaptations Update (Pages 9 - 41)**

To receive an update report and action plan in respect of housing aids and adaptations.

**7. Tenant Scrutiny Review - Satisfaction with Repairs and Maintenance Service (Pages 43 - 104)**

To receive a Tenant Scrutiny Review report and action plan in respect of satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.

**8. Revised Work Programme (Pages 105 - 112)**

To consider and approve a revised outline work programme for 2022/23.

**9. Urgent Business**

To consider any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

**10. Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission will take place on 20 September 2022, commencing at 1.30 pm in Rotherham Town Hall.

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION**  
**Tuesday 7 June 2022**

Present:- Councillor Wyatt (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Aveyard, Bennett-Sylvester, Browne, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, Cowen, Ellis, Havard, Hunter, Jones, Khan, McNeely, Monk and Tinsley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bacon, T. Collingham and Taylor and from Mrs. K Bacon, a co-optee from RotherFed.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2022**

**Resolved:-**

1. That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 April 2022 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

The Chair advised that there were no members of the public or representatives of media organisations present at the meeting and there were no questions in respect of matters on the agenda.

**4. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda that would require the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

**5. DRAFT ENVIRO-CRIME PLAN OBJECTIVES**

Consideration was given to a report and presentation on early phase development of an Enviro-Crime Plan presented by the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment and the Assistant Director for Community Safety and Street Scene. The main objectives of the Plan were presented for feedback from Members. The objectives were Prevention, Engagement, and Enforcement. Prevention is about designing out crime and making it harder for offenses to happen in the first place. The Engagement objective emphasises the need to communicate well the environment services available for people to dispose of their waste, the enforcement actions taken, and informing residents about environmental offenses and their responsibilities. The Enforcement objective is about effectiveness at all phases of the waste disposal cycle, working well with

police, increasing outputs of fines and prosecutions and notices requiring demonstration of responsible waste disposal and appropriate documentation. The service leads provided examples of tactical measures for discussion.

In discussion, Members asked for more information about how the service will work with private landlords. The response from officers noted that Council does contact landowners to ask them to clear waste on land they own, and the Council does have the power to enforce the landowners to clear waste on private land, which can sometimes be problematic for landowners when they

Members also asked for clarification around waste on private versus common land, or land where it is difficult to pin down ownership of land. Land usually has an owner although it can be hard to identify.

Members requested further information around budget provision for clearing eyesores or public health concerns that are on private land. There is funding going into the service to help expand coverage, and there is a special team with expertise to design out crime.

A specific example was given of a trouble spot for fly tipping. A further conversation regarding the trouble spot was offered outside the meeting.

Members also suggested better communication around schemes that are affordable, for example, qualification for extra bins. The service noted that the Plan would include expanding communication around the available schemes. Further work is in motion around making it an offense to advertise irresponsible waste disposal.

Members noted favourably the involvement of Members in nominating bins or bin changes. The service noted that the local knowledge of elected Members can be very valuable prior to making changes to bins.

Members noted the difficulty with fly tipping on common land, and that the Plan include provision for this grey area. Service leads offered a direct conversation about specific pieces of land. Where it there is land that is not owned by anyone, this can make prevention and enforcement difficult in that area but at the same time must be addressed so that it does not become harmful to communities.

Members offered examples of successful engagement, including work in schools and work by a community grassroots litter picking organisation which are already performing an excellent service for the community by tackling hotspots. Members suggested that the service tie in to consult members of this successful organisation around developing the engagement objective of the Plan. Members also suggested maximising the Council's website to publicise the Council's activity in terms of removals and enforcement. The service welcomed the suggestions and noted the changes that are being put in place to establish a more digital

and interactive interface with residents around frontline services. There is crossover with the nature crisis and climate change and Environment Bill 2021-22 that will have impacts on how much waste is created to begin with.

Members noted that language differences can impede the flow of information into communities. The bin calendars could be used as a communication channel. Members requested more readily available information about unusual items and where these can be taken. Work with library services and work in schools were also suggested. The response from officers emphasised the customer and digital services branch of the Plan which will provide more information at people's fingertips. The household waste contracts come to an end in 2023, therefore the service are working on options to present to Cabinet in the summer. This means that there is present flexibility to work with partners to develop the right options and stipulations in respect of household waste and recycling.

Members described the cascading impact of expanding work in schools which had been done in the past, recognising the resource involved. The importance of design in planning placement of bins was also emphasised in terms of designing out litter. The response from officers noted the powers to require developers to produce plans for waste. The service has also been taking part in the graduate programme to utilise all the resource possible. It will be important that following on from the Environment Bill there will be funding to ensure the requirements can be delivered.

Members noted that hotspots are often fly-tipped on a regular basis, and with a host of tactics, the service put extra measures in to go door to door to replace missing bins. The response from officers noted the challenges associated with fly-tipping and emphasised the objective of having a clear and consistent plan locally that will be amplified nationally through the medium to long term. CCTV has also been tactically deployed which will begin to have deterrent effect on the fly tipping.

Members requested clarification around issues with how residents present their bins. The response from officers noted the decriminalisation of presenting bins in inappropriate ways, replaced with a civil process. This is a process that has limitation around the ways it can be enforced, and one that requires resources to enforce with limited result that often would penalise the more law abiding citizens who are more willing to pay civil fines.

Clarification was requested around the procedure to address contaminated bins. The response from officers noted that there is no power or sanction that officers can take to address a contaminated bin. The only option open to the service is to work with the individual bin owner to help them clear the bin and better understand the kinds of collections for their bins. It was noted that the separate collections are about to become more complex in the future under the new regulations. Members emphasised that it is not reasonable for the service to

continually be having to sort out a repeatedly contaminated bin.

Members also suggested the service explore the potential of restorative justice approaches to deal with waste offenses. Members noted the responsiveness of the graffiti team which swiftly shift graffiti. It was requested that the service make information around the graffiti service available to Members.

**Resolved:-**

1. That the report be noted and the next update, including information in respect of performance measurement, clean-up and removal cost breakdowns, graffiti removal response times and a summary of work in schools, be submitted 12 months from implementation.
2. That consideration be given to expanding the work with private landlords and provision of support to communities where there may be an eyesore or public health concern on private or common land.
3. That the service avail all appropriate channels to further promote and publicise services and schemes to help residents dispose of waste responsibly and affordably.
4. That the service continue to engage elected members and community groups to maximise the local knowledge available to the service to inform deployment of assets, resources and schemes.
5. That forthcoming work on customer and digital interface include ward- or neighbourhood-level demonstrations where appropriate with a view to broadening access to information and support around responsible waste disposal.
6. That the service clarify the process for addressing contaminated recycling bins, and that any removal of such be coordinated with direct engagement with the resident, with a view to enhancing understanding of processes and resident responsibility.
7. That the responsiveness of the graffiti removal teams be noted, and that the service provide Members with information in respect of graffiti removal.
8. That the service explore potential restorative justice approaches to dealing with waste offences.

**6. INITIAL WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Consideration was given to an outline work programme for 2022/23. Several potential items for inclusion were identified and Members were invited to suggest possible items for the evolving work programme.

**Resolved:-**

1. That the report and proposed schedule of work be noted.
2. That authority be delegated to the Governance Advisor in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair to make changes to the schedule of work as appropriate between meetings, reporting any changes back to the next meeting for endorsement.

**7. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - MARKETS: ENGAGEMENT AND RECOVERY**

Consideration was given to a summary report outlining the findings and recommendations of the recent spotlight review on Markets Recovery and Engagement. The report described a site visit to the indoor and outdoor areas of the Town Centre markets complex and outlined the discussion with national experts and service leads around the redevelopment of the Rotherham Town Centre Markets.

**Resolved:-**

1. That a review of the Council's Rules and Regulations in respect of Markets be added to the IPSC work programme.
2. That the following recommendations from the review be endorsed for submission to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:
  - a) That face-to-face consultations and clear communication be prioritised in all interactions with vendors and traders.
  - b) That the service avail case studies and resources available in the libraries of NABMA and NMTF to inform the strategic refresh of Rotherham markets.
  - c) That the service re-evaluate the support offer for new vendors, in consultation with NABMA and NMTF, with a view to encouraging more new vendors to continue trading beyond the six-month introductory period.
  - d) In view of relevant expert advice in respect of sustaining a market during redevelopment works, that retaining traders through the redevelopment phase be considered top priority.
  - e) That any re-design of markets spaces duly consider usability and aesthetics, availing market research to optimise spaces for inclusiveness and accessibility, and to make the offer especially attractive to students and young people.

- f) That consideration be given to how the redesign and operation of the market may best cater to the needs and interests of younger generations by strengthening links with RNN student populations and extending opportunities to new entrepreneurs through the Young Traders Scheme.
- g) Recognising that the Town Centre markets complex represents a unique and distinct microeconomy with its own accompanying needs and character, that consideration be given to the ongoing management resource required to sustain the markets economy successfully over the long term.
- h) That consideration be given to design and development choices that would help the markets to incorporate cashless, up-to-date approaches to commerce that their potential customers expect.

**8. IPSC REPRESENTATIVE TO THE HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY PANEL**

Councillor McNeely volunteered to continue to serve as representative on the Health, Welfare and Safety Panel.

**Resolved:-**

- 1. That Councillor McNeely represent IPSC on the Health, Welfare and Safety Panel for 2022/23.

**9. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Commission's consideration.

**10. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved:-**

- 1. That the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission will take place on 19 July 2022, commencing at 1.30 pm.



Public Report  
Improving Places Select Commission

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Places Select Commission – 19 July 2022

**Report Title**

Update on the Tenant Scrutiny Panel Review – Aids and Adaptations Service

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

**Report Author(s)**

Daniel Peck, Adaptations Manager

Daniel.peck@rotherham.gov.uk

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel selected the Aids and Adaptations Service as an area of service for review, as part of a continuous programme of service reviews which are undertaken by the Panel. The work of the Panel is facilitated and supported by Rotherfed, the Council's Tenant Federation provider. The aim of the Panel was to investigate the customer journey for those using the Aids and Adaptations Service in terms of accessibility, clarity and fairness.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel completed its review and submitted a report detailing the Panel's findings, together with recommendations for service improvement. The report is attached as Appendix 1.

A report detailing the findings of the review and recommendations was received at Improving Places Select Commission on 29th June 2021.

This report provides an update on progress in delivering the actions agreed following the review. The action plan is attached as Appendix 2.

**Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the Improving Places Select Commission note the further progress made to date in delivering the actions within the Review Action Plan.
- 1.2 That the Improving Places Select Commission receive a further update report in 12 months' time

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Tenant Scrutiny Panel Report A&A Scrutiny Action Plan RAG  
Appendix 2 Tenant Scrutiny Panel recommendations and service action plan  
Appendix 3 The Climate Impact Assessment

**Background Papers**

Minutes - Improving Places Select Commission, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Update on the Tenant Scrutiny Panel Review – Aids and Adaptations Service**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 In April 2019 the Aids and Adaptations Service was selected by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel for review, following consideration of the Council's housing service performance outturn for 2018/19.
- 1.2 The performance data relating to the Aids and Adaptations Service showed that service performance for adaptation works completed on time had improved on the previous year, at 96.16%, compared to 94.29% 2017/18. However, the target for 2018/19 of 98% had not been achieved. In considering this area of service for review, the Panel also reflected upon their own experiences of the service and anecdotal evidence they had received from conversations with other tenants.
- 1.3 The Panel set out several objectives for the review, which are summarised below:
  - Review and consider the adaptations customer journey, including accessing the service, time taken, and the number of different services involved.
  - Ascertain whether the publicity around the service is available to all tenants, including hard to reach groups.
  - Use mystery shopping and other methods to explore service access routes.
  - Consider the current service policy in terms of accessibility for tenants.
  - Benchmark against other housing providers to identify any learning and good practice from their systems and policies.
  - Examine the charging policy and how clear it is.
  - Explore links between adaptations and different services e.g. NHS, Occupational Therapists and Assistive Technology
  - Ascertain how service requests are prioritised.
- 1.4 In taking forward the review, Tenant Scrutiny Panel members interviewed representatives of the relevant services. This included senior managers from the Council's Housing Options Service, which administers the aids and adaptations service; staff within the adaptations service and within the Community Occupational Therapy Service (NHS Foundation Trust). The Panel also collected relevant data, using several methods, to inform the review and final report. These methods included a mystery shopping exercise via a telephone survey of 22 tenants, who had recent experience of the major adaptations process or were currently journeying through the process.
- 1.5 Panel members also contacted the Council via various customer access routes, to enquire about adaptations for a friend or family member, via email, telephone and face to face contact.

- 1.6 Finally, a benchmarking exercise was completed by comparing the Council's Aids and Adaptations Service against other similar housing providers and through the Northern Adaptations Group.
- 1.7 The report submitted by the Panel summarised the findings of the review, including the evidence base used to inform the Panel's recommendations to improve the service. Aspects of the service reflected upon included how tenants are informed of their choices regarding adaptations; customer expectations when utilising the service and the communication customers receive whilst works are on-going to the point of completion. A further consideration was the collection of customer satisfaction data and how it is utilised to inform service development and improvement.
- 1.8 The Council received the report at the Housing Service Senior Management Team meeting on 3rd March 2021. The report was very much welcomed, and the recommendations considered and agreed. An action plan was developed by the service in response to the recommendations and implemented.

## **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 The action plan and progress to date is detailed at Appendix 2. The updated action plan shows that all the submitted recommendations are being implemented, with several actions already completed. This includes improvements to budget monitoring and control, as well as resource management for time critical works for customers in urgent need.
- 2.2 The good progress already being made demonstrates the value the Council places upon the Tenant Scrutiny Review framework and ensuring that the customers voice is clearly heard in how we shape, deliver and continually improve services.
- 2.3 This scrutiny review and delivery of agreed actions contributes towards the following themes/priorities:

Rotherham Council Plan 2022-25:

- People are safe, healthy and live well

Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2022-25:

- Supporting people to live independently

## **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Progress in delivering the actions from the Tenant Scrutiny Review are detailed within the action plan at Appendix 2.

#### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Review report and recommendations were presented to the Rotherfed Tenant Scrutiny Meeting on 8th February 2021 for discussion and finalisation, prior to submission to the Council. The Report was received, discussed and the findings and recommendations accepted at the Housing Senior Management Team meeting on 3rd March 2021. A report was presented to Improving Places Select Commission on 29 June 2021.

#### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 Delivery against the recommendations in the action plan is being monitored by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in liaison with the Council's Aids and Adaptations Service Management Team. The projected completion dates for actions within the plan are reflective of current resources within the service and recognises that the service is on a continuing journey of improvement.
- 5.2 The overall accountable officer is Paul Walsh, Acting Assistant Director for Housing.

#### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 The Appendix A – Action Plan indicates that four temporary A&A posts have been implemented to reduce the backlog. These posts are funded via the additional fees generated in the current financial year from increased capital budgets to fund carried forward works. If the additional works are not completed this could result in a budget pressure on both HRA and General Fund.

6.2 A review of the effectiveness of the posts will establish whether additional resource is needed long term. The financial viability will be considered prior to the posts being extended or made permanent.

#### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 The Council should ensure that measures for all consultation, reports, assessments and evaluations comply with Equality and Diversity legislation, HRA legislation and in compliance with Local Government consultation duties, Housing, Children and Care Law.

#### **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 At DLT on 11 May 2021 four full time additional posts for the service were established for 12 months on a temporary basis. From a contractual perspective the posts will remain in place for 12 months following appointment and this may result in a staggered start and finish. One project manager commenced in April 2022, two application officers commenced in December 2021 and one technical officer commenced December 2021. A review of the effectiveness of the posts will establish whether additional

resource is needed long term and should this be the case the consideration will be given as to whether this should be on a permanent basis. Due HR processes will be followed in this regard.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 None arising from progress report

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 Ensuring that the customer voice is heard is instrumental in how the Council develops and delivers its services and is of paramount importance. The review supports the continued journey of improvement for the aids and adaptations service. The service aims to offer a high quality and accessible service to all customers, ensuring that our residents are safe, healthy and live well with dignity and independence.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 The service improvement actions being implemented will contribute to the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. The improvements proposed to customer access and self-service opportunities will reduce the potential number of physical visits Council officers will make to complete all paperwork and assessments, by offering a digital solution. The creation of this digital service will reduce paper and printing requirements of the service as well as reducing multiple visits to customers where possible, reducing the services carbon emissions through reduced car usage.

11.2 The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to:

- Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” philosophy.
- Be a good neighbour, minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.), improve green areas (e.g. biodiversity, visual attractiveness etc.).
- Reduce carbon footprint – be aware of main impacts on carbon emissions including the indirect carbon used in manufacturing processes and the direct impact of operations and logistics
- Temporary ramps and straight stairlifts are recycled following removal and all new shower installations are energy efficient.

11.3 Please see the Emissions Impact Assessment attached at Appendix 3

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 The Housing Options Service Senior Management Team will continue to work with RotherFed and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel towards delivering the

recommendations in the action plan. Delivery of these actions will involve collaboration across relevant Council services and with key delivery partners.

### 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The key risk is the failure to engage with the tenant scrutiny board in Rotherfed and inability to deliver against the recommendations in the action plan. This will be mitigated by ongoing monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation of the recommendations by the Improving Places Select Commission and the Adaptations / Housing Options Management Team

### 14. Accountable Officer(s)

Daniel Peck. Adaptation Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Kathleen Andrews	01/07/22
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Elizabeth Anderton	01/07/22
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	Claire Cox	01/07/22
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	05/07/22
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing - Councillor Brookes	04/07/22

*Report Author: Daniel Peck, Adaptations Manager*

*Daniel.peck@rotherham.gov.uk*

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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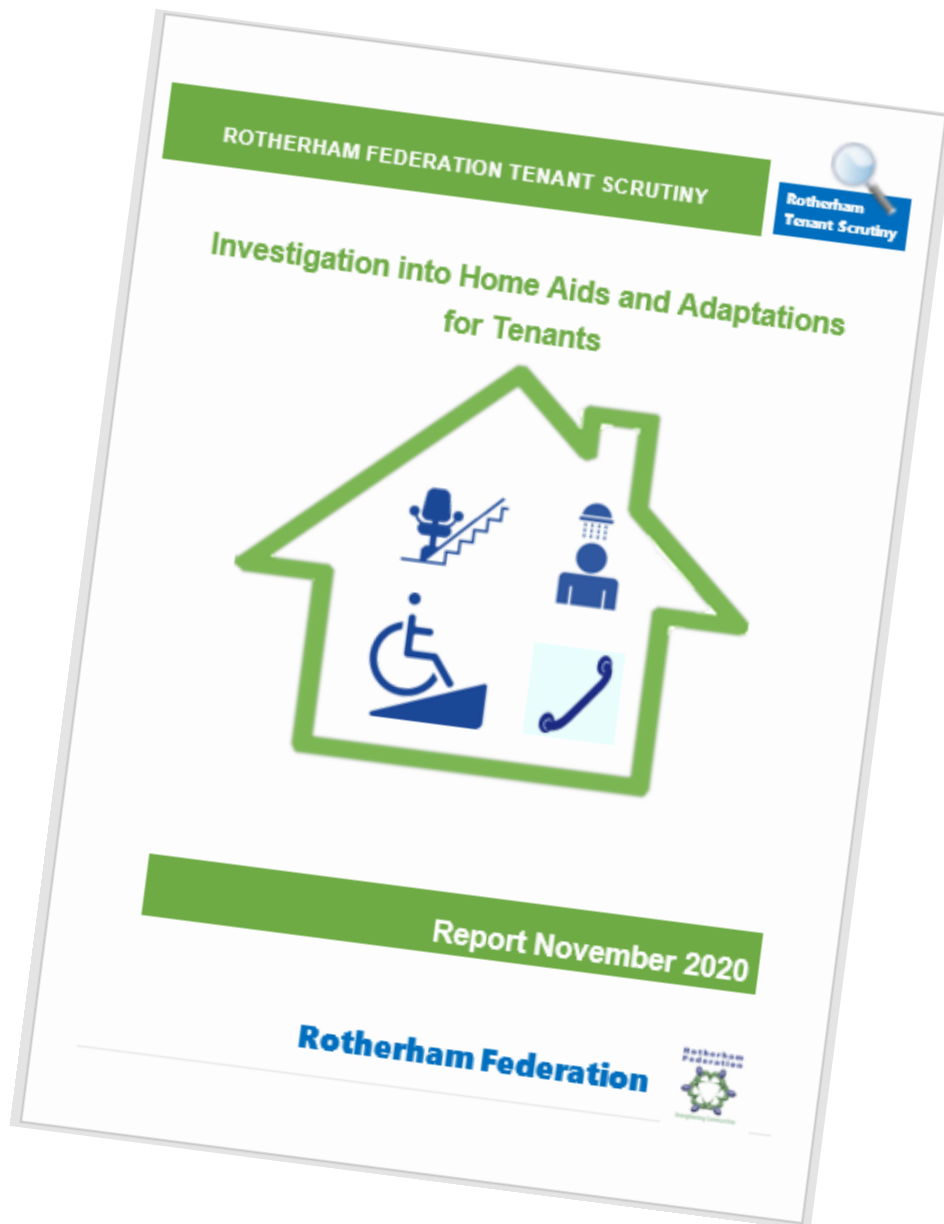


# ROTHERHAM FEDERATION TENANT SCRUTINY



**Rotherham  
Tenant Scrutiny**

## SUMMARY OF THE REPORT:



**For presentation to Rotherham Metropolitan  
Borough Council  
November 2020**

This is a summary of the fourth report of the Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny panel resulting from an investigation into the Aids and Adaptations service provided by Rotherham MBC for Council tenants. 'Aids and Adaptations' was chosen by the tenant scrutiny panel following consideration of the Rotherham Council housing performance information for 2018/19 quarter four. The data showed that despite better performance than the previous year for adaptation works completed on time (96.16%), the annual target of 98% was not being met. Panel members were also keen to investigate this topic due to their own experiences and other evidence from their conversations with their neighbours and friends.

The summary includes the findings of the investigation, the recommendations made by the panel, and the evidence leading to these conclusions being drawn.

## Terms of reference

**Aim:** To investigate the customer journey for tenants using the 'Adaptations and Aids' service in terms of accessibility, clarity and fairness

### Objectives, to:

- Consider Adaptations customer journeys including accessing the service, time taken and the number of different services involved
- Ascertain whether the publicity around adaptations and aids services is available to all tenants, including hard to reach groups
- Use mystery shopping and other methods to explore access routes for the Adaptations service
- Consider the current policy in terms of accessibility for tenants
- Benchmark against other housing providers to check for any learning from their systems and policies
- Examine the charging policy and how clear it is
- Explore links between Adaptations and different services e.g. NHS, Occupational Therapists and Assistive Technology
- Ascertain how cases are prioritised

## Scope

It was agreed that the panel would *not* fully investigate:

- ✗ The quality of aids and adaptations made
- ✗ The financial elements of the service as regards removal of adaptations from voids etc.

## Methodology:

The investigation included:

- The panel interviewed representatives of the services including senior managers from Housing options (Rotherham Council) and Community Occupational Therapy (NHS Foundation Trust) and officers based in the Housing adaptations team
- A mystery shopping exercise – a telephone survey of 22 tenants who had experienced the major adaptations process recently or were currently in the system
- Panel members contacting the Council via various routes to ask about adaptations for a friend or family member via email, telephone and face to face
- Benchmarking Rotherham Council's Aids and Adaptations service against other similar housing providers and through the Northern Adaptations group

**PLEASE NOTE THAT UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AS REGARDS COVID-19, THE PANEL ARE EXPECTING AN ACTION PLAN WITH EXTENDED TIMESCALES FOR RESPONDING TO THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS. TIMESCALES SHOULD ALLOW FOR THE RELEVANT TEAMS TO BE OPERATING AT FULL CAPACITY AGAIN.**

## KEY FINDINGS

**The panel has prioritised its recommendations in order of importance. The supporting evidence for each recommendation is listed:**

### Recommendation A: Team resources to meet demand

Ensure that the Adaptations team resources are up to full complement to meet the needs of the work demand received.

#### The Evidence:

- There has been a vacancy for a technical officer in the Aids and Adaptations team for over two years. Consideration is being given to replacing this post with a surveyor role due to the increasing number of assessments for extensions. This proposal was supported by the Tenant Scrutiny panel.
- The primary reason for the investigation of this topic was that the annual target of completing 98% of aids and adaptations on time was not being met (18/19 performance) and this was confirmed by panel members who had numerous examples of how speed of service varied vastly for different tenants.
- Half of the works from the mystery shopping exercise exceeded the 40 working days target for major adaptations, some by several months, and 50% of the respondents said that the service could be improve with shorter waiting times.
- One of the respondents from the major adaptations survey in 18/19 said: *'I was told it would be three weeks and it was in fact ten'*
- When interviewed, officers assessed the service as good but agreed that it had performed better in previous years i.e. The average time for assessment to works commenced was only five weeks between April and July 2019 but had previously been as short as three weeks in 2015/16.
- Although only a few complaints were received each year about the Aids and Adaptations service, the largest percentage referred to delays in service, which could be potentially be reduced if the team was up to full capacity.
- The demand for aids and adaptations rose by 16.5% between 18/19 and 19/20, putting additional pressure on the reduced team. The Rotherham COT team has capacity to handle 3,500 referrals per year; 4,300 referrals were received in 2018/19.
- The national shortage of Occupational Therapists had led to delays in the assessment of adaptations applications; however, it was anticipated that the COT team would reach full capacity in early 2020.

- During July 2019, the backlog for referral to approval had extended to nine weeks exceeding the eight-week target for Rotherham Council. By January 2020 this had further increased to 13 weeks.

Full report pages 19-22

## Recommendation B1: Re-draft the policy

Redraft the policy document as soon as possible. This should include drafting a summary version for the general public, working with tenant representatives. The policy should include clear guidance on the re-housing of tenants to previously adapted homes.

### The Evidence:

- The current policy and procedures used by Rotherham Council for Aids and Adaptations were written in December 2015. There is no review date mentioned in the documents but all officers agreed that they were overdue for review and refresh.
- The policy is accessible only to officers, which was confirmed by the *Learning from Customers forum* who found it to 'include out of date information' and 'too many abbreviations/ too much information'.
- The Tenant Scrutiny panel found the policy misleading concerning financial assessments for Council tenants and the re-housing of tenants to previously adapted accommodation.
- Panel members could see both the benefits and disadvantages of moving people from their own home into a previously adapted property. It would usually be best for the tenant to stay in their own neighbourhood and for the Council to save on removal costs; however, this was offset by the feasibility of adapting their own home, the cost of adaptations and the cost of potential removal in the future.
- It was disappointing that officers did not have time to review the policy with the Tenant Scrutiny panel's input during the investigation as originally intended, but the panel hoped that the contents of the report and their views could be included in the next draft of the policy.

Full report pages 10 and 11

## Recommendation B2: Five-year rule

Consider reviewing the policy to state that tenants must stay in their home for five years following adaptations unless there are unforeseen circumstances, in line with the policy for private households.

### The Evidence:

- There is no requirement for a Council tenant to stay in their adapted property for five years, unlike private customers receiving the Disabled Facilities Grant. If the tenant does move on, the property is advertised as an adapted home. If the home is still on the housing stock list after a few months, the adaptations will be removed at a significant cost to the Council.
- There was a strong feeling from the panel that the cost of both the installation and removal of adaptations (if required) should make it imperative that tenants commit to stay five years in an adapted home, except in extenuating circumstances.

Full report page 11

## Recommendation C: Improve publicity of the service

Develop a strategy for targeted publicity of the service which is accessible for hard to reach and vulnerable people, including those people without access to the internet.

### The Evidence:

- The only publicity for the adaptations service is via word of mouth or from the Rotherham Council website. There are no leaflets advertising the service for people to decide if it is appropriate for them.
- Panel members were happy to see that numerous people taking part in the mystery shopping exercise had heard about the service from other Council officers or Occupational Therapists (65% of people responding to the mystery shopping exercise heard about the service through OTs and Social Care). However, this relied on the person first approaching other services and wouldn't cater for someone who was struggling to access any help.
- The panel were concerned about how people, particularly hard to reach groups, hear about the service, unless they have access to the internet or have a family or GP to help with the referral.
- The COT survey found that the majority of referrals received by the team were from family/ friend / carer and by self-referral, accounting for 45% of the total. Very few referrals were received from the housing department (3-7%), secondary health (hospitals) (3-4%) or voluntary organisations (2-3%).

<p>➤ It was disappointing that only 3-7% of referrals are from housing teams when the current housing verification visits include questions relating to the need for adaptations; <i>‘How are you managing within your home (identify slips, trips, falls, floods or mental health impact)’</i> and <i>‘Would you like any further information or support in relation to your health and wellbeing? (includes falls and frailty)’</i>. The panel wondered if this was because these visits only take place every four years.</p>
<p>➤ One panel member said <i>‘When I came out of hospital, I didn’t receive any information on the adaptations that may be available to me to be able to use my home safely or to be able to go out’</i>. This was supported by only 3-4% of referrals being received from hospitals.</p>
<p>➤ Voluntary Action Rotherham do work with some GPs as link workers and may signpost the adaptations service if appropriate. However, the panel thought that there is clearly an opportunity for further targeted publicity through voluntary organisations (including Rotherham Federation) as only 2-3% of referrals were received that way.</p>
<p>➤ It was noted that Hull City Council produce a leaflet for service users that details how to access the service, the Council’s policy and the timescales for the service. The leaflet was found to be really helpful, in particular if used with health professionals and voluntary groups to promote the service to those most in need.</p>
<p>➤ Panel members agreed with senior officers that any leaflet should focus on people having access to an assessment process rather than making promises about the provision of aids and adaptations. This approach may well make sure that those most appropriate for the service receive it and that inappropriate demand is reduced.</p>
<p>➤ The Customer Service Centre on two occasions just gave out a phone number to ring when enquiring about aids and adaptations. It was felt that some people would prefer to receive a leaflet to decide whether it was appropriate for them to self-refer, particularly if face to face discussion was not an option and if they didn’t have access to the internet.</p>
<p>Full report pages 12-14 and 17</p>

## Recommendation D: Publicise service expectations

Develop a leaflet to hand to tenants when using the adaptations service that provides a summary of what they can expect from the service. This should also include the expectations on the tenant in receipt of the service.

### The Evidence:

- There is no written communication with customers that lets them know the timescales and expectations of the service.
- It was noted by the panel that some delays are caused by customers not being available when the assessments/works are due to take place. It would helpful if these people are

notified of the service expectations and that the lack of access to their homes will cause delays to the works.

- Officers agreed that publicity could be used to manage the expectations of people who may be considering the service i.e. that an assessment may not always lead to adaptations being approved; the anticipated timescales for completion of assessment processes.

Full report pages 18 and 28

## Recommendation E: Written communication on the process

Ensure that written communication on the process is sent out once a referral has been made.

### The Evidence:

- It was reassuring that people are being told roughly how long the adaptations will take; but there did seem to be large differences in the times promised (range of two weeks to 12 months for similar works when mystery shopping exercise was carried out). However, this information is given verbally.
- A previous pathway and quality standards document were available in 2011 on the Connect2Support website, which was useful to confirm timelines for customers to refer to for the adaptations service: However, customers are no longer referred to these web pages.
- The COT survey in 2018/19 quarter four received some negative comments about the time taken for referral – one person stating that three months was too long to wait for independence and another stating that it had taken eight weeks for an assessment after leaving hospital.
- The perception of time taken from referral to assessment differed considerably for most people, with some people thinking it had taken up to 32 weeks longer than it had.
- There was some disappointment that there is no written confirmation of when the referral was made and how long before an assessment visit/works would take place. It was thought that written communication soon after referral may well overcome issues with people thinking that the process was taking longer than it should.

Full report pages 18, 20 and 26-27



## Recommendation F: Regular contact intervals

Agree, implement and monitor regular contact intervals to keep customers up to date with progress and works scheduling. A key contact approach would help with this.

### The Evidence:

- The panel felt that one of the biggest issues for disappointment with the adaptations service was not being kept informed of progress and timescales. This could be overcome by the introduction of a key worker arrangement.
- Comments received from the Adaptations team survey 2018/19 included: *'They were unable to tell me when a decision would be made and how long it would take overall'; 'We didn't know when the builders would turn up to do the work'; 'Too long to wait in getting installed and had to get in touch by telephone'*

Full report pages 22 - 24

## Recommendation G: Budget for urgent work

Make sure that some of the budget each year is kept aside for urgent work.

### The Evidence:

- The adaptations budget does not include a contingency budget for urgent work, meaning that other routine works are delayed once an urgent case is referred to the adaptations team.
- The tenant Scrutiny panel found it unfair that works already ordered and in the adaptations' system were being delayed each time an urgent referral was received.
- By November 2019, the full year's allowance for Council owned homes adaptations in 2019/20 had been spent. No alternative funding could be found and this led to a long waiting list of work to be carried forward to the following year (13-14 weeks waiting list had already accumulated by January 2020). The panel were particularly concerned that the funding for adaptations had been spent five months earlier than planned, leading to a long list of adaptations waiting for the new financial year. The list could potentially include urgent works.

Full report pages 29-30

### Recommendation H: Balance spending on minor and major adaptations

Assess the spending each year between minor and major adaptations to allow for separate budgetary monitoring for each.

#### The Evidence:

- The adaptations budget is not divided between types of work; major and minor adaptations are funded from the same budget; this could mean that excessive numbers of minor adaptations could lead to fewer major works being carried out and vice versa.
- The panel was worried about the increasing number of referrals and the lack of capacity to handle these. This supported the need for improved prioritisation to ensure that those most in need were receiving services first.

[Full report pages 29-30](#)

### Recommendation I: Minor adaptations survey

Design, use and monitor a simple customer satisfaction survey for minor adaptations.

#### The Evidence:

- During the investigation the panel were able to view customer survey results for the COT team survey and also for the Adaptations team survey for major adaptations. However, it was confirmed that a customer satisfaction survey is not issued for minor adaptations.
- The panel felt that it would be useful to receive periodic feedback from people who had received minor adaptations in their homes.

[Full report pages 31-33](#)

**The full report includes further detail of each recommendation and the related evidence, incorporating 'Panel Views' sections for ease of reading.**

## Suggested improvements

The following suggestions were considered to be outside the scope of this investigation but to be important improvements that could be made to RMBC services:

1.	<b>Performance Monitoring</b> - Consider splitting the ROKI indicator between minor aids/ minor adaptations and major adaptations?
2.	<b>Assess savings</b> - Test out how much money is saved across adult services by the adaptations service and request an increase in the current budget for this service.



Report produced by:



[rebecca.morrisonps@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.morrisonps@gmail.com)

07931 471131

On behalf of:



**Rotherham Federation**

Springwell Gardens Community Centre, Eastwood View, Rotherham, S65 1NG  
[info@rotherfed.org](mailto:info@rotherfed.org) Tel: 01709 368515

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RAG rating: Each action should be given a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating according to the following definitions.

Progress/indicator RAG status	
	Work is significantly behind schedule and no progress has been made, and/or Progress has been made but the timescale has not been achieved
	Progress is being made, progress is good and the action is likely to be achieved within timescale. Or the action has been completed but evidence is required to demonstrate achievement
	The action has been completed and there is a record of evidence to support its completion.

Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
<b>Recommendation A: Team resources to meet demand</b> Ensure that the Adaptations team resources are up to full complement to meet the needs of the work demand received.	Daniel Peck	<p>The service has a full complement of staff. In addition, service capacity has expanded with the appointment of 2 Adaptations Application Officers, 1 Project Manager and 1 Technical Officer. These posts are additional temporary posts initially, to meet current service demand. All staff have completed a 3-month induction programme and are completing their duties as required. This has helped to progress jobs forward to the Contractors.</p> <p>A dedicated Aids and Adaptations Manager post, to provide additional and more focussed management oversight of the service, has also</p>	March 2022		Team resources increased - 4 additional staff recruited.  Dedicated team manager appointed.

Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
		been created and the postholder started in the role on 27 <sup>th</sup> June 22.			
<b>Recommendation B1: Re-draft the policy</b> Redraft the policy document as soon as possible. This should include drafting a summary version for the public, working with tenant representatives. The policy should include clear guidance on the re-housing of tenants to previously adapted homes.	Daniel Peck Sandra Tolley	<p>The current policy has been in operation since January 2015.</p> <p>To support the policy refresh, benchmarking has been undertaken by the Business Development Unit in Housing Services. The service is also liaising with other local authority colleagues through the Northern Adaptations Group. Best practice is also being considered via free Disabled Facilities Grant Champions seminars.</p> <p>The policy refresh has unfortunately been delayed due to the impact of Covid, with the principal focus being on sustaining service delivery, and also due to reduced management capacity in the service. These issues have been addressed and the service is mapping out the policy refresh plan, to ensure timely completion but also to ensure that a robust review is undertaken.</p> <p>The revised Policy is currently being worked on and will be presented to Cabinet by March 2023.</p>	Original target date June 2022  (Revised to March 23)		Service benchmarking undertaken and discussions taking place within the sector to identify best practice.



Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
<b>Recommendation B2: Five-year rule</b> Consider reviewing the policy to state that tenants must stay in their home for five years following adaptations unless there are unforeseen circumstances, in line with the policy for private households.	Daniel Peck	This action will be addressed as part of the Policy refresh as per Action B1 and timeline above. However, in the meantime, all-rehousing options are fully discussed before adaptations are agreed to Council homes and any subsequent adaptations are undertaken to ensure that the adapted home meets household requirements, preventing the need for rehousing in the short to medium term. Clearly, circumstances do change, and the Council will respond to that to ensure that we support people to continue to live safe, well and independently and make best use of our available housing stock.	March 23		Rehousing options are explored before adaptations are undertaken, to ensure that the adapted home is sustainable for the households needs.
<b>Recommendation C: Improve publicity of the service</b> Develop a strategy for targeted publicity of the service which is accessible for hard to reach and vulnerable people, including those people without access to the internet.	Daniel Peck	A review of the website content is being undertaken following benchmarking with other authorities.  Key contacts have been strengthened within the Rotherham hospital and with Adult Social Care to ensure all staff have a pathway to discuss individuals' adaptation needs.  Customers can access the service via searching, for example, Adaptations on the Council website or by calling 01709 336009 or 01709 382121.  Customers accessing the service are provided with information about the	Date tbc		Improved pathways with key services.

Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
		service and how requests are progressed.			
<b>Recommendation D: Publicise service expectations</b> Develop a leaflet to hand to tenants when using the adaptations service that provides a summary of what they can expect from the service. This should also include the expectations on the tenant in receipt of the service.	Daniel Peck	<p>To improve communication the new Application Officers, undertake the initial contact with the customer and maintain communication. This involves signposting to relevant support where necessary, checking affordability and advising of the adaptations process including expectations and timescales.</p> <p>A customer satisfaction survey is completed at the end of the process.</p> <p>The policy refresh has unfortunately been delayed due to the impact of Covid, with the principal focus being on sustaining service delivery, and also due to reduced management capacity in the service. Following benchmarking and good practice review, and the completion of the Policy review, a new service leaflet will be produced to align with the new Policy.</p>	November 2021  (Revised date of December 2022)		We have undertaken benchmarking on good practice, consulting with customers

Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
<b>Recommendation E: Written communication on the process</b> Ensure that written communication on the process is sent out once a referral has been made.	Daniel Peck	Verbal and written communication is now in place, with the Adaptations Application Officers maintaining regular contact with the customer.  Letter will be auto generated as part of the new ICT which is expected to be in place by March 2023.  Customers can now contact the Adaptations Team directly via 01709 382121.  Direct telephone numbers are provided to customers by the Adaptations Application Officers and the Contract partner once works has been ordered.	March 2022		Completed  Customers understand the process following a referral.  There is ongoing communication with Adaptations Application Officers during the process.
<b>Recommendation F: Regular contact intervals</b> Agree, implement, and monitor regular contact intervals to keep customers up to date with progress and works scheduling. A key contact approach would help with this.	Daniel Peck	The new Adaptation Application Officers undertake the initial contact with the customer, signposting to relevant support where necessary, checking affordability and advising of the adaptations process including expectations and timescales.  A customer satisfaction survey is completed at the end of the process.	March 2022		Completed  Implementation of key contact approach via recruitment of Application Officers is in place with regular contact intervals for customers.

Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
<b>Recommendation G: Budget for urgent work</b> Make sure that some of the budget each year is kept aside for urgent work.	Daniel Peck	Weekly meetings are held with delivery partners. Urgent jobs are discussed and prioritised accordingly.  Budgets are monitored monthly, to ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible.	March 22		Completed  Able to be responsive to urgent work requests.
<b>Recommendation H: Balance spending on minor and major adaptations</b> Assess the spending each year between minor and major adaptations to allow for separate budgetary monitoring for each.	Daniel Peck	An annual budget is set against forecasted demand. No delays in minor works to ensure short term needs are met  Budgets are monitored monthly, to ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible.	March 2022		Completed  Improved financial management and this ensures no delays are incurred
<b>Recommendation I: Minor adaptations survey</b> Design, use and monitor a simple customer satisfaction survey for minor adaptations.	Daniel Peck	Major and Minor adaptations customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken by the Contract partners at the end of the installation, to ensure the customer is satisfied with the work carried out.  In house quality assurance processes are also in place to random sample satisfaction levels by spot checking 5% on a monthly basis.	March 2022		Quality assurance in place to affirm satisfaction levels with minor adaptations

#### User guidance:

- The first section of this form guides users through considering major areas where emissions are likely to occur. If emissions are impacted in a way not covered by these categories, please identify this at the bottom of the section
- The first section should be filled as such:
  - **Impact:** identify, in relation to each area, whether the decision of the proposal does the following *reduces emissions*, *increases emissions*, or has *no impact on emissions*. If it is uncertain this section can be labelled *impact unknown*
  - If **no impact on emissions** is identified: no further detail is needed for this area but can be added if relevant (e.g. if efforts have been made to mitigate emissions in this area.)
  - **Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions:** two sections deal respectively with emissions from the Council (including those of contractors), and emissions across Rotherham as a whole. In both sections please explain any factors that are likely to reduce or increase emissions. If **impact unknown** has been selected, then identify the area of uncertainty and outline known variables that may affect impacts.
  - In most cases there is no need to quantify the emission impact of an area after outlining the factors that may reduce or increase emissions. In some cases, however, this may be desirable if factors can be reduced to a small number of known variables (e.g. if an emission impact is attached to a known or estimated quantity of fuel consumed).
  - **Describe any measures to mitigate emission impact:** regardless of the emission impact, in many cases steps should be taken in order to reduce mitigate all emissions associated with each area as far as possible; these steps can be outlined here (For example: if a proposal is likely to increase emissions but practices or materials have been adopted in order to reduce this overall impact, this would be described here).
  - **Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out:** in this section outline any steps taken to monitor emission levels, or steps taken to monitor the factors that are expected to increase or reduce emission levels (for example, if waste or transport levels are being monitored this would be described here)
- A **summary paragraph** outlining the likely overall impacts of the proposal/decision on emissions should then be completed - this is not required if the proposal/decision has no impact across all areas.
- The supporting information section should be filled as followed:
  - Author/completing officer
  - **Research, data, or information** may refer to datasets, background documents, literature, consultations, or other data-gathering exercise. These should also be added to the **supporting documents** section of the cabinet report

- 
- Carbon Impact Assessments are to be appended to the associated cabinet reports
  - Prior to publishing reports, Carbon Impact Assessments should be sent to [climate@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:climate@rotherham.gov.uk) for feedback
  - Report authors may also use the above email address to direct any further queries or to access further support regarding completing the assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	No Impact	The points in the action plan will have no impact on emissions from non-domestic buildings.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Emissions from transport?	Reduces emissions	By increasing the digital options for self-serve and marketing for customer access, the service will reduce the number of visits required to complete paperwork with applicants, thus reducing emissions from travelling, as well as reducing printing requirements.	Impact will be to reduce emission, but the visits will not have a significant impact upon emissions across Rotherham as a whole.		Monitoring of total mileage from service to ascertain if this is reduced, and in turn emissions have been reduced
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Reduces waste	<p>The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” philosophy.</li> </ul> <p>Temporary ramps and straight stairlifts are recycled following removal</p>	Impact will be to reduce emissions	N/A	N/A

Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Reduces emissions	<p>The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.)</li> </ul> <p>All new shower installations are energy efficient.</p>	Impact will reduce emissions	N/A	N/A
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Reduces emissions	<p>The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” philosophy.</li> <li>Be a good neighbour, minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.), improve green areas (e.g. biodiversity, visual attractiveness etc.).</li> </ul>	Impact will reduce emissions	N/A	N/A

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce carbon footprint – be aware of main impacts on carbon emissions including the indirect carbon used in manufacturing processes and the direct impact of operations and logistics</li> </ul>			
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	No Impact	The points in the action plan will have no impact on emissions from non-domestic buildings.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

In order to ascertain the level of which these actions will reduce emissions, the service will monitor its mileage once the required changes are implemented. This will allow us to fully understand the impact these developments will have on emissions, and to what extent they will be reduced.

Supporting information:



Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Daniel Peck Adaptations Manager Housing Options Adult care, Housing & public Health
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form, please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	

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Public Report  
Improving Places Select Commission

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Places Select Commission – 19 July 2022

**Report Title**

Tenant Scrutiny Review – Satisfaction with Repairs & Maintenance Service

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

**Report Author(s)**

George Temple, Head of Service; Contracts, Investment & Compliance  
01709 822074 or [george.temple@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:george.temple@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (the Panel), which is facilitated and supported by Rotherham Federation (Rotherfed) has undertaken a review of tenant satisfaction in relation to the repairs and maintenance service provided to Council housing in Rotherham.

The Panel, which forms part of the Council's wider Tenant Engagement Framework, works with the Council to constructively challenge landlord services and standards with the aim of improving performance, value for money and tenant satisfaction.

Following completion of the Tenant Scrutiny Review, the report and recommendations were discussed with the Housing Service and an action plan agreed to address the issues raised.

This report provides the Improving Places Select Commission with a summary of the findings of the review and progress about the completion of the associated action plan.

**Recommendations**

1. That Improving Places Select Commission receive and note the Tenant Scrutiny Panel Report and recommendations, attached at Appendix 1.
2. That Improving Places Select Commission note the progress made to date in delivering the action plan, attached at Appendix 2.

3. That Improving Places Select Commission request a further update report in 12 months' time.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Tenant Scrutiny - R&M Tenant Satisfaction Report  
Appendix 2 Tenant Scrutiny Review Action Plan  
Appendix 3 Emissions Impact Assessment.

### **Background Papers**

None, however, an IPSC workshop 'Housing Repairs and Maintenance', was held on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The outcomes of the workshop were reported to Improving Places Select Commission on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Minute 92 refers.

### **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None.

### **Council Approval Required**

No

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

### **Tenant Scrutiny Review – Satisfaction with Repairs & Maintenance Service**

Tenant Scrutiny Review – Satisfaction with Repairs & Maintenance Service

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel was approached by the Council to undertake a review of tenant satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service. The aim of the review was to understand the issues that impact customer satisfaction and to work with the Council on formulating recommendations to improve tenant satisfaction with the service. The review was undertaken independently of the Council and the repairs and maintenance contract partners, although appropriate support was provided to the Panel throughout the process.
- 1.2 The review was undertaken in the context of the establishment and commencement of new repairs and maintenance contracts with Mears and Engie (now operating as Equans). The Council, working with its contract partners, was keen to ensure that the repairs and maintenance service was delivered to optimum levels of service performance and delivering the highest possible degree of customer satisfaction.
- 1.3 In addition, the Charter for Social Housing White Paper which set out proposals for regulatory changes under 7 key Chapters, of which the following were pertinent to the review:

- Chapter 1 – To be safe in your home (which includes fire safety and gas/electrical safety)
- Chapter 2 – To know how your landlord is performing This proposed that the regulator introduce a set of tenant satisfaction measures, particularly on the things that matter most to tenants, including repairs, complaints handling and safety.
- Chapter 3 – Effective handling of complaints with complaints being handled promptly and fairly.
- Chapter 5 – To have your voice heard by your landlord, ensuring that landlord's listen to their customers views and take notice of them.
- Chapter 6 – To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.

Following the publication of the White Paper, The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill was laid before Parliament on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022. It aims to deliver the proposals set out in the White Paper by introducing measures to give tenants greater powers, improve access to redress and strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's powers. The Bill enshrines key objectives of safety, transparency and accountability to tenants, as articulated in the White Paper and under three main themes reminiscent of the previous Chapters: 'To be safe in your home'; 'To know how your landlord is performing' and 'To be treated fairly and with respect, backed by strong consumer regulation'.

1.4 A Terms of Reference, detailed in Section 3 of Appendix 1, was agreed for the review and a review Panel established, consisting of customer representatives from various Tenant and Resident Associations and a ward member. The Panel was supported by Council officers and staff from Rotherfed.

1.5 The Panel considered a range of information and data, including a 3-month snapshot of customer feedback following completion of repairs, which was analysed and discussed with Council officers, in addition to undertaking an individual telephone survey of 12 members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel. The Panel also revisited the outcomes of a previous tenant scrutiny review of repairs and maintenance, which was provided under the previous contract, undertaken in 2017/18.

## **2. Key Issues**

2.1 The Panel were asked to consider the review undertaken in 2017/18 which identified that the most important influences in terms of customer satisfaction were:

- The repair should be easy to report.
- The repair work should be of a good quality.
- Repair operatives should arrive at the agreed time.
- Repair operatives having to come back, as the repair cannot be completed on the first visit.
- Not having to wait too long between reporting the repair and it being completed.

2.2

The majority (67%) of Panel members surveyed as part of the current review agreed that these issues were still a priority, although there were different opinions as to how they should be ranked in order of importance. Additional comments raised included:

- The importance of communication, where a job is not completed on the first visit, ensuring that customers do not have to keep chasing updates on progress.
- The quality of the service delivered by the Customer Contact Centre should be included.
- Ensuring that customers receive updates when an appointment time changes.
- Customers with disabilities should be prioritised.

2.3

The latest review highlighted that the following reasons tended to influence the degree of satisfaction felt by customers with the service. These resonate with the previous findings:

- The quality and timeliness of communication, from reporting the issue through to resolution.
- The quality and timeliness of the repair.
- Meeting agreed appointment times and providing customers with a choice of appointment times.
- The conduct of staff.
- Resolving the issue and getting it 'right first time'.

2.4

Regarding how customer satisfaction with the service is captured, the Panel reviewed the current text messaging-based survey used by Mears and Engie (Equans). This uses 2 to 3 questions that reflect Housemark questions used to assess customer satisfaction. Previously, tenant satisfaction had been captured by repairs operatives on a handheld device, using standardised questions, at the point the repair was completed. In addition to the sharing of a handheld device not being suitable due to Covid-19, some tenants had been unhappy with this approach and the text-based approach had been introduced at the beginning of the current contract as an alternative. It was noted by the Panel that the Council was currently looking at how a range of survey approaches could be used to capture customer satisfaction and to give tenants a choice in the way they respond, in the future.

2.4.1

In considering the current approach and a snapshot of survey results, the Panel noted that:

- The survey of 12 tenant scrutiny panel members identified that 92% were happy to answer questions by text.
- 75% thought the current questions being used by the contract partners were suitable. However, the Panel felt that questions should also be asked in relation to the appearance and conduct of the repairs

operative; satisfaction with the time taken to complete the repair and the service received from the Customer Contact Centre.

- A snapshot of monthly survey returns, for a four-month period, identified that survey response rates varied between the two contract partners, with Mears at 17-21% and Engie (Equans) 41%.
- The number of survey responses indicating very satisfied or satisfied with the service was consistently above 85%.
- The questions asked at the survey need to be the same for each partner.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 The recommendations arising from the Tenant Scrutiny Review are detailed within the action plan at Appendix 2. These are broken down into nine key proposed actions as follows:

- Appointments - investigate the lack of communication around re-arranging or cancelling appointments, and then look to improve the current system.
- Complaints processes - Provide some further clarity to tenants about how to complain about a repair.
- Customer satisfaction measurement - Find additional ways of measuring tenant satisfaction with the repairs service, rather than relying only on the text service.
- 'Right First Time' measurement - To expand on the ways in which 'Right First Time' is measured.
- Text Questions - Standardise the text survey questions and the scoring method used across both contract partners.
- Response rates - Investigate the reasons for Mears customers being less likely to respond to the text survey than EQUANS customers.
- Customer satisfaction sub-group - Form a further sub-group for the Repairs and Maintenance service that considers quality and tenant satisfaction, including representatives from Rotherham Federation and contract partners.
- Publicity about the learning - Publicise the learning from tenants about improving the repairs and maintenance service.
- Actions required to generally improve staff behaviours from the first point of contact (customer service centre) through to works being completed.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.2 The action plan, associated with this report (see Appendix 2), is consulted at monthly Tenant Scrutiny meetings, which are attended by Rotherham Council Housing Services, Rotherfed, tenant representatives and the repairs and maintenance contract partners, Mears and EQUANS.

4.3 The tenant scrutiny report, and an update on progress made against the actions, was presented at the Housing Involvement Panel on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022. This meeting was attended by Rotherham Council Housing Services,

Rotherfed, tenant representatives and the repairs and maintenance contract partners, Mears and EQUANS.

- 4.4 The action plan (see Appendix 2) is discussed and updated at monthly customer satisfaction sub-group meetings. This sub-group focusses on recommendations made in the tenant scrutiny report. The sub-group meetings have been established as a direct action from the report and are attended by the Contracts, Investment & Compliance Service within Housing Services, Rotherfed and the repairs and maintenance contract partners, Mears and EQUANS.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The Council's Head of Service for Contracts, Investment and Compliance has responsibility for implementing the findings of the review and the associated action plan.
- 5.2 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel receives regular updates on progress against the recommendations and actions.
- 5.3 The Housing Involvement Panel received an update on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022.
- 5.4 Eight of the nine actions included within the Action Plan have now been completed, with one further action at the "in progress" stage. It is expected that following a "You said, We did" publication in the next edition of Home Matters, the Action focused on publicising how the repairs and maintenance service has learned from the findings in the report, and how the service has improved as a consequence of this.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications due to the recommendations in the report. Contract partners currently undertake customer satisfaction surveys at their own cost as part of the repairs and maintenance contract.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 None.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 None, current staffing levels able to meet and complete all actions detailed within the report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 None, no safeguarding concerns raised as part of the report's findings.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 Ensuring that the customer voice is heard is instrumental in how the Council



develops and delivers its services and is of paramount importance. The review supports the continued journey of improvement for the Contracts, Investment and Compliance service in delivering repairs and maintenance to our tenants. The service aims to offer a high quality and accessible service to all customers.

- 10.2 No equality issues were identified as part of the report findings with all Contracts, Investment & Compliance staff having undertaken the mandatory equality and diversity training.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on local, national, and international scales. In recognition of this the Council has aimed to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for Rotherham as a whole to achieve the same position by 2040.
- 11.2 Actions associated with appointments, right first time and text questions can aid the Council and its repairs and maintenance contract partners through fewer wasted visits, fewer journeys to tenants' homes and suppliers, and by continuing to remain paperless where possible.
- 11.3 The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to:
- Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” philosophy.
  - Be a good neighbour, minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.)
  - Improve green areas (e.g. biodiversity, visual attractiveness etc.)
  - Reduce carbon footprint – be aware of main impacts on carbon emissions including the indirect carbon used in manufacturing processes and the direct impact of operations and logistics.
- 11.4 Please see Appendix 3 for the Carbon Impact Assessment (formerly EIA) associated with this report and action plan.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 The Contracts, Investment & Compliance Service will continue to work with Rotherfed, the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and the repairs and maintenance contract partners towards delivering the recommendations in the action plan. Delivery of these recommendations will involve collaboration across relevant council services and with key delivery partners.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 The key risk is the failure to engage with the tenant scrutiny board in Rotherfed and inability to deliver against the recommendations in the action plan. This has been addressed through strong progress detailed within the Action Plan and will be further mitigated through ongoing monitoring,

scrutiny and evaluation of the recommendations by the Improving Places Select Commission and the Contracts, Investment & Compliance Service.

**Accountable Officer(s)**

George Temple, Head of Service; Contracts, Investment & Compliance

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

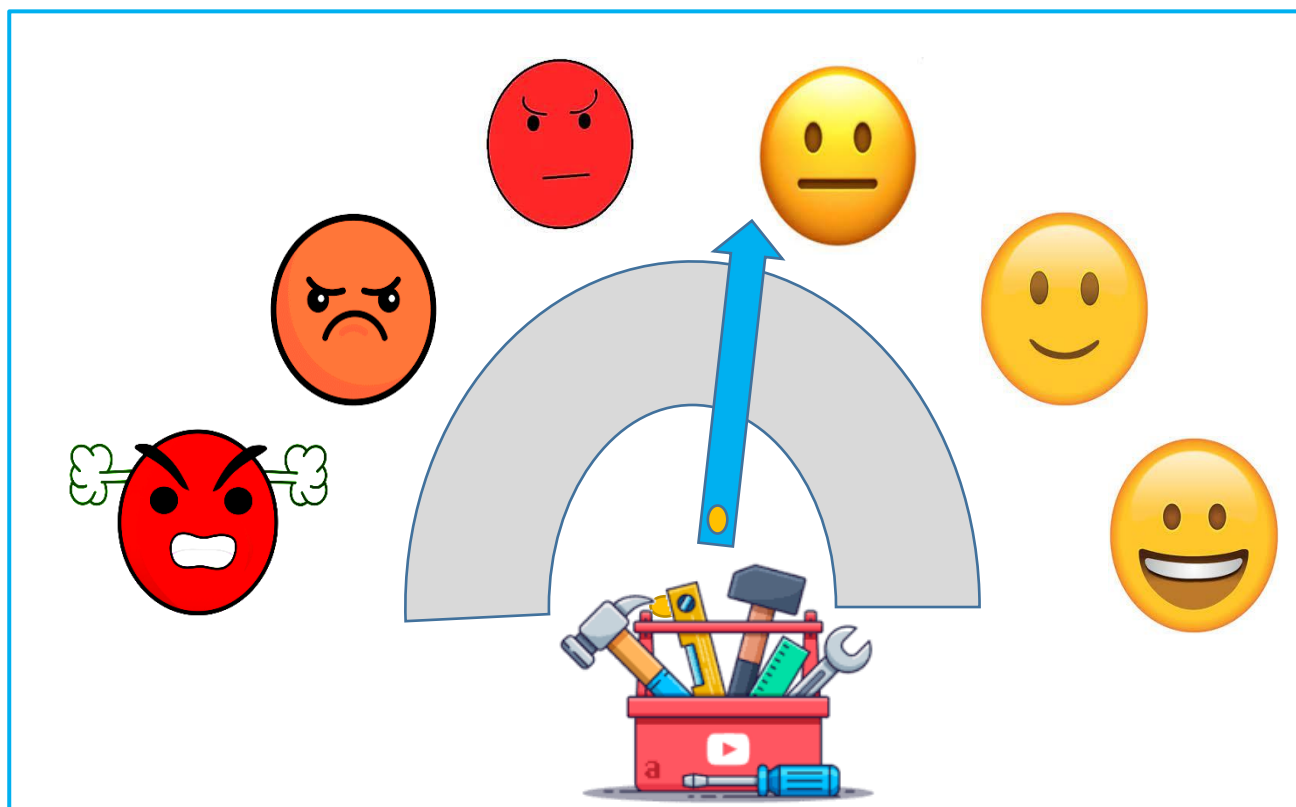
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive		Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	05/07/22
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing - Councillor Brookes	04/07/22

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

## ROTHERHAM FEDERATION TENANT SCRUTINY



### Rapid investigation into improving tenant satisfaction with the RMBC Repairs and Maintenance service



Report June 2021

**Rotherham Federation**



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## 1. Background

Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny was formed in April 2016. Tenant Scrutiny provides an opportunity to build an effective partnership between Rotherham Council's tenants and their landlord in the spirit of co-regulation, resulting in a joint-win for all. The process is used to challenge landlords' services and standards with the aim of improving performance, value for money and tenant satisfaction.

The Tenant Scrutiny panel was approached in March 2021 to offer some support to officers on improving tenant satisfaction with RMBC Repairs and Maintenance services. It was agreed that a 'rapid' investigation would be carried out by the panel, completing the task within three months.

This is the fifth report of the Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny panel. Previous reports have been submitted on the following topics:

1. Engaging Young Tenants in Rotherham (March 2017)
2. Responsive Repairs: Appointments, Communication Process and Customer Journey (February 2018)
3. Process of Dealing with Anti-social behaviour complaints (January 2019)
4. Home Aids and Adaptations for Tenants (November 2020)

### Choice of topic

The Tenant Scrutiny panel was approached in March 2021 by Contract Managers for the Repairs and Maintenance service, to request some assistance with the way in which tenant satisfaction could be measured and then improved. The request was made following:

- the commissioning of a new Contract Manager in April 2020 leading to a review of the Key Performance Indicators for the repairs service.
- the publication of the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020

### Social Housing White Paper November 2020

The White Paper includes seven core themes/chapters. The proposals that are most relevant to repairs are:

*Chapter 1: To be safe in your home* (including fire safety and gas/electrical safety)

**Chapter 2: To know how your landlord is performing** – regulator to introduce a set of tenant satisfaction measures for all landlords to know how their landlord is performing. Satisfaction will be measured on the things that matter most to tenants including *repairs, complaints and safety*.

The draft tenant satisfaction measures include:

- keeping properties in good repair,
- responsive repairs completed right first time,
- tenant satisfaction with landlord's repairs and maintenance service.

*Chapter 3: Effective handling of complaints – complaints dealt with promptly and fairly*

*Chapter 5: To have your voice heard by your landlord - satisfaction that their landlord listens to their views and takes notice of them*

*Chapter 6: To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in – good quality decent homes*

### Key Performance Indicator: 2i Customer Satisfaction

With Chapter 2 in mind, the Council had agreed that customer satisfaction with the Repairs and Maintenance service would be assessed through the use of a text service, with a five-point scale (very satisfied, fairly satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied)

The target for the percentage of customers reporting that they are satisfied or very satisfied was set at:

Year	Target
2020/2021	88%
2021/2022	89%
2022/2023	90%
2023/2024	91%
2024/2025	92%

### Previous Tenant Scrutiny report

An investigation into the Repairs and Maintenance service had been carried out by the Tenant Scrutiny panel in 2017/18. Recommendations had been made to the Council in February 2018 and an action plan had been completed and signed off in February 2020.

The recommendations made from this investigation related to:

- ✓ Accuracy of records in particular vulnerable tenants and current contact details
- ✓ Improvements to online reporting for repairs
- ✓ Improved appointment system
- ✓ Clearer definition of 'emergency repair'
- ✓ Monitoring of repeat visits
- ✓ Multiple ways of receiving customer feedback
- ✓ Means of assessing 'right first time' through visit data

It was agreed that the investigation would be a 'rapid' one limited to three panel meetings. This would allow the panel to move onto other topics swiftly in view of the time lost during the Covid pandemic.

## 2. The panel and officers

The panel was made up of representatives of various Tenant and Resident Associations and Councillors from across Rotherham:

David Ramsden (Chair)	Jo Workman	Winston Cook	Ann Hitchens
Mary Jacques	Wendy Birch	Cllr Kathleen Reeder	Shirley Dingwall
Winnie Billups	Jon Pearson	Mohammed Ramzan	Julie Sharp
Stella Parkin			

Many other tenant representatives took the time to respond to the survey. The panel would like to thank them for their contribution to this investigation.

Officer support was provided by:

Asim Munir, RMBC Tenant Involvement Coordinator  
 Phil Hayes, Rotherham Federation Chief Executive Officer  
 Laura Swift, Rotherham Federation Administrative Officer  
 Kiera Lambert, Rotherham Federation Community Organiser  
 Jane Owen, Rotherham Federation, Volunteer Coordinator  
 Nicola Evans, Rotherham Federation, Volunteer Coordinator  
 Rebecca Morrison Project Solutions

Valuable subject matter expertise was provided by four representatives of the Council:

Andy Lumb	Partnering Manager
Alison Fox	Partnering Manager
Janet Fox	Performance Analyst
Bethany Gould	Business Development Unit

### 3. Terms of Reference

**Aim: To investigate how tenant satisfaction with the Repairs and Maintenance service could be improved.**

#### Objectives:

##### To:

- Carry out a health check of the current Repairs and Maintenance services
- Comment on the current Key Performance Indicator as regards Customer Satisfaction and the targets set for future years
- Advise on the factors leading to tenant satisfaction with the repairs carried out on their homes
- Examine the text services used for feedback by the contract partners
- Consider the ways in which all tenants are made aware of how to make a complaint about the Repairs service if necessary
- Consider how learning from customer satisfaction surveys and complaints is shared with relevant teams to bring about improvements to the service

#### Scope

As the investigation was a 'rapid' review, it was limited to three meetings of the panel (April, May and June 2021). Due to the restricted time, it was agreed that the investigation would NOT include:

- ✗ Talking directly to contractors
- ✗ Conducting a full survey/ consultation with all tenants
- ✗ Carrying out a mystery shopping or similar exercise with tenants
- ✗ Any analysis of financial elements of the service

#### Measures of Success

The panel agreed to measure success of the investigation by ensuring that:

- ✓ The KPI targets are set at a reasonable level of customer satisfaction. The questions and arrangements for receiving customer feedback by both contract partners and the Council are robust
- ✓ Good systems are in place to share learning across Council and contract partners and to develop/improve the Repairs and Maintenance service
- ✓ A transparent and accessible way for tenants to be able to make complaints about the service received during repairs made at their homes is in place



## Benefits

### For tenants:

- An improved Repairs and Maintenance service that meets the satisfaction of most Council tenants, responding to customer feedback and offering access to a transparent complaints service if required

### For the Council:

- Improved performance against the KPI targets and any new indicators set in response to the Social Housing White Paper Chapter 2: To know how your landlord is performing
- Learning points and recommendations that will help officers and contractors to further develop the Repairs and Maintenance service and improve Tenant Satisfaction
- Improved reputation for the Council

## Risks

The panel acknowledged the following risks when embarking on this investigation. That:

- The time limitation may lead to some incomplete lines of enquiry
- The views of the Tenant Scrutiny panel may not fully represent the views of other tenants.
- Contractors may not feel that their voice has been sufficiently heard during this investigation
- The learning and recommendations made as a result of this investigation may lead to more costly services in delivering improved Tenant satisfaction

## 4. Methodology

The panel's rapid investigation was restricted to be conducted over three months; April to June 2021.

The investigation consisted of:

### 4.1 Consideration of background information

Panel members discussed the information contained in the Social Housing White Paper and the previous Tenant Scrutiny investigation into the Repairs and Maintenance service.

### 4.2 Submission of officer information

Due to the time constraints, officers were requested to submit intelligence data on customer satisfaction and complaints relating to repairs, prior to the first panel meeting. Alongside this

data, information was requested on the wording of the contract with Mears and Engie and the way in which they use the text service for monitoring customer satisfaction.

This information, along with the background documents, was used to create a pre-investigation summary for panel members to peruse before the first meeting of the group.

### 4.3 Meetings

Three Tenant Scrutiny meetings took place in April, May and June, which focussed most of the agenda on this topic. Officers attended for part of these meetings and the information submitted was analysed and discussed. Further questions for officers were prepared at each meeting.

### 4.4 Survey of Tenant Scrutiny panel members

A telephone survey was conducted with 12 members of the Tenant Scrutiny panel to find out their views on the Repairs service; in particular concentrating on what are the factors affecting customer satisfaction, ways of assessing customer satisfaction, recent problems experienced with the service, knowledge of how to make a complaint, if necessary, whether performance updates would be useful, and if the current targets for customer satisfaction were reasonable. A copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A and the results can be found at appropriate points in the body of this report.

## 5. Summary of Evidence

### 5.1 Customer Satisfaction surveys

Text surveys have been sent out by contractor partners once the work is completed since April 2020? The panel requested to look at the responses to these surveys for the four months from November 2020 to February 2021. Previously, the council has used a handheld device for immediate customer feedback on completion of the repair. At the time of the Tenant Scrutiny investigation into repairs, this method was found to be quite threatening for some tenants. RMBC is looking to potentially resurrect this service to be used alongside other tenant satisfaction measurement methods.

#### Questions used

Two separate systems have been designed by the contractor partners to measure customer satisfaction. It was agreed at the launch of the text surveys that the questions would reflect the Housemark question used to assess customer satisfaction.

#### MEARS

1. Overall I was satisfied with the service I received from Mears; and
2. Mears made it easy to handle my issue.

*Scores 1-10 where 1 is very dissatisfied and 10 is very satisfied*

3. Housemark Question - Overall how satisfied are you with the repairs service you received on this occasion?

#### *Follow-up*

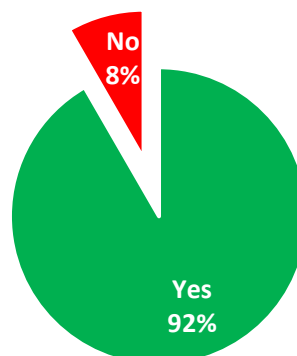
Any score of 1- 4 triggers an email alert which is logged on the IT system. Contact is made with the customer to discuss /address any issues. Three attempts are made to contact the

#### ENGIE

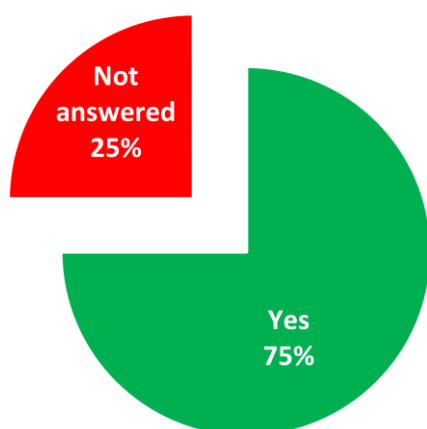
1. On a scale of 1 (very satisfied) and 5 (very dissatisfied): Overall how satisfied are you with the repairs service you received on this occasion?
2. What comments would you like to make in relation to your previous response?

## Survey of tenant scrutiny panel members

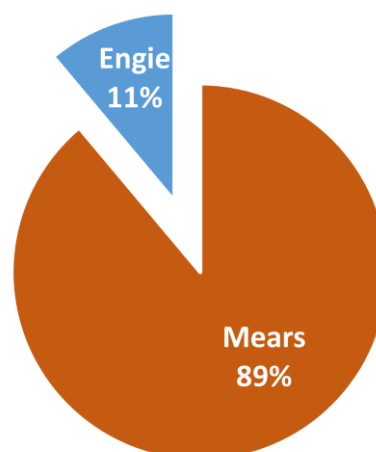
Are you happy answering questions by text service?



a) Do you think these questions are suitable?



b) Do you prefer the Mears or Engie questions?



#### General Comments:

- ? The questions need to be the same for both contractors x 5
- ? Checks are also needed on the treatment by the Call Centre x 2
- ? It is important to ask how the issue was handled x 2
- ? Need to be asked soon after the repair so fresh in my mind
- ? A scale of 1-10 is much better than 1-5 (x 2)

#### Suggestions for other questions:

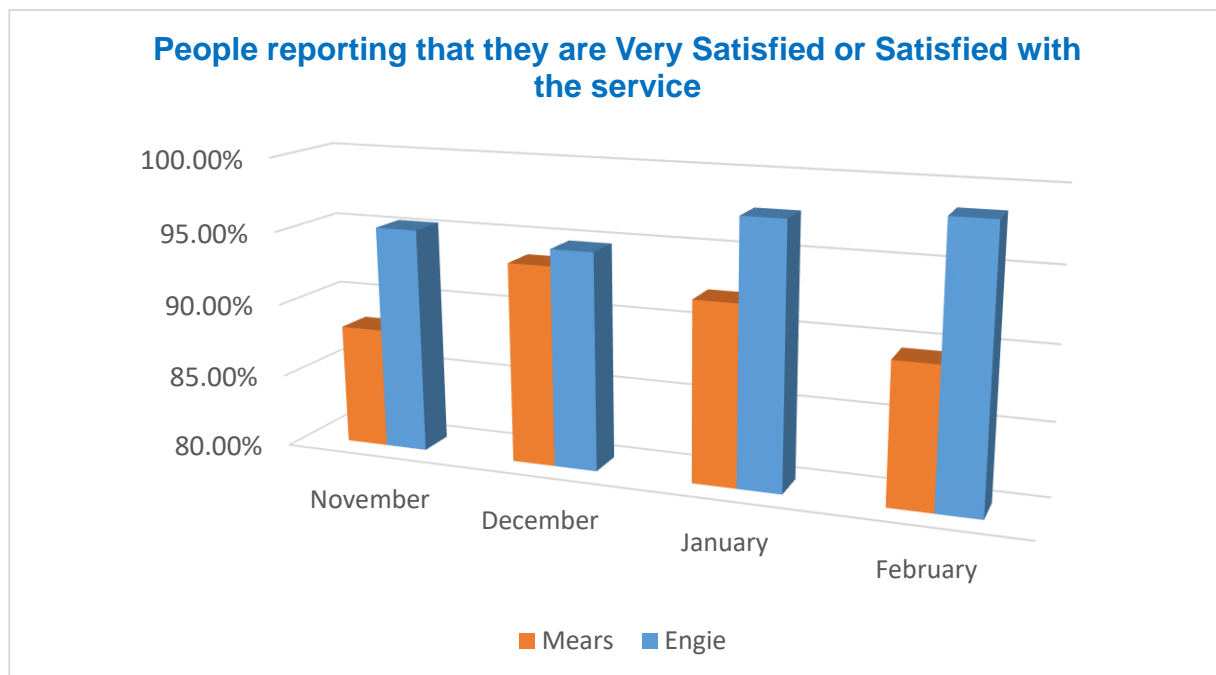
- ? How tidy was the operative?
- ? How pleasant was the operative?
- ? How was the service from the Call Centre?
- ? If happy with the time taken?

### Return Rates

From the data received for the previous four months, it was evident that there were fewer survey responses from Mears than Engie. This was explored further and it was found that the response rates were:

MEARS	ENGIE
Total responses 439	Total responses 769
Monthly survey response rate	Monthly survey response rate
17-21%	41%

### Satisfaction rates



The number of people reporting that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the Repairs and Maintenance service was high, being consistently above 85% of responses (2020/21 target 89%). However, the satisfaction rate for Mears' customers seemed to be consistently 5-15% lower than for Engie customers. It was not clear whether this was due to a poorer service being delivered or due to other factors such as the lower response rate, demographic/ resilience/ outlook of people living in those areas.

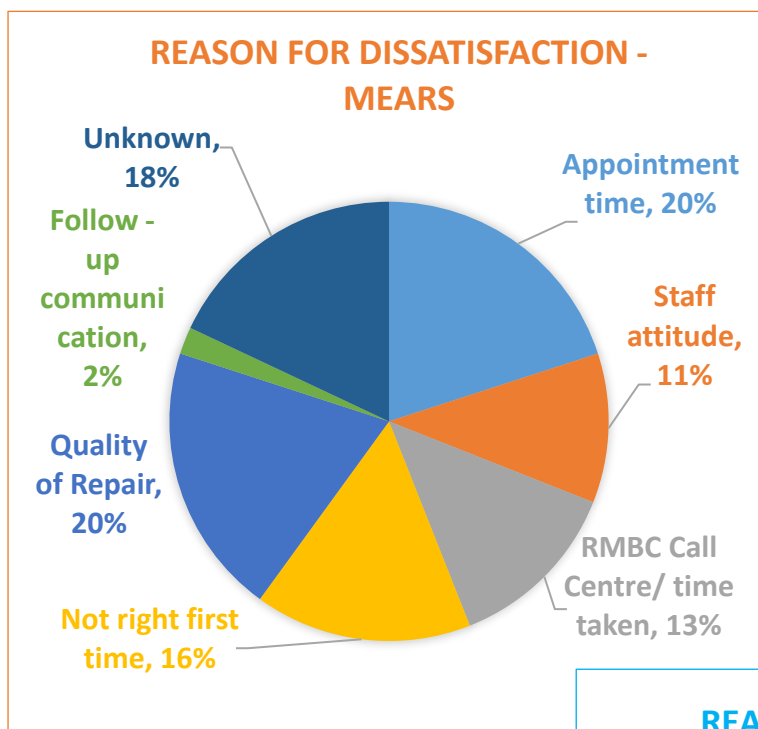
### Dissatisfaction rates

The table below shows the survey scores showing either being neutral, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Repairs and Maintenance service:

Contract Provider	Month			
	November 2020	December 2020	January 2021	February 2021
<b>Mears</b>	11.8%	6.4%	7.8%	10.5%
<b>Engie</b>	7.5%	4.8%	3.5%	2%

### Reasons for dissatisfaction

The following charts break down the reasons for people to be dissatisfied with the Repairs and Maintenance service received by each of the contract partners:



Compared to Engie, more Mears customers reported:

- problems with the repair not being right first time (16% higher than Engie)
- poor staff attitude (4% higher than Engie)

Compared to Mears, more Engie customers reported:

- Follow-up communication being unsatisfactory (8% higher than Mears)
- Problems with the RMBC call centre and the time taken for their repair to be arranged (7% higher than Mears)



Comments made:



*Appointment Time*

- Waited in all morning and the operative never arrived, even though the phone message said that he was on his way
- Received a text to say you would be there in 20 mins – you never turned up and didn't text to say why
- Waited in all morning and turned up at 2 p.m.
- Waited all day when they said they would be there at 11:30am
- Turned up an hour late and I had left my father's house
- Turned up early morning when I requested afternoon
- Only let know the day before that they were visiting – had to cancel as I was working
- Didn't turn up at agreed time twice and then turned up when I wasn't in

*Staff attitude*



- Found him somewhat rude
- Never told me what the issue was or if he'd fixed it
- Dirtied my carpets
- Didn't wear a mask



*RMBC call centre/ time taken*

- Wrong trades sent out to two of the jobs
- Only had option of morning or all day – I wanted afternoon
- Wasn't given an appointment time
- Told my repair would be next day and then waited a week
- Had to wait eight days for my shower repairing
- Poor office staff answering the phone
- Too long to get this repair completed (three months of re-scheduling)

### *Quality*



- Needs replacing not patching up
- Bodged job
- Incomplete job
- Only left one key for the door
- Only fixed part of roof and ignored the guttering that is leaking
- The repair caused more damage to the door and looks a mess
- They tried to fix something and broke something else
- Doesn't feel secure
- Never solved
- Didn't stay long enough to check it was working
- Materials not good enough



### *Not right first time*

- Outside light now constantly on – sensor not working
- Toilet started leaking again
- Have to order more parts which means I need to ring again to order
- Not completed first time and need to come back to complete it
- Thought they were installing the fans, but just came to take photos and measure up
- Said they would have to pass the job on to someone else

### *Follow-up communication*



- Further repairs needed and there's been a lack of communication from RMBC
- Annoyed that they have sent a different agency back to the repairs instead of the original contractor – we weren't told this

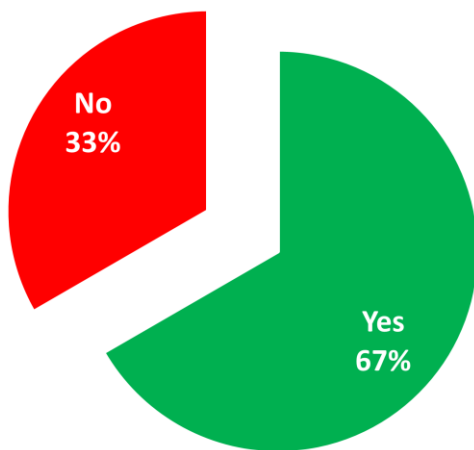


## Survey of tenant scrutiny panel members

**We carried out an investigation into repairs in 2017/18 and at that time the most important things for customer satisfaction with repairs were found to be:**

- A. Easy to report
- B. Good Quality
- C. Operatives arrive at agreed time
- D. Operatives having to come back (not completed first time)
- E. Not having long to wait between reporting the repair and it being completed

**a) Do you agree with this priority list?**



**b) Do you think that it is in the wrong order/ should include something else?**

67% agreed with the priority list as it was.

Suggestions received for changes were:

- Make them all equally important
- Wait time should be higher up / at the top of the list x 2
- Good quality should be at the top x 2
- Communication when a job has not been completed should be included. The tenant shouldn't need to keep chasing.
- The quality of the service received by the call centre should be included
- Updates when the appointment time is changed are really important
- People with disabilities should be prioritised

**PANEL VIEWS:**

- It was surprising that the response rate on the text survey for Mears customers was so much lower (20%) than Engie customers. It was not clear whether this was due to the demographics or other factors.
- It was agreed that the text survey questions would be more meaningful if they were standardised across both contract partners. This would help with being able to compare data across the two companies.
- Up to five questions followed by comments boxes was thought to be an acceptable length for the text survey.
- The Tenant Scrutiny members survey suggested that other questions could be asked about tidiness, pleasantness, Call Centre service and time taken to complete the repair.
- Panel members also thought that the scoring methods required consistency; with a range of 0 to 10 being most useful.
- The panel was surprised by the number of comments received about appointment times not being kept, particularly about the lack of communication to let them know that things had changed. This was also highlighted in the survey of tenant scrutiny panel members. It was felt that further investigation was needed to assess the significance of this issue in terms of customer satisfaction.

**Recommendations****Response rates**

- Investigate the reasons for Mears customers being less likely to respond to the text survey than Engie customers

**Text Questions**

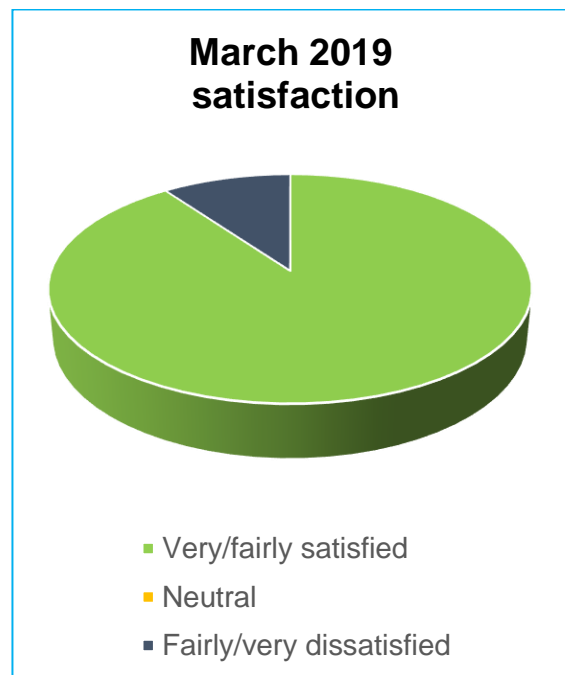
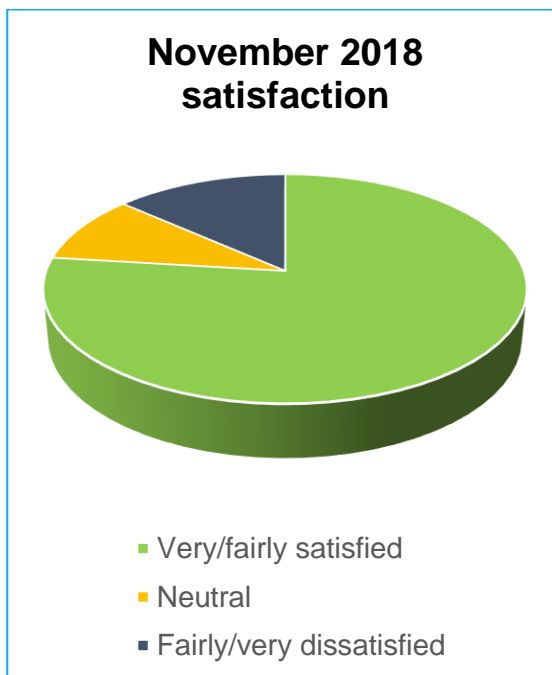
- Standardise the text survey questions and the scoring method used across both contract partners.

**Appointments**

- Investigate further the significance of the lack of communication around re-arranging or cancelling appointments, and then look to improve the current system.

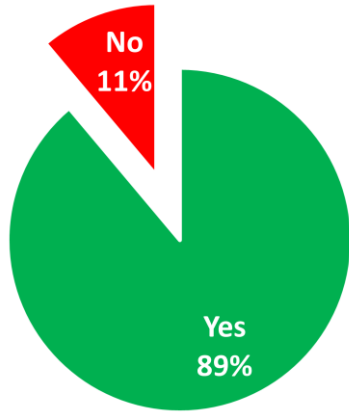
## 5.2 Mystery Shopping

Previously, the Council has conducted mystery shopping exercises to check with 10 people who have recently used the repairs service provided by Mears. The most recent exercises were completed in November 2018 and March 2019 (another was commenced in June 2019, but was only conducted with two people. It has therefore been excluded from this report).



## Survey of tenant scrutiny panel members

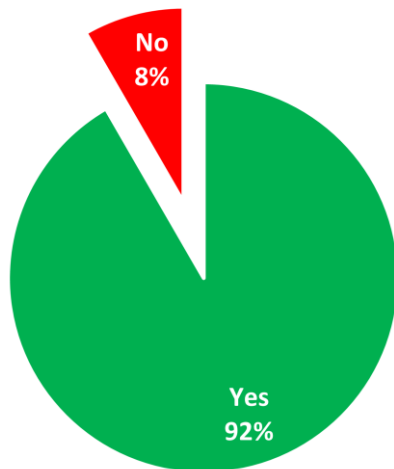
**Would you be happy completing a survey when the contractor is at your home?**



### Comments:

- 💬 Would only want to speak to the operative if the service was good – would feel intimidated otherwise
- 💬 Tenants should be given the option of how to feed back
- 💬 Sometimes don't know how good the repair is till the operative has left
- 💬 Less pressure and easier by text
- 💬 Would not want to give feedback to operative direct and I don't think many other tenants would either.








**Happy for mystery shopping to contact you?**



### Comments:

- 💬 Would need to be quick and simple (20 mins max) x 3
- 💬 Need time to be arranged in advance x 2
- 💬 Would prefer to be able to ring them at my convenience
- 💬 Doorstep interview could be an option

**PANEL VIEWS:**

-  It is disappointing that Mystery Shopping has not taken place since March 2019, when it provides an opportunity to check with people who may not wish to give direct feedback to the contractor.
-  Panel members felt that it was important to contact the other 60-80% of people who do not complete the text surveys after having a repair carried out at their home. Any future Mystery Shopping should concentrate on this cohort of people.
-  The panel also thought that Mystery Shopping should take place at least quarterly each year and should contact approximately 10 – 20 people each time. This would complement the other methods of receiving customer satisfaction data which are received directly by the contract partners and not from neutral sources i.e. other tenants.
-  The comments from the Tenant Scrutiny members survey around time taken and arranging in advance should be borne in mind
-  The panel were also keen to explore using a range of other methods of receiving feedback, such as resurrecting the handheld device used by operatives previously. This was reinforced by the comments received from the Tenant Scrutiny members survey.
-  It was also felt that some feedback should be requested approximately three weeks after a repair being completed, to assess the quality and longevity of the work and the materials.
-  Do we need to overcome the issue of people not answering the phone to mystery shoppers etc as they don't recognise the number?

**Recommendations****Customer satisfaction measurement**

- Find additional ways of measuring tenant satisfaction with the repairs service, rather than relying only on the text service.

## 5.3 Complaints

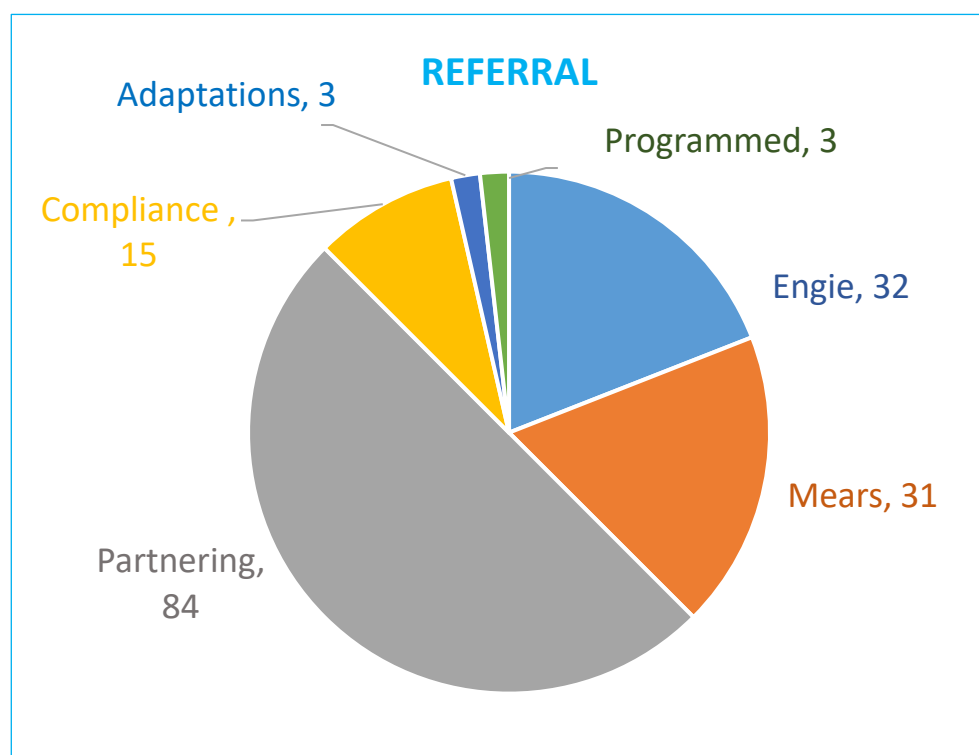
### How to complain

There are five ways in which tenants know how to complain about a service currently:

1. Information on how to make a complaint is on the RMBC website,
2. Some people will 'phone the Customer Service Centre and after reporting any shortfall in service, they will be asked if they wish to make a formal complaint,
3. The complainant will 'phone the Contract Partner direct if they know who has completed the work,
4. Others may email the service directly if they have a contact email address, or
5. Complaints can be referred on to the service by Councillors and MPs:

Number of complaints by different sources (April 2020 to March 2021)		
Council	Contract Partner	Councillor/MP *
107	63	33

\* Councillor and MP complaints are not counted in the following section as they are reported separately and data was not available to break down the reason for these complaints

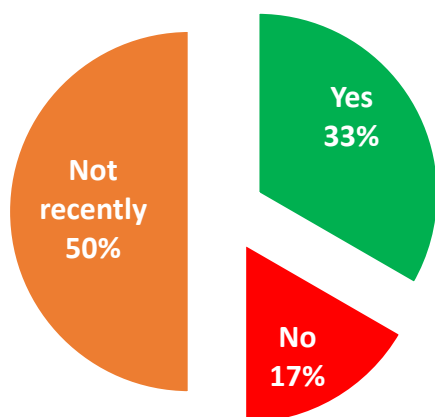


RMBC are endeavouring to be paper-free during repairs visits and do not leave any paperwork behind such as leaflets for customers.

## Survey of tenant scrutiny panel members

**Have you ever experienced problems with getting a repair done to your home?  
What caused the problem?**

**Experienced repair problems?**

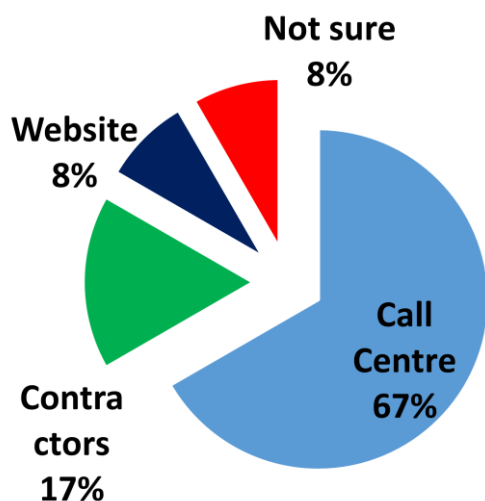


**Comments:**

- Call Centre rings for ages
- Call Centre didn't understand the importance
- Online service said it wouldn't be fixed for a month – had to raise as an emergency
- Operatives didn't turn up
- Someone locked in bathroom - weren't going to treat this as an emergency
- Had to wait three weeks for my toilet to be repaired
- Need a timeframe for jobs to be completed once they have been started
- Had to chase a job for them to complete it when waiting for parts x 2
- Made to feel like a second-class citizen previously

**If you were going to complain about a repair, who would you contact?**

**Who would you contact?**



**Comments:**

- Call Centre wait is too long and staff can be surly/ rude x 3
- Need to know clear process of what happens to my complaint

## PANEL VIEWS:

- ✍ The panel was disappointed that no information is handed out to tenants on completion of work on what they should do if they have any concerns or wish to make a complaint about the repair. The panel agreed that leaving a card saying *'Your repair is now completed; Hope it's to your satisfaction, but if you wish to complain please contact.....'* would be useful for RMBC customers.
- ✍ It was agreed that if RMBC was not keen on introducing a leaflet or card on how to raise a concern/make a complaint, this could perhaps be done by text message instead. Alternatively it could be added to the message on the handheld device message if re-introduced.
- ✍ The panel felt that the information on *'how to complain'* only being available on the website restricted many people who are not comfortable with using the internet, have disabilities preventing them from reading from a screen, or people who do not have access to the internet/ suitable device.
- ✍ It was also thought that many people are reluctant to use the telephone to complain when waiting times are generally long.
- ✍ It was interesting to see how many people complained directly to the contractor (38%) even though they did not have their contact details.

## Recommendations

### Complaints processes

- Provide some further clarity to tenants about how to complain about a repair.

## Arrangement with Contract Partner

The Repairs and Maintenance contract states:

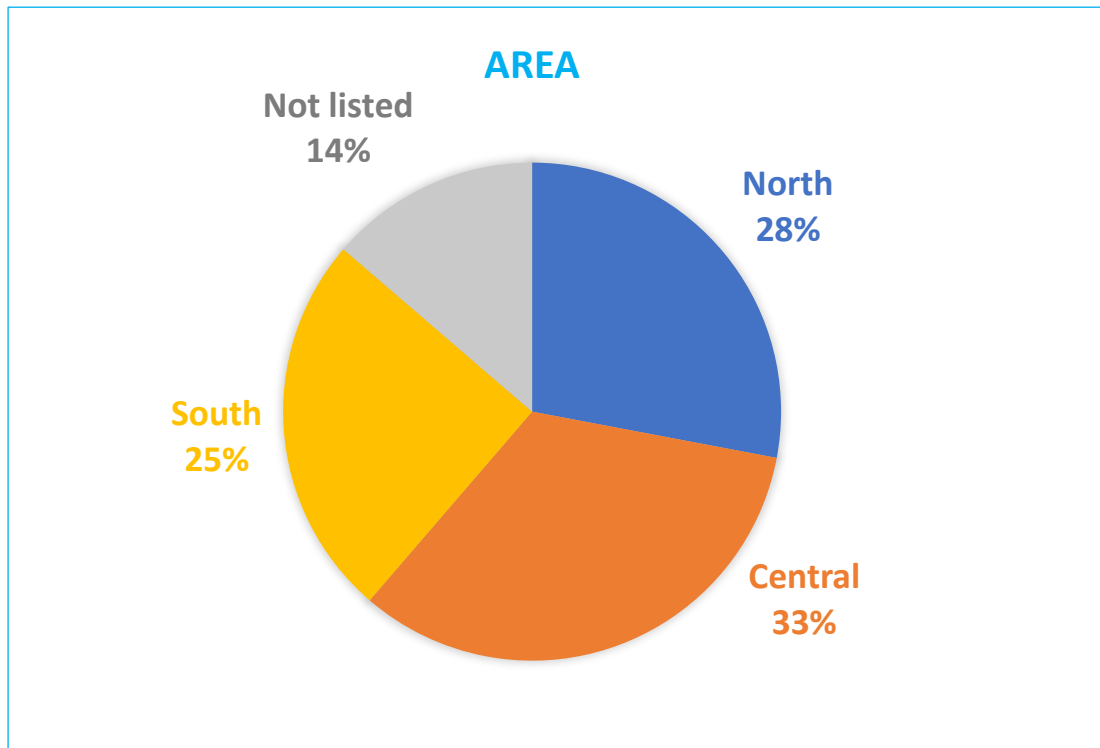
*'If a customer complains directly to the Service Provider, they will be answered in full by a nominated Officer who must investigate and respond in accordance with the Client's Service Standards and Complaints Policy and timelines. It is imperative that the Service Provider holds this at the heart of their service. The Service Provider must make the Client aware of any complaints received directly to them, to be transparent and help improve the service.'*

However, no audits are carried out on the number of complaints received by contractors and whether these have all been reported through to RMBC.

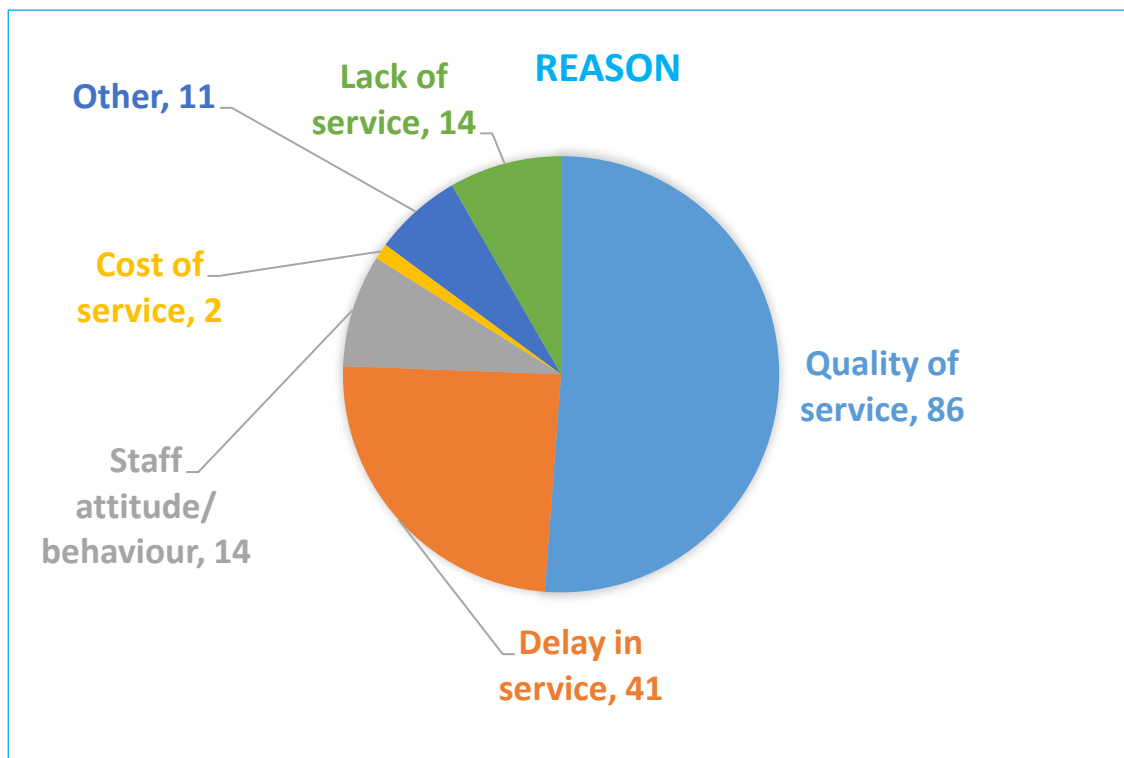


### Number of Complaints

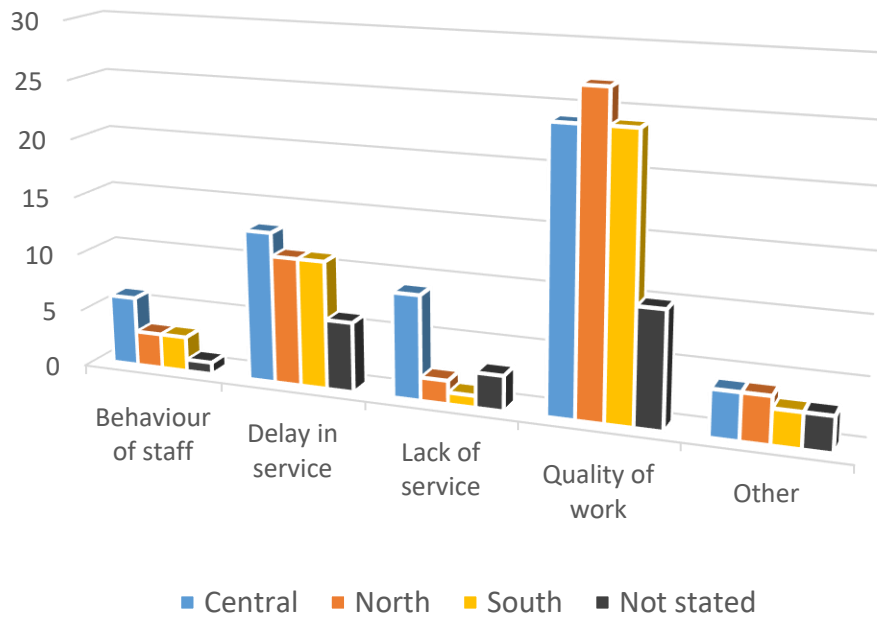
The total number of complaints received by the Council and Contract Partners between April 2020 and March 2021 about repairs and maintenance was 168.



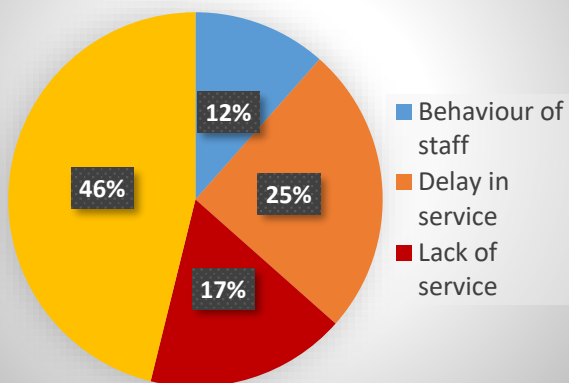
### Type of Complaints



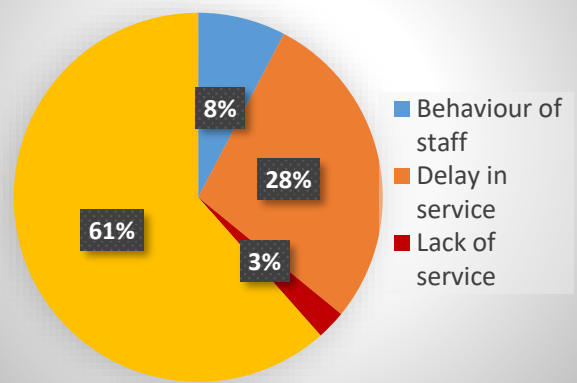
Type of Complaint by area



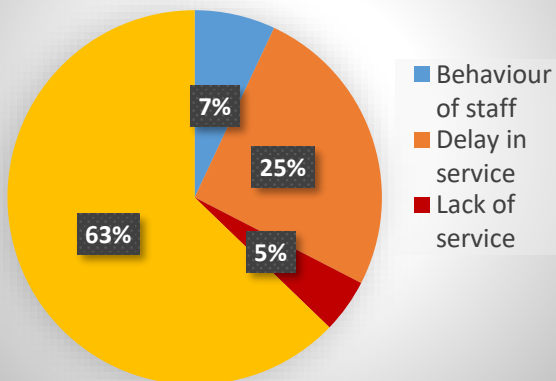
Central (55 complaints)



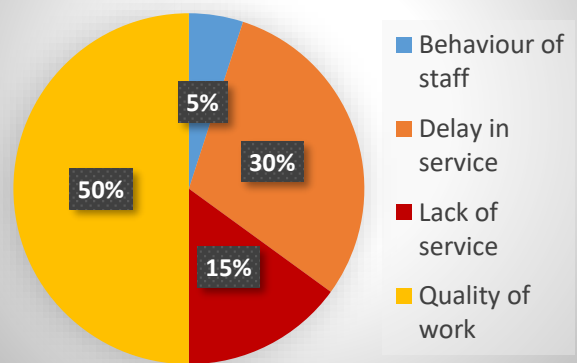
South (42 complaints)



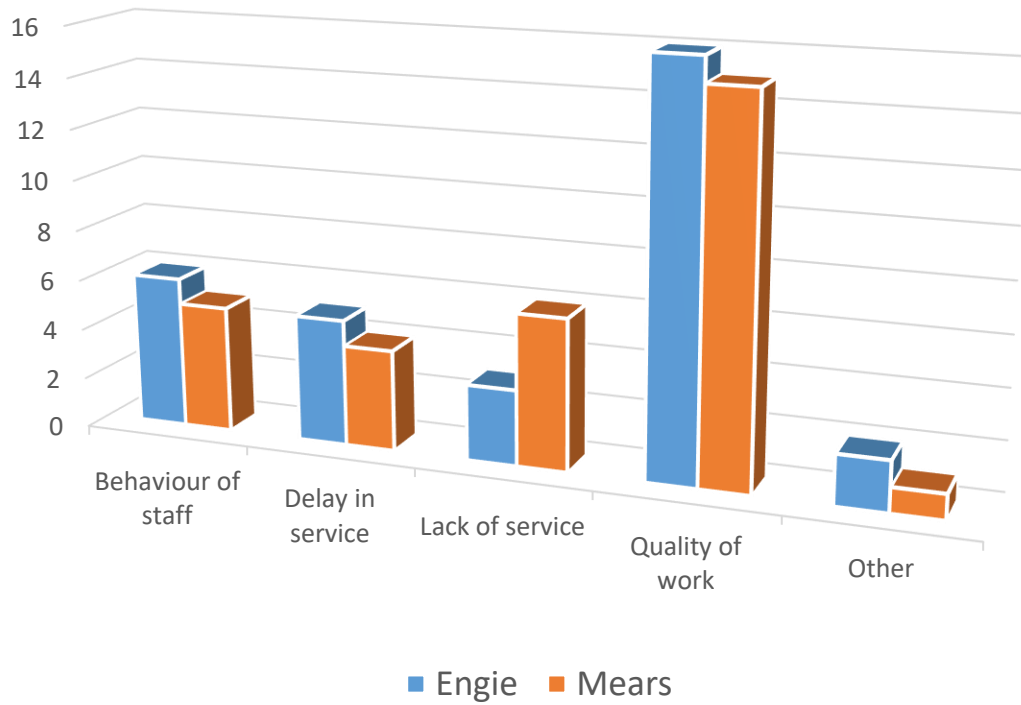
North (47 complaints)



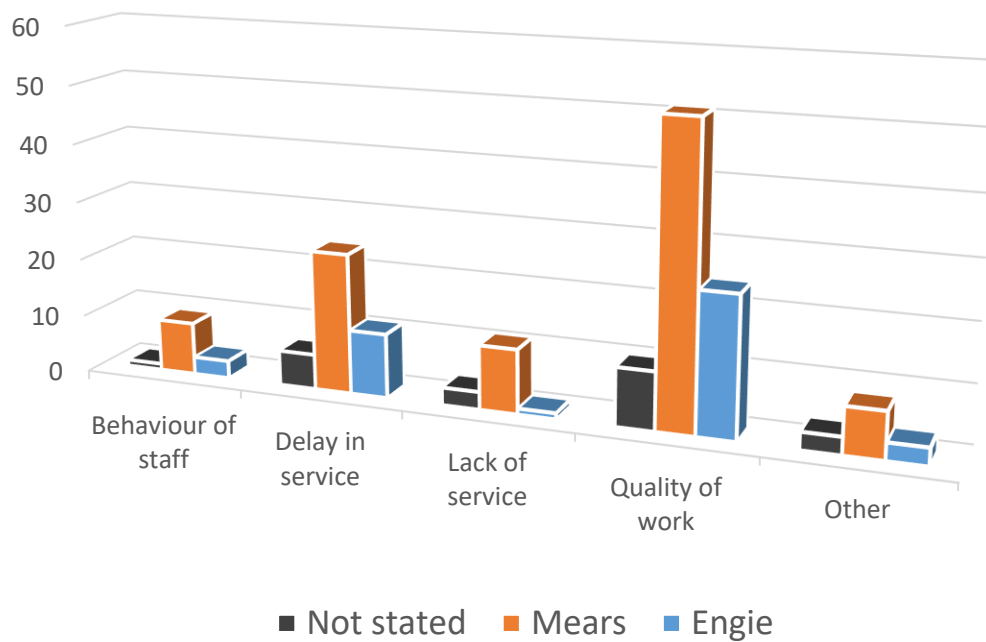
Area not stated (24 complaints)

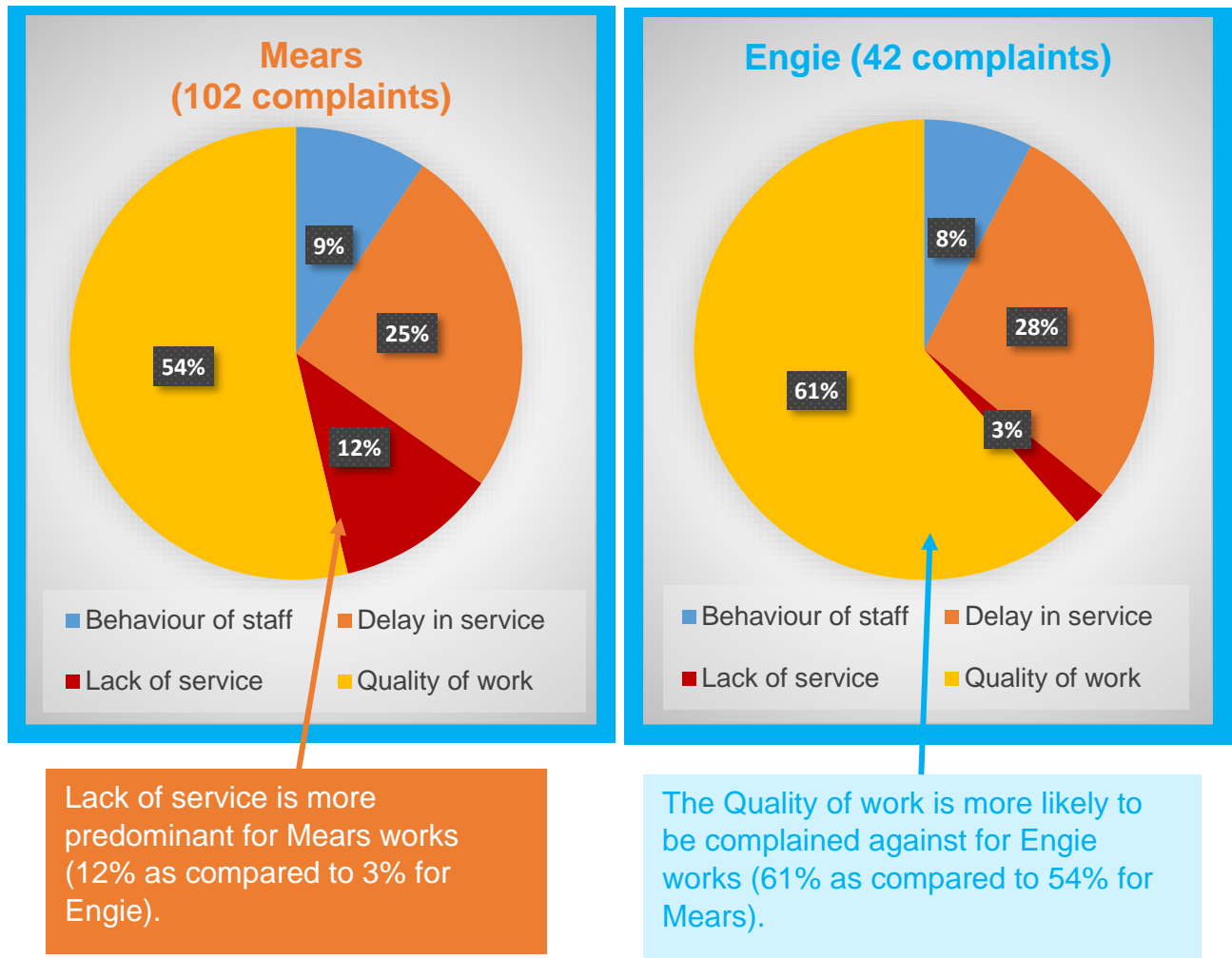


**Type of Complaint *received* directly by contractor (number)**



**Type of Complaint by contractor  
(total number of *all* complaints)**



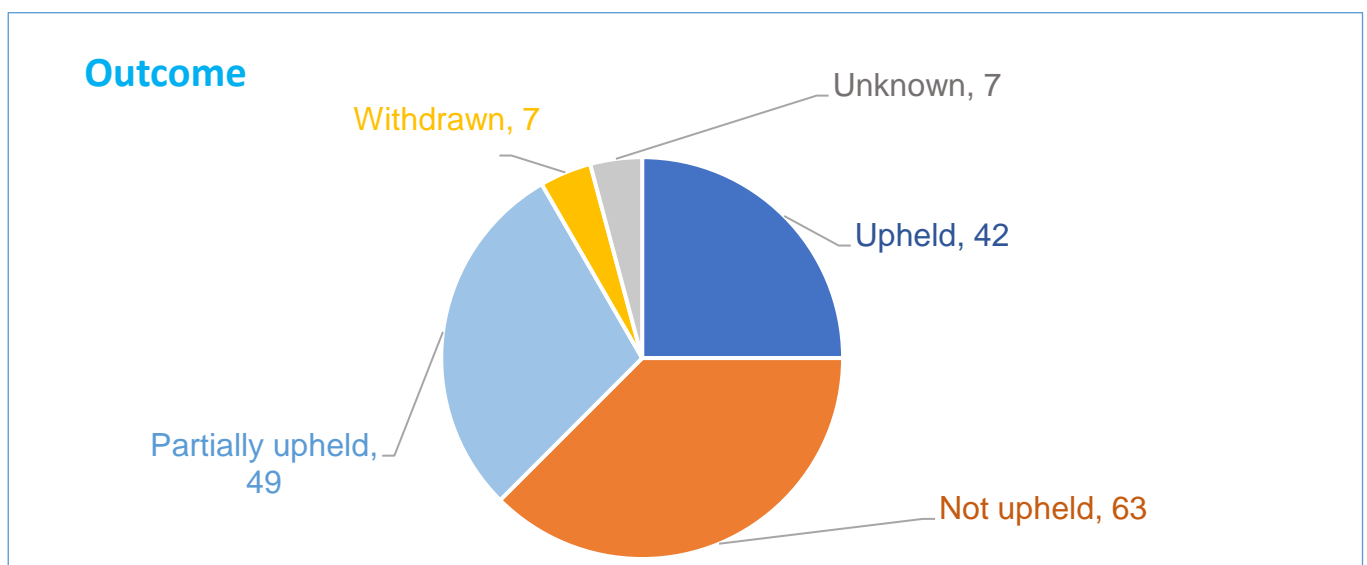


### Outcome of Complaints

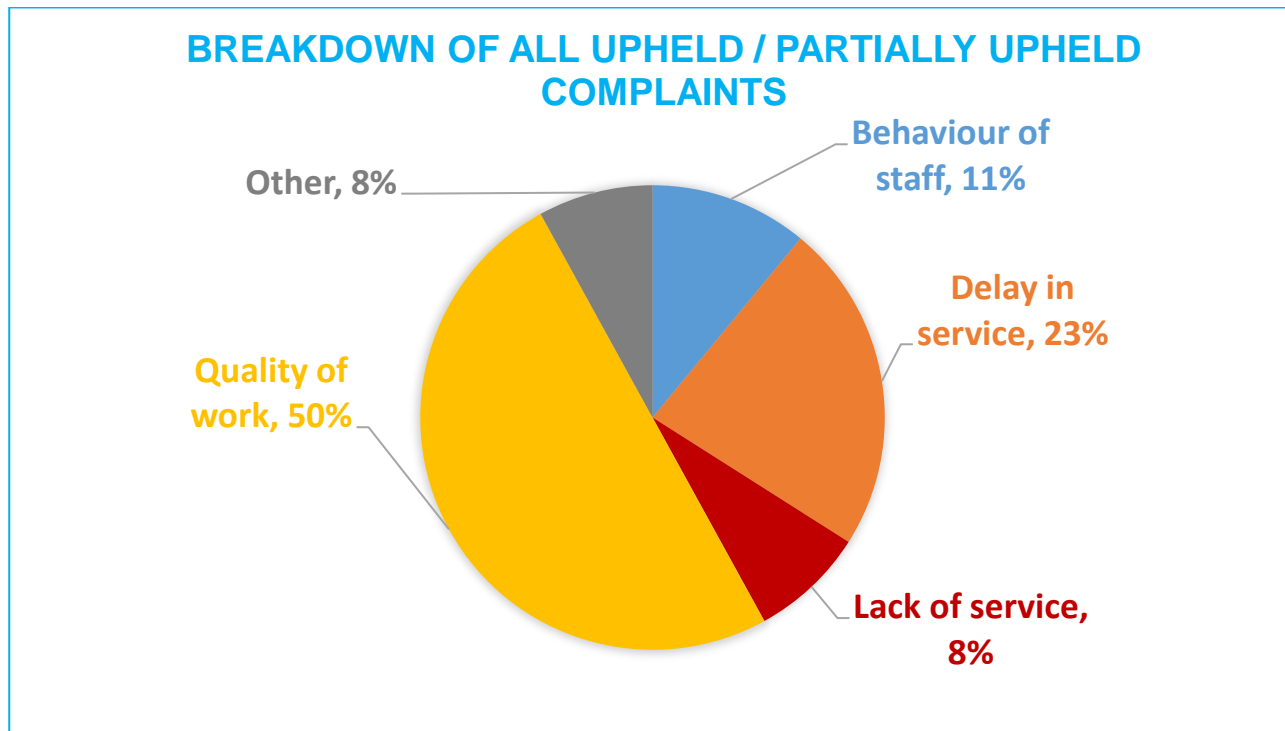
Once each complaint has been investigated, it is decided whether it is justified and is classed as:

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld

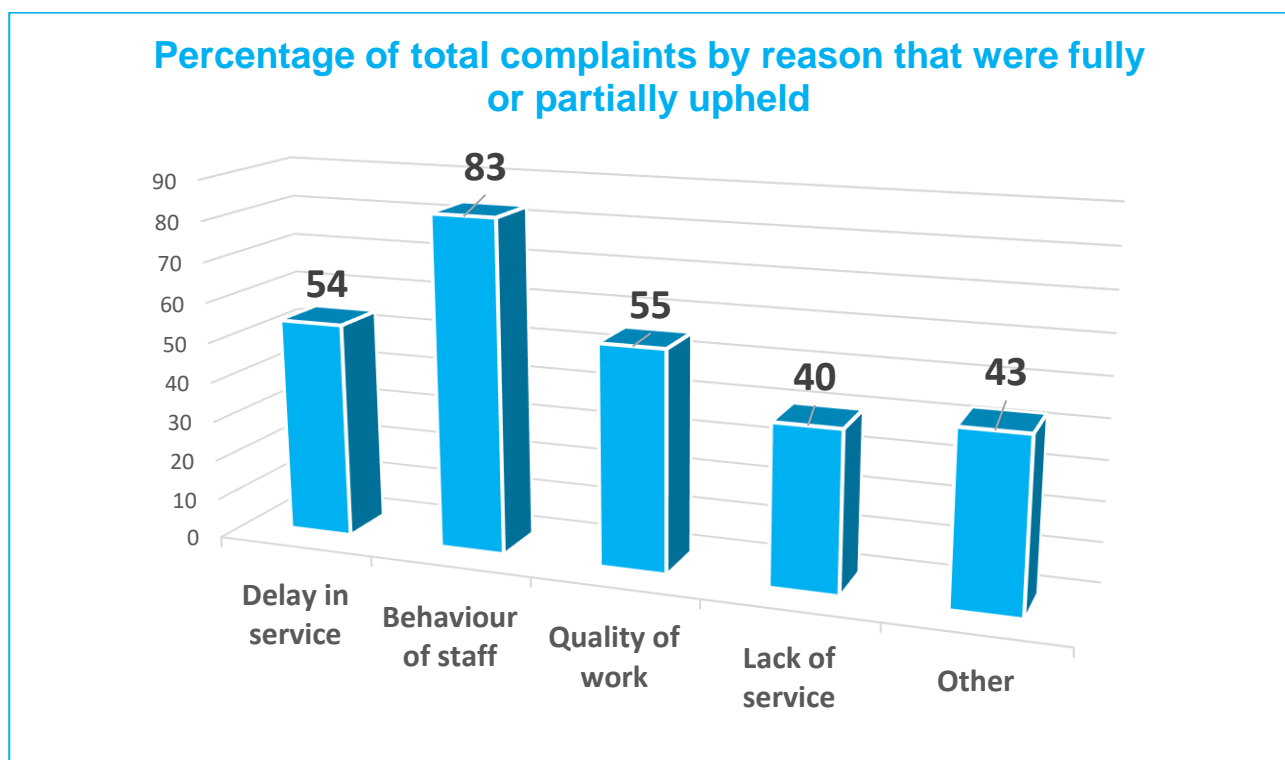
In some situations, the complaint may also be withdrawn by the tenant.



Between April 2020 and March 2021, 91 (54%) of the 168 complaints were either upheld or partially upheld.



The majority (50%) of upheld complaints concerned the 'Quality of Work' carried out. However, when compared to the quantity of complaints made in each category, the highest percentage (83%) of upheld complaints related to the 'Behaviour of Staff':



- Told would have to wait 2.5 weeks for hot water and heating to be reinstated
- Not kept informed of likely delay due to asbestos
- Delay repairing stairlift left the tenant stranded upstairs



### Delays

- Appointment changed – wrong date given in letter
- Didn't phone when they said they would
- Operatives attended earlier than arranged
- Time brought forward without notifying tenant
- Attendance unannounced



### Appointments

## EXAMPLES OF UPHELD COMPLAINTS

- Workmen didn't turn up to complete the repair
- Failure to attend on two appointments to repair heating/ hot water
- Twice missed appointment with no contact



### Lack of Service

- Spoken to in a rude manner when on phone reporting damage
- Nails and packaging left on site after works
- Litter dropped in neighbour's garden
- Failure to wear mask and shoe defenders
- Damage to carpets






### Behaviour of Staff

- Work to guttering left tenant with no TV reception
- New step is wobbly
- Loss of frozen/ chilled foods following electrical works
- Damage to wallpaper while replacing cistern
- Door doesn't fit
- Scaffolding erected in wrong place leading to a delay in starting the work
- Repeated failure to fix leak causing ceiling to collapse



### Quality

## PANEL VIEWS:

-  The panel agreed that many of the 'quality' issue raised by customers concerning their repairs were referring to the work not being 'right first time'. They were surprised that this is not included as a separate category for complaints, although appreciated that this is a separate KPI that is measured through other means.
-  Panel members would like to see 'right first time' included in feedback for customer satisfaction. This could perhaps be obtained through a mystery shopping exercise approximately three weeks after completion of the repair.
-  There was some concern that the largest number of upheld/ partially upheld complaints related to staff behaviour. The panel was keen for this to be explored further and to check whether the staff they were unhappy with were contractor staff or RMBC staff e.g. call centre staff. This needs deeper investigation and analysis. There is a need to focus on reducing the number of complaints about staff behaviours.

## Recommendations

### 'Right First Time' measurement

- To expand on the ways in which 'Right First Time' is measured.

### Staff behaviours

- Further investigate the incidence of complaints about staff behaviours and provide a strategy and tools to reduce the number of complaints received.

## 5.4 Learning from Feedback

Data from complaints and from customer surveys are forwarded to the contract managers for RMBC. They will then consider the responses and follow-up as necessary or contact the tenant directly for further exploration. Any lessons to be learned are noted and shared if thought appropriate, but this is not on a structured basis.

There is a Core Group that meets to discuss the whole of the Repairs and Maintenance service on a monthly basis. Any risks, operational issues, safeguarding concerns etc. are discussed at the Core Group. There are also Sub-groups feeding into the Core group, but none of this specifically leads on customer satisfaction.

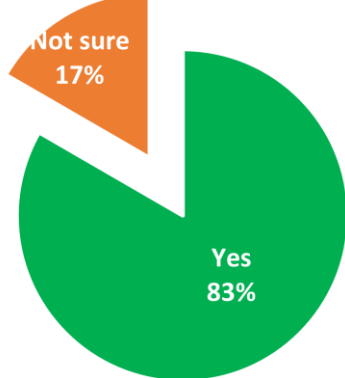


### Survey of tenant scrutiny panel members

Rotherham Council are expecting 89% of tenants to be satisfied or very satisfied with their repairs in 2021/2022. By 2024/25 they would like satisfaction to have increased to 92%

Do you think this is a reasonable target?

**Satisfaction target reasonable?**



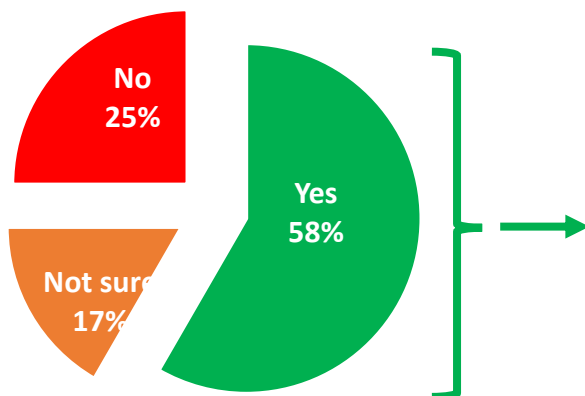
#### Comments:

- 💬 100% would be better but might not be achievable x 3
- 💬 Anything above 90% is good
- 💬 Ongoing improvements by the contractors is good. They are heading in the right direction to achieve this
- 💬 High targets will improve contractor services

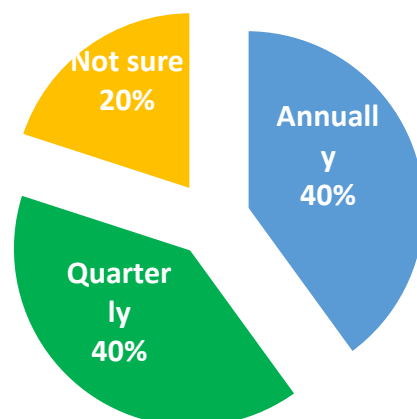
Would you like to receive regular updates on how the repairs service is performing?

If yes, how would you like to receive this e.g. newsletters, annual reports, leaflets?

**Want to receive updates?**






**How often?**



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**PANEL VIEWS:**

-  It came to light that there is no working group that considers the feedback coming from any complaints and survey information relating to the Repairs and Maintenance service which could discuss how to improve tenant satisfaction.
  -  The panel was of the view that, to focus on tenant satisfaction with the service, a group consisting of representatives of the Council, Rotherham Federation and contact partners would be useful. This group could report to the Core Group (Council Assistant Directors, Rotherham Federation Chief Officer and senior managers for the contract partners)
  -  Panel members felt that it would be useful to share the learning from customers concerning the service and publicise the actions taken by the Council. This would lead to more confidence in the Council's Repairs and Maintenance service amongst tenants. The survey suggested that this should be done either quarterly or annually.
- 

**Recommendations****Customer satisfaction sub-group**

- Form a further sub-group for the Repairs and Maintenance service that considers quality and tenant satisfaction, including representatives from Rotherham Federation and contract partners.

**Publicity about the learning**

- Publicise the learning from tenants about improving the repairs and maintenance service.

## 6. Recommendations

### Recommendations (in order of priority):

Priority ranking	Recommendation	Page Number
<b>A</b>	<b>Appointments</b> Investigate further the significance of the lack of communication around re-arranging or cancelling appointments, and then look to improve the current system.	15
<b>B</b>	<b>Complaints processes</b> Provide some further clarity to tenants about how to complain about a repair.	21
<b>C</b>	<b>Customer satisfaction measurement</b> Find additional ways of measuring tenant satisfaction with the repairs service, rather than relying only on the text service.	18
<b>D</b>	<b>'Right First Time' measurement</b> To expand on the ways in which 'Right First Time' is measured.	28
<b>E</b>	<b>Text Questions</b> Standardise the text survey questions and the scoring method used across both contract partners.	15
<b>F</b>	<b>Response rates</b> Investigate the reasons for Mears customers being less likely to respond to the text survey than Engie customers.	15
<b>G</b>	<b>Customer satisfaction sub-group</b> Form a further sub-group for the Repairs and Maintenance service that considers quality and tenant satisfaction, including representatives from Rotherham Federation and contract partners.	31
<b>H</b>	<b>Publicity about the learning</b> Publicise the learning from tenants about improving the repairs and maintenance service.	31
<b>I</b>	<b>Staff behaviours</b> Further investigate the incidence of complaints about staff behaviours and provide a strategy and tools to reduce the number of complaints received.	28

## 7. Appendices

### A – Survey questions for Tenant Scrutiny panel members

The Rotherham Federation Tenant Scrutiny panel is currently undertaking a short investigation into how tenant satisfaction is measured for repairs carried out by the Council's contractors – Engie and Mears.

As some members of the Tenant Scrutiny panel are struggling to join the online meetings, we wondered if you would be happy to share your views by completing the following questions and returning this to the Rotherham Federation offices.

It would be appreciated if you could return this before **2 May 2021**

**1. We carried out an investigation into repairs in 2017/18 and at that time the most important things for customer satisfaction with repairs were found to be:**

- A. Easy to report
- B. Good Quality
- C. Operatives arrive at agreed time
- D. Operatives having to come back (not completed first time)
- E. Not having long to wait between reporting the repair and it being completed

**Do you agree with this priority list?**

**Do you think that it is in the wrong order/ should include something else?**

Answer/ Comments:

**2. Tenant satisfaction with repairs is being tested by the contractor sending a text out following completion of a repair. The wording for each contractor differs slightly:**

**Mears ask three questions:**

- ? Overall, I was satisfied with the service I received from Mears (scale of 1 to 10);
- ? Mears made it easy to handle my issue (score 1-10), and
- ? Overall, how satisfied are you with the repairs service you received on this occasion?

**Engie ask two questions:**

- ? On a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) and 5 (very satisfied): Overall how satisfied are you with the repairs service you received on this occasion?
- ? What comments would you like to make in relation to your previous response?

**Do you think that these questions are suitable? Do you prefer the Mears or Engie questions?**

Answer/ Comments:

**If you had just had a repair completed, would you be happy to answer these questions by text service? Would you prefer another method e.g. written survey or completing a survey while the contractor is there?**

Answer/ Comments:

3. If you didn't respond to a survey about the repair you'd had done, how would you feel if someone else such as a mystery shopper got in touch with you to ask questions about satisfaction with the repair?

Answer/ Comments:

4. Have you ever experienced problems with getting a repair done to your home? What caused the problem? How long ago was the repair completed?

Answer/ Comments:

5. If you were going to complain about a repair, who would you contact?

Answer/ Comments:

6. Would you like to receive regular updates on how the repairs service is performing?  
If yes, how would you like to receive this e.g. newsletters, annual reports, leaflets?

Answer/ Comments:

**7. Rotherham Council are expecting 89% of tenants to be satisfied or very satisfied with their repairs in 2021/2022. By 2024/25 they would like satisfaction to have increased to 92%**

**Do you think this is a reasonable target?**

Answer/ Comments:

Thank you for your time – all information will be useful for the investigation and for making recommendations to the Council repairs teams on how tenant satisfaction can be improved.



**Report produced by:**



[rebecca.morrisonps@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.morrisonps@gmail.com)

07931 471131

**On behalf of:**



**Rotherham Federation**

Springwell Gardens Community Centre, Eastwood View, Rotherham, S65 1NG  
[info@rotherfed.org](mailto:info@rotherfed.org) Tel: 01709 368515

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## **Tenant Scrutiny Review - Customer satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.**

<b>Progress/indicator RAG status</b>	
	Work is significantly behind schedule and no progress has been made, and/or Progress has been made but the timescale has not been achieved
	Progress is being made, progress is good and the action is likely to be achieved within timescale. Or the action has been completed but evidence is required to demonstrate achievement
	The action has been completed and there is a record of evidence to support its completion.

Recommendation	Lead Officers	Actions	Update	Target Date	RAG Status	Outcomes
<p><b><u>Appointments</u></b></p> <p>Investigate further the significance of the lack of communication around re-arranging or cancelling appointments, and then look to improve the current system.</p>	<p>Andrew Lumb (AL) supported by Rachel Severn (RS)</p>	<p>Ensure that up to date customer contact details are held, to aid effective communication.</p>	<p>Considerable progress since June 2021.</p> <p>Customer Contact Centre staff have been trained on the new housing management IT system and periodically briefed on the importance of ensuring that up to date customer information is captured and updated on the system.</p> <p>Discussions are regularly held at the Repairs &amp; Maintenance team meeting with Team Leaders and also discussion with Contract Partners during operational meetings.</p> <p>June 2022 - Track my operative (Mears) and Localz (EQUANS) rolled out to tenants for specific work categories (responsive – Mears, gas servicing – EQUANS) to enable tenants to see when operative is on their way.</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p> <p><b>(Ongoing review)</b></p>		<p>Improved customer satisfaction response rates with the service, demonstrates more correct phone numbers on file.</p> <p>Fewer complaints referencing poor communication as an issue.</p> <p>In May 2022, 95% of customers were satisfied with the repairs service, similar to the average for 2021-22 which was also 95%.</p>

<p><b>Complaints processes</b></p> <p>Provide some further clarity to tenants about how to complain about a repair.</p>	<p>Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn</p>	<p>Ensure that customers know how to make a complaint.</p>	<p>The July 2022 edition of Home Matters tenant's magazine features an article setting out how customers can make a complaint about a repair, or other service issue.</p> <p>Complaint's handling training was carried out in April 2022 for Housing Repairs and Contract Partner staff involved in handling complaints.</p> <p>The Corporate Complaints Team will be meeting periodically with the Acting Asst Director of Housing to review complaints and learning points for the service.</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p>		<p>Increased tenant awareness of how to make a complaint and the various ways to get in touch.</p> <p>Increased knowledge/refresh of how to deal with tenant complaints efficiently and in a customer focused manner. Emphasis on timescales and meeting all deadlines.</p> <p>Regular review of complaints and learning points.</p>
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<p><b>Customer satisfaction measurement</b></p> <p>Find additional ways of measuring tenant satisfaction with the repairs service, rather than relying only on the text service.</p>	<p>Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn</p> <p>Equans – Roy O Connor (RO'C)</p> <p>Mears – Diane Keay (DK)</p>	<p>Identify and implement additional methods of capturing customer satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.</p>	<p>Continuous improvement since June 2021 in terms of number of responses received.</p> <p>The Housing Contracts, Investment and Compliance Service Technical Support Officers have trialled customer satisfaction surveys via telephone. It was agreed that they would target customers who had not responded to text message surveys from the Contract Partners and try to ascertain the reason for this in order to look at better ways of working.</p> <p>The Technical Support Officers phoned 10 Equans customers who have not responded to the customer satisfaction texts – of the 10 that were called, all gave feedback between scores 1-3 which is very high to good.</p> <p>The Technical Support Officers will carry out the same exercise for Mears</p>	<p><b>Complete (and ongoing)</b></p>		<p>Increase in customer satisfaction data returned, any poor scores received, Mears and EQUANS contact tenants by phone call to understand why the score received was poor, to learn from issues in order to drive, service improvement and further increase performance.</p> <p>In May 2022, 95% of customers were satisfied with the repairs service, similar to the average for 2021-22 which was also 95%.</p>
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			and thereafter will endeavour to do this monthly on receipt of repairs completion reports from Contract Partners.			
<b>'Right First Time' measurement</b> To expand on the ways in which 'Right First Time' is measured.	Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn  Equans – Roy O Connor (RO'C)  Mears – Diane Keay (DK)	To continue to strengthen the 'Right First Time' approach to repairs, wherever practically possible.  Continue to measure the proportion of Council housing repairs completed 'Right First Time'	This is a Key Performance Indicator for the service and partners, which has continually improved since June 2021.  Discussions are regularly held with contract partners with regard to achieving the highest possible level of performance, through briefing staff and carrying impressed stock in vehicles.  Unfortunately, some repairs may need a further visit, such as following an emergency board up pending reglazing or where a specific part is required and needs to be ordered.	<b>Complete</b>		Increased awareness of issues that impact completion of repairs 'Right First Time' through the Tenant Scrutiny group.  Monthly monitoring of the KPI.  In May 22, 90.51% of repairs were completed right first time against a target of 87% This has increased from 89.29% in June 2021 (month of review).

<b>Text Questions</b> Standardise the text survey questions and the scoring method used across both contract partners.	Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn  Equans – Roy O Connor (RO'C)  Mears – Diane Keay (DK)	Both contract partners to adopt the same text survey questions.  To analyse questions asked and how this will increase performance to ensure the questions are meaningful.	Mears have now adopted the same scoring system as Equans 1-5 due to the success rate in receiving feedback.  They have also adopted asking 2 key questions to encourage customers to participate rather than multiple questions.  A monthly meeting has been established with the complaints team to identify any areas of discussion/progression and trends/learning.	<b>Complete</b>		The number of customer satisfaction surveys completed has increased from 227 in June 2021, to 438 in April 2022 and 672 in May 2022.  In May 2022, 95% of customers were satisfied with the repairs service, similar to the average for 2021-22 which was also 95%.
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<p><b>Response rates</b></p> <p>Investigate the reasons for Mears customers being less likely to respond to the text survey than Engie customers.</p>	<p>Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn</p> <p>Equans – Roy O'Connor (RO'C)</p> <p>Mears – Diane Keay (DK)</p>	<p>Review how both contract partners approach text surveys, and associated completion rates, to determine any issues preventing completion and adopt a unified approach.</p>	<p>Mears have now adopted the same scoring system as Equans 1-5 due to the success rate in receiving feedback. Response rates have continually improved since June 2021 (see outcomes).</p> <p>They have also adopted asking 2 key questions to encourage customers to participate rather than multiple questions.</p> <p>The previous system used by Mears where the customer had to download a link to the survey has been discontinued as it is thought that this is why response rates were lower.</p> <p>A monthly meeting has been established with the complaints team to identify any areas of discussion/progression and trends/learning.</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p>		<p>The number of customer satisfaction surveys completed has increased from 227 in June 2021 (month of review taking place) to 672 in May 2022.</p> <p>In June 2021, only 84 surveys were returned to Mears, which has increased to 412 in May 2022.</p> <p>In May 2022, 95% of customers were satisfied with the repairs service, similar to the average for 2021-22 which was also 95%.</p>
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<p><b>Customer satisfaction sub-group</b></p> <p>Form a further sub-group for the Repairs and Maintenance service that considers quality and tenant satisfaction, including representatives from Rotherham Federation and contract partners.</p>	<p>Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn</p>	<p>Establish a tenant scrutiny sub-group for Repairs and Maintenance Services</p>	<p>Customer Scrutiny Group established since Jan 2022 and meet monthly, facilitated by Rotherfed and including representation for the Council's Tenant Involvement Team.</p> <p>The issues raised at this group feed into the monthly meeting that has been established with the Corporate Complaints Team to identify any areas of discussion/progression and trends/learning.</p> <p>Monthly meetings ongoing – meetings have minute notes taken for distribution.</p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p>		<p>Collaborative working with tenant representatives encouraged and fully scheduled.</p> <p>This has increased tenant knowledge and understanding of Council and contract partner processes, enabling an arena to allow open and honest feedback to the Council from tenant groups.</p>
<p><b>Publicity about the learning</b></p> <p>Publicise the learning from tenants about improving the repairs and maintenance service.</p>	<p>Andrew Lumb supported by Rachel Severn</p>	<p>Create a 'You said, we did' article to go in Home Matters showing improvements implemented as a consequence of customer satisfaction feedback.</p>	<p>The current Summer edition of Home Matters now features priority information regarding fuel poverty/disrepair/cost of living issues, as well as detail on how to report a complaint.</p> <p>An article will be planned for the next edition of Home Matters due in Autumn 2022.</p>	<p><b>October 22</b></p>		<p>Positive publication of how complaints and customer feedback has resulted in service improvements.</p>

<b>Staff Behaviours</b>	Andrew Lumb (AL) supported by Rachel Severn	<p>Review incidents of complaints about staff behaviours; Council/Mears/Engie; including Customer Contact Centre staff.</p> <p>Identify learning and incorporate into staff briefing/training.</p> <p>Improve customer service delivery and reduce incidents of complaints where staff behaviour/conduct is a factor.</p>	<p>Both contract partners are committed to ensuring customer satisfaction is raised during toolbox talks and this is ongoing to ensure customer focus is key throughout the service.</p> <p>A monthly meeting has been established with the complaints team to identify any areas of discussion/progression and trends/learning.</p> <p>Complaints and customer care training carried out in April 2022 for all CIC/Partner management and Technical Officers.</p> <p>Contact centre manager attended full customer service training, in addition to Contracts, Investment &amp; Compliance (CIC) service staff in April 2022; this has since been relayed to contact centre staff.</p>	Complete (and ongoing)		<p>Improved understanding of the customer journey and how the service the Council provides impacts upon this.</p> <p>Complaints have reduced from 16 received in March 2022 to 11 in May 2022.</p> <p>Staff better equipped to support customers, delivering a better service to all.</p> <p>Training undertaken including actions for resolution, with improved appearance and behaviours.</p> <p>Reiterating to staff the importance of respecting tenants' homes, opinions and needs. All visiting staff now equipped with</p>
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			Follow up session on Customer Care Part 2 to be rolled out to staff.			<p>overshoes and PPE.</p> <p>Ensuring staff have the confidence to fully explain decisions, identify and understand what the outcomes of these complaints are, including why a decision to uphold or not uphold a complaint has been reached in order to provide a thorough and well organised complaint response.</p> <p>Monthly feedback on how the CIC Service can learn from complaints arranged with operational staff, where any patterns identified are swiftly acted upon.</p>
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#### User guidance:

- The first section of this form guides users through considering major areas where emissions are likely to occur. If emissions are impacted in a way not covered by these categories, please identify this at the bottom of the section
- The first section should be filled as such:
  - **Impact:** identify, in relation to each area, whether the decision of the proposal does the following: *reduces emissions*, *increases emissions*, or has *no impact on emissions*. If it is uncertain this section can be labelled *impact unknown*
  - If **no impact on emissions** is identified: no further detail is needed for this area, but can be added if relevant (e.g. if efforts have been made to mitigate emissions in this area.)
  - **Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions:** two sections deal respectively with emissions from the Council (including those of contractors), and emissions across Rotherham as a whole. In both sections please explain any factors that are likely to reduce or increase emissions. If **impact unknown** has been selected, then identify the area of uncertainty and outline known variables that may affect impacts.
  - In most cases there is no need to quantify the emission impact of an area after outlining the factors that may reduce or increase emissions. In some cases, however, this may be desirable if factors can be reduced to a small number of known variables (e.g. if an emission impact is attached to a known or estimated quantity of fuel consumed).
  - **Describe any measures to mitigate emission impact:** regardless of the emission impact, in many cases steps should be taken in order to reduce mitigate all emissions associated with each area as far as possible; these steps can be outlined here (For example: if a proposal is likely to increase emissions but practices or materials have been adopted in order to reduce this overall impact, this would be described here).
  - **Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out:** in this section outline any steps taken to monitor emission levels, or steps taken to monitor the factors that are expected to increase or reduce emission levels (for example, if waste or transport levels are being monitored this would be described here)
- A **summary paragraph** outlining the likely overall impacts of the proposal/decision on emissions should then be completed - this is not required if the proposal/decision has no impact across all areas.
- The supporting information section should be filled as followed:
  - Author/completing officer
  - **Research, data, or information** may refer to datasets, background documents, literature, consultations, or other data-gathering exercise. These should also be added to the **supporting documents** section of the cabinet report

- 
- Carbon Impact Assessments are to be appended to the associated cabinet reports
  - Prior to publishing reports, Carbon Impact Assessments should be sent to [climate@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:climate@rotherham.gov.uk) for feedback
  - Report authors may also use the above email address to direct any further queries or to access further support regarding completing the assessment

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	No impact on emissions	The points in the action plan will have no impact on emissions from non-domestic buildings	N/A	N/A	N/A
Emissions from transport?	Reduces emissions	Emissions will reduce through greater attendance following confirmed appointments being made, as well as increased jobs being completed "right first time", limiting the total no. of journeys required.	As this affects the whole borough, emissions should slightly reduce through reduced traffic.	Both Mears and Equans have trialled electric fleet vehicles.	There are no specific emission impacts identified, although "right first time" is recorded corporately.
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	No impact on emissions	The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to: Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the "reduce, reuse, recycle" philosophy.  By continuing with paperless, text message-based communication will reduce waste paper.	N/A	N/A	The contract partner's zero to landfill target is recorded on a monthly management information KPI submitted to the CIC service and performance and quality team.
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Reduces emissions	Where possible, materials used for repairs and maintenance investment will be of a high thermal quality, renewable (e.g.	Slight reduction to emissions	N/A	EPC information monitored on an annual basis – all homes to achieve

		<p>biomass), or high efficiency standard to ensure that emissions stay as low as possible.</p> <p>The Contract Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to: Minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality, etc.).</p>			EPC C rating by 2035.
Emissions from construction and/or development?	Reduces emissions	<p>The Contractor Partners operate to the minimum Standards Charter to: - Eliminate unnecessary waste by adopting the “reduce, reuse, recycle” philosophy. - Be a good neighbour, minimise negative local impacts (noise, air quality etc.), improve green areas (e.g. biodiversity, visual attractiveness etc.). - Reduce carbon footprint – be aware of main impacts on carbon emissions including the indirect carbon used in manufacturing processes and the direct impact of operations and logistics</p>	Impact will reduce emissions	N/A	N/A

Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None	The points in the action plan will have no impact on emissions from non-domestic buildings	N/A	N/A	N/A
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					
Nil					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

In order to ascertain the level at which these actions will reduce emissions, the service will monitor the relevant KPI, management information (MI) and EPC submissions on an ongoing basis (monthly for KPI/MI, annually for EPC). This will allow us to fully understand the impact these developments will have on emissions, and to what extent they will be reduced.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	George Temple, Head of Service; Contracts, Investment & Compliance/ Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	N/A
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	N/A
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	



Public Report  
Improving Places Select Commission

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Places Select Commission – 19 July 2022

**Report Title**

Revised Work Programme

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**

Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor  
01709 254532 or [katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

To provide an update on the Work Programme of the Improving Places Select Commission.

**Recommendations**

1. That the report and proposed schedule of work be noted.
2. That authority be delegated to the Governance Advisor in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair to make changes to the schedule of work as appropriate between meetings, reporting any changes back to the next meeting for endorsement.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Work Programme – Improving Places Select Commission 2022/23

**Background Papers**

Minutes of Improving Places Select Commission meetings 2021/22

Minutes of Improving Lives Select Commission meetings 2021/22

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings 2021/22

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

**Council Approval Required**

No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

**IPSC – Revised Work Programme 2022/23****1. Background**

- 1.1 The remit of the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) is to undertake scrutiny activity in respect of all matters pertaining to the borough of Rotherham as a place. In broad terms, this remit relates to business and economic development, employment, emergency planning, environment, housing, climate change, leisure, culture and tourism, transport and highways, as well as regulatory services such as trading standards and environmental health. The breadth of functions and services that fall within the Commission's remit is significant.
- 1.2 The way in which the Commission discharges its scrutiny activity is a matter for itself, having regard to the provisions of the Constitution and any direction from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. The IPSC has chosen to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work.
- 1.3 The IPSC has eight scheduled meetings over the course of 2022/23, representing a maximum of 20 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 2.5 hours per meeting. Members therefore must be selective in their choice of items for the work programme. The following key principles of effective scrutiny are considered in determining the work programme:
  - Selection – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
  - Value-added – Items had to have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the council and its partners.
  - Ambition – the Programme does not shy away from scrutinising issues that are of greatest concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.
  - Flexibility – The Work Programme maintains a degree of flexibility as required to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration during the year and to accommodate any further work that falls within the remit of this Commission.
  - Timing – The Programme has been designed to ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, its findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. The Work Programme also helps safeguard against duplication of work undertaken elsewhere.

**2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 Members are required to review their work programme at each meeting during the 2022/23 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of the borough.
- 2.2 An initial draft of a work programme for Improving Places Select Commission is appended to this report.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 Members are recommended to discuss potential areas of scrutiny work to be added to the work programme.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 The work programme is subject to consultation with the Chair and Members of the IPSC. Regular discussions take place with Cabinet Members and officers in respect of the content and timeliness of items set out on the work programme.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The decision to develop a work programme is a matter reserved to the Commission and will be effective immediately after consideration of this report.
- 5.2 The Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Head of Democratic Services) is accountable for the implementation of any decision in respect of the Commission's work programme. The Governance Advisor supporting the Commission is responsible on a day-to-day basis for the Commission's work programme. Members are recommended to delegate authority to the Governance Advisor to make amendments to the programme between meetings.

### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
- 7.2 The authority of the Select Commission to determine its work programme is detailed within the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and Responsibility for Functions parts of the Constitution. The proposal to review the work programme is consistent with those provisions.

### **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

### **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 There are no implications for children and young people or vulnerable adults arising from this report.

### **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 Whilst there are no specific equalities implications arising from this report, equalities and diversity are key considerations when developing and reviewing scrutiny work programmes. One of the key principles of scrutiny is to provide a voice for communities, and the work programme for this Commission has been prepared following feedback from Members representing those communities.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 There are no implications for CO2 emissions or climate change directly arising from this report. Members will have regard to the Climate Emergency when selecting potential items for scrutiny and in developing recommendations.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 The membership of the Commission includes co-opted members from RotherFed who contribute to the development and review of the work programme. Where other matters are being considered for inclusion on the work programme, relevant partners or external organisations are consulted on the proposed activity and its timeliness.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 There are no risks directly arising from this report.

## **14. Accountable Officer(s)**

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*Report Author: Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor  
01709 254532 or [katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk)*

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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Meeting Date	Items for Scrutiny
7 June 2022 (Reports 25 May)	Draft Enviro-Crime Plan
	Initial Work Programme
	Scrutiny Review Recommendations - Markets Engagement and Recovery
	IPSC Representative to Health, Welfare, and Safety Board
July 2022 Markets Review (Cont.)	Markets Regulations Review
19 July (Reports 8 July)	Tenant Scrutiny Review - Housing Repairs and Maintenance
	Aids and Adaptations Update
	Revised Work Programme
Autumn 2022 Review	Selective Licensing - Landlords
20 September 2022 (Reports 9 September)	Neighbourhood Working Annual Report
	Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy Update
	Work Programme
25 October 2022 (Reports 14 October)	Bereavement Services Annual Report
	Flood Alleviation Update
	Work Programme
13 December 2022 (Reports 2 December)	Town Centre Update
	Allotments Update
	Scrutiny Review Recommendations: Selective Licensing - Landlords
	Work Programme
Winter 2023 Spotlight	Rent Arrears
07 February 2023	Environment Bill 2021 - Update
	Fly Tipping
	Work Programme
Room for Spring Review Item	Review TBC

21 March 2023	Tenant Engagement Framework
	Housing Strategy and Development
	Work Programme
09 May 2023	Tree Programme Update
	Item TBC
	Recommendations from Scrutiny Review – TBC
	Work Programme
Potential Forward Plan Items	Planning White Paper
	CCTV - Update
	Housing Repairs and Maintenance Update
	Active Travel Update
	Housing Energy Efficiency Update
	Markets - Update