

HOUSING AND ANTI-POVERTY SCRUTINY PANEL	DATE 11 October 2018	ITEM NO 8
TITLE In-Depth Housing Service Review: Statement of Intent Report	WARD(S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Housing and Safer Communities	CABINET MEMBER Housing	

1 **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and comment on the on-going service improvement work of the Housing Repairs Service.
- 1.2 As part of the Scrutiny Review of the Repairs Service, Members have requested a report that provides a position statement to include performance and benchmark information.
- 1.3 Members have also asked for a report on the number, context and actions taken to resolve complaint.
- 1.4 In response to these requests, this report aims to set out the performance for 2017/18 and Quarter 1 of 2018/19. Where available, benchmarking data has been included in the report.
- 1.5 A Project Plan has also been produced, to provide a scope and some key activities that the Committee may wish to undertake as part of its Scrutiny Review. This has been provided separately.

2 **Background**

- 2.1 Repairs and Investment (R&I) is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the Royal Borough's 25,679 Council homes, which include 4,803 leasehold properties and the service also manages the Housing Capital Programme which is managed and delivered separately to the core repairs and maintenance service.
- 2.2 The Housing Repairs Service is the largest single activity direct customer service provided through the Housing Revenue Account. In the last year we completed 65,232 day-to-day repair orders with an annual budget of £10.3M. The average cost of a repair was £158.39.

- 2.3 Day-to-day repairs are defined as responsive internal and communal repairs. This will typically be gas related repairs, plumbing, carpentry, electrical, roofing, drainage and plastering jobs to tenanted properties. These jobs are initiated by the tenant contacting the Council through its call centre, requesting the repair.
- 2.4 Works carried out to empty properties to re-let them and gas servicing are excluded from this report, as are planned maintenance works.
- 2.5 Day-to-day repairs are delivered primarily through the Council's direct labour. Specialist contractors support this work, most notably Erith in the management of asbestos.
- 2.6 The repairs service is the single most contact point between Council tenants and housing services, with repairs typically being a key issue by which residents assess the housing service. It therefore remains a key priority for the Council, and not surprisingly, as with most social housing landlords, the repairs service generates the most correspondence and complaints.
- 2.7 As part of ensuring that complaints were being properly captured and monitored, changes were introduced in October 2017 which have resulted in more robust logging, with higher numbers now being recorded.
- 2.8 Resident satisfaction is currently measured through an in-house telephone survey to a relatively small sample of residents. The results of last year's sample (6.9%) showed an overall satisfaction rating for the service of 97.4%.

3 Service Improvement Work

- 3.1 As part of its service improvement programme, some targeted reviews have been initiated, to deliver some key improvements and changes over the next 6 months, looking at the following areas:
- Customer Care & Communications
 - *Complaints Team Improvement Plan* – how complaints are managed and responded to, and how learning is captured.
 - *Resident Satisfaction Surveys* – looking at how surveys can be extended to capture greater feedback to help inform service improvement

- **Costs & Efficiency**
 - *Tackling immediate issues around operative mobile working* – ensuring all operatives have functional equipment for mobile working,
 - *Changing how operatives access and use the Council stores* – developing a pilot to move away from the current approach, and free up more operative time to be spent on site doing jobs, and less back at base.
- **Learning and Development**
 - Initial scoping is being undertaken to develop an approach to multi-skill training and delivery for operatives, to enable simple jobs requiring a variety of skills to be undertaken first time.

3.2 Customer Care & Communications

3.2.1 *Complaints Team Improvement Plan:* The Complaints Team are currently reviewing their processes for managing all correspondence and analysing the data received from complaints.

3.2.2 The aim of this review is to improve the quality of the responses, the performance against our KPI's, and to maximise learning from complaints.

3.2.3 *Resident Satisfaction Surveys:* Options are being explored for expanding the way resident satisfaction data is captured to include more channels and greater numbers of responses.

3.3 Costs & Efficiency

3.3.1 *Resource Handheld Tablets:* The current system of handheld tablets is outdated, and there are immediate shortages as ageing equipment has not been replaced as it has broken down. This is having a negative impact on the service due to the increased manual and paper administration required.

3.3.2 As an immediate priority, R&I are currently working with ICT to source replacement devices as a matter of urgency.

3.3.3 *Changing how operatives use and access the Council stores:* Work has begun on scoping and developing a pilot with four of our core trades, to increase efficiency and enable more operative time to be spent on site, carrying out repairs. This will involve vans being stocked with a determined amount of supplies relevant to their trades.

3.3.4 It is anticipated this model will result in greater productivity of operatives and reduced downtime, as they will be able to complete more jobs without coming back to the depot to collect supplies.

3.4 **Learning & Development**

3.4.1 *Explore Multi-Skill training and delivery for operatives.* Very few of our operatives are multi-trade. This causes inefficiencies with jobs that require more than one trade, e.g. carrying out plumbing works in a kitchen, where some carpentry skills may be needed. In such a case, a plumber would have sufficient carpentry skills to be able to carry out these associated works, without being fully qualified as a carpenter.

3.4.2 This work is being developed, and will require suitable training and assessment services to be procured and delivered.

3.4.3 It is envisaged that the necessary works to assess, train and implement will take 6 to 9 months to deliver.

4 **Performance of the Repairs' Service**

4.1 The day-to-day repairs service completed 65,232 repair orders in 2017-18, and 13,489 in the first quarter of 2018-19. This equates to 202 orders per working day last year, and 206 per day this year.

4.2 On average, we complete 3.1 repairs per property per year, and, according to the most recent benchmarking data available from HouseMark, this places the Royal Borough of Greenwich among London's top performers, where 3.2 or fewer repairs per year represents London Top Quartile (LTQ) performance.

4.3 **Urgent Repairs**

4.3.1 This indicator measures performance in completing a prescribed list of urgent repairs within defined time limits - between 1-5 working days. An example is the partial loss of electric supply – remedy within three working days.

4.3.2 To provide a service designed around customer needs, the Royal Borough allows tenants to request repair appointment times outside of these limits, to suit their availability to be at home.

4.3.3 We had previously been unable to exclude these orders from our reporting on urgent repairs, and had been counting them as performance failures up until March 2018.

4.3.4 We have now re-written our report parameters for 2018-19, and can now report that 93% of urgent orders were completed on time in Q1 2018-19.

4.3.5 No benchmarking data is available at this time for this indicator.

4.4 **Non-urgent Repairs**

4.4.1 This indicator measures performance in completing all other non-urgent minor repairs, where the time limit is 20 working days.

4.4.2 89% of non-urgent repairs were completed within target timescales in 2017-18, compared to 90% in Quarter 1 this year.

4.4.3 No benchmarking data is available at this time for this indicator.

4.5 **Customer Satisfaction**

4.5.1 Our current approach to measuring resident satisfaction is to conduct in-house telephone surveys on a 10% (target) sample of households that have recently had responsive repairs completed.

4.5.2 In 2017/18 the R&I team conducted 3,622 telephone surveys which is roughly a 6.9% sample rate. This has remained consistent for Quarter 1 2018/19, with 922 surveys at a sample rate of 6.9%.

4.5.3 It is typically standard to measure satisfaction against a 10% sample of residents, however many organisations have moved away from relying solely on internal surveys.

4.5.4 A best practice methodology is a mixed strategy that includes external providers such as independent market research companies that adhere strictly to their obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

4.5.5 Such an approach would also offer a variety of channels with which to engage with residents such as text, online & phone.

4.5.6 Lastly, updating the way we collect this data will allow us to benchmark against similar housing providers.

4.6 HouseMark Benchmarking

4.6.1 HouseMark is one of the UK housing sector's largest membership organisations. The benchmarking data provided in this report is anonymised and is based on data submitted by 20 London Boroughs and ALMOs.

4.6.2 Information on the following indicators is available;

- *Average Days Waiting* – Measures the average number of days taken to complete a non-urgent repair
- *Right First Time* – Measures what proportion of repairs are completed in a single visit
- *Appointments Kept* – An appointment is deemed to have been kept if the operative arrives within the specific time slot given to the resident. An appointment is deemed to be kept if no access is provided by the resident

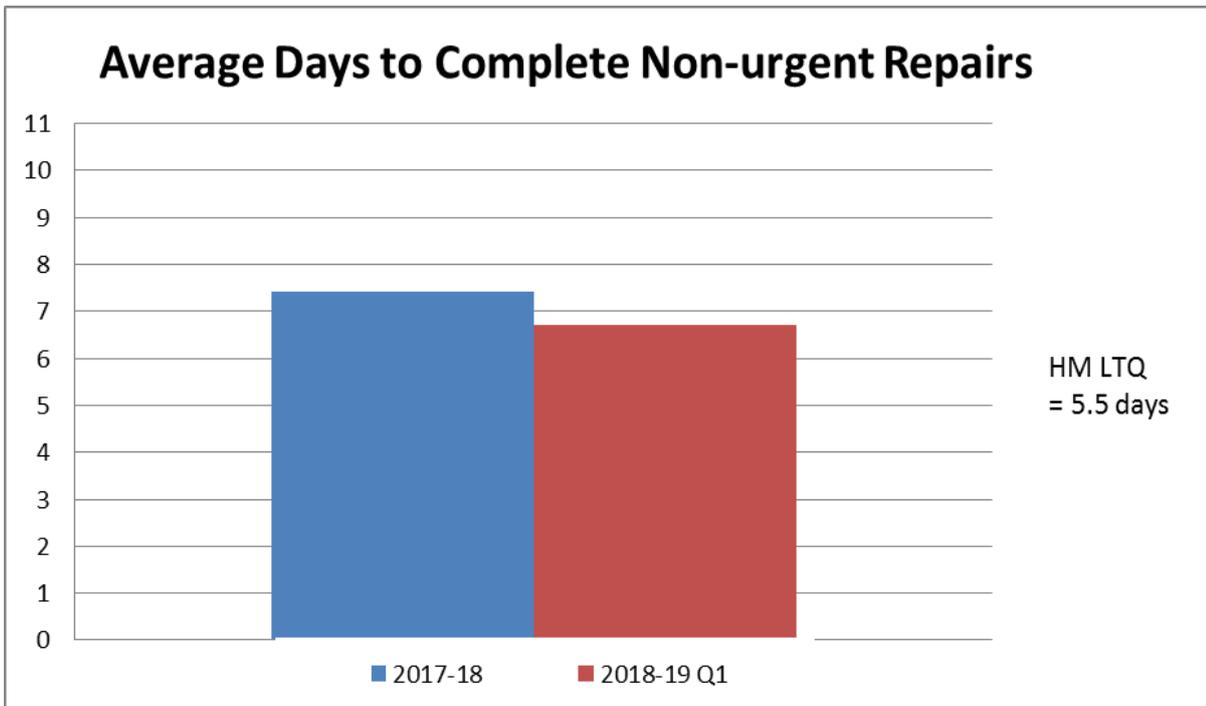
4.6.3 The table below shows how RBG compares against HouseMark's London Top Quartile (the best performers), the London Average, and the 4th Quartile (the bottom 25%).

	Royal Borough of Greenwich	HouseMark Top Quartile	HouseMark Average	HouseMark 4 th Quartile
Average Days Waiting For Repair	7.43	5.50	7.47	10.03
Right First Time	91.21%	95.20%	90.60%	87.94%
Appointments Kept	92.95%	97.28%	95.84%	93.39%

4.7 Average Days

4.7.1 The average number of days that tenants had to wait to have a repair carried out was 7.43 days during 2017-18, and 6.70 days during the first quarter of this year.

4.7.2 HouseMark's 2017-18 top quartile performance for this measure is 5.5 days. Our performance was just above the average of 7.47 days, placing the Royal Borough in the 2nd quartile for London during 2017-18.



4.8 Right First Time

4.8.1 This indicator is considered a measure of how accurately the repair was diagnosed by the person taking the report of the repair. It can also tell us whether our operatives are carrying the right stock on their vehicles to carry out their day-to-day tasks, without having to leave the tenants home to source parts or materials.

4.8.2 HouseMark's London top quartile for this indicator is 95.2% of orders completed at the first visit. In 2017/18, 91% of repairs were completed in a single visit, which places Royal Greenwich's performance in the 2nd quartile (i.e. above the average for London, which was 90.6%).

4.8.3 The performance for Q1 2018/19 has fallen to 84%. Upon investigation, this drop in performance has been affected by a shortage of hand-held devices for our operatives, many of which now need to be replaced after 4 years' use.

4.8.4 Accurate reporting of this indicator relies on operatives closing the task on their hand-held device to register a 'right first time' repair. R&I are currently working with ICT to source replacement devices as a matter of urgency.

4.9 Appointments Kept

4.9.1 92.9% of our responsive (but not emergency) repairs appointments were kept in 2017/18 against a target of 92%. The performance for Quarter I has remained consistent at 92.9% against the same target.

4.9.2 It is noted that according to House Mark's benchmarking data; the best performers in London keep 97.28% or more of the repair appointments that they make.

4.9.3 The Royal Borough's 2017-18 performance of 92.9% puts us in the 4th (bottom) quartile for London, which is 93.39% or worse.

4.10 **Damp**

4.10.1 139 new cases of damp were reported in Q1 of 2018-19. This compares to 110 in the same period last year.

4.10.2 Whilst the Q1 numbers when compared to the previous year show a rise, the proportion of stock reporting damp and the number of households with children living with damp continue to fall:

- The overall proportion of stock reporting damp has fallen from 1.69% to 1.35% in the last 12 months.
- The number of households with young children living in damp conditions has fallen from 57 to 53 over the same period. This remains a key priority for the service and will continue to be monitored closely.

5 **Complaints**

5.1 **Background**

5.1.1 Repairs & Investment has a dedicated Complaints Team that manages correspondence received relating to the service and co-ordinate responses. This includes general enquiries, casework (Councillor and MP enquiries, FOI's and ROA, data protection enquiries), formal Complaints at Stage 1 and 2, and correspondence received from the Housing Ombudsman.

5.1.2 The number of items of correspondence received by Repairs & Investment is the highest in the directorate, which is not uncommon with other social housing providers. In the period from April to June 2018 (Q1) a total of 796 items of correspondence have been received, which is an average of 11 per day.

5.1.3 Changes were introduced in October 2017 to allow more robust logging of formal complaints. This has resulted in a reduction in general enquires but an

increase in the number of Stage I Complaints, with more issues now being picked up.

5.1.4 Customer Care & Complaints is a key focus for Repairs & Investment and work has begun on an Action Plan to improve on our current performance, and how we deal with complaints, including the quality of written responses.

5.2 Performance

5.2.1 The table below shows the different categories of correspondence received. Casework and formal complaints are logged and managed on the corporate, web-based, management software, Pentana (formally Co-valent).

	2017/18	% of total	2018/19 - Q1	% of total
Stage 1	389	12%	175	22%
Stage 2	49	1%	21	3%
Ombudsman casework	37	1%	8	1%
*Casework	1307	40%	407	51%
Compliments	67	2%	20	3%
General Correspondence	1459	44%	165	21%
Total	3308	100%	796	100%

**Casework includes Councillor and MP enquiries, FOI's and ROA, data protection enquiries*

5.2.2 In 2017/18 we received 37 pieces of casework from the Ombudsman of which 4 were official enquiries. Of the 4, three were upheld and one was not upheld.

5.2.3 Only casework and formal complaints have been counted in the table below which shows the ratio of casework and complaints received, relative to the number of repairs completed in the first quarter of 2018/19.

	2018/19 - Q1	% against total completed repairs
Repairs Completed	13,445	-
Formal Complaints	204	1.52%
Casework	407	3.03%

5.2.4 The table below show the volume of casework and complaints received broken down by each service area. As would be expected, most complaints that are received relate to Occupied Repairs as they carry out the responsive repairs.

	2017/18	% (of total)	2018/19 - Q1	% (of total)
Occupied Repairs	998	56%	325	59%
Planned Works	230	13%	65	12%
Damp Team	192	11%	74	13%
Engineering Services	147	8%	30	5%
Complaints Team	73	4%	13	2%
Capital Works	72	4%	27	5%
External Works	37	2%	8	1%
Voids	33	2%	9	2%
Total	1,782	100%	551	100%

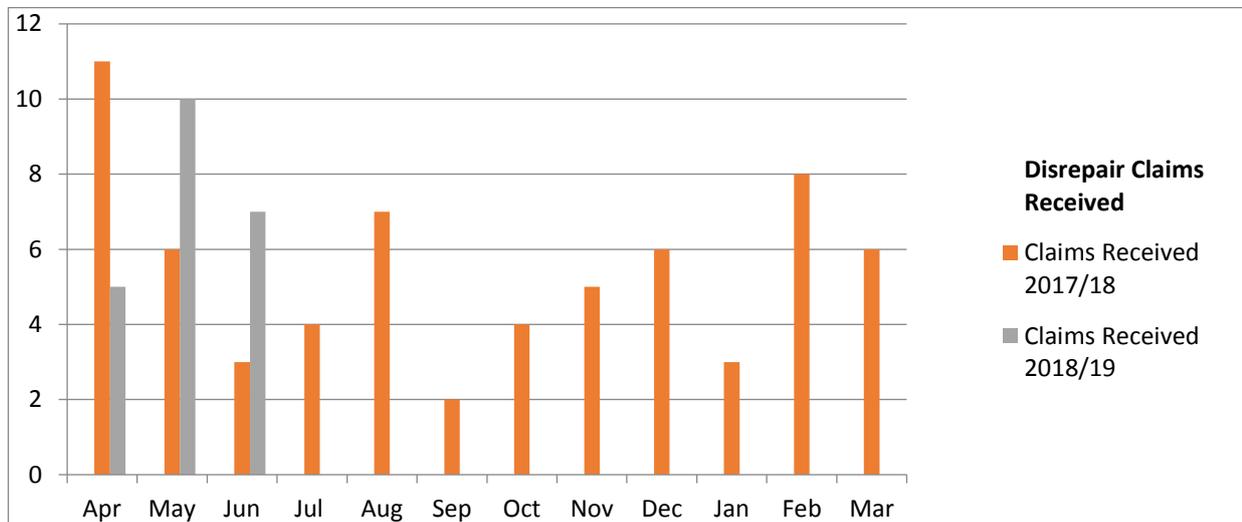
5.2.5 Complaints have been categorised as being for the Complaints Team when it is deemed that they are responsible for the response, for example all Ombudsman enquiries. It does not reflect the number of complaints that have been made about the team.

5.2.6 Work is underway to improve the way that complaints are monitored to provide us with accurate information about trends in the performance of our service.

5.2.7 There has been a slight increase in the proportion of complaints about our Damp service. There are ongoing issues around the resourcing of the team which will be explored further as part of the review.

5.2.8 Disrepair cases brought against the Council under Section 11 of the Landlords and Tenants Act 1985 and Section 82 Environmental Protection Act 1990 have seen a steady increase during the last 15 months. This is due to the claims management industry increasingly targeting Council housing tenants with aggressive marketing tactics, encouraging them to make claims which are then sold on to law firms. Our response to disrepair claims requires an integrated approach, involving case managers, the repairs team, legal services and in some occasions, insurers. A targeted review of how we manage claims more effectively, including approaches to tackling 'no win no fee' lawyers will be undertaken in the coming weeks.

5.2.9 The table below shows the number of disrepair claims received. A total of 65 claims were received in 2017/18 compared to 22 in Q1- 2018/19. This is compared to just 24 cases received in the whole of 2016/17 – See also Appendix B.



6 Performance

- 6.1 Repairs & Investment has nine performance indicators that measure the timeliness of responses to all types of correspondence received by the service.
- 6.2 The performance for 2017/18 and Quarter 1 of 2018/19 can be seen on the previous table.
- 6.3 Performance is measured against the targets set out in the Council’s Corporate Complaints procedures. The Complaints Team regularly under-perform against these targets.
- 6.4 The Complaints Improvement Plan aims to address these failings and improve on our current performance

7 Complaints’ Improvement Plan

- 7.1 The Repairs & Investment Complaints Team are currently reviewing their processes for managing correspondence and analysing data, the aims of the review is to:

- Improve performance of the KPI's for responding to casework and complaints.
- Reduce the number of complaints that are escalated via the formal complaint procedure.
- Introduce improved staff training to enable the team provide credible, concise and clear written responses to complaints.
- Improve the processes for recording complaints and collecting performance data.
- Develop relationships and clear lines of communication with the service areas.
- Introduce a learning log to identify any trends or learning and any practice changes to improve future performance.
- Compare performance with other housing repairs providers via HouseMark or the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE).

7.2 High Level Action Plan

Action	Due Date
Introduce regular case review meetings with service managers	31-Aug-18
Cross departmental case reviews for formal complaints and Ombudsmen cases	31-Aug-18
Review allocation process/templates for complaints	30-Oct-18
Amend communications log to reflect performance data/Learning required	30-Oct-18
Develop performance data and monthly reports for SMT to promote learning from complaints	30-Oct-18
Finalise complaints team procedures and guidance	30-Nov-18
Implement new procedures including complaints allocation process	01-Dec-18
Introduce a complaints staff training and development plan	31-Dec-18
Join Benchmarking organisation and share performance data	31-Dec-18
Action	Due Date

Targets	Due Date
Reduce the backlog of outstanding complaints	31-Dec-18
Reduce the number of late complaints	31-Dec-18
Reduce the number of repeated/ escalated complaints	31-Mar-19

Background Papers

None provided.

Appendices

Appendix A – Repairs Performance Indicators

Appendix B – Repairs and Investment Correspondence Performance Indicators

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