



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

27 February 2014

**Title:** Concierge and Cleaning Update

**Report of:** Director of Customers and Communities

### Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide a progress update following the implementation of the Concierge and Cleaning review.

### Background

2. Following a consultation process with customers, stakeholders, employees, and Trade Unions the review of the Concierge and Cleaning service was implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.
3. Prior to this review of the 28 multi storey blocks in Gateshead, 22 received the residential Caretaker service and 6 a combined Concierge and cleaning service. The Caretaker service was reviewed in 2010 and this committee received an update report on 4 May 2011 highlighting the success of this review.
4. The ongoing redevelopment of the Chandless estate has reduced the six multi storey blocks receiving the concierge and cleaning service to four. These are Warwick Court, Regent Court in Central Gateshead and Redheugh Court and Eslington Court in Teams.
5. The remodelled service introduced the residential Caretaker role and retained a Concierge service operating to revised hours (See Appendix). The review also provided the opportunity to enhance both the management of the Caretaker and Concierge services and our approach to multi storey blocks.

### Key Features

#### Concierge Service

6. The new service was remodelled to operate during peak periods of activity and with the aim of being delivered from one location, Eslington Court. The role continues to focus on security, controlling access to the blocks and monitoring CCTV. The new hours and revised staffing structure to support this were introduced from April 2013. It is anticipated that the move to one location will be completed by 31 March 2014.

## **Caretaker Service**

7. The residential Caretaker service took over the communal cleaning of the four multi storey blocks, previously carried out by LES under a Service Level Agreement. Caretakers also carry out a range of additional tasks which include:
  - Small repairs to communal areas
  - Small tasks/repairs inside customers flats
  - “Introduction to New Tenant” visits
  - Accompanied viewings with Estate Officers
  - Monthly Health & Safety Inspections
  - External Environmental Tasks
8. The information below relates to the four blocks which now receive the combined Concierge and Caretaker service for the nine month period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 – 31 December 2013.

### **Repairs in Communal areas**

9. Caretakers carry out a range of small repair tasks in communal areas of multi storey blocks. The most common are unblocking bin chutes and adjusting door closers. All Caretakers attend a training course on tackling small repairs and are provided with a range of tools required to carry out such tasks.
10. Caretakers have carried out a total of 453 repair tasks in the communal areas and the value of this repair work based on existing Schedule Of Rate (SOR) codes is £3,922.

### **Small Tasks**

11. In addition to repairs in the communal areas, Caretakers also carry out a range of small tasks inside customers’ homes.
12. The most common tasks included unblocking sinks and toilets, resetting smoke alarms and replacing smoke alarm batteries. During this period Caretakers carried out a total of 216 tasks.

### **New Tenant Visits**

13. Caretakers aim to visit all new customers within 21 days of the tenancy start date to discuss a range of topics including; the role of the Caretaker service, fire safety, car parking, rubbish disposal, recycling, operating instructions for heating and connecting washing machines to existing taps. During this period a total of 61 new tenant visits were completed.

### **Accompanied Viewings**

14. Caretakers attend accompanied viewings with Estate Officers in multi storey blocks. They are able to provide information and advice about living in the block and the surrounding areas. Up to 31 December 2013 caretakers attended 77 accompanied viewings with Estate Officers.

## **Monthly Health and Safety Inspections**

15. To support our approach to fire safety, Caretakers carry out a monthly health and safety inspection of their block. They inspect all communal areas completing a checklist that includes emergency exits, fire extinguishers, door closures and dry risers. The inspection results are reported to the Company's Health and Safety Manager.

## **External Environmental Tasks**

16. To enhance the duties carried out by LES, Caretakers litter pick the area around their blocks when required. At Warwick Court the Caretaker has also worked with customers to help improve the appearance of the external communal areas by carrying out gardening tasks.

## **Operational Support**

17. The review has also provided the opportunity to strengthen the existing management arrangements of the concierge and caretaker service, whilst delivering value for money. The Operational Support team based at the Civic Centre were aligned with the Central Housing Office, which facilitated the sharing of administrative support.
18. The two existing Operational Support Officer posts were replaced with a new Housing Manager (Multi Storey) post with overall responsibility for both the Caretaker and Concierge services. The post was also introduced to strengthen our knowledge and approach to managing multi storey blocks.
19. The post holder has worked closely with the Multi Storey Service Improvement Group for example to review Caretaker service standards and develop a programme of Customer inspections of cleaning standards. They have also worked with Housing Managers to develop Designing Out Crime bids and with the Asset Management team on various investment schemes in multi storey blocks.
20. A Concierge Supervisor post was introduced to provide closer support and supervision to the team. The post holder is based in the Eslington Court suite and in addition to staff supervision can cover vacant shifts when required.
21. To reflect the wider role the sections name was changed from Operational Support team to the Multi Storey Management team.

## **Feedback from Customers**

22. In December 2013 a customer satisfaction survey was sent out to all tenants and leaseholders living in the four multi storey blocks that receive the combined Concierge and Caretaker service. A total of 70 surveys were returned representing 12% of residents in the four blocks.
23. 91% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the Caretaker service since it was introduced.
24. 86% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the new Concierge service.

25. Between 1 April and 31 December 2013, 5 compliments were received from customers about the combined Concierge and Caretaker service. They ranged from compliments about the quality of the Caretakers work to the general attitude and helpfulness of employees.
26. During the same period, one step two complaint was received from North East Ambulance Service regarding access to Regent Court car park. This has been satisfactorily resolved.

### **Feedback from Employees**

27. Individual 121's were carried out by Karen Bell (Multi Storey Housing Manager) with all Concierge employees to assess the impact of the changes to the service from their perspective.
28. Overall employees were positive about the changes. They highlighted the introduction of the Supervisor post which has increased the amount of 121 contacts with a line manager. They also were positive about the introduction of Caretakers, stating that the blocks were very clean, that they were able to provide a quick response and the service was popular with customers.
29. The changes made have received positive comments from other services within the Company highlighting improved joint working with the Concierge, Caretakers and the Multi Story Housing Manager.

### **Service Improvements 2014.15**

30. The focus during 2014.15 will be on developing the existing Concierge role and strengthening performance management of both the services. We will involve customers in this process through the Multi Storey Service Improvement Group.
  - Review Concierge and CCTV Service Standards with customer involvement.
  - Develop the Concierge role to include additional tasks that benefit customers and provide further VFM opportunities
  - Strengthen performance management by developing Northgate to record Caretaker and Concierge tasks i.e. small repairs and new tenant visits.

### **Link to values**

31. The report relates to the following values of the company:
  - Being customer focused, innovative and professional
  - Being motivated, trained and committed across the company
  - Being a listening and learning organisation

### **Impact on tenants**

32. The new service has retained the Concierge service and provided customers with an enhanced Caretaker service, delivering greater value for money at no additional cost.

### **Risk Management Implications**

33. There are no direct risk management implications resulting from this report.

### **Financial Implications**

34. The Head of Corporate Services has confirmed that there are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

35. The combined Caretaker and Concierge service has resulted in customers having increased accessibility and contact on a day to day basis. New tasks such as small scale repairs in residents homes directly benefits the more vulnerable residents who may not have access to friends or family for such assistance.

### **Value for Money Implications**

36. The review has provided the opportunity to address the gap between the cost of providing the service and the revenue generated by the service charge, at no additional expense to the customer. The combined Concierge and Caretaker service provides additional benefits to customers and has led to a number of VFM initiatives. Caretakers are on duty for a longer period than the previous cleaning service and carry out a wider range of tasks at no additional cost. By tackling small repairs such as unblocking bin chutes Caretakers have produced cost savings.

### **Health Implications**

37. Studies have shown that prolonged shift work throughout the night can be detrimental to the health and well-being of employees. Prior to the review the Concierge service was provided 24 hours per day and employees were required to cover night shifts on a rota. The changes to the hours the service operates means that the latest shift ends at midnight on a Friday and Saturday and through the week at 10pm. This will potentially have a positive impact on the mental and physical well-being of those employees.

### **Environmental Implications**

38. The Caretaker's duties will help to maintain the environment both inside and around the external areas of multi-story blocks.

### **Consultation carried out**

39. Feedback from customers has been gained through a range of sources to assess satisfaction with the changes made to the service. This includes the customer survey detailed within this report and compliments and complaints received about the service.

## **Recommendations**

40. The committee are asked to:
- note the information contained in the report; and
  - discuss if it is satisfied with the progress made following the review of the Concierge and Cleaning service.

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Concierge duty times

Monday – Thursday	8am – 10pm
Friday/Saturday	8am – 12pm
Sunday	11am – 8pm

Outside of these hours, calls from the door entry go direct to the customers flat.

Caretaker duty times

Monday – Thursday	8am – 4.30pm
Friday	8am – 4.00pm

Outside of these hours, Caretakers also provide an emergency call out service. They respond to Health and Safety emergencies and visit each block on a Saturday to rotate the refuse bins.