



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

11 September 2014

Title: Repair Reporting Services - Update

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Purpose of Report

1. To update the committee on the outcome of a number of changes relating to repair reporting that were implemented in late 2013.

Background

2. Being able to report repairs quickly and easily is important to customers, and the most popular method of repair reporting has always been by telephone. In 2012/13 (the first year of the new repairs contract with Mears), the HomeRepairs reporting team received over 100,000 attempted calls. This increased to over 120,000 attempted calls in 2013/14 (around 480 per day). Just over 88,000 calls were answered in 2013/14 (averaging 352 per day).
3. At the meeting in February 2013 the committee received a report proposing a consultation exercise with customers aimed at improving access to repair reporting. The report described how queue times for the HomeRepairs reporting line had increased. Average call waiting had been 7 minutes 43 seconds in January 2013, and extended regularly beyond 20 minutes at peak times.
4. The consultation exercise took place in March/April 2013. A further committee report in May 2013 listed a number of actions that were to be implemented as a result of the consultation:
 - Repair reporting opening hours to be 8:00 am to 5:00 pm (rather than 8:00 am to 7:00 pm) so that more staff would be available to take calls during busiest hours (with extended hours on Mondays until 6:30 pm).
 - Out of hours emergency calls to be received by Mears 24/7 team at their national call centre.
 - Improvements to the telephone messaging system used to select options and to provide information whilst in the queue.
 - Additional training for other TGHC teams to provide support and back-up for the repair reporting team during peak periods.
 - Improvements to be made to the method of reporting repairs online.

5. The changes to the telephone system and opening hours were implemented during December 2013, with an ongoing programme of improvements to online reporting, and associated promotion of this option.

Impact of the changes to the repair reporting service:

Queue times

6. The overall objective of the changes was to improve access to repair reporting, and to reduce queue times. There have been some promising results since the changes were implemented in December 2013.
7. Prior to the changes, all repair calls were placed in a single queue (with an average time of 3 minutes 41 seconds in 2013). One of the developments implemented was the separation of calls for new repair requests and for querying existing repairs. There are now therefore two queues, with two groups of officers receiving calls.
8. There has been a noticeable improvement in queue times since January 2014. The table included at Appendix 1 shows how average queue times for new repair requests have reduced down to 49 seconds by end of July 2014.
9. Queue times for querying existing repairs have also reduced significantly during 2014, from over 6 minutes in January and February down to 2 minutes 42 seconds in July. However, there is still scope for further improvement, and we have looked to rebalance the staffing resources in the two groups of officers by converting one post to enable more queries to be answered sooner.

Formal complaints

10. The Advice Assistants dealing with repair queries aim to resolve issues before they escalate to a formal complaint. This approach is showing positive results. Formal complaints relating to repairs have reduced significantly since the changes were implemented - from 31 in January 2014 to 8 in July 2014 (see Appendix 2).

Opening hours

11. The switch to the new opening hours has been very successful with no complaints received about the changes implemented. Out of hours calls are automatically transferred to Mears 24\7 national call centre, and the transition has been very smooth. The Mears team have received full training on our systems and how to deal with any calls that may fall beyond their scope. The changes have enabled more staff to be receiving calls at peak times and have greatly simplified the rota arrangements.

Customer Service Support

12. The lettings team were identified as the most natural team to offer additional support, as they already used the same telephony system and were able to be located next to the repair reporting team when we moved to our current office in the civic centre. Repairs training for all the Lettings Clericals is now complete and they are able to provide repair reporting cover if required. We also aim to train

the repair reporting team on basic lettings queries, to provide support where possible to lettings team.

Other methods of reporting

13. There is still work to be done to encourage more tenants to use the online repair reporting tool. Following feedback from customers, changes have been made to the way the system is accessed, but usage is still very low with only 2-3 repairs logged per day (see Appendix 3).
14. We receive approximately 100 texts/emails per day from customers in relation to repairs and there is scope to develop this access method further.

Link to values

15. This report relates to the following company values: -
 - Being honest, accountable and transparent
 - Being customer focused, innovative and professional

Impact on tenants

16. The changes to repair reporting have generally been positive for tenants. There have been reductions in queue times, and a focus on tackling queries that has helped to reduce the number of formal complaints. There have been no reported issues with the changes to opening times, or the out of hours service.

Risk Management Implications

17. Customer satisfaction could reduce if improvements to access to the repairs service are not maintained

Financial Implications

18. The changes to the service have been delivered within existing budgets and resources.

Equality and Diversity Implications

19. The proposed improvements to access to the service are designed to ensure that all customers can report repairs more quickly and easily.

Value for Money Implications

20. Value for money considerations have been integral to the development of these changes, and will also feature in the further promotion of online reporting options.

Health Implications

21. There are no health implications directly associated with this report

Environmental Implications

22. There are no environmental implications directly associated with this report

Consultation carried out

23. Four workshop events with customers were organised between 26 March and 4 April 2013 with 34 customers attending. The changes to repair reporting were promoted via the company website and newspaper.

Recommendation

24. The views of the committee are sought on whether the committee is satisfied with progress on the improvements to repair reporting.

Average queue times when calling HomeRepairs reporting team

N.B.

A customer ringing the HomeRepairs reporting line selects from these options:

- "...press 1 to report a new repair"
- "...press 2 to query an existing repair"

Month	Calls answered: new repair	Average queue: new repair (min:sec)	Calls answered: queries	Average queue: queries (min:sec)
Jan 2014	6,102	2:29	2,073	6:12
Feb 2014	5,052	3:08	1,861	6:25
Mar 2014	5,180	1:08	1,973	3:37
Apr 2014	4,329	1:15	1,806	3:39
May 2014	4,194	0:57	1,761	3:16
Jun 2014	4,129	0:58	1,839	2:25
July 2014	4,157	0:49	1,581	2:42

For comparison, in the calendar year 2013 (when all calls went into one queue) the average queue time was 3 minutes 41 seconds.

Repair Complaints 2014

Month	Step 2 (formal) repair complaints
January 2014	31
February 2014	24
March 2014	13
April 2014	16
May 2014	10
June 2014	14
July 2014	8

Repair requests using the online repair reporting tool

Month	Repair reporting tool usage (requests)
January 2014	62
February 2014	83
March 2014	73
April 2014	66
May 2014	55
June 2014	80
July 2014	41

(Note: this table relates only to the pictorial online tool. In addition to this we receive around 100 texts or emails per day)