

Your Homes Newcastle Outer West and North Area Board 9 July 2007

Service Standard Review

Report by Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Business

| Information | Area Implications | Inner West |
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| Executive Summary | <p>A report to Area Boards in May gave information about the review of service standards, and the reporting of performance in relation to revised service standards.</p> <p>This report addresses comments made in discussion of the May report. It also provides an update on the review of service standards across YHN services. Information is provided for comment on a number of revised sets of service standards, which are provided as appendices.</p> | |
| Recommendations | <p>Board is asked to consider and comment on the revised service standards, and to endorse arrangements for future reporting of service standard performance</p> | |

| Business Implications | |
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| YHN Mission and Strategic Objectives | <p>Service standards apply to all areas of YHN service provision. They therefore have an impact in relation to all YHN strategic objectives and the mission statement</p> |
| Value for Money/Efficiencies | <p>The purpose of the review is to make service standards more relevant and meaningful to service users, and to make them easier to monitor. The standards will become more effective by being SMART through the review. Efficiency will be improved through having to monitor a reduced number of standards.</p> |
| Resources | <p>A reduced number of service standards will reduce the time taken in monitoring performance. This will allow staff time to be</p> |

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| | <p>spent on other areas of work.</p> <p>Revised standards for all service areas will require re-printing of service standard booklets for all service outlets. The full cost of this has not yet been estimated as it depends on the number of sets of standards following the completion of the review.</p> |
| Impact on Services/Performance | Revised service standards will have a positive impact on performance. Standards which have already been revised have been incorporated into this year's service plan, so that staff across YHN become familiar with, and responsible for, performance in relation to the targets. |
| Outcomes for tenants/leaseholders | Tenants and Leaseholders will benefit through having more meaningful and measurable service standards across the full range of services provided by YHN. The revised standards will increase accountability in service provision |
| Risk | Failure to monitor performance in relation to the revised standards could place YHN at risk of failing in any of our strategic objectives. This, in turn, risks our reputation and our status as a two star organisation. |
| Environmental | Incorporating revised standards into the performance management framework removes the need for separate performance and service standard monitoring reports to Area Boards. This will lead to a reduction in use of paper, with a consequent positive environmental impact. |
| Legal Implications | There are no legal implications. |
| Equality and Diversity | There are no direct equality and diversity implications. However, some of the revised standards have an equality and diversity impact in terms of service delivery. Making standards more SMART and meaningful will therefore have a positive impact. |
| Stakeholder Involvement/ Consultation (planned or already carried out) | Initial consultation has taken place with the Tenants Federation, who have been provided with copies of relevant revised standards. There has also been separate consultation with service user groups for some of the revised standards. |

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| Background papers | Service Standard monitoring report to May Area Boards Service Plan 2007/08 |
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Review of Service Standards

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the process of reviewing all YHN service standards. A summary is given in relation to the current position for all service standards. Standards which have been revised since the May report are given in draft form as appendices for comment.

2. Background

- 2.1 Regular reports have been presented to Area Boards during the past year which have covered the review of service standards, and reporting arrangements. The report to the May meeting of this Board provided the following information:
- A response to comments in relation to the draft housing management service standards made at a previous Area Board meeting
 - A position statement in relation to the ongoing review of standards
 - A recommendation to combine the reporting of performance in relation to service standards with future performance reports
- 2.2 This report provides a response to further comments on the draft housing management service standards, and explains progress on the review of standards during the past two months. As agreed by Area Boards in May, performance in relation to some of the service standards already reviewed is included in the separate performance report, as detailed in section three.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 Two further comments were made in relation to the housing management service standards at the May meeting of Outer West and North Area Board. These were about timescales for repairs and responding to urgent nuisance and harassment reports.
- Members asked if timescales for repairs could be amended so that they are all calendar or all working days. These timescales are currently specified within the repairs and maintenance contract, so they cannot be changed or reviewed until the current contract is due for renewal
 - Members asked if the timescale for responding to urgent cases of nuisance and harassment could be changed from 'the next working day' to 'within 24 hours or next working day'. It is not currently possible to provide a response to all reports within 24 hours, due to weekends and bank holidays. Within 24 hours on the next working

weekends and bank holidays. 'Within 24 hours or the next working day is not currently feasible as the necessary IT is not in place. The manager of the Housing and anti-social behaviour enforcement team has undertaken to review this request when the necessary IT is in place, which is expected to be in September 2007.

The housing management service standards are given at Appendix 1.

- 3.2 Service standards for eight service areas had already been reviewed prior to the May meeting. Performance for four of these is reported in this month's performance report. These services are:

Community Care Alarm Service

Sheltered Housing

Inline

Stepping Stones

It is proposed to report performance for the other four services at September Area Board meetings. These are:

Advice and Support

Right to Buy

Asylum Seekers Unit

Adaptations service

- 3.3 In addition to housing management, the following service standards have been reviewed with service managers and staff since the May meeting. The revised standards for these services are provided in draft form as appendices. They have also been referred to the Tenants Federation for comment:

Your Choice Homes

Concierge service

Modern Homes

Furniture service

Leasehold service

- 3.4 It is proposed to report performance for these standards to the November 2007 and January 2008 Area Board meetings.

There are still three sets of service standards which are not yet ready for consultation. Revised standards for these will be reported to the September meeting:

Housing and anti-social behaviour enforcement team

Customer service

Repairs and maintenance

It is now proposed to have a separate set of service standards for repairs and maintenance. It was previously proposed to incorporate these within the new housing management service standards

It is proposed to report performance in relation to these standards at the March 2007 meeting.

4. Options

- 4.1 The methodology for the review of service standards has been agreed previously by Area Boards. There are no other options to consider at this stage.

5. Implications

- 5.1 The implications of the service standard review is identified earlier in this report. The completion of the review should have a positive impact on all areas covered, though there will be some short term cost implications incurred through re-printing and circulating revised service standard booklets.

6 Consultation

- 6.1 Initial consultation has taken place with the Tenants Federation, who have been provided with copies of relevant revised standards. There has also been separate consultation with service user groups for some of the revised standards.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 Board is recommended to consider and comment on the revised service standards.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1 Further consultation will take place in relation to revised standards, where this has not already happened. Following completion of the review of the standards, revised booklets will be printed and distributed to all service outlets. Staff will also be made aware of the revised standards, and these will be published on YHN's website. Performance in relation to the revised standards will be reported on a phased basis as part of Area Board performance reports. Information about the revised standards will also be communicated through Homes and People, and other service specific newsletters and briefings.

DRAFT HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE STANDARDS

What you can expect from the housing management service

Help with your housing application

Council housing in Newcastle is allocated through the Your Choice Homes scheme. There is a separate booklet which explains the service standards which apply to Your Choice Homes.

We will ensure that your application is registered quickly. We will also ensure that you are kept informed about properties that are available, and will offer you assistance with your application if you need it.

Property Standard

We will make sure that when you move into a new property, it is safe, clean and in good condition. What this means is explained in a separate booklet called Property Standard.

New Tenants

- When you look at a home we will offer to show you around and tell you about the fixtures, fittings and services.
- We will make sure your home is clean and safe and that we have completed all repairs to our empty property standard.
- If your home needs decorating we will talk to you about what we can offer you, and how it will be done.
- We will tell you about the other services we offer that can help you settle into your home. These include help with furniture and gardening, and advice and support in managing your tenancy if you need it.
- We will explain your tenancy agreement to you before you sign it, and provide you with a copy. We will not ask you to sign it until you are sure you understand it.
- We will give you a welcome pack. This will contain information about your home, your local area and its services.
- We will offer you the service of an Advice and Support Worker, or suggest other agencies which may be able to help you settle into your tenancy.
- We will visit you within six weeks of you moving into your new home to make sure that you have no problems with your tenancy.

Repairs

- We will widely publicise how you can report repairs
- We will widely publish the repairs that are your responsibility. If you want us to carry out these repairs, we will do so and charge you.
- We will make sure that all workers provide identification, have the skills they need to carry out your repair and use good quality materials.
- We will make sure that anyone carrying out work for us treats you and your home with respect and tidies up after all work carried out.

- Wherever possible we will try to complete your repair as agreed. If however, we have to cancel your repair or appointment, we will tell you by writing to you, phoning you or visiting you at your home.
- We will inspect a sample of all completed repairs carried out on our behalf to assess the quality of the work and service provided.
- We will keep a record of all complaints made about repairs, and will make sure that they are passed to the relevant person to investigate and reply.
- We will ensure that at least 80% of repairs that are reported to us are completed on the first visit
- We will ensure that repairs are carried out as quickly as possible, and that the average repair times is 9 days or less
- We will make and keep an appointment with you to carry out a gas safety check or gas service every year
- We will ensure that target response times for all categories of repair are achieved. This includes the following targets:
 - Urgent 1 working day – 98%
 - Urgent 3 working days – 98%
 - 7 calendar days – 96%
 - 28 calendar days – 98%
 - Special agreed (non-standard repairs) – 98%
 - Rapid Response appointments – 97% within 5 working days

Nuisance and harassment

We will help you if you have problems with nuisance or harassment. We also have a specialist Housing and Anti-Social Behaviour Team who deal with serious cases of nuisance and harassment. There is a separate booklet covering service standards for the Housing and Anti-Social Behaviour Team. We will ensure that you are given a prompt response if you report problems of nuisance and harassment, and that appropriate action is taken to either deal with the problem, or pass details to the Housing and Anti-Social Behaviour Team

The response time for investigating cases of nuisance and harassment will vary according to its seriousness. This will be discussed with you when you report an incident. There are three categories of response time, as follows: Category 1-People (response next working day). Examples can include abusive graffiti, assault, domestic violence, racial harassment and criminal activity

Category 2-Property (response within 5 working days). Examples can include property damage and vandalism, loud noise, music and parties, and rubbish dumping

Category 3-Environment (response within 10 working days). Examples can include illegal parking, behaviour of animals, scrap and rubbish accumulation
 More detailed information about the above categories is given in the booklet covering service standards for the Housing and Anti-social Behaviour Team. A response time for nuisance and harassment will be agreed with you when you report an incident, and these response times are monitored as a housing management service standard'.

Paying your rent

You should pay your rent weekly. You can pay by other frequencies by agreement with us, but if you do this, payments should be in advance.

When you sign up for your tenancy we will tell you:

- How much rent you have to pay for your home;
- How where and when you have to pay it, and
- How to claim housing benefit
- How to get help with managing your rent from our Advice and Support Service, if you need it

If you have an enquiry about your rent account:

- We will offer you a confidential interview and try to deal with your enquiry immediately. If we cannot deal with it there and then we will reply to you in writing within 15 working days
- We will provide details about your account, including balance details, if you need it. If you ask for a statement of your account we will provide it within a maximum of 15 working days and we will also give you a statement of your rent account on a regular basis.

If you fall into rent arrears:

- We will contact you to agree how these will be paid back and confirm in writing any agreement made

If you fail to maintain an agreement with us to pay your arrears:

- We will take legal action to recover your debt. We will explain your legal rights to you and what will happen if we have to take you to court
- We will tell you, in writing, that we are going to go to court, and of the outcome of any legal action
- If you fail to make payments as ordered by the court, we will take action to evict you from your home

After your tenancy has ended

- We will confirm, in writing, if you owe us any rent. We will try to reach an agreement for repayment, and explain to you the problems you may have if you want to apply for another home from us.
- If you do not keep to the agreement, we may pass your debt to a debt-collection agency for them to recover it

Customer Service

We strive to provide excellent customer service to all of our customers. There is a separate booklet covering customer service standards, as these apply to all of our staff.

Housing Management Service Standards

- We will ensure that all Your Choice Homes applications received at Community Housing Offices are registered within 5 working days
- We will give you a copy of our empty property standard. This will tell you about the work we will do to your home before you move in.
- We will arrange to visit you within six weeks of moving into your home and discuss any problems you may have, including paying your rent
- We will offer you the service of an Advice and Support Worker if you are having difficulty paying your rent and have substantial arrears
- When you report a case of nuisance or harassment to us we will complete a complaint form and give you a copy as a receipt.
- We will begin investigating cases of nuisance or harassment either:
 - the next working day
 - within five working days, or
 - within ten working days.(nb see nuisance and harassment section for types of nuisance and harassment within each category)
- If you visit any of our offices, our reception staff will see you within five minutes of you arriving
- We will answer all telephone calls within five rings
- If you write to us, we will reply within 15 working days
- To help ensure that estates are well maintained, we will carry out an estate inspection of all estates twice every year
- We will arrange an estate walkabout for all estates on an annual basis, and will invite all tenants to attend
- We will attend all resident and community group meetings to which we are invited

Appendix 2

DRAFT YOUR CHOICE HOMES SERVICE STANDARDS

What can I expect from the service?

Before joining the scheme

- We will widely publicise the scheme and provide information about how you qualify to join.
- We will check your registration details and tell you if we need more information. When we receive all of your information we will write and let you know if you qualify to join Your choice homes within 10 working days.
- We will offer you help and support to register and use the scheme. We will visit you at your home if you need us to.

While you are looking for a home

- We will advertise homes in a range of ways so that you will know which properties are available.
- We will give you information about local services and amenities to help you make a choice of where to live.
- When we have made you an offer of a home we will make arrangements to show you around the property.
- We will advise you about furniture packages available through the Newcastle Furniture Service.
- Every month we will provide information on successful lettings. This is to help you make a decision on where you want to live. We will publish this information on our website, in the property shop and in our Community Housing Offices.

After you have found a home

- An officer from your local housing office will visit you within six weeks of you moving into your new home to make sure that there are no problems with your tenancy.
- We will offer you the service of an Advice and Support Worker if you are having difficulties.

If you are unhappy with our decisions

- We will tell you about our review and appeals procedure.
- We will confirm receipt of your review request within five working days.
- We will deal with any written review request we receive within 21 calendar days.
- If your request for a review of the original decision is unsuccessful we will send your case for an appeal decision by a panel of independent officers. When a decision has been made on your appeal we will write to you within five working days.

Our service standards

- We will answer all telephone calls within five rings.
- If you write to us, we will reply within 15 working days.
- When we receive your registration form to join Your choice homes staff at the Property Shop will register your details within five working days. We will write to you to confirm this.
- If you do not qualify to join Your Choice Homes we will write to you and tell you why this is, what information we have considered and what can be done to quality. This will include what support will be available to you.

Appendix 3

DRAFT CONCIERGE SERVICE STANDARDS

What can I expect from the service?

- If an area or block falls below our cleaning standards, we will bring it up to those standards within 24 hours
- Your concierge will challenge any non-resident who enters a block without authority
- We will display information boards with up-to-date service details
- When our staff are on duty they will wear a full uniform and an identity badge
- If you report a repair or tell us that someone has broken their tenancy agreement, we will give you a receipt. The receipt tells you:
 - What you have told us; and
 - When you told us

Our service standards

- We will give you a welcome pack when you move in.
- We will inspect your building every three months to make sure our cleaning work schedule is being followed. We will display our cleaning work schedule in your building. We will invite tenant representatives to all our inspections and we will make the results available to you.
- We will meet you and give you an introduction to our services. We will explain to you your responsibilities as a tenant. We will do this within seven days of you moving into your home.
- Your concierge will carry out daily safety and security

Appendix 4

DRAFT MODERN HOMES SERVICE STANDARDS

What can I expect from the service?

Consultation and Providing Information:

- We will hold an event each year to explain our plans for improving homes.
- We will produce a plan each year for improving homes in the coming year. We will widely publicise the plan in our Newsletter 'Homes and People', in Community Housing Offices and on our website www.yourhomesnewcastle.co.uk
- We will always write to you first to tell you about any work we are planning for your home. We will do this at least three months before work is due to start.
- Nearer to the time we will write to you again and give you more detailed information about any work we are planning for your home. We may also invite you to an Open Event.
- When writing to you, we will make sure we provide a contact name and phone number.
- We will make sure that you are aware of and can choose fixtures and finishes wherever possible. Examples of this would be kitchen and bathroom improvements.
- We will always take account of any special requirements you may have, such as a disability or ill health, when carrying out improvement work to your home.

Carrying out Improvements to your Home:

- We will make sure that you receive at least seven days' notice of when we will carry out work to your home.
- When we are working on your home, we will:
 - protect you and your home by making sure our contractors work carefully and safely;
 - respect you and your home while the work is going on;
 - make sure that everyone visiting your home will carry identification;
 - cause as little disruption and inconvenience as possible; and
 - monitor our contractors to make sure they clean up after themselves at the end of each working day.

- We will keep our appointments with you and let you know if we are running late.
- We will always try to complete the work as agreed. However, if we have to delay the work (for example, because of weather conditions), we will tell you by writing to you, phoning you or visiting you at your home.
- We will always give you the name and freephone number of the person to contact if you have any questions or problems about the work to your home.

Our service standards

- We will write to you to tell you about any work we are planning for your home at least three months before work is due to start.
- We will hold an information event on our Talk to us Bus prior to the Modern Homes work starting on your estate.
- We will carry out a customer satisfaction survey on all of our completed schemes to assess the quality of the work and service. We will let you know what we have found and what we are going to do about it.
- We will achieve 89% customer satisfaction for the work completed on the Modern Homes Programme.

Appendix 5

NEWCASTLE FURNITURE SERVICE-SERVICE STANDARDS

What can I expect from the service?

Furniture Service

- We will deliver your furniture on a day we have agreed with you.
- We will offer you a morning or afternoon appointment when we deliver or collect your furniture.
- When we deliver your furniture we will give you a list of all the items in your furniture package.
- When we deliver your furniture we will assemble any items that need it.
- We will make sure your cooker is fitted safely.
- We will make sure that any electrical items we give you are in good working order and fitted safely.
- We will replace any items of furniture that need changing due to wear and tear
- When we collect your furniture we will take apart any items that need it.

Child Safety Equipment Scheme

- We will offer you a morning or afternoon appointment
- We will ensure all equipment conforms to any relevant and current safety standards
- We will fit the equipment as detailed by the manufacturer's guidelines
- We will give you instructions on how to use the equipment, both verbally and in writing

Gardening Service

- We will Visit you on the day that has been arranged with you.
- We will carry out the maintenance as detailed in the maintenance programme leaflet.
- We will offer you a selection of bulbs for planting in the winter for spring growth.

Our service standards

Furniture Service

- We will deliver furniture to you within five working days of your request; we aim to do this with 93% of all deliveries.
- We will collect furniture within five working days of you asking us to, we aim to do this with 93% of all collections.
- We will visit you within eight weeks of delivering your furniture to make sure everything is all right.
- We will repair or replace any faulty cookers we have supplied to you within two working days of you telling us about it.

Child Safety Equipment Scheme

- We will install your safety equipment within 8 weeks of receiving your request
- We will answer any queries within 2 working days

Gardening Service

- We will visit you 11 times per year (8 summer visits and 3 winter visits)
- We will answer any queries within 2 working days

Appendix 6

LEASEHOLD SECTION SERVICE STANDARDS

What can I expect from the service?

- We will keep the structure and outside of your building insured against fire, flood, lightning, explosion and any other reasonable risks. You will continue to be responsible for insuring your home contents.
- We will continue to maintain the structure and outside of your building.
- We will tell you about your responsibility to pay for all the services we provide.
- We will give you an invoice for your service charges every July. Your service charge invoice will explain the individual charges.
- You can pay your service charge either in one payment or in monthly instalments. We will offer you a range of ways to pay.
- We will consult you on any major repairs or improvements we plan to carry out on your building.
- We will liaise with you while we carry out any work on your building.
- We will give you reasonable notice if we need to get into your home to carry out any repairs. This will be seven days unless in an emergency.
- We will hold a leaseholders' forum every year, and regular meetings of a leaseholder steering group. The steering group is made up of leaseholders and Your Homes Newcastle officers. It meets at regular intervals to discuss issues that are important to leaseholders

Our service standards

- We will send you a welcome pack as soon as we are notified that you have purchased your home.
- We will send you a Leasehold newsletter twice a year.
- We will invite you to a Leasehold Forum once per year.
- We will consult with you a minimum of 30 days before we carry out any major work to your home.