

## Service improvements suggested by Mystery shoppers – Investment Delivery

A presentation to all staff in Investment Delivery has taken place to advise of the findings from the mystery shopping. Workshops took place after the presentation to discuss and look at ways to improve our level of service provided to the tenants.

Issue	Improvement	Action / Progress	Timescale	Actions Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mystery shoppers felt it was extremely important for all members of staff to give their full name. This would help if they needed to ring back and if they wanted to speak to the same person so they would not have to repeat everything to another member of staff.</li> </ul>	<p>All Investment Delivery staff has been instructed to use their full name on the opening of the call. This will help tenants if they need to call back and speak to the same person.</p> <p>Spot checks will be done to ensure this is implemented by all staff on the section.</p>	<p>All staff have now been advised of the correct opening</p> <p>All area teams within Investment Delivery have been advised of the spot checks that will be performed on their staff.</p> <p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the</p>	<p>March 2007</p> <p>March/April 2007 and ongoing until at a satisfactory level</p>	<p>Spots checks on the opening of the call have taken place on staff across Investment Delivery.</p> <p>This is to continue the focus from the section presentation and the briefings done in</p>

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		area team meetings within Investment Delivery.		the team meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mystery shopper discussed that the service could improve if tenants were involved in the handover process. Mystery shoppers said that there would be a training implication but it would help if a tenant representative or a member of staff from YHN was present at the time of handover.</li> </ul>	City Design, YHN's technical section carry out checks on the properties when the work has been completed. City Design carry out a sample of the properties from each scheme. If any problems are identified during this sample inspection, the sample size will increased.	<p>All Project Managers in Investment Delivery send out this letter following the completion of each property on their schemes.</p> <p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within</p>	Currently, this letter is sent out to all tenants after the completion of their property.	<p>The letter has been amended to inform the tenants of the full handover process in relation to their property/estate.</p> <p>This is sent out to all tenants following the handover of</p>

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	<p>YHN recognise this has been an issue and have introduced a final letter which is sent to the tenants on the completion of the work for their property. This letter will advise the tenants of the process to follow if any faults or problems are identified after the contractor has left the site.</p>	<p>Investment Delivery</p>		<p>their property.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not all members of staff gave the same information about why the work could not all be done at once in one property. Mystery shoppers appreciated the information about how it was decided in the beginning through consultation with tenants and the tenant's federation.</li> </ul>	<p>A 'frequently asked question' (FAQ) sheet will be developed to ensure all staff have the knowledge on the decisions taken by Investment Delivery. This will ensure consistency to all answers provided to tenants by staff.</p> <p>This FAQ sheet will also be used as part of the induction for new staff members.</p>	<p>The FAQ sheet will be developed to help staff provide a more informative service to our tenants during phone calls and site visits. It will be discussed in area team meetings within Investment Delivery.</p> <p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within Investment Delivery</p>	<p>April/May 2007</p>	<p>A FAQ question sheet has been developed so that all information provided by staff is consistent when providing information to tenants.</p> <p>All staff in Investment Delivery have been provided with a copy of the FAQs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When calls were transferred from the customer service team to area teams, mystery shoppers were disappointed that they then had to repeat all the</li> </ul>	<p>When staff receive a call and they are required to transfer it to the officer dealing with the scheme, any details advised to them by the tenant should be</p>	<p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within Investment Delivery</p>	<p>April 2007</p>	<p>All staff have been advised to forward any details taken from the tenant prior to</p>

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<p>information again when being transferred. They felt that they hadn't really been listened to</p>	<p>given to this officer prior to transferring the call. This will avoid the tenant repeating all of the details again. If convenient for the tenant, a callback should be offered to avoid the tenant from waiting unnecessarily on the phone.</p>			<p>transferring the call.</p> <p>Callbacks are offered if the issue cannot be dealt with during the first contact from the tenant.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information was provided on the guarantee of the windows when they asked staff, staff just referred mystery shoppers to Repair Call. Mystery shoppers did not know why they couldn't provide information on warranty.</li> </ul>	<p>The new final letter sent to the tenant after the handover of their property will provide the telephone number for repaircall. If the tenants rings this number, repaircall will deal with the problem and organise for the work to be done. If it is an ongoing issue on that estate, this will be feedback to Investment Delivery.</p>	<p>FAQ sheet to be developed showing full response required for this question.</p> <p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within Investment Delivery</p>	<p>April 2007</p>	<p>A FAQ question sheet has been developed so that all information provided by staff</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mystery shoppers felt that staff should not assume that all tenants will understand what 'internal package' means. This should be explained.</li> </ul>	<p>FAQ sheet will explain the full meaning of an internal package and external package</p> <p>Staff will use this to explain exactly what the term 'internal package' is when explaining to tenants. Staff will also be advised to avoid the use of jargon when discussing the work with tenants.</p> <p>Investment Delivery staff will stress to tenants that any package of work due on their property is subject to a survey by the contractor.</p>	<p>FAQ sheet to be developed showing full response required for this question.</p> <p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within Investment Delivery</p>	<p>April 2007</p>	<p>is consistent when providing information to tenants.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mystery shoppers commented on the amount of background noise when</li> </ul>	<p>Staff will be made aware of the impact of background noise on their calls,</p>	<p>This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within</p>	<p>April 2007</p>	<p>Background noise is at times unavoidable due</p>

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making calls. They said that this is sometimes distracting but did not know whether this could be improved.	however, the office is open plan and background noise will be unavoidable.	Investment Delivery		to the layout of the office.  Staff has been advised to make use of the mute button on the phone when carrying out work during the call.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mystery shoppers discussed hearing staff complain that the phone were busy. They felt that this was not professional.</li> </ul>	Staff will be advised that these comments are unacceptable as they make us appear unprofessional to our tenants.	This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within Investment Delivery	April 2007	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff should refrain from using jargon such as 'void' and 'rat runs'. Mystery shoppers could not understand what the member of staff was talking about.</li> </ul>	<p>Staff will be advised that the use of jargon is not appropriate when talking to tenants. They should not assume that tenants are familiar with our terminology.</p> <p>Staff will also be advised that when discussing the year the work is due for the tenants, it should be</p>	This action plan document will be discussed with staff in the area team meetings within Investment Delivery	April 2007	Staff advised to not use jargon during the presentation and in team meetings

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	highlighted that this is the financial year i.e. April to March.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="237 592 683 699">• Staff need to be honest and listen carefully to questions put to them by tenants.</li>   <li data-bbox="237 852 683 991">• Some calls from tenants highlight concerns about the work being done in their home.</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="712 592 1099 699">Staff to ensure that clear and accurate information is provided to tenants</p> <p data-bbox="712 852 1099 1062">Tenants will be able to refer to a work leaflet that will explain how they can prepare for the work and what the work will involve in their home.</p>	<p data-bbox="1146 592 1547 730">Staff to use all information sources available to provide the correct answers to the tenant's queries.</p> <p data-bbox="1146 852 1581 991">Staff to send out a work leaflet to the tenants that should help explain the work that will take place in their property</p>	<p data-bbox="1619 592 1765 619">April 2007</p> <p data-bbox="1619 852 1832 879">April/May 2007</p>	<p data-bbox="1863 592 2085 802">FAQs, Internet and information systems to be used to ensure accuracy of information.</p> <p data-bbox="1863 852 2085 1062">Work leaflets have been made available to all staff in Investment Delivery.</p>

## Appendix three

### Investment Delivery Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
What is the Decent Homes Standard (DHS)?	This is a Government Standard, which all councils must achieve by 2010. It sets out 4 elements that a home can either pass or fail. The elements cover minimum Health and Safety standards, reasonably modern amenities like kitchens, affordable warmth and being wind tight and watertight.
Does the DHS include environmental work like improvements to footpaths, fencing or parking?	No, it does not include any work outside the home. YHN are continuing to work in partnership with other funding agencies e.g. New Deal for Communities and Bridging Newcastle Gateshead (Pathfinder) to attract complimentary funding.
Will my walls be re-plastered as part of the DHS work?	Patch plastering to areas affected by work will be carried out. Our Constructors, will however aim to keep damage to a minimum and where possible complete pilot properties to ensure you can be advised about levels of damage. Any additional plastering will be arranged through Repairs and Maintenance to ensure the Programme is not disrupted.
If I have asbestos in my home, will it be removed as part of the DHS work?	Our Construction partners will carry out sample asbestos surveys of every home prior to work starting. The results of this survey will identify if any treatment is required, and this will be co-ordinated with the DHS work. It is not always necessary to remove asbestos as if asbestos is not being disturbed, it is safe.
Will I definitely get the work carried out in the year you have said?	Our aim is to deliver the DHS as identified in the six year plan. While every effort is made to keep to these programme dates, there may be changes due to unforeseen circumstances. We will keep you informed of any programme changes.

<p>How did you decide in which year an estate would have improvements carried out?</p>	<p>We pulled together a lot of technical information about conditions on each estate from the stock condition survey and our repairs and maintenance information and prioritised on a “worst first” basis. We also took into account the views expressed by tenants in the 2001 Tenants Investment Priorities survey.</p>
<p>What work will be carried out to properties?</p>	<p>The work has been split into an internal and an external package.</p> <p>The internal package <b>could</b> include central heating, rewiring, replacement kitchens and bathrooms.</p> <p>The external package <b>could</b> include door and window replacement, brickwork repairs and roof repairs.</p> <p>We will carry out a technical survey in every home to assess what work is needed to bring the home up to DHS standard and there will be a break in between the internal and external work to minimise disruption.</p>
<p>Why two packages? Why not do all the work together?</p>	<p>This was discussed at a Tenants Group Event held on 7 February 2004. The event recommended that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be an even distribution of work across all areas of the City – if work is done together this would target investment at fewer estates in any one year.</li> <li>• Carrying out the work in two packages will mean that most tenants will be able to remain in their homes during the work.</li> <li>• The exception is that in Multi Storeys that work may be done as a combined package</li> </ul> <p>The Event was attended by Tenant Group Representatives.</p>

<p>Does this mean I won't have to move out during the work?</p>	<p>We have planned the work so that most people should be able to cope with the disturbance and stay in their homes. If anyone feels they are unable to cope with the work then we will look at what support we can provide.</p> <p>This can range from helping elderly or people with disabilities to pack some of their belongings to go into storage to respite care or temporary moves. It is important you raise any concerns with your Constructor's Liaison Officer during the home visit to ensure the necessary support can be provided.</p>
<p>When will the surveys take place?</p>	<p>Our Construction Partners will carry out the surveys within 3 months of to work starting. You will receive a letter telling you when surveys will be starting on your estate. Typically a survey takes between one and two hours.</p> <p>You will receive a letter confirming the outcome of the survey.</p>
<p>What can I do if I am not happy with the results of the survey</p>	<p>If you would like a review of your survey, contact your YHN Project Officer. They will arrange for someone from City Design, Newcastle City Council's in-house design service to re-inspect your property. The outcome of this survey will be the final decision and can not be changed</p> <p><b>Note for staff:</b>  (For External re-inspections email <a href="mailto:andrew.cairns@newcastle.gov.uk">andrew.cairns@newcastle.gov.uk</a>. For Internal re-inspections email <a href="mailto:mark.hutchinson@newcastle.gov.uk">mark.hutchinson@newcastle.gov.uk</a>)</p>
<p>Who will be doing the work?</p>	<p>We have appointed 10 Construction Partners to do the work. When we contact you about the work in your home we will tell you which Construction Partner will be working on your home.</p>

How long will the work take?

We will carry out the work as quickly as possible. The actual

	timescale will depend on what work is needed in your home.
How much notice will I get before the work starts in my home?	We will write to you telling you about any work we are planning in your home at least 3 months before it is due to start. Nearer the time we will write to you again and give you more detailed information about any work we are planning. These letters will provide information on when surveys will be carried out on your estate. You will be given at least 7 days notice before the work starts.
Will I have any choice over the fixtures and fittings used in my home?	We will let you know what choices you will have before the work starts. You will be invited onto the 'Talk to us Bus' when it visits your estate to have a look at examples of the new fixtures and fittings that will be used in your home. The Constructor will take any choices from you at the home visit or at an organised event.
What preparations do I need to do before the work starts?	The Constructor's Liaison Officer will advise you during the home visit of the preparations you need to carry out. This will depend on the extent of work but commonly can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure your personal belongings are removed and stored safely</li> <li>• Clear all kitchen cupboards where necessary</li> <li>• Remove any pictures, mirrors etc from walls</li> <li>• Remove any floor coverings you wish to keep</li> <li>• Keep pets out of the house where possible or restrict them to one room during the work.</li> </ul>
Why does the Council use timber windows?	A detailed study was carried out into the benefits of timber and UPVC windows. The Council chose timber because it offered better security, design and flexibility and it is more environmentally friendly, at the time of the study the cost of the two types of windows were similar. A review is currently underway as UPVC has progressed since the original study was carried out. You will be notified of any changes in policy as an outcome of this review.

<p>How long will I be left without heating or hot water?</p>	<p>This depends upon the scope of the work that is being carried out but you should not be left without heating or hot water overnight.</p>												
<p>What if I don't want the work?</p>	<p>The work is optional unless it is necessary for Health and Safety reasons for example rewiring. However we are encouraging all tenants to have the work done and will provide any support you may need to make sure the disturbance to you is kept to a minimum.</p>												
<p>Will I get help with redecoration?</p>	<p>Kitchen and bathrooms which have been fully replaced will be emulsioned after the work. You will receive a contribution towards redecoration for other rooms whose décor has been affected by rewiring. This will be paid to you by cheque after the work is complete. The amounts you will receive are:</p> <table data-bbox="687 864 1114 1066"> <tr> <td>Living Room</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dining Room</td> <td>£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bedroom (each)</td> <td>£20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hall, Stairs and Landing</td> <td>£30</td> </tr> </table> <p>If your kitchen and bathroom are not fully replaced and you are rewired you will receive:</p> <table data-bbox="687 1196 1114 1285"> <tr> <td>Kitchen</td> <td>£25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bathroom/WC</td> <td>£20</td> </tr> </table> <p>I can send you out a leaflet confirming these allowances if you would like it?</p>	Living Room	£50	Dining Room	£50	Bedroom (each)	£20	Hall, Stairs and Landing	£30	Kitchen	£25	Bathroom/WC	£20
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<p>How will you publicise the improvement plans in the future?</p>	<p>We will hold an event each year and invite people who are getting work done in the coming years to attend and discuss the plans. We will also publicise these plans on our website <a href="http://www.yhn.org.uk">www.yhn.org.uk</a>.</p>												

<p>Will I be given a point of contact for any queries/concerns during the work?</p>	<p>Yes, you will be provided with a point of contact for queries and concerns. You will be informed of this contact on all information letters.</p>
<p>Will I pay extra rent for the improvements?</p>	<p>The government has said that Social Landlords must use the value of the property as part of the calculation for setting the amount of rent you pay. Some improvements <b>may</b> increase the property value and therefore lead to a small increase in rent. You will be informed of this increase before the work</p>

	starts.
What do I do if a problem develops after the Contractors finish the work?	<p>There is a 12 month defect period on mechanical and electrical equipment and 6 months on anything else and within this time the Contractor will carry out any repairs to what they have installed. After this period if any repairs or maintenance is required, you will need to report it to the Repairs Centre and they will arrange for it to be done. There are 3 ways to do this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by phoning the Repairs Centre anytime on <b>0845 113 8888</b></li> <li>• by calling in to your local Housing Office</li> <li>• by calling in to your nearest Customer Service Centre.</li> </ul>
What do I do if I need a disabled adaptation?	<p>If your bathroom is being replaced and you struggle to use the bath you will need to discuss this with the Constructor's Liaison Officer who will organise an Occupational Therapist to call at your home to assess your needs.</p> <p>For other adaptations please contact the Adaptations Team within Investment Delivery.</p>

**Staff Note:**

- (1) If providing dates for packages please advise the year runs from 1 April to 31 March
- (2) Always avoid the use of jargon.
- (3) When answering telephone calls provide both first name and surname.