



Your Homes
Newcastle

Mystery Shopping

Repairs and Maintenance

Report by Tenant Involvement Team – June - August 2007

Introduction

Your Homes Newcastle is committed to involving tenants to improve housing services. The mystery shopping programme began in November 2005 with the initial shop on the rent payment system. Since then the mystery shoppers have increased in numbers and have tested the services of the sheltered housing service and investment delivery. The mystery shoppers then decided that the next topic they would like to mystery shop was repairs and maintenance.

This report will provide an update on the results so far from June to August.

The results will then be used to help develop an action plan.

Recruitment

We have developed a pool of 15 mystery shoppers from across the city. A training course was held in July 2007 and we recruited a further 14 mystery shoppers. We also have three mystery shoppers from Inline who have also taken part in the repairs and maintenance mystery shop. The total number of mystery shoppers is now at 32 and is representative of YHN customers.

Training

An initial training programme was developed in July 2006. Since then the process of mystery shopping has developed and the feedback process has been designed by the existing volunteers.

In July 2006 the training was delivered by the tenant involvement team. This included information about what is involved in becoming a mystery shopper, what is meant by good customer service, the importance of impartiality, the need to stick to the script, using the equipment and most importantly how the results will form an action plan for service improvements.

The new training programme concentrates on a lot of similar themes such as impartiality, confidentiality and customer service. However the format of how the mystery shops can take place has changed and the training will be adapted to prepare new mystery shoppers. Mystery shoppers now have the opportunity to

- ◆ complete questionnaires from home
- ◆ record individual scenarios
- ◆ and they are looking to extend the programme so mystery shoppers can visit housing offices.

The repairs and maintenance mystery shop will only use the questionnaire method.

Getting the most out of mystery shopping

To ensure that the questionnaires would lead to service improvements the tenant involvement team lead officer for mystery shopping met with Victoria Birchall (monitoring manager) to develop questions that would ensure service improvement. The reason for this being that repairs and maintenance already do customer surveys after the repair has been complete and this was to ensure that there was no repetition. Managers were asked to brief their staff and inform staff that the mystery shop would commence from March and would be ongoing for the year.

The questionnaires were then discussed with the mystery shopping volunteers and changes were made to reflect what the mystery shoppers would also like to measure.

The changes were then confirmed with the repairs and maintenance section. As the mystery shoppers were only requested to complete a questionnaire when they had a genuine repair we agreed that this mystery shop would take longer to complete and that it would be ongoing for the year. To keep the repairs and maintenance team up to date with results it was agreed that a quarterly report would be developed to ensure service improvements throughout the year.

The volunteers will only report genuine repairs throughout the mystery shop. Therefore each shop will be different as all cases are individual. The mystery shoppers were reminded about the purpose of mystery shopping before each call and reminded that they needed to remain impartial when deciding on customer service levels.

The mystery shop

All the volunteers will complete the questionnaires from their own home. All calls will be reported through repair call and results recorded through the questionnaires. All questionnaires will be returned to the tenant involvement team.

Once the mystery shoppers have completed 4 calls they will receive £10 towards their expenses.

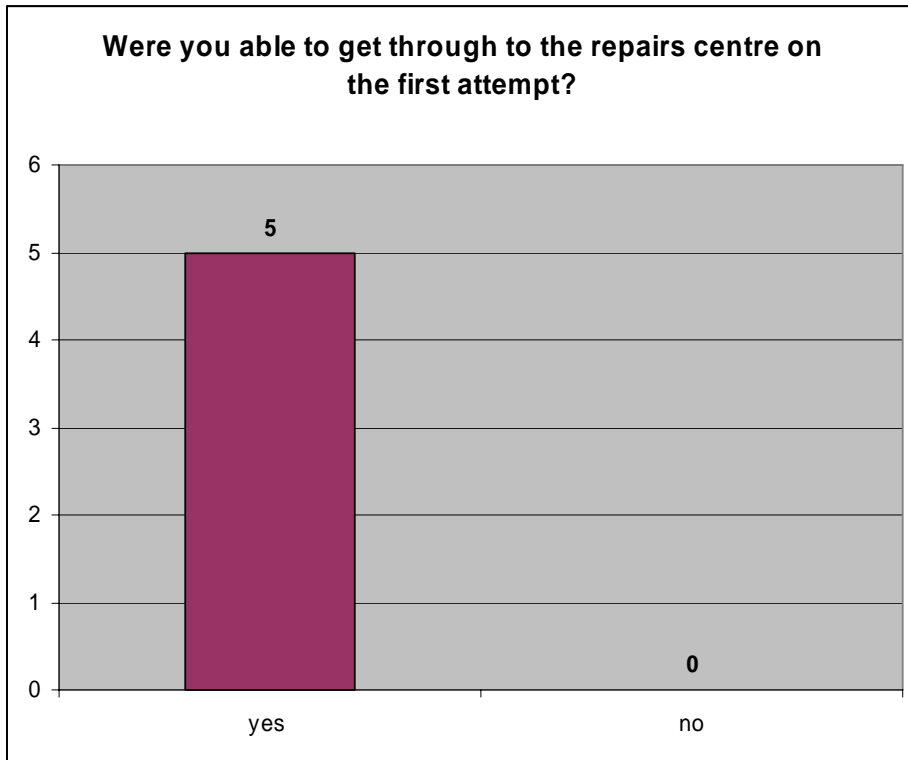
Feedback

Mystery shopping feedback was developed by working with the existing volunteers and it involves the mystery shoppers and service managers developing the action plan together to address all service improvements. Mystery shoppers receive a copy of the report and meet 4 weeks after this to discuss and develop the action plan. The service managers will then send a 6 month update on the progress made as a result of the mystery shopping.

Results

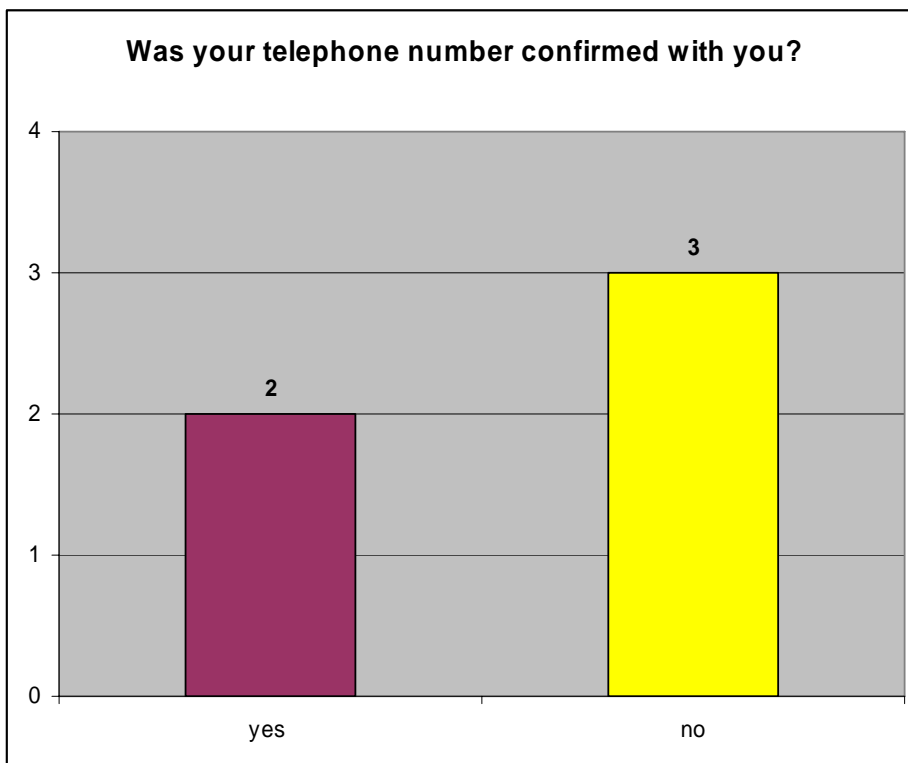
From June to August 5 people have returned their questionnaires. The results are as follows,

Question 1



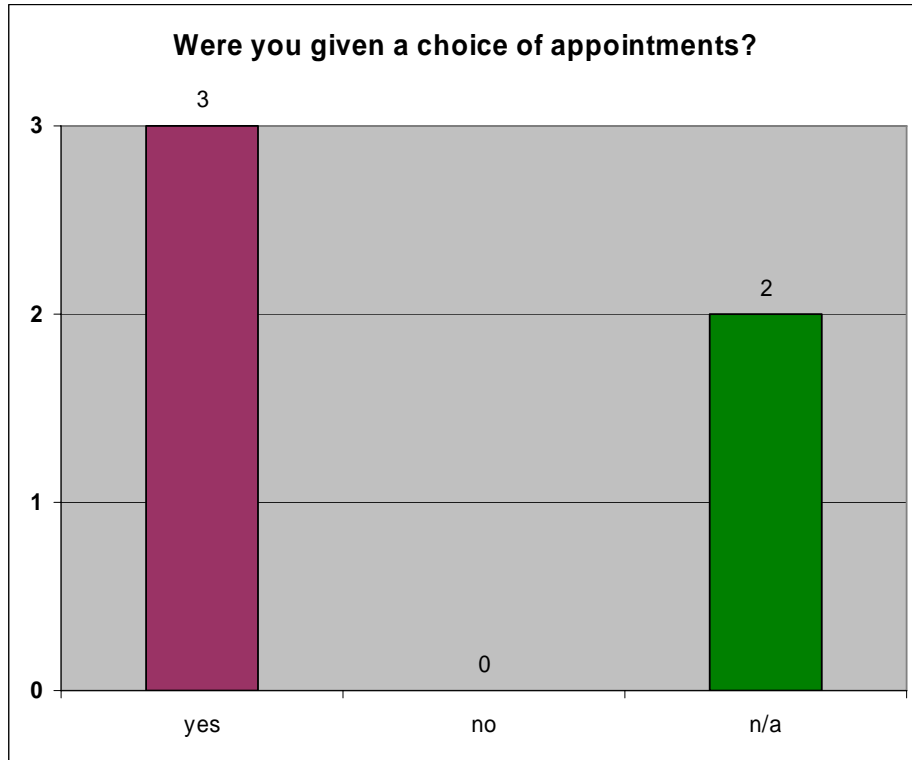
Customers were happy that were able to get through to repair call at the first attempt.

Question 2



Mystery shoppers felt that it was important that the repair call centre confirmed their telephone number. Telephone numbers may change and it is important that they have the correct one in order to gain access to the property.

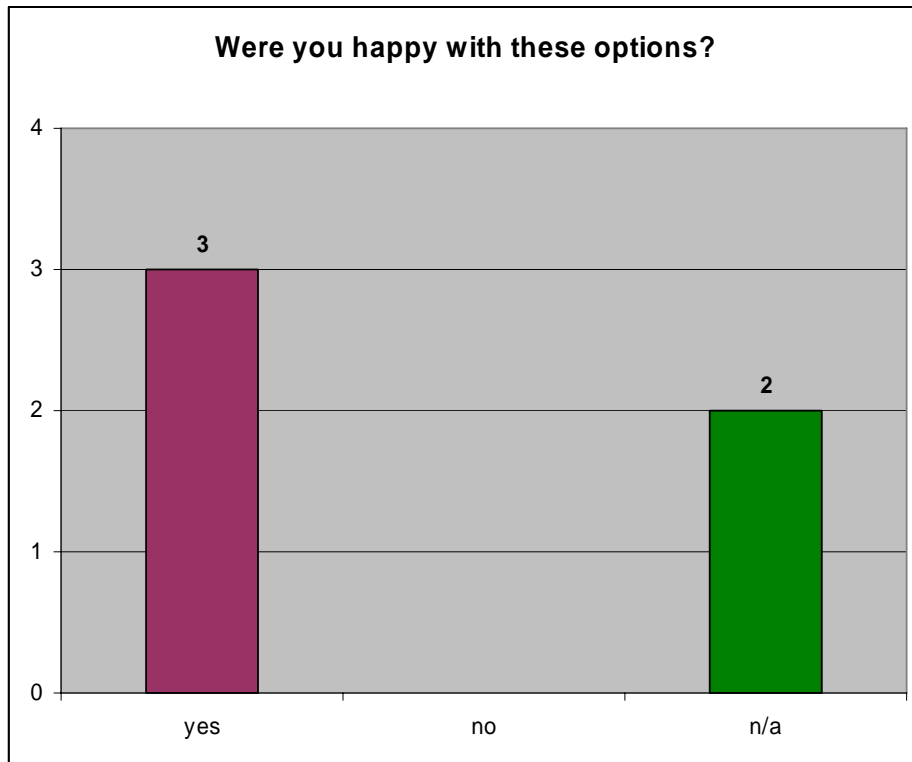
Question 3



Three out of five customers were happy with the options of appointments given.

Two out of five were not applicable as one repair was referred back to investment delivery therefore an appointment could not be given. For the other repair the mystery shopper was told that a worker would be out the same day so there was no need to give a choice of appointments.

Question 4



Question 5

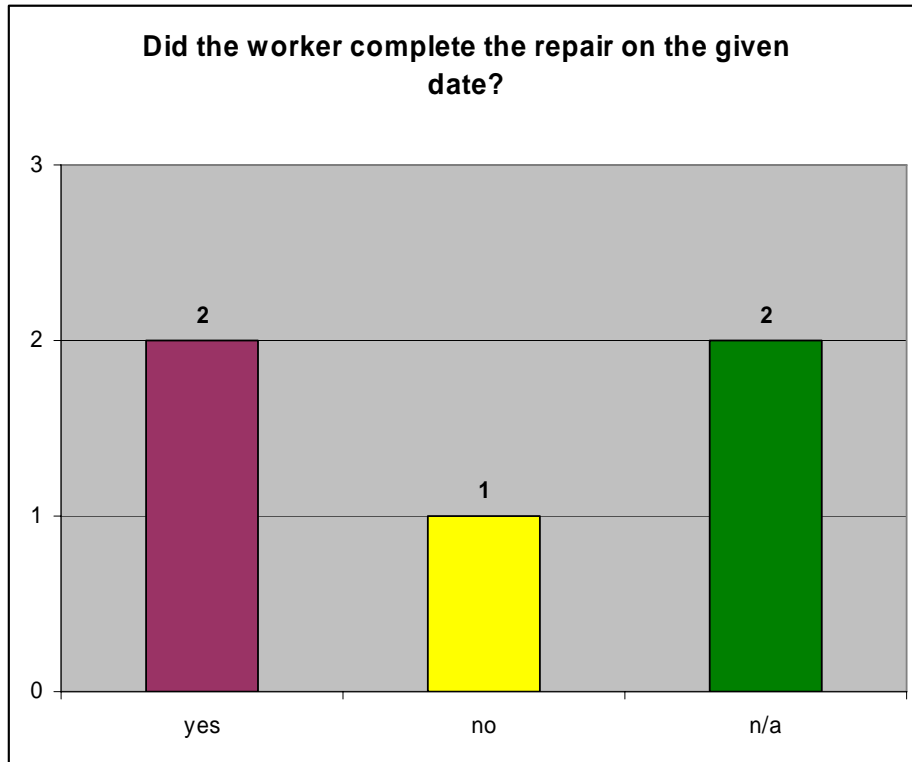


Three out of five customers received a letter. One mystery shopper was not happy with the service they received. The worker was due to come out that day to rectify the repair on the 8th June. However the worker failed to turn up after the customer had waited in all day. The mystery shopper then received

a letter on 13th June telling her that the repair would be completed on the 8th June.

Two mystery shoppers did not receive a letter as this is because one repair was referred back to investment delivery and one mystery shopper did not complete this section of the questionnaire.

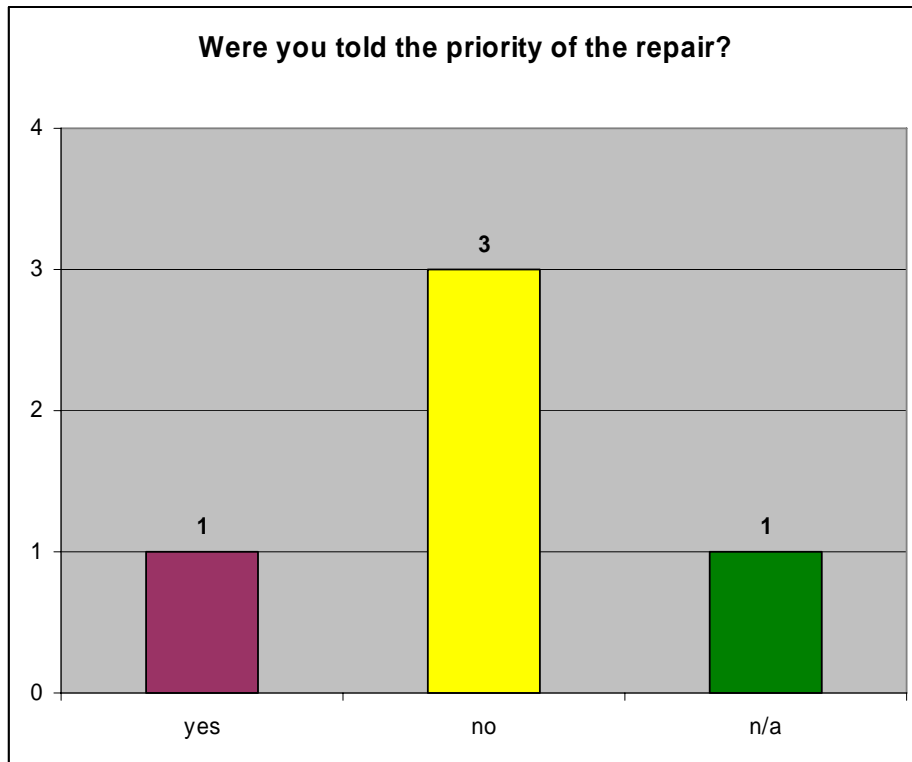
Question 6



The two mystery shoppers who had their work done on the given date scored the overall service as very good. One mystery shopper whose repair was not completed on the given date scored the overall service as very poor.

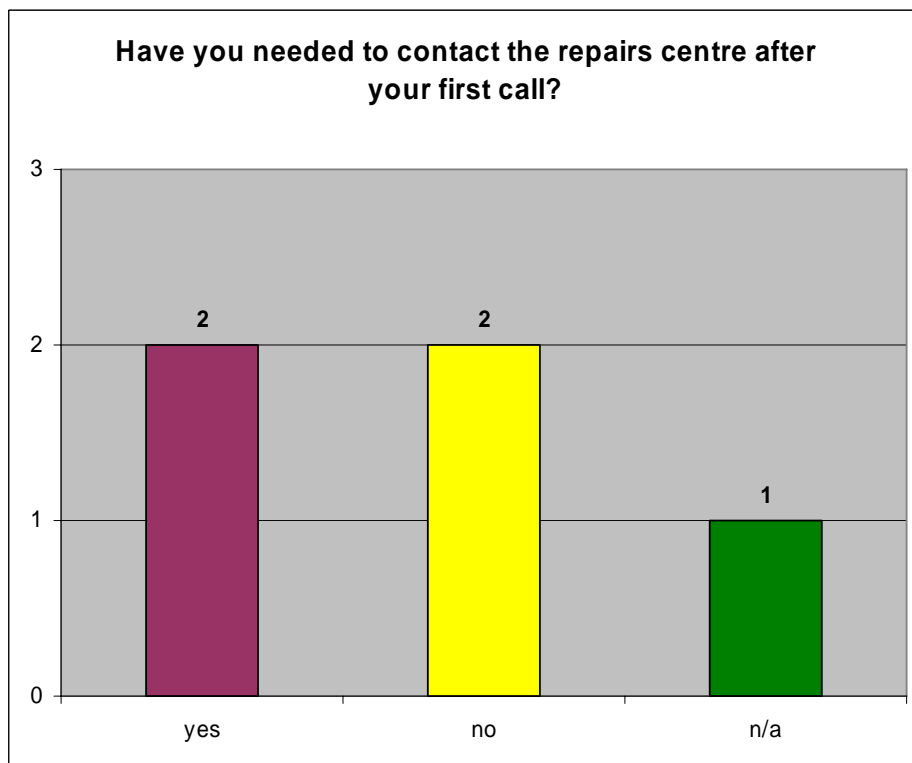
The two that were not applicable included mystery shops that were referred back to investment delivery and one mystery shopper did not complete this section of the questionnaire.

Question 7



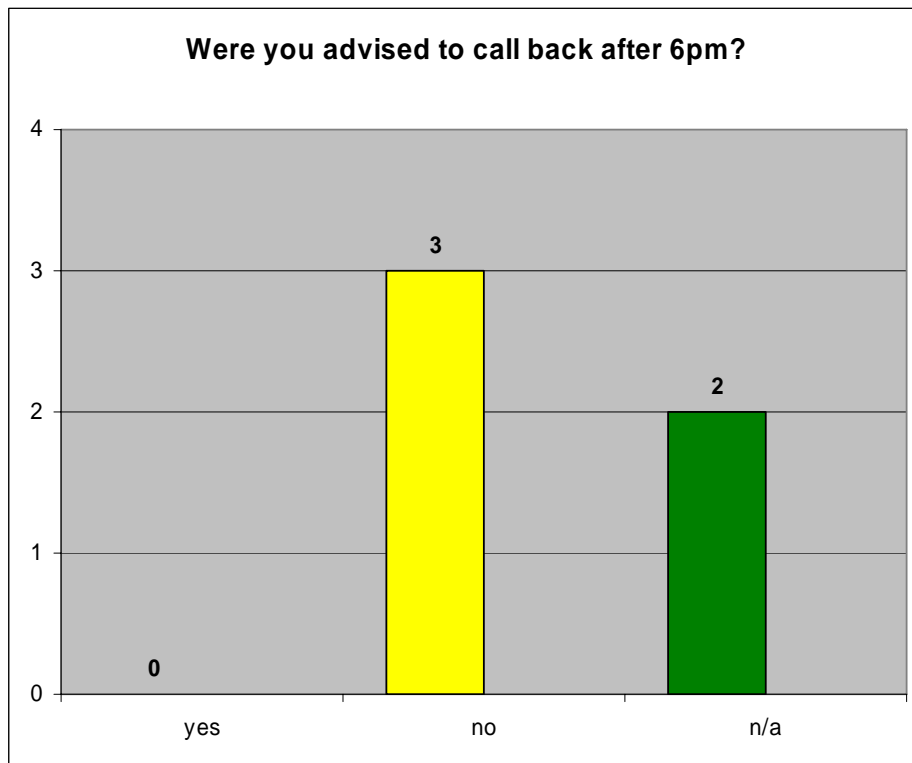
Out of the five mystery shops only one customer was told the priority of the repair. Mystery shoppers felt this was important information especially when some repairs take a long time to get fixed. Mystery shoppers felt that it would help customers understand why it takes so long if they were told the priority.

Question 8



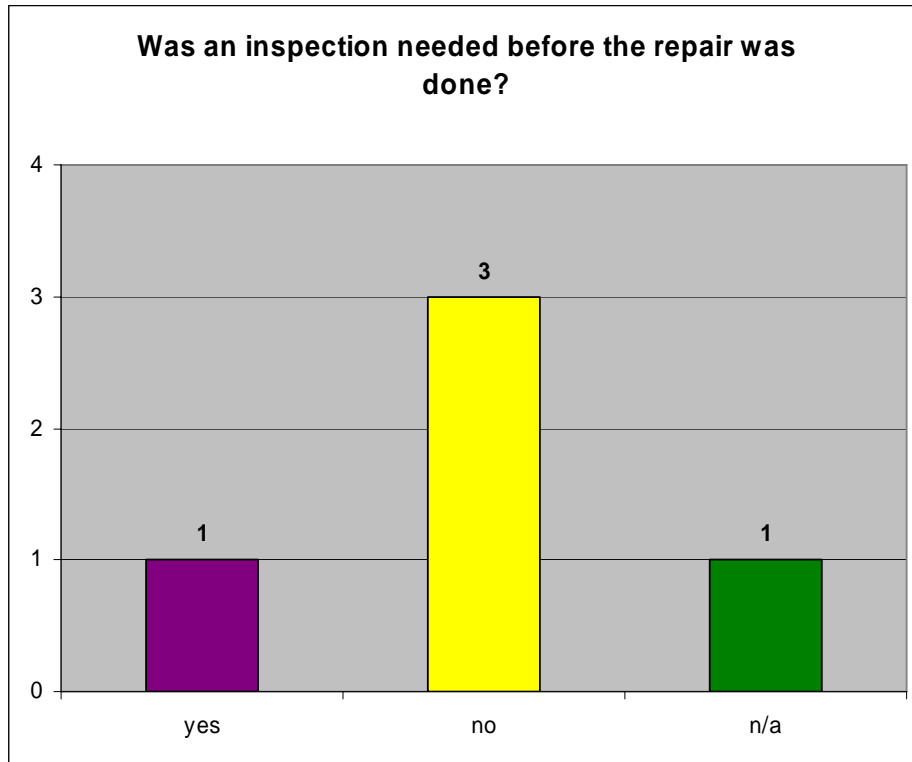
Two out the five mystery shoppers needed to contact the repair call centre to find out what was happening with their repair. One mystery shopper had to contact the repair centre as no one had turned up to do the repair on the given date, so they had to find out what was happening and when they would be sending someone else. Another mystery shopper was having a continuous problem with their drains and had to ring the repairs centre to chase up the repair as the repair to the drains had not been fixed.

Question 9

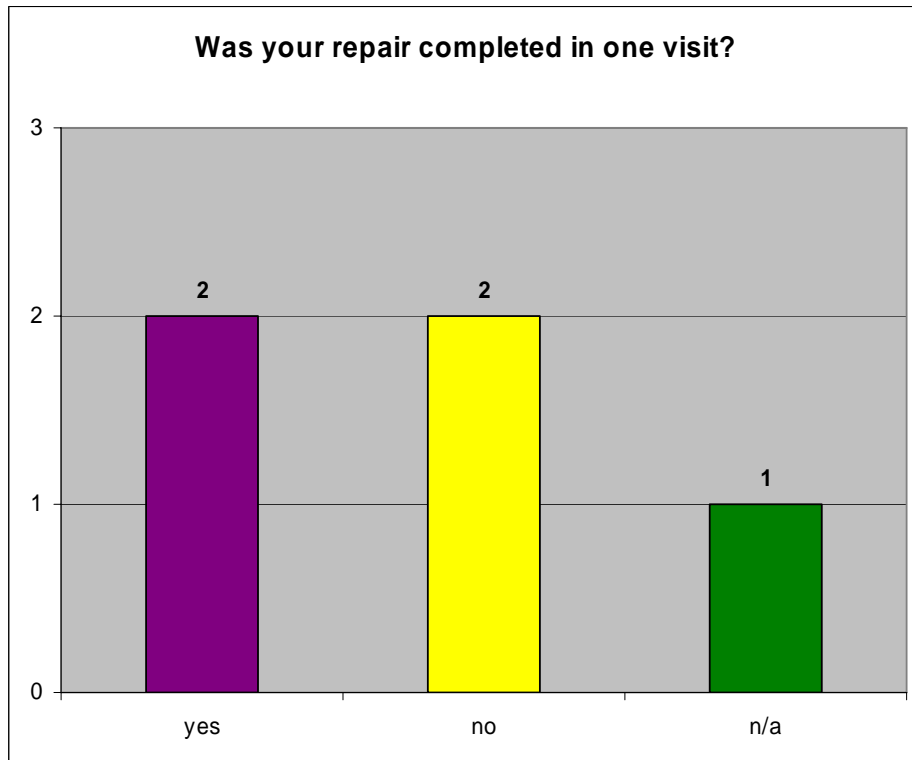


The Repair

Question 10.



Question 11

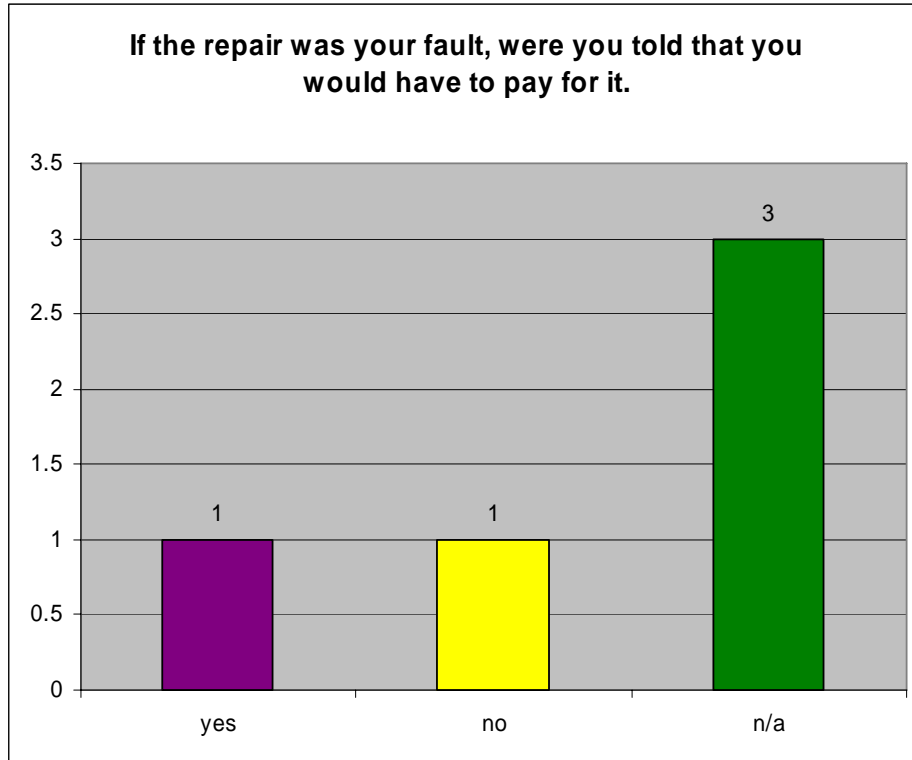


Two out of five mystery shoppers were happy that their repair was complete in one visit. One mystery shopper had an inspector out to their property and

therefore the repair could not be completed in one visit. However the mystery shopper was extremely happy with the service that she received as she only rang up originally to get some advice but an inspector was sent to have a look at the repair. She said the inspector was extremely helpful and a repair was organised after the inspector had been out.

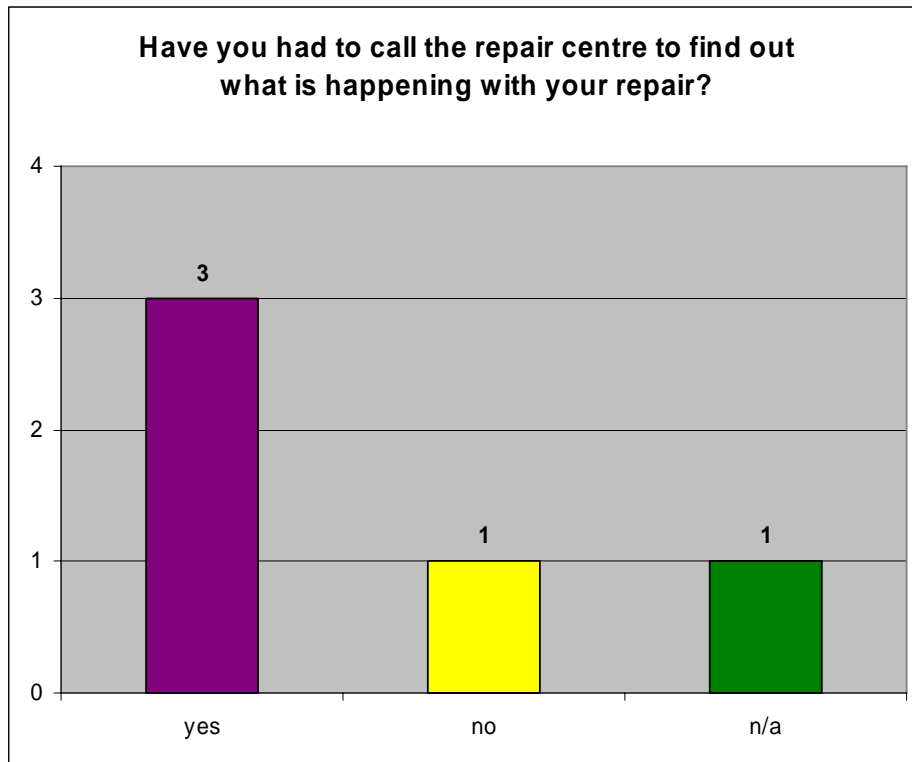
Another mystery shopper that did not have her repair completed in one visit was told when the worker arrived that he could not fix the boiler, however they informed the mystery shopper when they would be coming back to fix it

Question 12



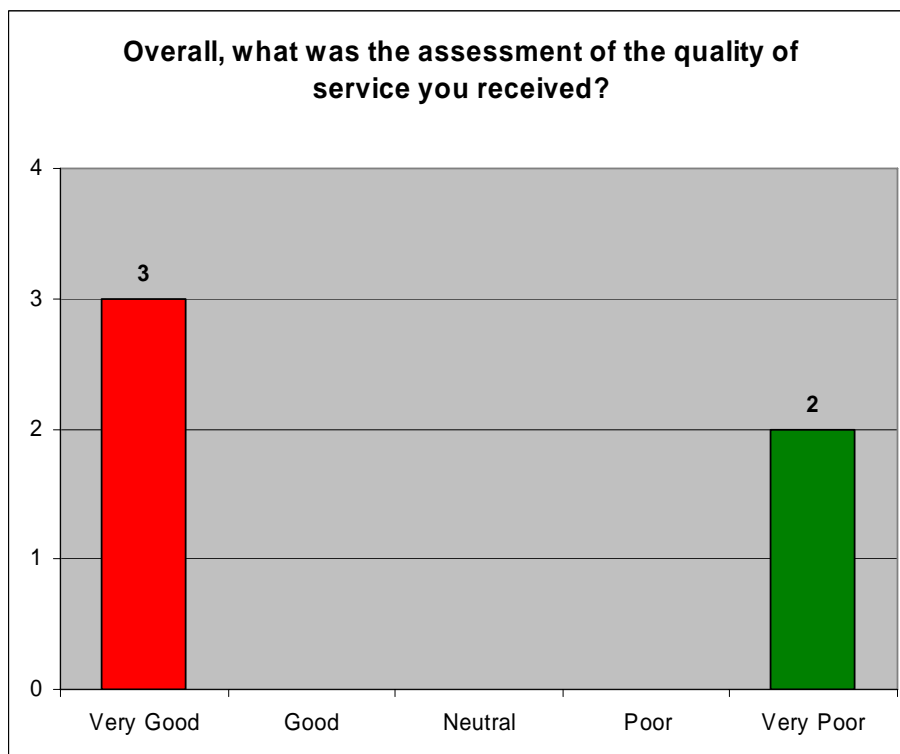
Three out of five mystery shoppers felt that this question was not applicable due to the type of repair that they were reporting. One mystery shopper was not told that they would have to pay for the repair however as the repair was not their fault again this was not applicable. One mystery shopper who was told about the possibility of being charged for the repair was due to the repair that was being reported may have been caused by that person or that repair call may not be responsible for fixing that type of repair.

Question 13



One mystery shopper contacted the repairs centre to re arrange an appointment but was happy that this service was available. Another mystery shopper had to ring back to chase up what was happening with a repair. And another mystery shopper had to ring back as a worker had not turned up when the appointment had been arranged.

Overall customer service



Mystery shoppers viewed the overall service as very good when their telephone number was confirmed with them, when the repair was completed on the given date and also if staff were polite and helpful when answering the telephone.

Those who scored the service poorly did not have their telephone numbers confirmed with them and received a poor service on getting the repair completed by having to chase up what was happening.

Service improvements

- ◆ All staff should confirm the customer's telephone number. 60% of calls did not have their telephone number confirmed. Mystery shoppers pointed out that a lot of people change their number especially mobile numbers and that is why staff should always check. Also mystery shoppers suggested more repairs may get completed on time if the telephone number was confirmed at the beginning as it would make it easier to gain access to a property.
- ◆ All mystery shoppers were happy that they received an option of appointments.
- ◆ One mystery shopper was disappointed to receive a letter after the work was due to be completed (especially as the worker failed to turn up on the given date). YHN are quick to send out letters if you are not in and miss an appointment but customers do not get an apology if they have to wait in all day and the workers do not turn up.
- ◆ Levels of service were scored higher if the repair was completed on the given date.
- ◆ Mystery shoppers felt customers should be told the priority of the repair as this would help customers understand why not all repairs can be completed straight away.
- ◆ Mystery shoppers scored the service poorly if they had to chase repairs to find out what was happening.

Positive feedback

"It really is possible to get an excellent service and I am a firm believer that YHN should know of these from satisfied customers".

"From start to finish the repairs centre really did pull out all the stops and were friendly and polite"

"the plumber that came to my home was great and he did the job, he was polite and respected my home".



Mystery Shop Repairs and Maintenance Guidance notes to completing a questionnaire

This Scenario is about when you need a repair to your home.

You will need to complete the questionnaire over a period of time. You can start when you report the repair and you will finish when the repair has been completed.

(Before you report the repair you should read the questionnaire and familiarise yourself with the areas that you are going to be observing. It may be useful if you have a notepad to make rough notes during the process – you might find them useful.)

You can use the free phones available in community housing offices or the repairs centre number **0845 113 8888**. After completing 4 mystery shops mystery shoppers will receive £10 expenses to cover the costs of completing the calls.

You should complete your name and the first line of your address on the questionnaire then complete the date, and time, you reported the repair. You should fill in name of the office/department you contacted – you should **not** write in the name of the person you reported the repair to.

Carrying out the Mystery Shop

Repairs reported within Office Hours 8am – 6pm

You should be told, without asking, the priority the repair has been given and when it should be completed by. Tell us if you were.

You should be offered an appointment if access is needed to your home and being given a choice.

Question 6 will ask if you are asked to call back after 6 o'clock , this is only relevant if you are reporting the repair during normal working hours 8am to 6pm or 8am to 3pm on a Friday. If you are reporting the repair out of hours this question will not apply.

The repair

Getting the Work Done

Questions 10 to 13 will look at the service delivered when the work is being carried out.

If the questions do not apply please tell us.

Please let us know if the repair was completed in one visit or whether the workmen needed to come back to complete the repair.

Some repairs are tenant responsibility and you should be told if you are responsible to pay for this repair.

Finally we would like you to rate the overall service you have received from reporting the repair to the repair being completed. Please add any comments you have about this service.

You should complete the questionnaire as soon as possible after your shop

If you find the questionnaire difficult to complete and can suggest a way to improve this please contact the Tenant Involvement Team with your ideas.

Please return questionnaire in freepost envelope provided.

Repairs & maintenance Mystery Shopping questionnaire

(Please complete as soon as possible after carrying out the Mystery Shop)

Name	
First line of address	
Date of mystery shop	
Time of mystery shop	
Repair details	
Date repair completed	

Contacting the Repairs Centre

1. Were you able to get through to the Repairs Centre on the first attempt? Yes No
2. Was your telephone number confirmed with you? Yes No
3. Were you given a choice of appointments? Yes No

What options were you given?

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Weekends | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Early morning | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Late morning | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Early evening | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Late evening | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
4. Were you happy with these options? Yes No
 5. Did you receive a letter a letter confirming this appointment? Yes No

Please give date you received the letter _____

6. Did the workmen complete the repair on the given appointment date? Yes No

7. Were you told the priority of the repair? Yes No

8. Have you needed to contact the repairs centre after your first call to report the repair? If yes, please give details. Yes No

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9. Were you ever advised to call back after 6pm (3pm on Friday)? Yes No

If yes:
What day/time did you make your first request?

Day/Time.....

What were the reasons given for this?

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.....
.....

The repair

10. Was an inspection needed before the was repair done? Yes No

If yes, did the inspector tell you what repair was needed? Yes No

11. Was your repair completed in one visit? Yes No

If not, were you informed why? Yes No
Were you informed when they would be returning? Yes No

12. If your repair was your fault, were you told you would have to pay for it? Yes No

13. Have you had to call the repair centre to find out what is happening with your Yes No

repair?

Overall, what was your assessment of the quality of service you received?

(Please tick one box)

Very good

Good

Neutral

Poor

Very Poor

Comments (You may wish to add some comments)

Thank you for completing this mystery shop. Please return your questionnaire in the freepost envelope provided.

Action plan

Issue	Improvement	Action / Progress	Timescale	Actions Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ All staff should confirm the customer's telephone number. 60% of calls did not have their telephone number confirmed. Mystery shoppers pointed out that a lot of people change their number especially mobile numbers and that is why staff should always check. Also mystery shoppers suggested more repairs may get completed on time if the telephone number was confirmed at the beginning as it would make it easier to gain access to a property.				

Issue	Improvement	Action / Progress	Timescale	Actions Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Levels of service were scored higher if the repair was completed on the given date. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ One mystery shopper was disappointed to receive a letter after the work was due to be completed (especially as the worker failed to turn up on the given date). YHN are quick to send out letters if you are not in and miss an appointment but customers do not get an apology if they have to wait in all day and the workers do not turn up. 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mystery shoppers felt customers should be told the priority of the repair as this would help customers 				

Issue	Improvement	Action / Progress	Timescale	Actions Completed
understand why not all repairs can be completed straight away.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Mystery shoppers scored the service poorly if they had to chase repairs to find out what was happening 				