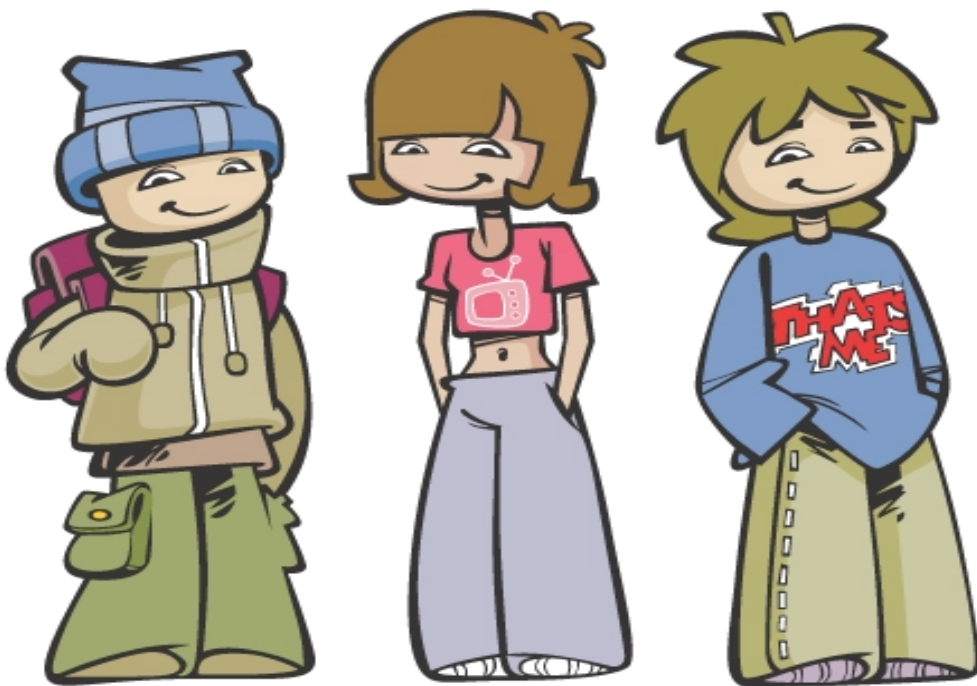




Your Homes
Newcastle



Mystery Shopping

Repairs and Maintenance
Involving Young People

Report by Tenant Involvement Team – June 2007

Introduction

Your Homes Newcastle is committed to involving tenants to improve housing services. As part of the mystery shopping programme we wanted to get more young people involved and reality checking our services.

We met with a group of young people who had previously been involved in phoning and checking services as part of Inline's code of conduct. We discussed the possible services that they would like to check and a priority was the repairs service.

Training

The young people who took part in the repairs mystery shop did not receive any further training about mystery shopping as they had already received training and have successfully completed reality checks through their work at Inline.

Getting the most out of mystery shopping

To make sure that the questionnaires would lead to service improvements the tenant involvement team met with Victoria Birchall (monitoring manager) to develop questions that would ensure service improvement.

This is because the repairs and maintenance already do customer surveys after a 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 then went to Youth Voice to give the young people the opportunity to add any additional questions. The group agreed that they were happy with the original questionnaires and did not have any amendments.

The young people were told that this mystery shop would be part of the ongoing repairs mystery shop and their involvement will help towards service improvement.

Three volunteers completed the mystery shop and as they were not Newcastle City Council tenants they were given a list of repairs, names and addresses (there were no emergency repairs to allow for the time to cancel the repairs). They were also provided with contact telephone numbers to provide staff with if they were asked to confirm their telephone number.

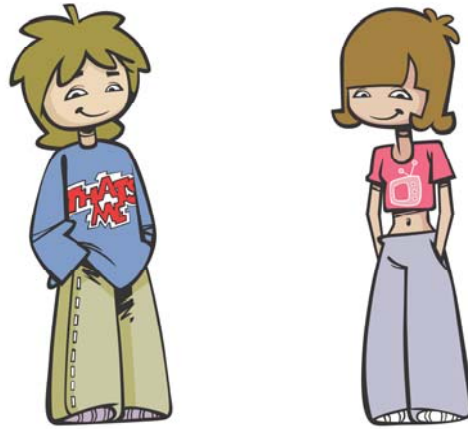
All the repairs were cancelled 2 hours after reporting them. The tenant involvement officer contacted repair call and then confirmed by email all the repairs that needed to be cancelled. All telephone numbers were corrected back to the original contact number.

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 completed the questionnaires on Friday 30th June. All calls will be reported through repair call and results recorded through the questionnaires. All questionnaires will be returned to the tenant involvement team.

In total 15 calls were completed.



Mystery Shop Repairs and Maintenance Guidance notes to completing a questionnaire

These notes will help you complete the mystery shopping questionnaire.

Before reporting a repair you will be given a pretend name, address and contact number. You can choose a pretend repair from the list below. All calls will be made to the repair centre by contacting telephone number 0845 113 8888.

You may find it useful to read the questionnaire before making your call as it will help you know what questions need to be answered. You may find it useful to make some rough notes during the call.

Please complete your name and the first line of the address on the questionnaire then complete the date, and time, you reported the repair.

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.

If you find the questionnaire difficult to complete and can suggest a way to improve this then please just let Heather or Louise know.

Repair examples

- ◆ Toilet is leaking from the cistern
- ◆ You have a leak under the kitchen sink
- ◆ Your boiler is not working and you have no hot water
- ◆ You have a leak under the bath
- ◆ Your bath panel is smashed
- ◆ Extractor fan in the kitchen is not working
- ◆ Your drains are blocked
- ◆ Your guttering has come away from the house.
- ◆ Your front door wont lock (you have a Yale lock it is just the mortice lock that is broken).

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	
Department contacted	
Repair cancelled	

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

If you were not happy please tell us why.

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

6. 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?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Please tell us how you rate 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)

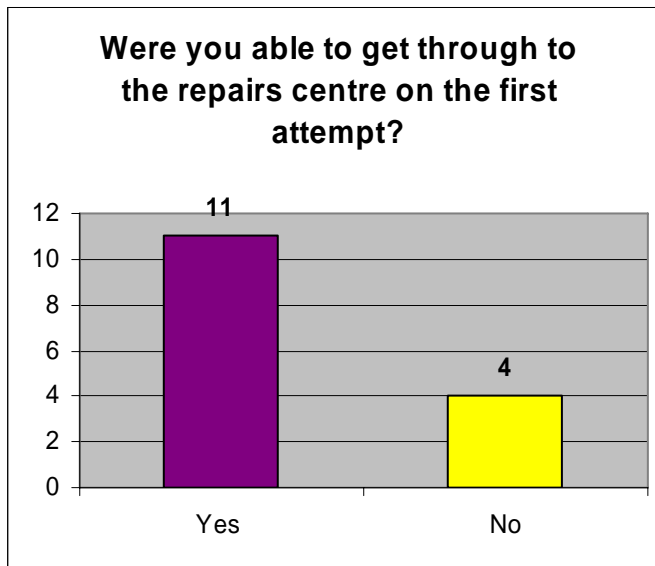
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Thank you for completing this mystery shop.

Please return the questionnaire to Heather or Louise.

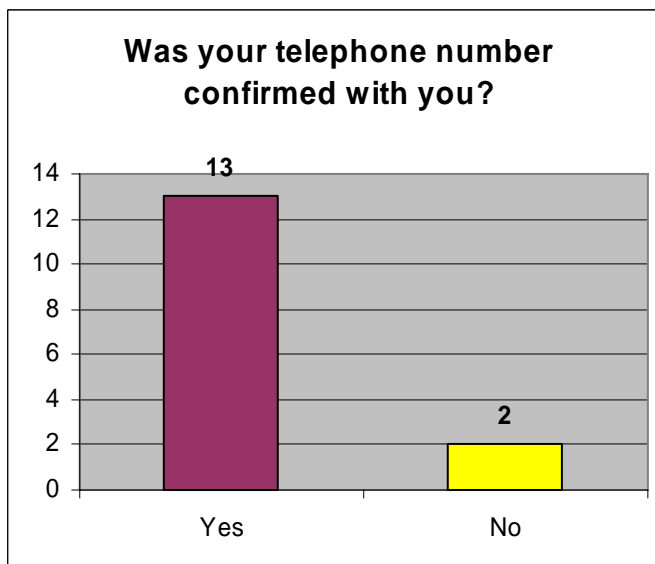
Results

Question one



The group felt that this was quite a good service. However there were four calls that could have been dealt with better. On 2 occasions the phone rang then the line went dead and the other 2 calls the line was engaged.

Question two



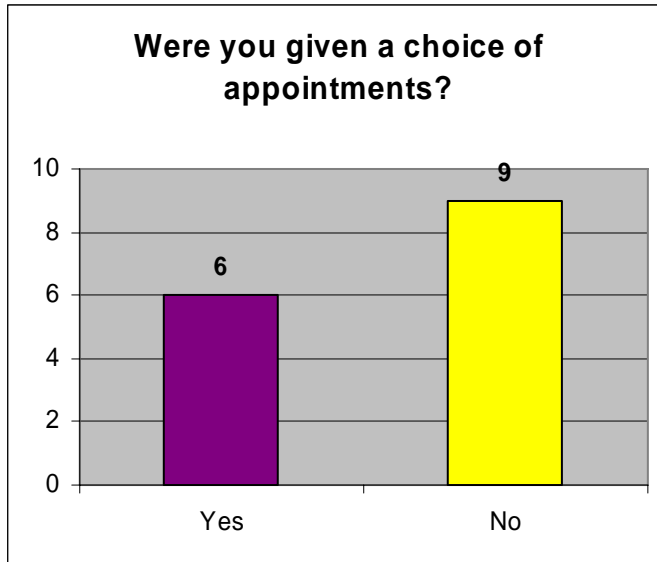
It was explained to the volunteers why the person on the other end the phone should confirm the telephone number and why it was important.

The group felt that this was done really well. However the two calls failed to do this.

On one call the repair person did not confirm the telephone number and yet promised to give the person a ring back later that day. It was felt that the number should have been confirmed as they may have had the incorrect details or this person may have changed their telephone number.

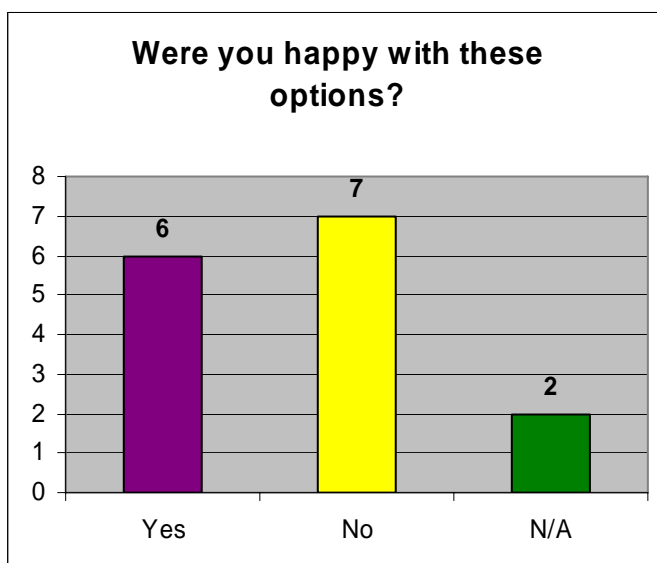
On the second call the repair person who did not confirm the telephone number at all this reflected in the score given on the level of customer service.

Question three



The volunteers found that 9 out of the 15 calls were not given a choice of appointments they were always told when someone could call. The volunteers felt it would be best if the repairs service asked when would be best for them or alternately if given an appointment ask them if that time was convenient to them.

Question four

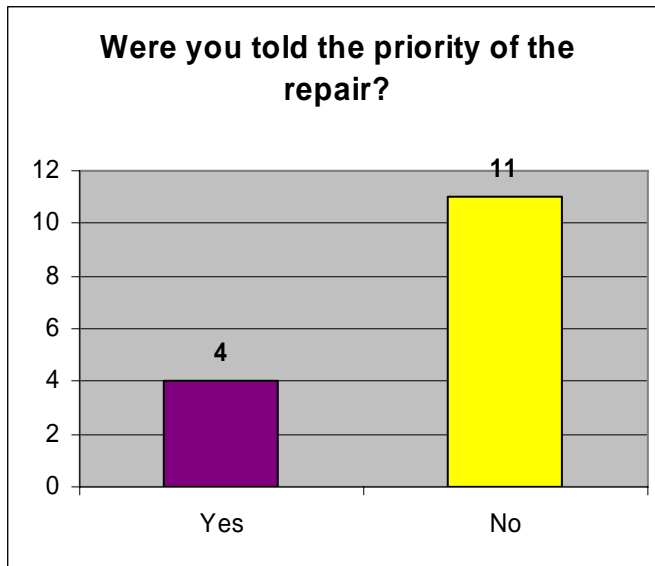


6 out of the 15 calls were happy with the service as they were happy to be told when the repair would be completed.

7 out of the 15 calls said that they were not happy with this service due to the fact that they were told and were not given any options.

2 calls were not applicable as they did not get to that part of the questionnaire as they were offered a call back.

Question five



11 out of the 15 calls did not provide the mystery shopper with information about the priority of the repair.

Out of the 11 calls that did not provide this information this did not affect the overall rating on customer service. However two mystery shoppers felt that this information would have been helpful and this affected the overall score on customer service.

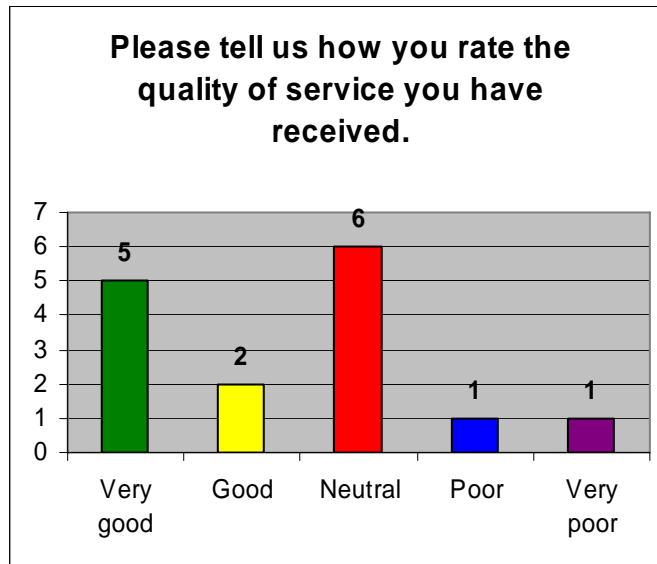
One mystery shopper felt that that it was a long time to get a leak fixed under the sink and would have liked more information about why it takes so long. Also they did not ask how bad the leak was; the mystery shopper also felt that this should have been asked by repair call.

Another mystery shopper was disappointed when they reported that guttering had come away from their property and water was leaking into the bedroom. Repair call said that this was not their problem as it was planned maintenance. The mystery shopper was told that this could take 3 months to repair. The mystery shopper understood about planned maintenance however was concerned that repair call were not interested with the fact that water was leaking into the property and what damage that was doing.

Question six

All calls were made on a Friday and one mystery shoppers was asked to called back on Saturday morning and she would get the first call number.

Question seven



5 out of the 15 calls said the service was very good. Out of these call they said the service was quick when responding to emergency repairs, the service was better when a choice of appointments was offered, when the staff were helpful and when an appointment was given within a few days.

2 out of the 15 calls viewed the service as good. However improvement could have been made if they were given a choice of appointments rather than just told when someone would be coming out.

6 out of 15 calls rated the service as average. One mystery shopper was confused as they reported that their extractor fan was not working and instead of being given an appointment they were told that their supervisor would ring them back.

The mystery shoppers felt this service could have been improved if they were given a choice of appointments rather than just be told when they were coming. They felt it would be better if they were asked "Is Monday AM ok with you?" rather than "I can get someone their on Monday AM."

One mystery shopper did not have their telephone number confirmed with them and again lack of choice for appointments was also a factor in the service being scored as neutral.

1 out of the 15 calls made considered the service to be poor. The reasons for this was that they could not get through on the first attempt (the line was engaged), they were not given a choice of appointments, the priority of the repair was not explained and this meant that the mystery shopper was

unhappy as they felt it was too long to wait to get a leak fixed under the sink. The mystery shopper also felt that the operator was impatient.

1 out of 15 calls recorded the service as very poor. The reason for this was that the repair that was reported involved water coming into her bedroom as the guttering had come loose from the house. The mystery shopper was told that this was not their problem and that it would be planned maintenance that would sort it out but this could take over 3 months. The mystery shopper felt that this was a poor response due to the water coming in to her property. She felt that they were not interested in the amount of damage that was happening to her property and that they were not thinking about the consequences of the repair. The mystery shopper understood about planned maintenance but thought under the circumstances that this repair was an emergency.

Service improvements

- ◆ The young people agreed that on every call the phone number should be confirmed with the caller. This is important when arranging access. The all agreed that people may change their numbers or lose their phone so this should always be checked.
- ◆ The group agreed that in general they were always told when someone would come out and were not given the options of the appointments available to them. The group were not aware that weekend appointments were available. The mystery shoppers felt that it would have improved the service if they were given an option but also if this was not possible to ask if the day given was ok for them.
- ◆ The group did not score the customer service low if repair call did not give the priority of the repair. However they said it would improve the service if this information was given as sometimes the mystery shoppers felt that it was to long to wait for a repair to be done. If an explanation was given this would have been easier to understand.
- ◆ One mystery shopper felt that repair call should have got more information about how serious the leak was that she was reporting to assess the priority of the repair.
- ◆ The group of mystery shoppers agreed that not all tenants would understand what planned maintenance is. If a repair is described as planned maintenance this should be explained.
- ◆ On two occasions the mystery shoppers told repair call that water was leaking into their priority due to guttering coming away from their property. The group agreed that although this came under planned maintenance repair call were not concerned about the damage being done to the property. The mystery shoppers were not even asked

about the damage being done. This should be considered to prevent further damage.

Action Plan

What you said	What we need to do	How we did	Completed on
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<p>2. The group agreed that in general they were always told when someone would come out and were not given the options of the appointments available to them. The group were not aware that weekend appointments were available. The mystery shoppers felt that it would have improved the service if they were given</p>			

<p>an option but also if this was not possible to ask if the day given was ok for them.</p>			
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