



Your Homes  
Newcastle

# Mystery Shopping

Community Care Alarm service / Sheltered Housing service  
Report by Tenant Involvement Team – October 2006

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## **Introduction**

Your Homes Newcastle is committed to involving tenants to improve housing services. We have developed the mystery shopping programme since the initial pilot in November 2005 and a number of improvements have been made to encourage more tenants to take part.

This report will cover how the mystery shopping programme has been developed and the finding results from the telephone mystery shop on the Community Care Alarm service and the Sheltered Housing Service.

### **Recruitment**

The pilot mystery shopping programme attracted 3 tenants in November 2005. Therefore the tenant involvement team had to look at new mechanisms to encourage more people to get involved. The tenant involvement team used a number of methods to recruit new members and this included

- A new advertising campaign (posters in local community housing offices/concierge blocks/customer service centres)
- An information leaflet for new tenants.
- A recruitment drive at the tenants and leaseholders event.
- New information on our website

The recruitment drive led to a total of 10 new volunteers. All 13 volunteers attended the training in July and 12 volunteers took part in the mystery shopping event.

### **Training**

The training was delivered by the tenant involvement team and 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 training is fun and all participants enjoyed the day. It involved the group doing activities and role plays to ensure that they felt confident for the actual mystery shop event. It was also an opportunity for new volunteers to discuss concerns and ask questions with those that took part in pilot mystery shop.

Part of the training included tenants discussing new methods for mystery shopping; this included sending letters, emails, visiting housing offices and reporting repairs. The group agreed that this should be developed for future mystery shop exercises.

To ensure that a mystery shop could take place in July the tenant involvement team had two scenarios's prepared for the group to discuss. The mystery shoppers had a choice between Investment Delivery or the Community Care

Alarm Service and the Sheltered Housing Service. The group agreed that for their first mystery shop they would like to do the Community Care Alarm Service and Sheltered Housing, they also added additional questions to the scenario which they felt would provide useful information.

Volunteers were asked to complete an evaluation form after the training, 9 forms (69%) were returned and 100% stated that they were happy with the training provided and would recommend mystery shopping as an effective way for improving services.

### **Getting the most out of mystery shopping**

To ensure that the scenario's would lead to service improvements for YHN the relevant managers developed the scenario questions. Community Care Alarm Service and Sheltered Housing Managers were invited to a meeting to discuss possible questions that the volunteers could use to improve services within their department. They devised a list of questions on what areas they wanted to measure for improvements.

The Sheltered Housing Service had undergone a review in June 2006 and the managers felt that this would be a good opportunity to identify any service improvement areas and also to ensure that everyone is giving the correct information to customers.

The Community Care Alarm Service wanted to test that all the information that staff were giving was correct and that staff were responsive to providing information booklets on request. They highlighted that it would be beneficial if calls were made at different times of the day to ensure that the data would be more representative as sometimes the call would go through to the control room.

All managers were asked to brief their staff and that the mystery shop would take place in July.

In the training the volunteers decided that the community care alarm service and sheltered housing would be the services that they would like to mystery shop.

The volunteers chose to use the questions developed by the Sheltered Housing Team and CCAS team and added an additional two questions which they felt would be important when they were making an enquiry to that service. These additional questions were agreed by the service managers.

### **The mystery shop**

All the volunteers that attended the training were invited to YHN house on Tuesday 25 July to conduct the telephone mystery shop. Twelve mystery shoppers attended.

The day was split up into 3 sessions (morning, midday and afternoon) with 4 volunteers attending each session. This was to ensure that the calls were staggered at different times of the day. Each group discussed the questions and scored separate elements of the scenario to indicate what they as customers see as important (an average score from the 3 groups was taken to assess the importance of each question). Both scenarios were therefore agreed as follows:-

## **Sheltered Housing Scenario**

### **1. Time scale – Calls will be completed on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2006.**

You are to make a telephone call to the numbers listed on your sheet.

Please make sure that you have a pen and the report to hand before you start dialling. Please make sure that you are not going to be disturbed during a call. Please make sure that you fill in the information required on the top of the report.

### **2. Cover storey/Research**

You are ringing the office to enquire about sheltered housing you will be required to ask an opening line and further questions. This will guide the member of staff to answer your enquiry about sheltered housing.

Once you have asked your question please let the member of staff do the talking and ask any questions they may need to be able to deal with your enquiry.

Remember

- Make sure you ask all the questions!
- Give staff time to answer your question
- Be calm and let the question flow like a normal conversation.

### **3. Opening Line – Please ask this question.**

“Hello, can I speak to someone about sheltered housing”

#### **Additional Questions**

“My parents are thinking of moving into sheltered housing. How do they apply?”

“How old do you have to be for sheltered housing?”

How much does sheltered housing cost? Will housing benefit cover this?

“They do not live a in council house at the moment. Does this make any difference?”

“Where can my parents find out where there is an empty flat?”

“I have been told that my parents have to “express an interest” in an empty flat. How does this work”

## **Community Care Alarms Scenario**

### **1. Time scale – Calls will be completed on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2006.**

You are to make a telephone call to the numbers listed on your sheet.

Please make sure that you have a pen and the report to hand before you start dialling. Please make sure that you are not going to be disturbed during a call. Please make sure that you fill in the information required on the top of the report.

### **2. Cover storey/Research**

You are ringing the office to enquire about community care alarms you will be required to ask an opening line and further questions. This will guide the member of staff to answer you enquiry about community care alarms.

Once you have asked your question please let the member of staff do the talking and ask any questions they may need to be able to deal with your enquiry.

Remember

- To stick to the script!
- Give staff time to answer your question
- Be calm and let the questions flow like a normal conversation.
- Please let Heather Nixon know when you receive any information about community care alarms.

### **3. Opening Line – Please ask this question.**

“Hello, can I speak to someone about community care alarms”

## **Additional Questions**

“My Mum recently had an accident a neighbour told me about your service and gave me this number. Can you tell me what your service does?”

“Will my Mum have to pay? If so, how much does this cost?”

“My Mum owns her own home doe it make a difference to the cost”

“Thank you for your help, can you please send me some information so I can talk this through with her”

## **Importance of questions**

### **Sheltered Housing**

Mystery shoppers rated an overall satisfaction as the most important element of the call. As far as specific aspects of the information requested in the scenario, the mystery shoppers rated the question about 'how much does sheltered housing cost and would this be covered by housing benefit' as most important. The volunteers felt that this question was pivotal to their satisfaction of the overall call.

### **Community Care Alarm Service**

Mystery shoppers again scored the satisfaction of the call as the most important element. As part of the scenario the most important question was 'can you tell me what your service does?'. Again the volunteers felt that this needed to be answered correctly to improve satisfaction.

(Please refer to the matrix in the appendix 1 about how the questions were scored in order of importance).

## **Mystery Shop Event**

The telephone numbers were supplied by Malcolm Whittaker Community Care Alarm Service Manager and each volunteer was allocated two numbers to ring. The 3 groups worked together to analyse the calls and discuss how they felt the calls were answered. In total 24 calls were made.

It was identified early on in the exercise that the mystery shopping was only assessing a small number of staff and it became apparent that staff were aware that we were conducting the mystery shopping exercise. Therefore for the purpose of this report we will only analyse the first five calls to each service from the event that took place in July.

To overcome this problem a further mystery shopping event was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> October and the 17<sup>th</sup> October for the sheltered housing service and individual sheltered housing schemes were contacted. Eight volunteers attended the event. The same scenario for sheltered housing was used and the information was recorded in the same way. A further shop on the Community Care Alarm service was not carried out due to time constraints.

The calls were recorded using specialist recording equipment and the tapes were played back to individual groups and the information was recorded on the templates.

The information recorded and the scores allocated have been analysed by the tenant involvement team and are presented in this report.

## Sheltered Housing Service

The telephone mystery shop was delivered by 12 volunteers on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July between 9.30am and 4.30pm. A further mystery shop was done in October on individual sheltered schemes. 5 calls were assessed from the July mystery shop and 19 calls were made to the sheltered housing schemes, 7 calls went through to answer machines and 1 scheme had a vacant post for a warden.

The shoppers were asked to record answer machine messages also as the service needed to monitor that correct messages were on machines.

The main findings of the report are summarised here below:-

### Answering the call

#### Sheltered housing schemes

- 18 out of the 19 (94.74%) calls answered were answered within 5 rings as required to comply with our service standard.
- 14 out of 19 (73.68%) calls answered using the corporate greeting.
- 15 schemes were mystery shopped on their answer machine message.
- 9 machines out of 15 (60%) had the correct answer machine message.
- 5 calls were made to YHN main office. 4 out of 5 (80%) calls were answered within 5 rings and all 5 calls used the corporate greeting (100%).
- In general the mystery shoppers were happy with the way calls were answered and felt that the corporate greeting was essential especially when ringing individual sheltered housing schemes.
- Mystery shoppers commented that the requirement to answer calls within 5 rings, as per the service standard, was not something they would see as a high priority – the quality of the service received once the call is answered is more important than how quickly the receiver is picked up.

## Responding to callers enquiries

- The mystery shoppers reported that from the 17 out of 19 calls made to sheltered housing schemes they felt that the warden fully assured them about how to apply for sheltered housing.
- Only 3 out of the 5 calls to YHN main office were able to reassure the mystery shoppers on how to apply for sheltered housing. The other two calls could not provide this information as mystery shoppers needed to speak to a senior housing officer for this information and she was not available. The mystery shoppers felt that staff answering these calls should have been able to give this information.
- All of the calls provided an answer to how old do you need to be for sheltered housing apart from 2 to the main office who said that they would need to speak to a senior sheltered housing officer. The mystery shoppers felt that there needed to be clarification on why the age limited was different for different schemes. Also that all wardens should explain that there may be special circumstance with regards to health problems.
- From the 19 calls made to sheltered housing schemes only 8(42%) were able to give an answer to how much sheltered housing costs. From those that answered it was very confusing on what was actually included within these costs, for example the warden service, heating and water rates. One warden explained to the mystery shoppers that they did not have SX3 on their computer so they could not answer. This was very confusing to the customer.
- The 5 calls to the main office again 3 calls were able to answer the question about sheltered housing costs and 2 calls were not answered as they needed to speak to the senior housing officer.
- Generally the mystery shoppers felt that the question about whether it made a difference that they did not live in a council home was answered well. 16 sheltered housing wardens were able to answer this question, 3 mystery shoppers did not ask this question and 3 wardens explained that they needed further training on this and would be able to get back to the mystery shoppers. The five calls to YHN main office again this question were answered correctly apart from the two that referred them to the sheltered housing officer who was not available.
- The mystery shoppers reported that the next question about how someone would find out where an empty flat in was answered well. From the 19 calls to sheltered housing schemes 15 wardens fully assured the mystery shoppers how they would find out where an empty

property is. 4 calls were not answered well although each warden did attempt to answer this question they 4 calls scored poorly were generally because they were not given all the options available about where to find the information. Again the calls to YHN main office 3 officers answered the question correctly and 2 failed to comment due to the senior sheltered housing officer not being available.

- The final query about how to express an interest was again answered very well. 73.68% fully assured the mystery shoppers on how to express an interest, only 4 calls to the sheltered housing schemes failed to answer this question. Although from these 4 calls some wardens did attempt to answer they were scored low if they were vague about the answer, one response include 'just let us know and that'.

### **General customer service**

- This is a summary of all the calls to the sheltered housing schemes and YHN main office in total 24 calls. There was only one extremely bad call where the member of staff was extremely unfriendly and unhelpful and this was from the Mid East Area.
- The 4 calls which scored neutral were a result of when the service was average and this had an impact of whether the mystery shoppers felt the staff were friendly or courteous.
- Out of the 3 calls that were scored as being very poor 2 were from calls where the mystery shoppers could not speak to an officer and were advised to ring back. One call was to a sheltered housing scheme and the service was extremely poor. This scheme was located in the Mid East Area. The warden was unable to provide any information about how to apply and just referred the customer to YHN house.
- One mystery shopper rated the overall service as poor as the customer felt that she needed more information to help with the enquiry.

## **Community Care Alarm Service**

The telephone mystery shop was delivered by 12 volunteers on Tuesday 24 July between 9.30am and 4.30pm.

The volunteers attended in three different sessions across the day, in the morning, midday and afternoon.

However it became apparent in the first five calls that the mystery shop was not going to be successful on account that we kept getting the same staff answering the telephone queries. Therefore for the purpose of this report only the first five calls will be analysed.

### **Answering the call**

- All calls were answered within 5 rings as required to comply with our service standard
- All staff answered using the corporate greeting

### **Responding to callers queries**

- Out of the first 5 calls all mystery shoppers (100%) reported that they felt that staff fully assured them about what their service does.
- All callers (100%) were fully assured on the answer to how much the service costs.
- All callers (100%) were satisfied with the answer to question 5 and were fully satisfied with the information about whether it made a difference to the cost if someone owned their own home.
- Only 4 out of the 5 calls asked for information to be sent to their home address. All Mystery Shoppers confirmed that they received this information within 5 working days. One caller did not ask for the information as she stated that her mother lived in North Tyneside, the mystery shopper was informed of who to contact for the correct information. This was excellent customer service.

### **General Customer Service**

- 4 out of the 58 calls (80%) of calls scored members of staff very good on being friendly and courteous. The remainder one call only scored them good as they felt there was too much information given in one call. (This may have been due to the fact that they were aware of the mystery shop taking place by the time of this call).

Section 2: Overall rating per call

- 5 out of 5 Calls (100%) rated the overall satisfaction as very good.

Call	Total Score	Percentage (out of 79)	Applicable Score	Applicable percentage
1	68	100.00%	68	100.00%
2	68	100.00%	68	100.00%
3	68	100.00%	68	100.00%
4	68	80.00%	59	100.00%
5	68	100.00%	68	100.00%

**No service improvement can be suggested from analysing only 5 calls.**

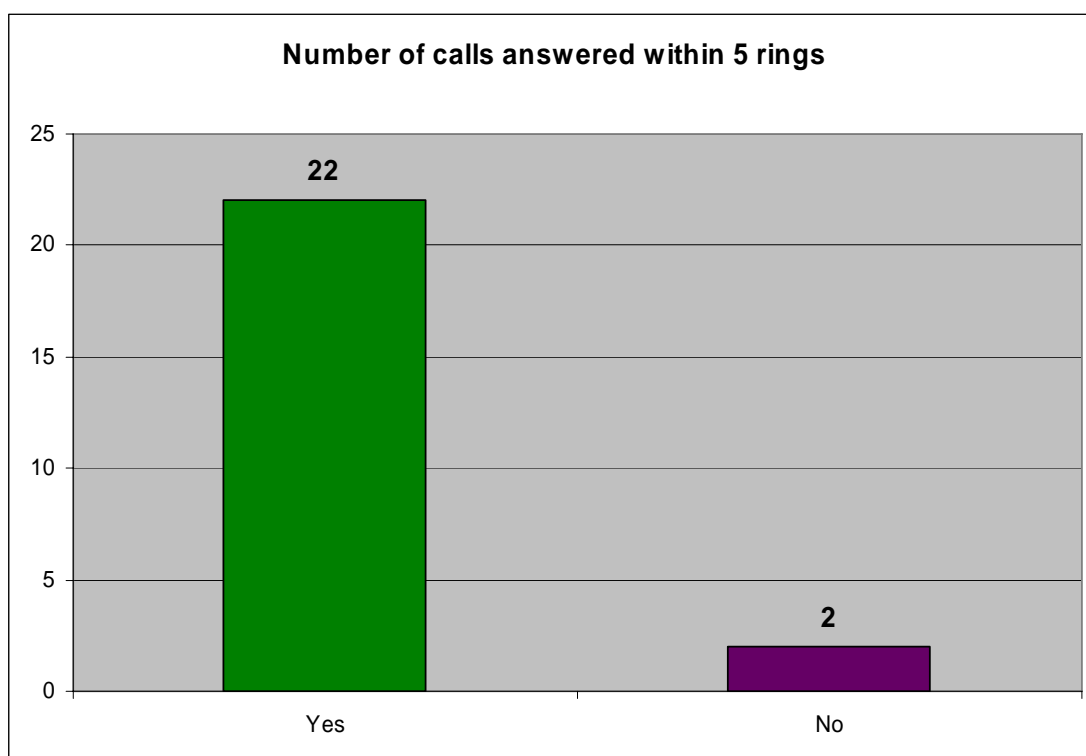
## Results and analysis of Sheltered Housing mystery shop

This section includes the scores, additional information recorded and service improvement suggested by the mystery shoppers. Analysis will include the 19 calls to sheltered housing schemes and the 5 calls to YHN House.

The service improvement notes will be highlighted in grey boxes.

### Section 1: Overall analysis

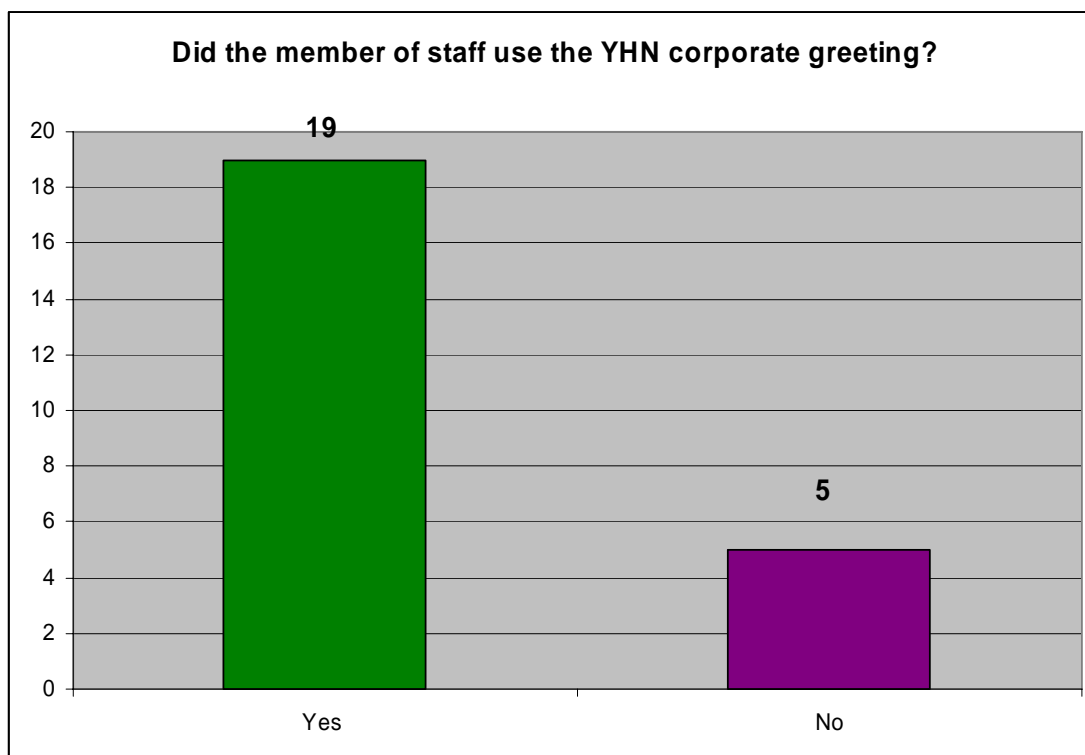
#### 1. Was the call answered within 5 rings?



Only two calls were not answered within 5 rings, one was to a sheltered scheme and the other to YHN house. In both cases this had no bearing on the overall satisfaction of the call and emphasises that it is the information received during the call that is the most important factor.

All mystery shoppers agreed that the standard of 5 rings was not important however they did state that it would be annoying if the phone was allowed to ring for more than 10 rings.

## 2. Did the member of staff use the Your Homes corporate greeting?

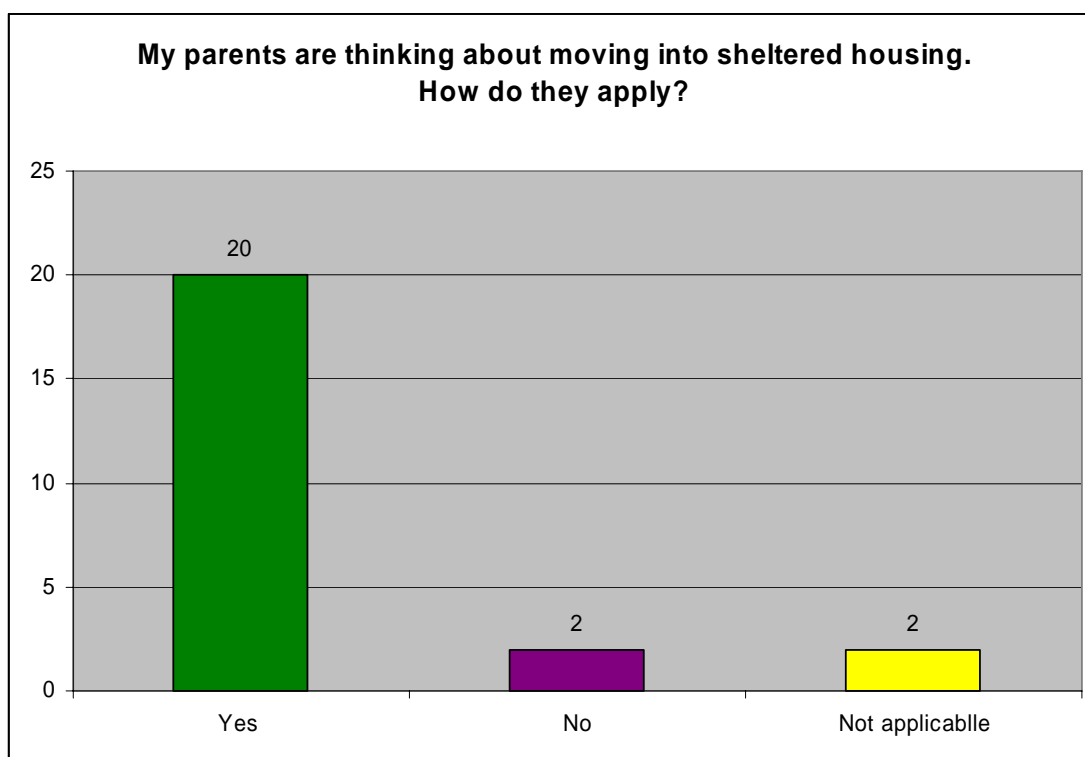


A high proportion of staff answering the call used the required Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting (79%). All five calls that did not use the corporate greeting were to Sheltered Housing Schemes. In one call the member of staff answered 'hello' but later apologised and said she was ill. Two members of staff did not say 'Your Homes Newcastle' and the remaining two members of staff did not give their name.

### **Service improvement note:**

Mystery shoppers did agree that it was important for YHN to have a corporate greeting that informed them of where they were calling and who they were speaking to. They also agreed that it was the tone of the greeting that was important. Some mystery shoppers felt that although staff gave the corporate greeting they need to ensure that it was welcoming and said in a friendly manner. Those calls that were scored with overall poor satisfaction were from members of staff that were not enthusiastic or happy to help.

### 3. My parents are thinking about moving into sheltered housing. How do they apply?



Out of the 24 calls made, the mystery shoppers felt reassured about how to apply for sheltered accommodation (83%). In two cases where the result was not applicable was due to 2 calls being answered by Community Care Alarm staff and not being able to put the mystery shopper through to a Senior Sheltered Housing Officer. In both cases mystery shoppers were offered a call back from the member of staff.

In the one case where the mystery shoppers did not feel that they were fully satisfied with the answer given, the mystery shopper felt that more options were available for them to apply and this should have been explained by the warden. They were disappointed that it was not suggested that a form would be sent out to them, all other options were given such as at Community Housing Offices, Customer Service Centres, on the website, at the property shop or at individual sheltered housing schemes.

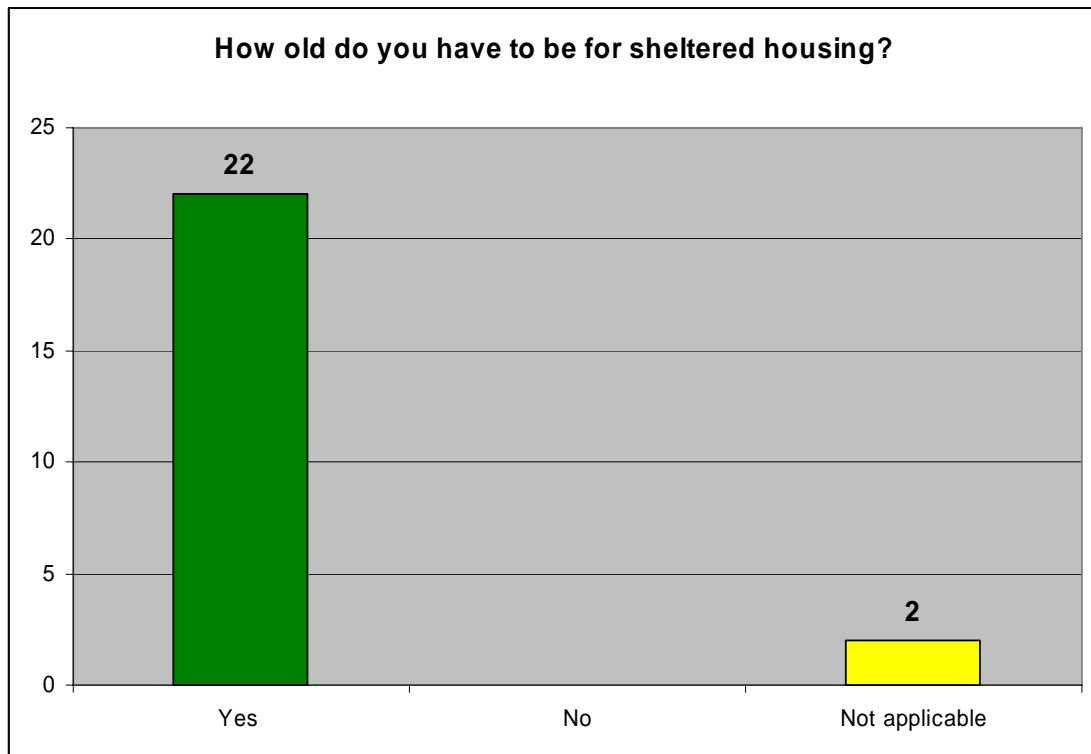
In the other case where the mystery shopper did not feel that they were satisfied with the answer was again from a warden that referred the query to YHN house and unable to answer the query at all.

#### **Service improvement note:**

Mystery shoppers felt that question was answered extremely well, however there were a variety of different answers and not all wardens gave all the options. Some schemes went the extra mile and offered for the mystery

shoppers to visit the scheme and the wardens would help them complete the form and give them a tour of what sheltered housing is like in Newcastle.

#### 4. How old do you have to be for sheltered housing?



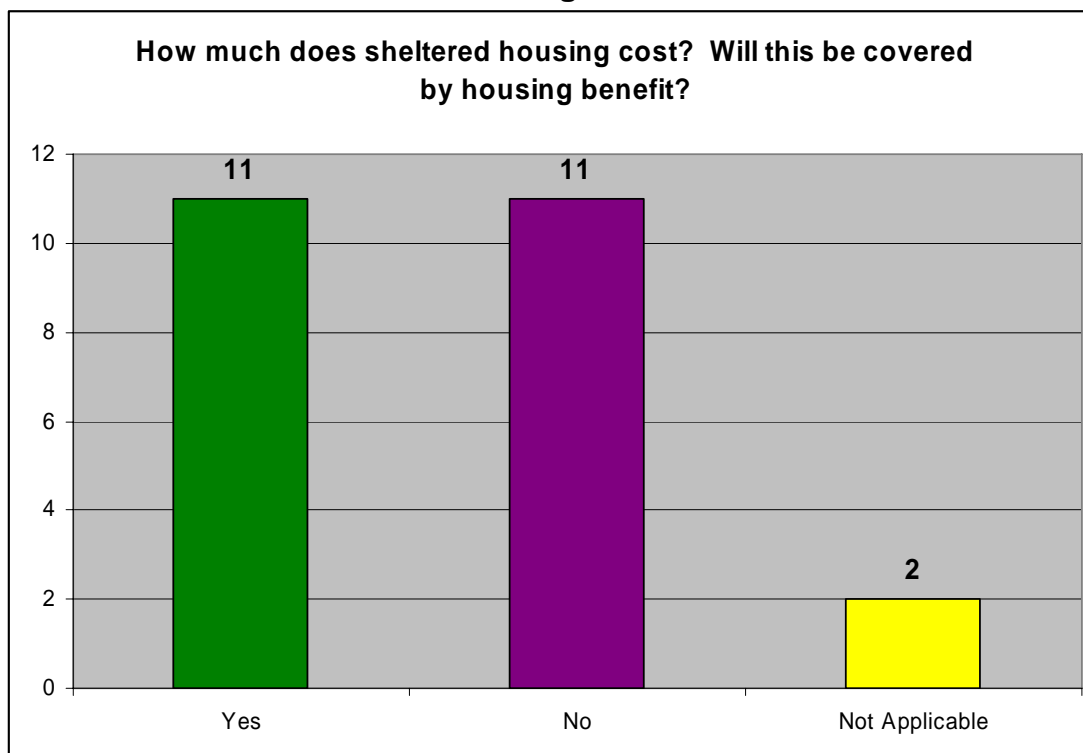
Again this question was answered really well (92%). In the two cases where the question was not answered was because the call went through to the Community Care Alarm staff and they were unable to transfer the call through to the senior housing officer.

#### **Service note improvement:**

The mystery shoppers were aware that the age of people differed from scheme to scheme. The majority of schemes gave the age of 60 however 1 scheme gave the response of 50 plus (**East Team**), 55 plus (**Mid East Team**) and 3 schemes gave the response of 65 plus (**West Team**). It became apparent that there was a lack of consistency as the correct response should have been 60 and then some information about how it also depends on individual circumstance for example health reasons.

The mystery shoppers agreed that all schemes should provide the same information and perhaps there was a training implication to ensure the correct information was given.

## 5. How much does sheltered housing cost?



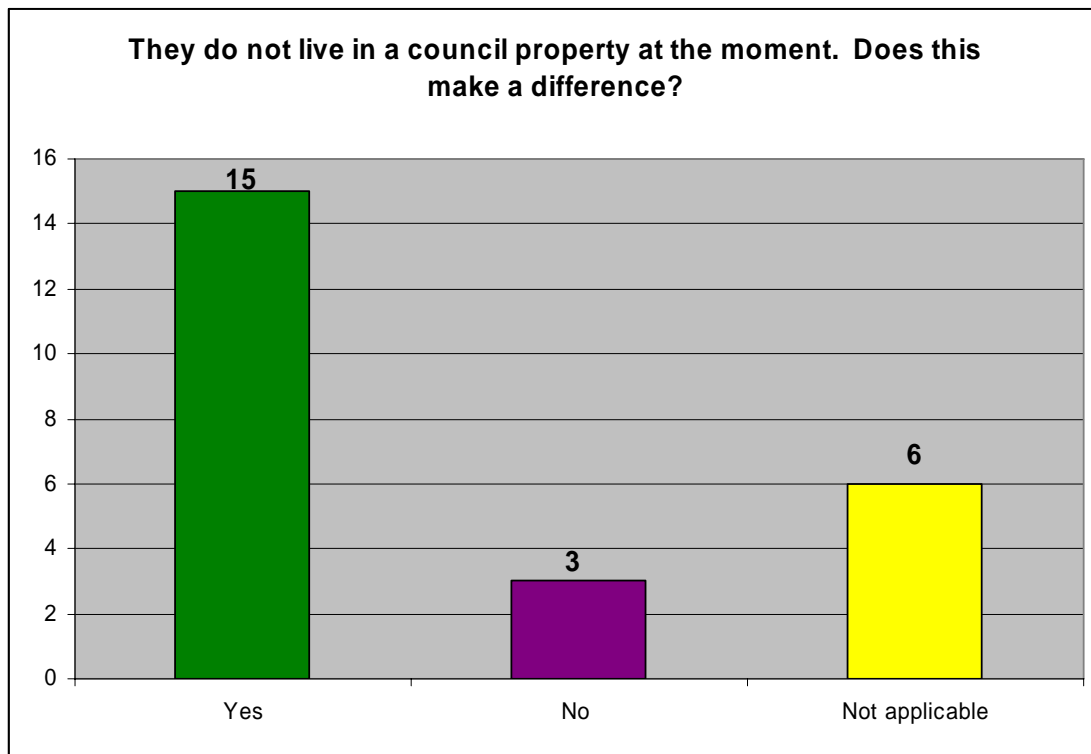
The mystery shoppers felt that this question was answered extremely poorly with only 45% of calls being able to answer the question. Of that 45% the answers varied considerably from each sheltered scheme. In cases that gave an answer to this question the mystery shoppers felt that it was more like a rough estimate of the cost. Only a couple of wardens broke down the rent and explained about the warden charge, heating and water costs. Those that did not explain about the heating and water costs also scored 'no' as the mystery shopper felt that their query had not been fully answered. One member of staff referred to the SX3 system which was extremely confusing to the mystery shopper. Two members of staff explained that they were still waiting for training on this issue and felt that they were unable to comment as they did not want to give the incorrect information. The two queries which were not applicable were due to the senior housing officer not being available but it was offered to ring the mystery shopper back.

The second part of the question was answered generally well and most wardens explained that it would depend on individual circumstances and their income.

### **Service improvement note:**

Mystery shoppers felt that staff needed more training on this issue. The answers given were not exact and varied in the amount of information. Mystery shoppers also agreed that it would be useful if the charges within the rent were explained so customers would get an idea of what was included.

**6. They do not live in a council property at the moment. Does this make any difference?**

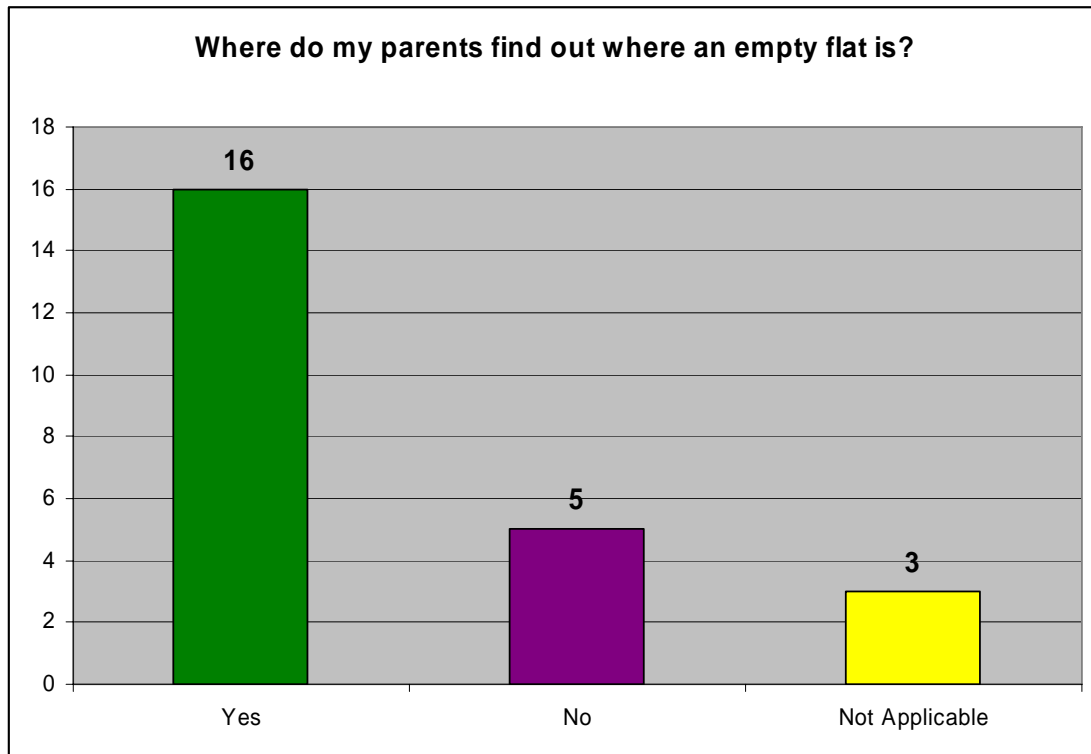


This question was answered promptly (83% percentage applicable) fully assured the mystery shoppers with their answer. 25% of calls were not applicable as the question was not asked by the mystery shoppers. The 3 cases that did not reassure the mystery shoppers, one member of staff just ignored the question and did not listen to the customer and in the other two cases the members of staff were honest and said they would have to seek advice on this question. When the members of staff were honest this was still viewed by the mystery shoppers as good customer service and they needed to make sure that their answer was correct. The two cases that highlighted that they needed advice were from the Mid East Team.

One member of staff explained about secure and insecure applications which were extremely confusing for the mystery shopper. The mystery shopper felt that they needed more explanation on this.

In another case a warden did explain that length of residency would affect their application and explained that if they were a council tenant they may not wait as long for a property.

## 7. Where do my parents find out where there is an empty flat?



The mystery shoppers felt that this question was answered thoroughly by staff (76% percentage applicable). The options included information about the property shop, adverts in the evening chronicle, information at local housing offices and customer service centres and on the website. One member of staff informed the mystery shopper that each sheltered scheme has internet access and that if they visited a scheme staff would be able to go through the process with them. The mystery shoppers agreed that this was excellent service and were very happy with this response.

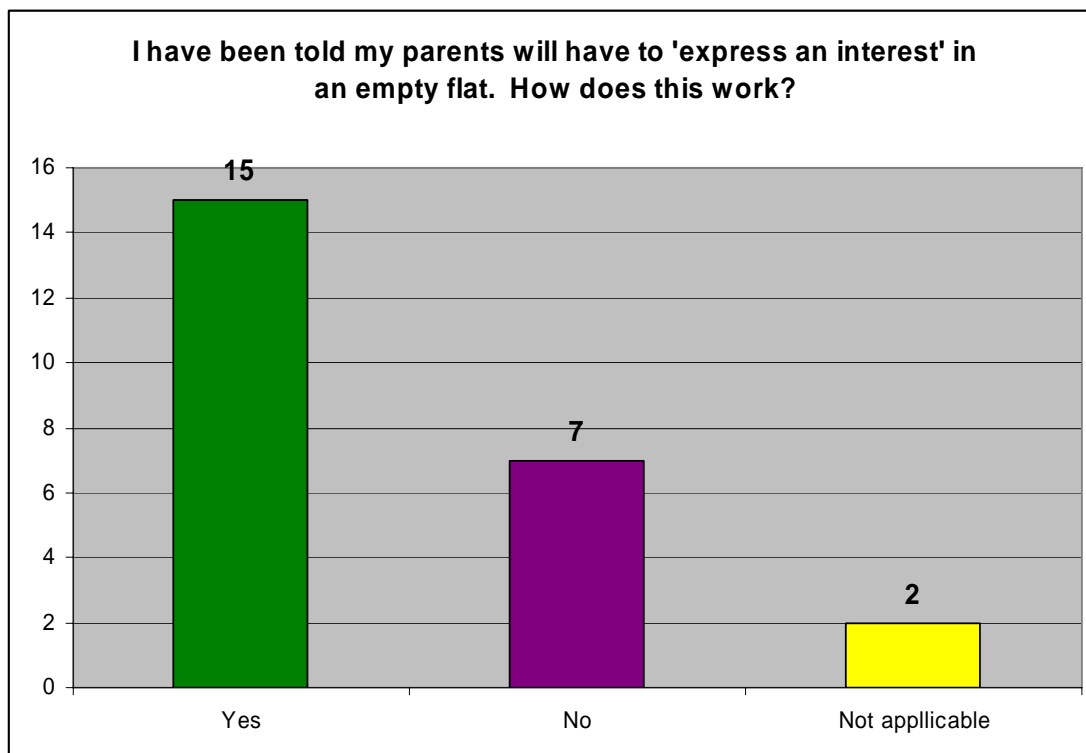
13% of callers did not ask the question.

24% of calls did not answer the question fully and the mystery shoppers did not feel satisfied with their response. In one case the warden said that to find out where an empty flat is the mystery shopper would need to ring Karen Mulroy at YHN house. The mystery shopper was confused by this as did not know who Karen Mulroy was and what her role was within sheltered housing.

**Service improvement note:**

In most calls the mystery shoppers were very happy with the information provided by staff. They felt it was beneficial when staff informed them what day properties were in the Chronicle, where the property shop is located within Newcastle and also the information that is available on the website. Most wardens where there was a vacancy at the scheme offered the mystery shoppers the opportunity to visit the scheme which the mystery shoppers felt was excellent customer service. Mystery shoppers only scored this question well if they were given lots of options of where they could find information about empty flats..

**8. I have been told that my parents will have to 'express an interest' in an empty flat. How does this work?**



68% of calls made felt that this question was answered well. The mystery shoppers felt that those who answered the question well explained the process of applying and receiving a registration number. Staff who explained where to contact with the registration number scored highly, information such as local housing offices, ring the sheltered housing officers, on the website, at customer service centres, at the property shop and at individual sheltered schemes.

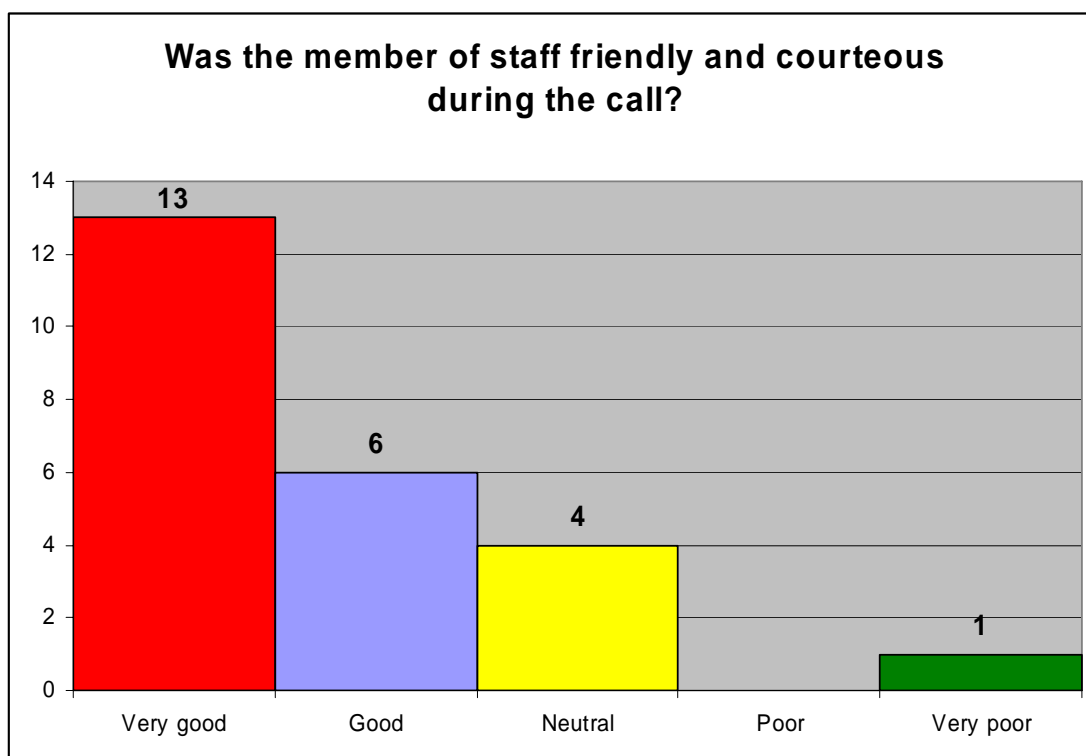
In cases where mystery shoppers scored 'no' staff did not explain all the options of how to express an interest. One member of staff only gave the option to ring YHN house.

In the two cases where the response was 'not applicable' was a result of not being able to speak to a senior housing officer.

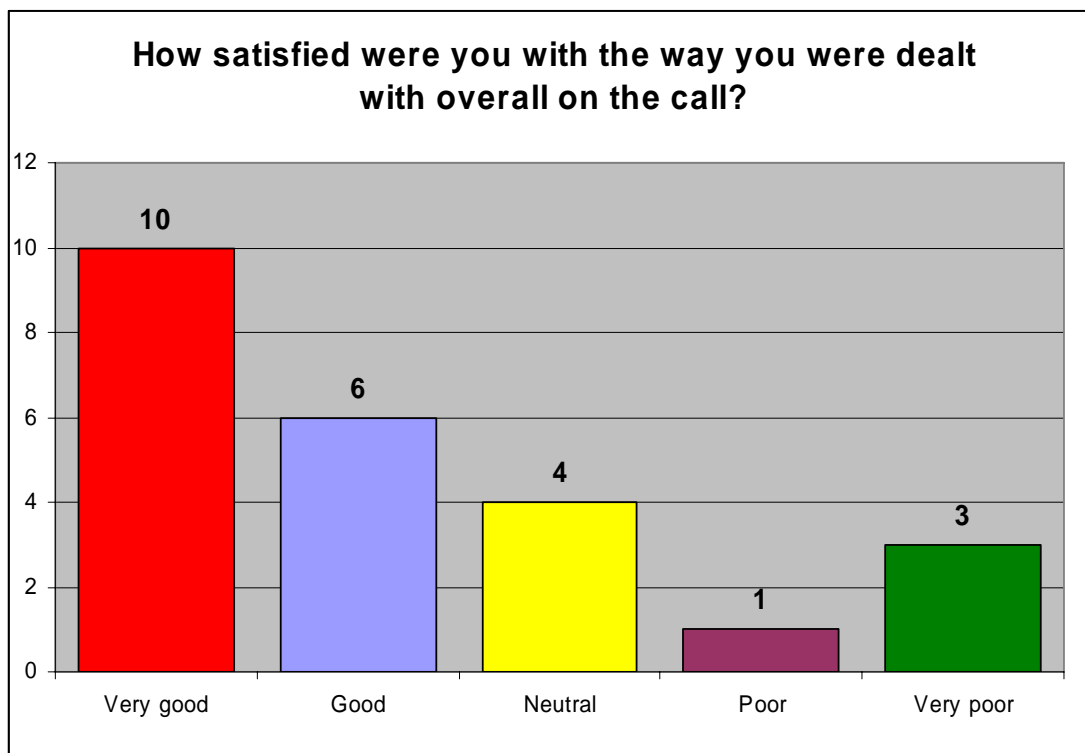
**Service improvement note:**

All members of staff must explain the process how applicants get a registration number, where they can express an interest and the mystery shoppers also felt that it was beneficial to know how many properties you could express an interest in at one time.

**Summary of general customer service**



NB: One call to a sheltered scheme in the Mid East Area told our BME mystery shopper that he was unclear and that it was difficult to make out what he was saying. The mystery shopper was asked if he was on a mobile as it was bad line and was then asked to ring back. The mystery shopper rang back immediately and the call was not answered. The mystery shopper was extremely unhappy with this service however it may have been a bad line connection.



#### Answer machine messages

From all the calls made the mystery shoppers recorded 12 answer machines to monitor whether they had the correct answer machine message. The correct message should include the name of the scheme, YHN, offer the opportunity to leave a message or alternatively if the call is urgent to contact the community care alarms on 0191 278 8699.

The results are as follows:

Sheltered Scheme	Correct Message	Problem
Avondale House	No	No mention of YHN
Bamburgh House	No	No mention of YHN
Belvedere House	No	Constant ring then one beep after 10 rings
Conewood House	No	One beep after 4 rings , no message, then constantly beeps
Hadrian House	Yes	
Monchester Green Bungalows	No	BT ring back service when warden on other line then went into BT answer machine
Moorhouse	No	No mention of YHN
Mount Pleasant House	Yes	
The Minorities	No	BT answer machine
Theresa Russell House	No	Incorrect telephone number for Community Care Alarms 0191 278 8694
Wansbeck House	Yes	
Wellbeck Green	No	Went into fax machine

**Service Improvement note:**

The mystery shoppers felt that some of the messages were mumbled as there is so much information that needs to be included in the message. They felt that all the information was relevant and necessary but some times the messages needed to be clearer.

**Section 2: Overall rating per call**

The mystery shoppers rated each element of the scenario according to how important it was to them as customers. This gave a maximum score for each scenario of 79 points. All scores for each question were added together to give an overall percentage of how well the call was answered. The percentage applicable will give the true percentage and this is to allow for questions that the mystery shoppers did not cover during the call.

**Table: Customer satisfaction overall**

Call	Total Score	Percentage (out of 79)	Applicable Score	Applicable percentage
1	48	60.76%	79	60.76%
2	60	75.94%	79	75.94%
3	59	74.68%	79	74.68%
4	71	89.87%	71	100%
5	47	59.49%	71	66.19%
6	63	79.74%	79	79.74%
7	69	87.34%	79	87.34%
8	71	89.87%	71	89.87%
9	51	64.55%	79	64.55%
10	79	100%	79	100%
11	68	86.07%	79	86.07%
12	48	60.76%	79	60.76%
13	61	77.21%	79	77.21%
14	36	45.56%	79	45.56%
15	73	92.41%	79	92.41%
16	66	83.54%	79	83.54%
17	16	20.25%	79	20.25%
18	69	87.34%	79	87.34%
19	69	87.34%	79	87.34%
20	63	79.74%	71	77.73%
21	19	24.05%	29	65.52%
22	22	27.85%	37	59.46%
23	79	100%	79	100%
24	77	97.47%	79	97.47%

In most cases the applicable percentage is a better reflection of the way the call was scored by the mystery shopper.

## Results and analysis of Community Care Alarm Service

**No service improvement can be suggested from analysing only 5 calls. All 5 calls provided excellent customer service.**

## Summary of Service Improvements

- Mystery shoppers did agree that it was important for YHN to have a corporate greeting that informed them of where they were calling and who they were speaking to. They also agreed that it was the tone of the greeting that was important. Some mystery shoppers felt that although staff gave the corporate greeting they need to ensure that it was welcoming and said in a friendly manner. Those calls that were scored with overall poor satisfaction were from members of staff that were not enthusiastic or happy to help.
- Some schemes went the extra mile and offered for the mystery shoppers to visit the scheme and some of the wardens offered to help them complete the form and give them a tour of what sheltered housing is like in Newcastle. Mystery shoppers agreed that this was excellent customer service especially for those who are unsure about sheltered housing and they felt that if they were able to visit the scheme with their relative this would reassure them. All schemes should offer this service.
- The mystery shoppers noticed that the age requirement for sheltered housing differed from scheme to scheme. The majority of schemes gave the age of 60 however 1 scheme gave the response of 50 plus **(East Team)**, 55 plus **(Mid East Team)** and 3 schemes gave the response of 65 plus **(West Team)**. It became apparent that there was a lack of consistency as the correct response should have been 60 and staff should then provide some information about how it also depends on individual circumstance for example health reasons.
- Mystery shoppers felt that staff needed more training on the issue of how much sheltered housing costs. The answers given were not exact and varied in amount. Mystery shoppers also agreed that it would be useful if the charges within the rent were explained so customers would get an idea of what was included.
- In most calls the mystery shoppers were very happy with the information provided by staff on how they find out where an empty property is. They felt it was beneficial when staff informed them what day properties were in the Chronicle, where the property shop is located within Newcastle and also the information that is available on the website. Not all wardens were able to provide this information and this needs to be addressed. Most wardens where there was a vacancy at the scheme offered the mystery shoppers the opportunity to visit the

scheme which the mystery shoppers felt was excellent customer service.

- All members of staff must explain the process how applicants get a registration number and where applicants can express an interest. The mystery shoppers also felt that it was beneficial to know how many properties you could express an interest in at one time.
- The mystery shoppers felt that some of the messages on answer machines were mumbled as there is so much information that needs to be included in the message. They felt that all the information was relevant and necessary but some times the messages needed to be clearer. All mystery shoppers agreed that all answer machines should have the correct information and the correct contact emergency number.

## **Conclusion**

The mystery shoppers felt overall that the service was extremely good, however the areas that need improvements should be address to all the staff responsible for the sheltered housing service. The mystery shoppers felt that the service improvement on answer machines should be corrected straight away as these contain important information.

To address the service improvements the group felt that all staff should be made aware of the results. It was suggested that as mystery shopping is not about getting individuals into trouble and should focus on service improvements that all the team should be fed the results as part of their team meetings and work on the actions to improve the service.

It was decided that mystery shoppers should have the opportunity to speak to the heads of service to relay their experience to the staff and also to support the service improvement requests. A meeting will be organised for 12 January for mystery shoppers and heads of service to discuss the results and to agree future actions.

## Appendix One



<b>Name of member of staff</b>	<b>Assessor</b>	<b>Length of call</b>
<b>Date of call</b>	<b>Time of call</b>	<b>Day of call</b>

	<b>OPENING</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No answer</b>				<b>Possible Score</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Was the telephone answered within 5 rings?</b>							<b>3</b>		
	The telephone MUST be answered before the 6 <sup>th</sup> ring to score yes.									
<b>2</b>	<b>Did the member of staff use the Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting?</b>							<b>7</b>		
	The corporate greeting should include the name of the member of staff (please write in the top corner of the report)									

	<b>QUERY RESPONSES</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>		<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>Possible Score</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>My mum recently had an accident a neighbour told me about your service and me this number. Can you tell me what your service does?</b>							<b>10</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
<b>5</b>	<b>Will my mum have to pay for this service? If so. How much will it cost?</b>							<b>9</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction. Please state the amount you were told.									
<b>6</b>	<b>My mum owns her own home. Will this make a difference to the cost?</b>							<b>9</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
<b>7</b>	<b>Thank you for your help. Could you please send me some information so I can talk this through with her</b>									
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									

8	Did you ask for more information to be sent to your home?							9		
9	If 'yes' did it arrive within 15 days?									
	<b>FOLLOW UP</b>	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor				
10	Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?	10	7	5	2	0		Possible Scores		
	Please use the five point scale to score this call.									
11	Please indicate how satisfied you were with the way you were dealt with overall on this call.	10	7	5	2	0				
	Please use the five point scale to score this call.									



<b>Name of member of staff</b>	<b>Assessor</b>	<b>Length of call</b>
<b>Date of call</b>	<b>Time of call</b>	<b>Day of call</b>

	<b>OPENING</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No answer</b>				<b>Possible Score</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Was the telephone answered within 5 rings?</b>							<b>2</b>		
	The telephone <b>MUST</b> be answered before the 6 <sup>th</sup> ring to score yes.									
<b>2</b>	<b>Did the member of staff use the Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting?</b>							<b>7</b>		
	The corporate greeting should include the name of the member of staff (please write in the top corner of the report)									

	<b>QUERY RESPONSES</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>		<b>Other data</b>		<b>Possible score</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>My parents are thinking about moving into sheltered housing. How do they apply?</b>							<b>9</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
<b>5</b>	<b>How old do you have to be for sheltered housing?</b>							<b>7</b>		
	Please state the age that they gave you.									
<b>6</b>	<b>How much does sheltered housing cost? Will this be covered by housing benefit?</b>							<b>10</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
<b>7</b>	<b>They do not live in a council house at the moment. Does this make any difference?</b>							<b>8</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
<b>8</b>	<b>Where do my parents find out where there is an empty flat?</b>							<b>8</b>		
	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
<b>9</b>	<b>I have been told that my parents will have to “express an interest” in an empty flat? How does this work?</b>							<b>8</b>		

	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.									
	<b>FOLLOW UP</b>	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor				
<b>9</b>	<b>Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>Possible Score</b>		
	Please use the five point scale to score this call.									
<b>10</b>	<b>Please indicate how satisfied you were with the way you were dealt with overall on this call.</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>				
	Please use the five point scale to score this call.									