



Your Homes
Newcastle

Mystery Shopping (Pilot)

Report by Performance Management and Policy
Team – December 2005

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Introduction

As part of Your Homes Newcastle's commitment to involving customers from hard to hear communities the Tenant Involvement team have been looking into innovative ways of involving tenants. The team found that using tenants as Mystery Shoppers is becoming increasingly common place with social landlords both local authority and RSL's and there are many examples of good practice. As a result it was proposed that a Telephone Mystery Shopping pilot be run with a view to expanding the scheme to include all tenants if it proved successful.

This report covers the findings resulting from the Telephone Mystery Shopping pilot.

What is Mystery Shopping?

Mystery Shopping is the evaluation, measurement and reporting of customer service standards by use of agents, known as mystery shoppers, acting as if they were customers. It is arguably the fastest and most effective method of obtaining objective information about customer service levels. Good practice amongst housing organisations is to use tenant representatives or other tenant volunteers as mystery shoppers, thus utilising their existing knowledge of the service and having the additional advantage of improving the way we involve tenants in monitoring and improving our services.

There are several types of Mystery Shop. The most common is where mystery shoppers visit a service outlet to make an evaluation. Another type is where mystery shoppers report on a telephone response to a variety of enquiries in different situations. It is this type, telephone mystery shopping, that Your Homes Newcastle chose to pilot.

Why use Mystery Shoppers?

Customer Service can be divided into two elements - the tangible and the intangible (how the customer feels about the service they receive).

Many of the tangible elements such as answering the phone within a certain number of rings or responding to letters within set timescales are measurable and we have performance indicators and service standards monitoring to cover these.

However, the intangible elements of customer service are more difficult to define and to measure. This is because they are:-

- a) Subjective and individual – it is possible for each individual to have a different perception of what constitutes an appropriate level of service and therefore the 'intangible feeling' that one person has may be different to another person even if they are dealt with in exactly the same way.
- b) Relative to customers' expectations - we now have service standards stating that a high level of customer service will be provided; if we ever fail to meet these standards which may have raised expectations we will see lower levels of satisfaction.

We recognise this and look to ensure staff are properly trained through our customer service and equalities training yet we currently have no way of effectively monitoring these 'intangibles'. Mystery Shopping can help to fill this gap.

The benefits are:

- Involving tenants and other customers in assessing and reporting on the services enabling them to play an active role in service improvement
- cost-effective method of monitoring our customer service standards
- an efficient way of identifying staff in need of further training
- a summary of strengths and weaknesses
- An effective deterrent against dishonesty, poor service or bad practice
- a way of identifying outlets which are under-performing

Research shows that it is the quality of human interaction which has the greatest effect on customers' perception of an organisation. Using Tenant Mystery Shoppers to help us improve our customer service standards can lead to real service improvements.

Methodology

Recruitment

As the Mystery Shopping pilot was a new mechanism for involving tenants from the Hard to Hear groups the Tenant Involvement team used a variety of methods to recruit volunteers, including asking staff in the Community Housing Offices to identify likely candidates, putting up recruitment posters in service outlets and asking attendees at various focus groups and tenants meetings.

The recruitment process yielded 7 volunteers. All the volunteers were then invited to a discussion meeting to make sure that the volunteers knew what was involved and what would be expected of them. All volunteers who still wished to take part then received training which was provided by a professional training organisation. The training took place in September 2005 and 5 volunteers took part.

Training

The training included information about the role of a Mystery Shopper, the importance of impartiality, and the need to stick to the scenario and script. Training also covered the recording methodology. Good practice means it is recommended that when the tenants undertake the Mystery Shopping for real they record conversations. This is because it is difficult to follow a scenario and write down the responses accurately at the time of the call. Recording the information means that Mystery shoppers can listen to what was said after the call has been completed. This enables them to accurately record information on forms at a later time rather than trying to write whilst speaking on the phone.

During the afternoon session of the training the volunteers were encouraged to come up with scenarios for investigation and to apply scoring to various aspects of the scenario based on how important to them it is. For example, volunteers were asked to rate how important it was to them that their call was answered within 5 rings and how important it was that the person answering was polite and courteous. All scores were relative to each other.

The scenarios the volunteers devised would be developed and used during the first delivery session.

Ensuring the exercise was useful to YHN

YHN Management team were kept informed of the development of the pilot and were keen to ensure that any scenario's used in the pilot would lead to useful and meaningful outcomes. The mystery shoppers themselves had come up with the subject areas they wanted to investigate during the training day but the volunteers did not have sufficient knowledge of the service provided by YHN to be able to develop the level of detail required for the scenario to provide useful information that would lead to real service improvements. Therefore, the Performance Management and Policy team were asked to contribute to the development of the scenarios. This approach meant that the subject areas covered were chosen by the mystery shoppers and that the questions that the mystery shoppers were asking linked to YHN service standards and performance indicators.

It was felt that for the first session the scenario should not require staff to have to access personal information on the mystery shopper and that as the new computer system, SX3, had only just been installed it would be unreasonable to require staff to access SX3 whilst staff were still getting used to the system.

The first scenario chosen for the pilot session was therefore 'Paying my rent – the new Payment Cards'.

Consulting with staff

As the first scenario covered an area of the Housing Management service Neil Scott, Head of Housing Management informed staff that telephone mystery shopping would be taking place at some point over a two week period in November.

Unison were informed of the intention to carry out telephone mystery shopping and the specific methodology was explained.

Some reservations were expressed from the staff side about the proposal to record the telephone calls. Staff expressed fears that recordings may be used as part of disciplinary action or that individual members of staff would be 'publicly humiliated' by having the tapes replayed during some future training session. In response to these concerns it was confirmed that the recordings would only be used to:-

- ensure that the information recorded on paper was accurate, and
- aid the mystery shoppers in scoring the call accurately.

However, it was also made clear that in the unlikely event that a mystery shopper recorded an incidence that could constitute gross misconduct YHN would be unable to ignore this and therefore reserves the right to use any such recording to support possible disciplinary action.

It was also agreed that all tapes (unless relating to incidents of gross misconduct) would be erased once the results had been recorded on paper.

Further more, to facilitate the support and supervision of the mystery shoppers and in order to allay fears that mystery shoppers may copy the tapes the pilot session was undertaken at YHN House rather than in the volunteers' homes. The mystery shoppers were also required to sign an agreement stating that all information was confidential and that they could not discuss the content of the calls with anyone else.

It was also agreed that the reporting and analysis of the results would not name individual officers, although if specific training needs were identified this information would be shared in confidence with the Organisational Development team.

Undertaking the Mystery Shopping

All volunteers who completed the training were invited to YHN House on Friday 4th November 2005 to conduct the first telephone mystery shopping session. Three mystery shoppers attended.

During the first part of the session the scenario was discussed and agreed with the mystery shoppers. They also scored the separate elements of the scenario to indicate what they as customers see as important. The scenario was therefore agreed as follows:-

Rent payment scenario

1. Timescale – Calls will be all be completed on Friday 4th November 2005

You are to make a telephone call to the offices 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 are not going to be disturbed during your call. Please make sure that you fill in the information required on the top of the report.

2. Cover Story/Research – You are ringing the office to enquire about paying with the new payment card you will be required to ask an opening line and further questions. This will guide the member of staff to give you advice about payment cards.

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

3. Opening Line – Please ask this question.

“Hello, can I talk to someone about paying my rent?”

Additional Questions – Then please ask the following:

“I have got one of the new payment cards and I am worried that I may get into arrears when I use it”

“How long does it take for you to get the money if I pay at the Post Office?”

“How will I know what my balance is?”

“Can I pay any other ways?”

If this is your Community Housing Office please also ask:-

“Could you send me a rent statement please?”

Additional Notes –

Please give the member of staff time to answer your questions please do not prompt.

Please also make note of the way the staff member dealt with you – their manner

Please let Mandy Mason know when you receive your rent statement

The scores allocated to each element were as follows:-

Question	Score allocated	Weighting (% of overall score)
Was the telephone answered within 5 rings?	5	3%
Did the member of staff use the Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting?	15	9%
Was there any background noise?	10	6%
Did the member of staff reassure you about paying with your payment card?	10	6%
Did the member of staff tell you how long it would take for the money to appear on your rent account?	5	3%
If they did were they correct?	15	9%
Did the member of staff tell you how to find out your balance?	5	3%
If they did were they correct?	25	15%
Did the member of staff tell you about other ways you have to pay?	5	3%
If they did were they correct?	10	6%
Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?	30	18%
Please indicate how satisfied you were with the way you were dealt with overall on this call	30	18%

As can be seen above the mystery shoppers rated a friendly and courteous manner and overall satisfaction as the most important elements of the call. As far as specific aspects of the information requested in the scenario, the mystery shoppers rated being given the correct information about how to find their balance as most important, followed by being given the correct information about how long it takes for a payment made at a post office to appear on the rent account.

The template that the mystery shoppers used to record and score each call is attached as appendix 1.

Each mystery shopper was allocated 7 Community Housing Offices to make the calls to, as there were 3 mystery shoppers one office was allocated to 2 of them. The mystery shoppers were asked to get through as many as they could in the allocated time. The calls were done in half hour slots to allow each mystery shopper the opportunity to take part.

Mystery shopper 1 completed 5 calls, Mystery shopper 2 completed 5 calls and Mystery shopper 3 completed 4 calls although 1 of these went directly to the answer machine.

In total 14 of the 20 Community Housing Offices received a call from a mystery shopper as part of this pilot exercise.

The calls were recorded using specialist recording equipment and following each half hour session the tapes were played back and the information recorded on the templates. As this was a pilot session and all involved were on a learning curve it was agreed that everyone present (the mystery shoppers and 2 members of staff from the Tenant Involvement team and the Performance Management and Policy team) would listen to, discuss and help to assess the calls in order to support each mystery shopper as they made their assessment.

Due to time constraints not all assessments were completed on the same day and the mystery shoppers were invited to return to complete the assessments on the 24th November 2005. Unfortunately, due to illness one of the mystery shoppers was unable to attend this session, so the calls they had made were assessed and scored by the other mystery shoppers present.

The information recorded and the scores allocated have been analysed by the Performance Management and Policy team and are presented in this report.

Executive Summary

The Telephone Mystery Shopping (pilot) was delivered by 3 volunteer Mystery Shoppers on Friday 4th November 2005 between 10.30 am and 12.00 noon. In total 14 calls were made, although 1 of these went directly through the answer machine. In addition 1 office was constantly engaged and the telephone number for 1 office was incorrect on the sheets given to the mystery shoppers.

The main findings of the report are summarised here:-

Answering the call

- 13 out of the 14 calls made (92%) were answered within 5 rings as required to comply with our service standard.
- 12 of the calls (86%) were answered using the standard corporate greeting, 1 was not and 1 call went directly to answer machine.
- The call that went directly to answer machine should not have done so as the call was made at 11.40 am.
- Background noise was only recorded on 1 call and we can not be certain whether the noise heard was actually coming from the office called or from the corridor outside the room in YHN House.
- In general the mystery shoppers felt that staff tended to either rush or mumble the corporate greeting and in some cases it was not possible to hear the name of the person who answered the call.
- The mystery shoppers also commented that they felt the corporate greeting was confusing as it did not specify which office they had called – this was especially apparent when listening to the tapes to try to make an assessment as it made it difficult identifying which office each call had been made to.
- It was also felt that the corporate greeting was too long.
- Mystery shoppers also 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 they felt fully reassured about paying with the new payment card in 7 cases. This equates to 50% of all calls made, or 64% of all calls where the mystery shopper was able to ask for reassurance.

- For 2 calls the mystery shoppers did not feel at all reassured about paying with their payment card. In one case the mystery shopper said they would have felt more anxious about paying with the card.
 - During one call the member of staff was not able to adequately respond to a question regarding technical problems with money being transferred from paypoint
 - During the other call the member of staff did not listen to what the mystery shopper was asking, did not answer their questions and insisted on getting their address so they could check their rent account.
 - During both the calls where the mystery shopper did not feel reassured the tone of voice used by the member of staff was sometimes dismissive, almost condescending.
- In a further 2 calls the mystery shopper said that they did not feel fully reassured by the member of staff and felt that they should have given more detail and/or explained better what they were saying.
 - One of these was assessed by the mystery shopper as not being fully reassuring because the member of staff did not confirm that an arrears letter would be sent if there was a timelag between the money being paid at paypoint and it appearing on the rent account.
 - The other call was assessed as not being fully reassuring as the member of staff did not explain why the fact the YHN are aware of problems should reassure the tenant nor how YHN would take account of any delay in money appearing on the account.
- For 3 of the calls, the mystery shopper was unable to ask for reassurance about paying with the new payment card. One call went straight to answer machine, one member of staff advised the mystery shopper to call their own office, and during the third the mystery shopper's response to a question meant it became inappropriate to ask the question.
- In 11 out of 14 calls the mystery shopper was given information about how long it would take for the money to appear on the rent account. This equates to 79% of all calls or 92% of calls where the mystery shopper asked for this information.
- In 1 call the member of staff did not give this information even though they were asked.
- Unfortunately, only 2 (18%) of those that did say how long it would take for the money to appear on the rent account gave the correct answer. This may be due to a difference between the timescales staff have been told and their actual experience as a couple of staff related instances where they were aware of it taking longer than anticipated for the money to appear. Further

investigation may be required to decide what staff should be telling customers.

- Mystery shoppers reported that they did not sense that staff were confident in their responses to the question about how long it takes for the money to reach YHN.
- All 5 members of staff who were asked how they could find out their rent account balance gave an answer. 2 of these 5 (40%) gave the correct answer. 2 gave partly correct answers and 1 gave an incorrect answer.
- Mystery shoppers recommended that if tenants phone to ask for their rent account balance staff should ask security questions to confirm the identity of the tenant before discussing any details.
- 8 of the 9 members of staff who were asked about other ways to pay answered the question (89%); the 1 member of staff who did not answer this question appeared not to understand the question as they responded by listing a number of Community Housing Offices and Customer service centres where tenants can make payments.
- Of the 8 who answered the question about other ways to pay, 1 gave a full correct answer, 4 gave a partly correct answer, and 1 gave an incorrect answer. This was not recorded on 2 of the scorecards.

General customer care

- 10 of the 13 calls (77%) that were scored were rated as being either very friendly or friendly by the mystery shoppers. The remaining 3 calls were assessed as average.
- The following are taken from the assessment sheets for those calls assessed as average by the mystery shoppers:-
 - “Felt they had interrupted the member of staff”
 - “The first question was 'What is your address', when the mystery shopper said their address the member of staff simply advised the caller that they should call their local office. Did not enquire as to what the call was about prior to giving this advice”
 - “Felt the member of staff did not listen”
 - “The member of staff was very keen (verging on insistent) about getting the address and looking at the rent account details”
- The mystery shoppers thought that being friendly and courteous was the most important aspect of customer service and consequently gave it a weighting of almost a fifth (18%).
- 10 of the 13 calls (77%) that were scored were rated as being either very satisfactory or satisfactory by the mystery shoppers. One of the remaining 3

calls was assessed as very unsatisfactory, one as unsatisfactory and one as average.

- The mystery shoppers rated their overall satisfaction with the call as being equally as important as being friendly and courteous and therefore gave this a weighting of 18%

Responding to a request to send a rent statement

- This could not be assessed as none of the mystery shoppers asked for a statement to be sent out.

Overall customer satisfaction rating

- The average customer satisfaction rating for completed calls was 69% when calculated using the scores given for questions actually asked by the mystery shoppers.

Results and Analysis

This section contains the scores, additional information recorded and analysis. The results are shown for the overall analysis (section 1), which is the total for all calls made. The individual results per office called are contained in appendix 2 although the office names have been changed to numbers so as not to identify locations. The raw data tables are contained in appendix 3, again the office names have been changed to reference numbers. For each question the tangible results are reported followed by the intangible elements – or how the mystery shopper felt, these are presented in a box.

Suggestions given by the mystery shoppers for service improvements appear in Grey highlighted boxes.

As described in the methodology section above mystery shoppers allocated a score to each element of the scenario, the scores for each call have been added together to give a total customer satisfaction rating for each call. The total customer satisfaction ratings per office are presented in section 2.

Results reported in the overall analysis show both the actual percentage for each question and the applicable percentage. Where the applicable percentage differs from the actual percentage this indicated that this question was not asked by the mystery shopper in all cases.

Section1: Overall analysis

1. Was the telephone answered within 5 rings?

	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	13	92.86%	92.86%
No	1	7.14%	7.14%
	14	100.00%	100.00%

As can be seen above all but one of the calls made (93%) were answered within 5 rings. The only one office did not achieve this standard taking 7 rings to answer the call.

The length of time it took to answer the call at the office that did not meet this standard did not *feel* excessive to the mystery shopper and it had no bearing on the overall satisfaction rating the mystery shopper gave. Similarly, although the other offices answered the call within the required 5 rings other factors had far more impact on the mystery shoppers experience and therefore the rating given. This was demonstrated in the weighting given to this element of the call – 3%

Service improvement note:

Mystery shoppers acknowledged that it is important to customers to have their call answered quickly, however, they felt that specifying 5 rings was not helpful and contributed to the exasperated tone sometimes heard upon answering. One mystery shopper was aware that the CCAS answer within one minute and suggested that this is a more realistic standard.

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

Did the member of staff use the Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	12	85.71%	92.31%
No	1	7.14%	7.69%
Not applicable	1	7.14%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Again, a high proportion of the staff answering the call used the required Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting (86%). The member of staff at one office did not use the greeting correctly as they did not say 'Good morning'. At another office the call was answered by an answer machine, the message does not comply with the corporate greeting. (Should it?!)

3 of those who gave the correct greeting only used their first name and 2 mumbled so much that it was not possible to make out their name.

The mystery shoppers all felt that the corporate greeting was confusing as it did not specify which office they had called. This was particularly evident when reviewing the taped calls in order to score them as it was often difficult to identify which office was being marked, especially where the member of staff mumbled their name.

The mystery shoppers also felt that the corporate greeting was too long and that the manner in which it was delivered by the majority of staff was an indication that staff did not feel committed to the greeting and that they were only doing it because they had been instructed to do so. Often the greeting was said very quickly or mumbled, and the tone of voice was not friendly – in some instances mystery shoppers commented that they felt as though their call was an inconvenience as if they had interrupted the member of staff.

Mystery shoppers said it is important to use the corporate greeting, however, this was not as important as other factors and was therefore given a weighting of 9%.

Service improvement note:

Mystery shoppers did think that it was important for YHN to have a corporate greeting that included the name of the member of staff and the location they were calling. They felt that the greeting should be said in a welcoming, friendly manner and not mumbled – it should not sound as though the person answering does not mean it. They also recommend that it should not be too long.

3. Was there any background noise?

Was there any background noise?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	1	7.14%	7.69%
No	12	85.71%	92.31%
Not applicable	1	7.14%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Background noise was only evident on one tape when the calls were played back. However, the mystery shopper and the member of staff supervising the call both said that there had been loud noises in the corridor outside the room in YHN house where the calls were made, therefore we cannot be sure the noise recorded on the tape originated at the Community Housing office.

The mystery shopper who made the call to the office where background noise was recorded said that they had not been aware of any distracting noise originating from the office during the call – they had been slightly distracted by the noise from the corridor outside the room they were in. Anecdotally mystery shoppers did report that background noise, especially ‘laughing and carrying on’, when heard on calls made did not create the right impression, and that other members of staff should be mindful of this when colleagues are on the ‘phone. This element was not considered as important as other factors, but was considered more important than the speed of answering the call and was therefore given a weighting of 6%.

4. Did the member of staff reassure you about paying with your payment card?

Did the member of staff reassure you about paying with your payment card?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	7	50.00%	63.64%
No	2	14.29%	18.18%
Yes and No	2	14.29%	18.18%
Not applicable	3	21.43%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Out of the 14 calls made, the mystery shopper felt reassured about paying with their payment card in 7 cases (50% or 64% of applicable calls). In 2 cases the mystery shopper did not feel at all reassured, and in a further 2 cases the mystery shopper did not feel *fully* reassured. This element was not applicable in the following 3 cases:-

- a) The call made where the mystery shopper was advised to call their own office and therefore did not get the chance to ask any questions.
- b) The call which went directly to answer machine.

- c) The call where the mystery shopper responded to a question by saying that they currently paid by direct debit therefore the member of staff reassured them that paying by DD would still be available.

The 2 cases where the mystery shoppers did not feel at all reassured are detailed below:-

- (i) In one call the mystery shopper (MS) explained that they wanted some information about using the new payment card. The member of staff asked how MS used to pay their rent - MS responded that they used to pay at the CHO. The member of staff said that it was now just the same but that tenants could now pay at any paypoint outlet. MS asked what would happen if there were any technical problems with regards to getting the money transferred from Paypoint to the rent account. The member of staff responded by saying 'there shouldn't be any technical problems'. MS did not feel that the information given in response to the questions and the tone of voice used by the member of staff was reassuring enough. The member of staff should have been able to reassure the caller about the process of transferring money from paypoint – may highlight a training issue.
- (ii) In the call to another office MS initially asked for some general information about paying with payment card. The member of staff's first question was 'What is your address?'. MS reiterated that they only wanted some general information about payment cards and said that they were not from the area but could not get through to their own housing office, said they were visiting friends in the area and they had suggested MS phone this office. The member of staff again asked for the address so they could check the rent account. Asked for address 4 times in all, so MS gave in and told them the address. The member of staff then looked at the rent account and said that MS was in arrears and should pay double next time. The MS was very dissatisfied with the outcome of the call as the member of staff did not listen to what they said and did not respond to what they were asking. There were long pauses during the call when (presumably) the member of staff was accessing the computer but no explanation was given about the reason for these pauses. The member of staff gave incorrect information about the rent account (the MS states they are not in arrears). The member of staff did not reassure MS about paying with payment cards, in fact made MS more anxious, and was very keen (verging on insistent) about getting the address and looking at the rent account details.

The 2 cases where the mystery shoppers did not feel fully reassured are detailed below:-

- (i) In another call the MS felt that the staff member did not fully reassure them about paying with the payment card as they did not say that MS would receive an arrears letter if a payment was missed which MS feels would be the case. It should be noted that the mystery shopper who carried out this call appeared to base the score they gave for this question largely on whether or not the member of staff confirmed what MS believed would happen if a payment was apparently missed even if this was due to a timelag.

(ii) In a further call the MS felt that the member of staff was not adequately reassuring. Although the member of staff did acknowledge that there could be a 'timelag' between making a payment at paypoint and the money appearing on the rent account and they said that YHN were aware of this and that it would be taken account of, they did not explain how this would be taken account of or why the MS should be reassured by this.

Service improvement note:

Mystery shoppers felt that the responses to this question in general highlighted a general need for customer care training, especially in terms of being better at listening to what the customer is asking. It was noted that in 5 out of the 14 (36%) calls made the first question the member of staff asked after the mystery shopper had explained they wanted some general information about payment cards was 'What is your address?' Mystery shoppers also noted that some of the responses to their requests for reassurance about the payment cards were lacking in detail.

The mystery shoppers thought that it was important for staff to be able to reassure tenants about using the new payment cards but did not feel it was as important as other elements of the call and therefore gave this a weighting of 6%

5. Did the member of staff tell you how long it would take for the money to appear on your rent account?

Did the member of staff tell you how long it would take for the money to appear on your rent account?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	11	78.57%	91.67%
No	1	7.14%	8.33%
Not applicable	2	14.29%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Out of the 14 calls made, the member of staff did tell the mystery shopper how long it would take for the money to appear on their rent account in 11 cases (79% or 92% of applicable calls). In 1 case the member of staff did not give this information even though they were asked. This element was not applicable in the following 2 cases:-

- a) The call made where the mystery shopper was advised to call their own office and therefore did not get the chance to ask any questions.
- b) The call which went directly to answer machine.

The 1 case where the member of staff did not give this information even though they had been asked for is detailed in question 4 above.

If 'Yes' did they give the correct information?

If 'Yes' did they give the correct information?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	2	14.29%	18.18%
No	7	50.00%	63.64%
Partly	1	7.14%	9.09%
Yes and No	1	7.14%	9.09%
Not applicable	3	21.43%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Of the 11 calls where the member of staff answered this question only 2 (18%) actually gave the correct information – i.e. it would take 5 working days to appear on the rent account. 7 were incorrect (see below), 1 was partly correct in that the mystery shopper said they had heard it would “take a week” and the member of staff confirmed this was true, and 1 member of staff gave conflicting information during the course of the call saying that it would take 3 days then later in the call saying 5 days.

The 7 cases where incorrect information was given are detailed below:-

- (i) One member of staff said it would take 3 to 4 days for money to appear
- (ii) One member of staff said it would take 3 days for money to appear
- (iii) At one office the actual response was not recorded
- (iv) One member of staff said it would take 4 working days
- (v) One member of staff said it would take 'a few days, about as long as it takes a cheque to clear'
- (vi) One member of staff said 'It can take up to 15 days in some cases'
- (vii) One member of staff said that they had been aware of some problems with delays in payments coming through but that this was mostly with garage accounts. They reiterated that if payment was made at a CSC it was guaranteed that payment would appear next working day, but that if payment made anywhere else it will take a 'couple of days'.

Mystery shoppers reported that in some cases they felt the member of staff did not give the impression that they were confident in the information they gave in response to this question, even in the case of one that got the information correct. This did not help to reassure the mystery shoppers about the new payment arrangements.

Service improvement note:

Mystery shoppers and staff supervising the calls were surprised at the inconsistency of the information given in response to this question. It appears that staff are not certain about what to tell customers. This could partly be due to a difference between the information staff have received and the actual experience on the front line, but could also highlight that further training or information is required.

The mystery shoppers thought that it was important for staff to be able to give an accurate response to this question as this information would help tenants understand and manage their rent account. They felt that accuracy of information was more important than actually answering the question but still felt that some weighting should be given to answering the question as not answering any question asked is very poor customer service. Therefore, answering the question was given a weighting of 3%, and giving the correct information was given a weighting of 6% - giving a total weighting of 9% for this question.

6. Did the member of staff tell you how to find out your balance?

Did the member of staff tell you how to find out your balance?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	5	35.71%	100.00%
No	0	0.00%	0.00%
Not applicable	9	64.29%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

All members of staff who were directly asked this question by the mystery shopper answered it. One of the mystery shoppers did not ask this question during any of the calls they made, a learning point for the future, this accounts for 5 of those recorded as 'Not applicable'. The remaining 4 'Not applicable' are due to:-

- The call made where the mystery shopper was advised to call their own office and therefore did not get the chance to ask any questions.
- The call which went directly to answer machine.
- The call to where in response to a question the mystery shopper said that they currently paid by direct debit therefore it was not appropriate to ask this question.
- The call where the mystery shopper did not ask the question as the member of staff had already spoken about rent statements being sent out.

If 'Yes' did they give the correct information?

If 'Yes' did they give the correct information?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	2	14.29%	40.00%
No	1	7.14%	20.00%
Partly	2	14.29%	40.00%
Not applicable	9	64.29%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Of the 5 calls where the member of staff answered this question 2 (40%) gave the correct information – i.e. you will be sent a statement of your rent account every three months. You can also get a balance in between statements by phoning or visiting your local YHN office (the number is on your rent card) or by phoning the income section. Although, none of the members of staff said that tenants could also

phone the income section at YHN house, it was felt that it was not appropriate to mark this down as an incorrect answer as the call was being made to a CHO. Two were partly correct in that the mystery shopper was advised to contact the local housing office but no mention was made of the quarterly rent statements.

One member of staff said that the only way for a tenant to get a balance on their rent account was to visit their local housing office and ask a member of staff. The mystery shoppers felt this should be recorded as incorrect as they did not say that tenants could telephone the office nor did they mention rent statements – it was thought particularly poor that this was not said given the fact that many tenants have a long journey to physically get to the office.

Service improvement note:

One member of staff said that if a tenant were to phone the office for a balance they would be asked security questions to verify their identity before any details about their rent account would be discussed, this was not mentioned by any other member of staff (in fact some members of staff appeared too keen to talk about rent account details – see question 4 above) but the mystery shoppers thought this was a very good idea and should be done as a matter of course.

The mystery shoppers thought that it was important for staff to be able to give an accurate response to this question as it was very important to tenants to be able to keep an eye on their balance, especially now that they would not be able to get a balance at the time they make a payment unless they pay at a CSC. They felt that accuracy of information was more important than actually answering the question but still felt that some weighting should be given to answering the question as not answering any question asked is very poor customer service. Therefore, answering the question was given a weighting of 3%, and giving the correct information was given a weighting of 15% - giving a total weighting of 18% for this question.

7. Did the member of staff tell you about other ways to pay?

Did the member of staff tell you about other ways you have to pay?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	8	57.14%	88.89%
No	1	7.14%	11.11%
Not applicable	5	35.71%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

8 out of the 9 members of staff who were directly asked this question by the mystery shopper answered it. It was felt that one member of staff perhaps did not understand the question as they responded by listing a number of CHO's and CSC's where tenants can pay. The remaining 5 'Not applicable' are due to:-

- a) The call made where the mystery shopper was advised to call their own office and therefore did not get the chance to ask any questions.
- b) The call which went directly to answer machine.

- c) The call where the mystery shopper responded to a question by saying that they currently paid by direct debit therefore it was not appropriate to ask this question.
- d) One call where the mystery shopper forgot to ask the question.
- e) The call where the mystery shopper did not ask the question as the member of staff had already spoken about rent statements being sent out.

If 'Yes' did they give the correct information?

If 'Yes' did they give the correct information?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Yes	1	7.14%	16.67%
No	1	7.14%	16.67%
Partly	4	28.57%	66.67%
Not recorded	2	14.29%	
Not applicable	6	42.86%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

Of the 8 calls where the member of staff answered this question only 1 (17%) gave the full correct information – i.e. Customers can pay in person at customer service centres and some Community Housing Offices using cash, cheque, credit or debit card, or postal order; at Paypoint outlets using cash only; Through the post by sending a cheque or postal order; Over the telephone using a debit or credit card; and through the bank by Direct debit or Standing order. On 2 of the forms the response to this question was not recorded. 4 members of staff were recorded as being partly correct, as follows:-

- (i) One member of staff said tenants could also pay by direct debit or standing order.
- (ii) Another said that tenants can pay with 'old rent card' at housing offices, also said that a named Community Housing Office still take cash, as do the civic centre and another customer service centre. Then said tenants can also use payment cards, and direct debit to pay their rent.
- (iii) At one office the answer was recorded as being partly correct yet the reason for this assessment was not recorded.
- (iv) One member of staff said tenants could pay with 'old rent card' at customer service centres, also directly from bank accounts or could send a cheque through the post.

One member of staff said that tenants could still pay using their 'old rent card' at customer service centres; they did not give any other information about other payment methods.

The mystery shoppers thought that it was important for staff to be able to give an accurate response to this question as it was very important to tenants to be aware of the choices available to them especially as there is still some disquiet about the withdrawal of cashiers. They also pointed out that paying by direct debit should be encouraged as it was a very easy method for tenants to pay the rent. They felt that accuracy of information was more important than actually answering the question but still felt that some weighting should be given to answering the question as not answering any question asked is very poor customer service. Therefore, answering the question was given a weighting of 3%, and giving the correct information was given a weighting of 6% - giving a total weighting of 9% for this question.

Service improvement note:
 Although most members of staff were aware of some other ways to pay only one member of staff asked could give a full response to this question. The mystery shoppers felt that this indicated a training issue. It was also recommended that the benefits of direct debit be promoted.

8. Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?

Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Very friendly	4	28.57%	30.77%
Friendly	6	42.86%	46.15%
Average	3	21.43%	23.08%
Unfriendly	0	0.00%	0.00%
Very unfriendly	0	0.00%	0.00%
Not applicable	1	7.14%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

The majority of staff 10 (77%) were assessed as being friendly and courteous during the call, calls were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very friendly and courteous. 3 members of staff (23%) were said to be 'average', i.e. they were rated as 3. Mystery shoppers comments regarding the 3 rated as average are as follows:-

- (i) The first Mystery shopping call made. The call didn't go as well as the Mystery Shopper had hoped. Member of staff's first question was 'What is your address?', the mystery shopper gave their address and were advised that they should call their local office. The member of staff did not enquire as to what the MS call was about prior to giving this advice, therefore the mystery shopper felt that the member of staff could have been a bit more friendly and courteous, and exhibit a bit more customer care. However, this being the first call there were some issues due to the MS being unable to answer some questions leading to long pauses.
- (ii) During another call the mystery shopper felt that the member of staff could have been more friendly and should have explained things in more detail especially as the MS had said they wanted reassurance. MS felt as though the member of staff had been interrupted and that the call was an

- inconvenience. Often answered a question with a question, and was abrupt 'What do you mean?!' the tone was not right.
- (iii) The mystery shopper was very dissatisfied with the outcome of the call as the member of staff did not listen to what MS said, did not respond to what they were asking. There were long pauses during the call when (presumably) the member of staff was accessing the computer but no explanation was given about the reason for these pauses. The member of staff did not reassure MS about paying with payment cards, in fact made MS more anxious, and was very keen (verging on insistent) about getting the address and looking at the rent account details.

Service improvement note:

Mystery shoppers felt that this, again, highlighted a general need for customer care training, especially in terms of being better at listening to what the customer is asking. It is vital to reiterate to staff the importance of not giving the impression that the call is an inconvenience and that they want to get the tenant off the phone as soon as possible. It was suggested that staff should also be reminded that customers may call with general enquiries that do not require the member of staff to know what their address is.

The mystery shoppers thought that being friendly and courteous was the most important aspect of customer service and therefore gave this a weighting of 18%

9. Overall how satisfied were you with the way you were dealt with?

Please indicate how satisfied you were with the way you were dealt with overall on this call	Number	Percentage	Applicable percentage
Very satisfied	4	28.57%	30.77%
Satisfied	6	42.86%	46.15%
Average	1	7.14%	7.69%
Unsatisfied	1	7.14%	7.69%
Very unsatisfied	1	7.14%	7.69%
Not applicable	1	7.14%	
	14	100.00%	100.00%

The majority of mystery shopping calls 10 (77%) were assessed as being very satisfactory or satisfactory, calls were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very satisfactory. The remaining calls were rated as average, unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory the reasons for these ratings are given in 8 above.

The mystery shoppers rated their overall satisfaction with the call as being equally as important as being friendly and courteous and therefore gave this a weighting of 18%

Section 2: Overall rating per office

10. Overall customer satisfaction 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 per element and a total maximum score of 165. During the assessment of each call the mystery shoppers were asked to allocate a score for each element, the scores were then added together to give an overall score for each call. This score as a percentage of the total maximum score is shown in the table below under the 'Percentage' column and was intended to give us the overall customer satisfaction rating for each call.

In practice, however, during some calls a number of the questions were not asked. This was either because it was inappropriate to ask the question or the mystery shopper forgot to ask. Therefore, it was necessary during the analysis of the scores to take account of those questions that were not asked. In the table below, the 'Applicable percentage' column shows the total score for the call as a percentage of the total maximum score for those questions asked during that call e.g. call 7 achieved a satisfaction rating of 58% (95 out of 165), however, during the call five of the applicable questions (with a maximum score of 55 points) were not asked therefore the total maximum score was 130 not 185; the call was given a score of 115 leading to an applicable score of 86%.

Table: Customer Satisfaction rating per call

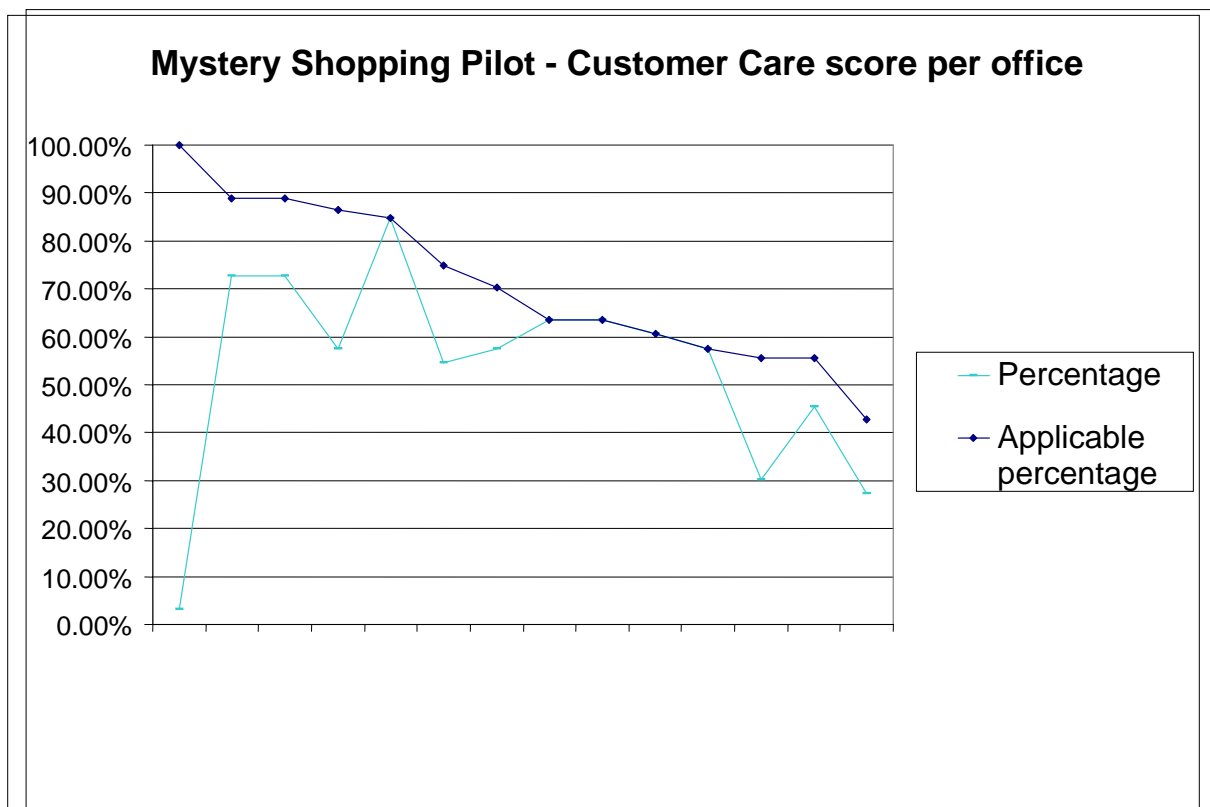
	Total Score	Percentage (out of 165)	Applicable score	Applicable percentage
1	140	84.85%	165	84.85%
2	120	72.73%	135	88.89%
3	120	72.73%	135	88.89%
4	105	63.64%	165	63.64%
5	105	63.64%	165	63.64%
6	100	60.61%	165	60.61%
7	95	57.58%	110	86.36%
8	95	57.58%	135	70.37%
9	95	57.58%	165	57.58%
10	90	54.55%	120	75.00%
11	75	45.45%	135	55.56%
12	50	30.30%	90	55.56%
13	45	27.27%	105	42.86%
14	5	3.03%	5	100.00%
Overall average score		55.21%		71.87%

In most cases the applicable percentage is a better reflection of the way the call was scored by the mystery shopper. However, both scores should be considered as the nature of this exercise means the reasons that a question has not been asked may

indicate an issue, for example, the data tables (appendix 3) shows call 13 with five applicable questions not asked, however the reason these were not asked was because the member of staff did not listen to the mystery shopper; and call 14 scored 100% because the call went straight to answer machine meaning that 11 out of the 12 elements were not applicable - in these cases the percentage score is a better indicator of the outcome of the call.

As can be seen from the table above 6 out of the 13 calls completed (46%) scored applicable percentage ratings of 70% or more, conversely 4 (31%) scored less than 60%.

The diagram below shows the overall customer satisfaction scores per office.



11. Average customer satisfaction rating

The average percentage rating (calculated inclusive of all elements whether they were asked or not) is 55%.

The average applicable percentage rating for all calls made is 72% (69% for all completed calls, i.e. not including the one that went to answer machine)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Mystery shopping ‘Rent payment scenario’ template

Appendix 2 – Individual results per office

Appendix 3 – Raw data tables

Appendix 1 – Rent payment scenario template



TELEPHONE REPORT - Rent Payment Scenario

Name of Member of staff:		Assessor:	
Date of call:		Time of call:	

OPENING		Yes	No	N/a
1	Was the telephone answered within 5 rings?			
	The telephone MUST be answered before the 6th ring to score yes.			
2	Did the member of staff use the Your Homes Newcastle corporate greeting?			
	The corporate greeting should include the name of the member of staff (please write in on the top of the report)			
3	Was there any background noise?			
	There should NOT be any background noise which could distract the conversation (for example laughing, music, fax machine, shouting, loud talking.)			
QUERY RESPONSES		Yes	No	Not applicable
4	Did the member of staff reassure you about paying with your payment card?			

	You should be FULLY assured that the query was answered to your satisfaction.			
5	Did the member of staff tell you how long it would take for the money to appear on your rent account?			
	If they did were they correct? Please write how long they said in the box at the bottom			
6	Did the member of staff tell you how to find out your balance?			
	If they did were they correct?			
7	Did the member of staff tell you about other ways you have to pay?			
	If they did were they correct?			
	FOLLOW UP	Very good	Good	Neutral
8	Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?			
	Please use the five point scale to score this call			
9	Please indicate how satisfied you were with the way you were dealt with overall on this call			
	Please use the five point scale to score this call			
		Yes	No	Not applicable
10	Did you ask for a rent statement to be sent to your home?			
	If 'Yes' did it arrive within 15 days?			

If you have any other comment you wish to make about this call please write them in the box below:

I confirm that this is an accurate record of this call, please sign and date below:

Signed (assessor):

Date:

Signed (For Your Homes Newcastle):

Date:

Appendix 2 – Individual results per office

Call number	Within 5 rings?	YHN greeting	Back-ground noise?	Did the member of staff reassure you about paying with your payment card?	Did the member of staff tell you how long it would take for the money to appear on your rent account?	If yes was the info correct	Did the member of staff tell you how to find out your balance?	If yes was the info correct	Did the member of staff tell you about other ways you have to pay?	If yes was the info correct	Was the member of staff friendly and courteous during the call?	Overall satisf.	Total Score	Percent age	Applicable percentage
1	5	15	10	10	5	0	5	25	5	0	30	30	140	84.85%	84.85%
2	5	15	10	10	5	0	NA	NA	5	10	30	30	120	72.73%	88.89%
3	5	15	10	10	5	15	NA	NA	5	0	30	25	120	72.73%	88.89%
4	5	15	10	10	5	0	5	0	5	0	25	25	105	63.64%	63.64%
5	5	15	10	10	5	0	5	0	5	0	25	25	105	63.64%	63.64%
6	5	15	10	0	5	0	5	25	5	0	15	15	100	60.61%	60.61%
7	5	15	10	NA	5	15	NA	NA	NA	NA	20	25	95	57.58%	86.36%
8	5	0	10	10	5	0	NA	NA	5	0	30	30	95	57.58%	70.37%
9	0	15	10	10	5	0	5	0	5	0	25	20	95	57.58%	57.58%
10	5	15	10	0	5	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	25	30	90	54.55%	75.00%
11	5	15	0	0	5	0	NA	NA	0	NA	25	25	75	45.45%	55.56%
12	5	15	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	5	50	30.30%	55.56%
13	5	15	10	0	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15	0	45	27.27%	42.86%
14	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	3.03%	100.00%

Appendix 3 – Data tables

CHO	Did the member of staff reassure you about paying with your payment card?	Did the member of staff tell you how long it would take for the money to appear on your rent account?	If yes was the info correct?	Did the member of staff tell you how to find out your balance?	If yes was the info correct?	Did the member of staff tell you about other ways you have to pay?	If yes was the info correct?	How friendly & courteous	Overall Satisf.	General comments MS = Mystery Shopper
1	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	partly	1	1	<p>Q4 - When first asked for information about the payment card, member of staff asked questions to clarify what the card was for (i.e. rent or council tax), then asked if the MS had experienced any problems with making payments. Understood the issue the MS was calling about as asked questions to clarify. Advised MS that if they wanted to ensure a payment appeared on the rent account the next working day that they should make payment at a CSC or the Civic as opposed to paypoint. Explained that it takes 'a few days' for the payment to appear if payment is made at the post office or paypoint outlet. Advised MS to get a receipt wherever payment is made. Q5 - Said that had been aware of some problems with delays in payments coming through but that this was mostly with garage accounts. reiterated that if payment was made at a CSC it was guaranteed that payment would appear next working day, but that if payment made anywhere else it will take a 'couple of days'. Did offer reassurance as said that the new system works very well and there had been a positive response from customers who now found it easier to make rent payments at the post office. Said that if MS was concerned about paying with card at paypoint or post office they should make sure they keep their receipt and there shouldn't be a problem. Q6 - Advised MS that they could ring any CHO, the officer should ask security questions to verify who you are and then would be able to give you a balance over the phone. Said rent statements are sent out quarterly and that tenants could request a statement is sent to their home address at any time. Q7 - Said could pay with 'old rent card' at customer service centres, also directly from bank accounts or could send a cheque through</p>

										the post. Additional comments - MS asked about rent free weeks at Christmas, Member of staff clarified the relevant weeks and reiterated that if tenants are in arrears they still have to make a payment. Overall the MS felt that this member of staff dealt with the call enthusiastically and happily, exhibited a high level of customer care. Did not ask inappropriate questions such as where the MS lived etc.
2	yes	yes	no	not applicable	not applicable	yes	yes	1	1	When MS asked for some general information about paying with the payment card member of staff's first question was 'What is your address' but did not push it when MS explained only wanted some general information. Q4 - MS impressed that member of staff did admit that caller would get an arrears letter if the payment was delayed and the account went into arrears, also gave advice as to how to stop such letters being sent - i.e. call the office to explain. Q5 - said it takes 3 to 4 days to receive the money. Q6 - MS did not ask this question. Q7 - Said could pay with credit or debit cards over the phone, also mentioned direct debit and standing order. Overall comment - MS felt that member of staff explained the whole process really well, was friendly and courteous, reassured MS about making payments with the rent card and was honest about the arrears letters.
3	yes	yes	yes	not applicable	not applicable	yes	Not recorded	1	2	MS could not catch the name of the member of staff. MS did not ask about how to get a balance, but the member of staff did talk about rent statements - did not say how often they were sent out. Q5 - Member of staff said that it would take 5 working days for payment to reach account.
4	yes	yes	no	yes	partly	yes	Not recorded	2	2	No further comments recorded

5	yes	yes	no	yes	partly	yes	partly	2	2	Q4 - Member of staff advised MS to check the information on the receipt was correct when they make a payment and to keep receipts for future reference. Any problems or queries should be taken up with the paypoint outlet at the time of the transaction. MS asked what would happen if they lost the card. Response was simply 'that would be your responsibility' - MS felt that the tone of the response to this question was a bit too offhand although did go on to give advice about tracking back to find the card. Q5 - Said it takes 4 working days for money to appear on account when paying through paypoint. Q6 - Advised to come into or telephone the office. Q7 - Said tenants could also pay by standing order or direct debit. MS then asked why cashiers had been taken away - responded that it was more convenient for tenants to be able to pay at local shops.
6	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	partly	3	3	Q4 - MS explained that wanted some information about using the new payment card. Member of staff asked how MS used to pay the rent - MS said used to pay at the CHO. Member of staff said that it was now just the same but tenants could now pay at any paypoint outlet. MS asked what would happen if there were any technical problems with regards to getting the money transferred from Paypoint to the rent account. Member of staff responded by saying 'there shouldn't be any technical problems'. MS did not feel that the information given and the tone was reassuring enough. Q5 - When asked how long it takes for the cash to appear on the rent account when making a payment via paypoint the member of staff said 'a few days, about the same as the length of time it takes a cheque to clear', later was more specific and said it takes 4 days for payments to show on the account. Q6 - Said that rent statements are sent out every 3 months and that tenants can ring up or call into their own housing office to request a balance. Q7 - Said that tenants can pay with 'old rent card' at housing offices, a named CHO still take cash, as do the civic centre and another CSC. Then said tenants can also use payment cards, and direct debit to pay their rent. General comment about the call - Member of staff could have been more friendly and explained in more detail, MS had said wanted reassurance. MS felt as though the member of staff had been interrupted and that the call was an inconvenience. Often answered a question with a question, and was abrupt 'What do you mean?!' the tone was not right.

7	not applicable	yes	yes	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	2.5	2	Q4 when MS asked for reassurance about paying with the payment card the member of staff asked what method MS used to pay at present. MS said paid by direct debit so member of staff then reassured her about paying by direct debit. Q5 MS asked how long it takes for payment to reach the account when paying using the payment card - Staff response was '4 to 5 days'. Additional comments - the member of staff asked for the MS address so that she could look at the rent account and check the current balance. MS reiterated that they just wanted some general information. Member of staff reassured caller that direct debit was still available and that if MS was happy with this method could continue to pay this way, then said that the payment cards were to be used by those tenants who previously paid with the rent card. Questions 4,6 and 7 were not applicable as MS said paid by DD therefore member of staff reassured MS about that method of paying.
8	yes	yes	no	not applicable	not applicable	yes	no	1	1	Q5 - Said it would take 3 days for money to appear on the account. Never at any point asked MS what their address was or even where they were from - which was perceived as good. Did not say that MS would get an arrears letter if fell into arrears due to payment arriving late on account due to delay in paypoint. Advice about other ways to pay was incorrect - said that could still pay using rent book at the Customer service centres - did not mention any other payment methods.
9	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	partly	2	2.5	In response to Q5 the member of staff said that it can take up to 15 days 'in some cases' for the money to appear on the rent account if paying at a paypoint outlet. In response to question 6 the member of staff said that the only way to get a balance was to call into the housing office and ask.
10	yes and no	yes	yes and no	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	2	1	Q4 - MS felt that staff member did not fully reassure about paying with the payment card as did not say that MS would receive an arrears letter if a payment was missed which MS feels would be the case. Q5 - Some confusion about how long it takes for money to show on rent account, said 3 days at one point and 5 days another time. Did try to reassure caller that this would not be a problem by saying 'but you shouldn't get into arrears' but MS felt this was not very reassuring. Q6 and Q7 were not asked by the MS.

11	yes and no	yes	partly	not applicable	not applicable	no	not applicable	2	2	MS initially asked for some general information about paying with payment card. Member of staff's first question was 'What is your address?'. MS reiterated that only wanted some general information about payment cards and said that was not from the area but could not get through to own housing office. Q4 and 5 - MS said that they had heard that it can take up to a week for money to appear on rent account if paying at paypoint, member of staff confirmed that this was the case but said that YHN were aware of this time lag and that YHN would take account of this when looking at the rent account. MS felt that this was not adequately reassuring as felt that member of staff did not explain how this would be taken account of or why MS should be reassured by this. Q7 - Did mention other places MS could pay but did not mention other payment methods. Also said that MS could pay with 'Rent card' at 3 named outlets. MS interpreted this to mean the old cardboard rent card but thought member of staff may have meant the new payment card - group felt that this needs to be made more clear.
12	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	3	4	This was the first Mystery shopping call made. Didn't go as well as MS had hoped. Member of staff first question was 'What is your address' when MS said their address simply advised the caller that should call their local office. Did not enquire as to what MS call was about prior to giving this advice. However, this being the first call there were some issues as the MS was unable to answer some questions and there were long pauses.

13	no	no	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	3	5	MS initially asked for some general information about paying with payment card. Member of staff's first question was 'What is your address?'. MS reiterated that only wanted some general information about payment cards and said that was not from the area but could not get through to own housing office, said was visiting friends in the area and they suggested MS phone this office. Member of staff again asked for the address so they could check the rent account. Asked for address 4 times in all, so MS gave in and told staff the address. Member of staff then looked at the rent account and said that MS was in arrears and should pay double next time. MS very dissatisfied with the outcome of the call as the member of staff did not listen to what MS said did not respond to what they were asking. There were long pauses during the call when (presumably) the member of staff was accessing the computer but no explanation was given about the reason for these pauses. Gave incorrect information about the rent account (MS states is not in arrears). Did not reassure MS about paying with payment cards, in fact made MS more anxious, and was very keen (verging on insistent) about getting the address and looking at the rent account details. MS did not ask questions 6 and 7.
14	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	Call made at 11.40 - went straight to answer machine with message saying the office was closed.