

Review Update (Follow up)

Review:	Watford Community Housing
Committee/Task Group:	Watford Community Housing Task Group
Committee/Task Group Chair:	Councillor Asif Khan
Final report published:	February 2019
Watford Community Housing response received:	April 2019

Service Charges

Recommendation:	Provide information to residents explaining how to notify them when a service, included in their service charge, was not provided.
Watford Community Housing's response:	<p>When residents believe they have not received a service that they are paying for, they can inform us via our Customer Service Centre on 0800 218 2247 or enquiries@wcht.org.uk</p> <p>We will then acknowledge this and communicate it to the appropriate department within the business for further action and feedback. Information on how to raise concerns is already included as part of our service charge letters sent in both February and September and is also available on our website.</p> <p>Timescale: Already in place</p>
Latest update:	This is in place as indicated in our response in February 2019.

Recommendation:	Communicate with tenants outlining the final adjustments to be made to their service charge following a service being paid for that was not provided as soon as possible after the matter was identified, and with full details included in the annual letter sent to residents providing information on the actual charges made for the previous financial year.
Watford Community Housing's response:	<p>As part of the process of issuing actual service charge costs to residents in September of each year, the actual cost of a service is listed and where this differs to the original estimate an adjustment is applied. In the case of a service not being provided, this adjustment would be a credit to the residents account.</p> <p>For instances such as loss of critical service e.g. no hot water at a property for an extended period we will consider appropriate financial adjustments, which could be compensation for loss of service. This would be dealt with in line with our tenant compensation policy.</p> <p>Timescale: Already in place</p>
Latest update:	This is in place as indicated in our response in February 2019.

Maintenance

Recommendation:	Work collaboratively with Hertfordshire County Council and Watford Borough Council to help improve local amenities for tenants and residents.
Watford Community Housing's response:	<p>We welcome this suggestion from the Task Group and any assistance that can be provided to facilitate greater partnership working with regards to grounds maintenance. This is a subject that has been raised with WBC. The challenge is synchronisation of contract standards which has been subcontracted to WBC by HCC. The current arrangement operates on fewer cuts per year than the WCH standard. We are open to exploring with WBC / HCC options whereby we take responsibility for cutting grassed areas adjacent to our land. Our new grounds maintenance contract starts with Accuro Environmental Ltd on 1st May 2019. We would welcome this as part of our exciting new contract, which ultimately would benefit all parties.</p> <p>Timescale: September 2019</p>

Latest update:	Met with Alan Gough- Group Head of Customer Services in June 2019 to discuss grounds maintenance. Agreed to produce maps and complaints data clearly identifying the areas of concern by end of September 2019. Meeting to review maps in place in October to review with Alan Gough.
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Recommendation:	Arrange for repair or refurbishment works to properties to be carried out before mutually swapped or transferred to ensure they meet lettable standards.
Watford Community Housing's response:	It is standard practice within the housing sector to only undertake health and safety work on mutual exchanges. As discussed at the Task Group, mutual exchanges are an exchange or assignment of a tenancy where by mutual consent tenants swop properties. This is generally a statutory right depending on the type and when their tenancy was granted. The property is taken as seen (similar to an open market sale) and is ultimately the tenant's choice as to whether to proceed. We will not be making any changes to our process or carrying out additional works as this does not provide value for money for our tenants in an area of our business where people have choice. Timescale: N/A
Latest update:	No further action as per our response in February 2019.

Recommendation:	Notify tenants on how long it will take to carry out the works.
Watford Community Housing's response:	Providing a timescales at the beginning of building works can be challenging. We recognise that this however is an area which can be improved. This was recently highlighted by our Gateway Membership Team (involved residents) following their recent scrutiny of lettings, completed in March 2019. As a result of this we have implemented changes to improve communication and the timing of when we advertise properties to manage expectation in a more effective manner. Timescale: Immediately
Latest update:	The above recommendation is in place and resident expectations are being managed.

Recommendation:	Outline any major works that will be required, including when these will be completed and the property ready for habitation, when void properties are placed on the 'home choice letting' scheme.
Watford Community Housing's response:	As part of our voids process a stock condition survey is undertaken before the property is let. This allows us to set the future programme of works for the next 30 years. In order to improve our service we will make available the planned maintenance forward guidance as part of our signup process for incoming tenants. Timescale: September 2019
Latest update:	The Planned Investment Programme is available on our new website link as follows and forms part of our signup process : https://www.wcht.org.uk/WCH_Site/media/Watford-Community-Housing/PDFs/Planned-works-improvement-programme.pdf

Repairs

Recommendation:	Complete repairs on the first visit to the satisfaction of tenants in 85% of cases with details published in the annual report.
Watford Community Housing's response:	We are currently achieving between 80-83% first time fix rate which is collected as part of our tenant survey. Part of our Business Plan 2020-25 and our tenant offer is to provide a First Class Repairs Service and achieve 90% first time fix by 2025. The first time fix rate forms part of our Corporate Objectives for 2019/20 and will be reported to our residents in the annual report. Our current target is to achieve 80% which was agreed by our Group Board, Gateway Membership Team and Operations Committee. This was previously included in our Annual Report 2017/18 and was reported as 83%. Timescale: During our Business Plan 2020-2025
Latest update:	We are currently finalising our new business plan 2020 - 2025. Part of the tenant offer is to achieve repairs on the first visit 9 times out of 10. To achieve this we are reviewing our technology, training of

	<p>staff, alongside our supply chain capability. We are currently working with Jewson to implement automated van stock replenishment, which will be rolled out across all trades by March 2020.</p>
<p>Recommendation:</p>	<p>A) Complete remaining repairs to the satisfaction of tenants within 30 days of the initial reporting in 95% of cases and include the outcomes in the annual report.</p> <p>B) Not close a case until the resident was content with the repair.</p>
<p>Watford Community Housing's response:</p>	<p>A) Our target for 2019/20 is currently set at 95% of non-urgent repairs completed within 30 working days. This forms part of our current service standards.</p> <p>B) Repairs are closed by the operative onsite when the works are completed via their smart phone. This is then registered as complete in our IT systems. As discussed at the Task Group we phone 10% of tenants on the completion of works on a daily basis. The purpose is to spot check tenant satisfaction. We do not believe it would be practical from a resource perspective to phone all tenants to check they are content. Our satisfaction survey is designed to pick up issues and is sent to all tenants where a repair has been marked as complete. Currently this feedback is via a postal survey. One of our planned projects for 2019/20 is to implement a new ICT solution which will send out surveys electronically. The benefit will be a more instant understanding of the tenant view of the repair, which will be dealt with by our Customer Relations Team.</p> <p>Timescale: March 2020</p>
<p>Latest update:</p>	<p>A comprehensive review of software providers was carried out over the summer. A brief was produced which suppliers were asked to tender against. We have shortlisted to two providers with final presentations booked for September / October 2019. The outcome of which will be taken and considered by EMT in November 2019 for implementation by April 2020.</p>

Recommendation:	Include in the annual report, details of repairs that have taken longer than 30 days to complete and itemise the number of days taken.
Watford Community Housing's response:	We do not believe that this is practical to itemise repairs in the annual report, given that we complete around 15k repairs a year, nor does it add value to our tenants. Our current target is to complete 95% of repairs within 30 working days. If we achieve the target there would be approximately 750 repairs would fall outside of the target. In addition there would be issues with GDPR which would further complicate the matter. Timescale: N/A
Latest update:	No further action as per our response in February 2019.

Recommendation:	Increase the number of inspections of repairs to 20% of those undertaken and report on those that were found to be unsatisfactory in the annual report.
Watford Community Housing's response::	We currently undertake 10% checks of completed repairs to establish value for money and 100% where tenants are unhappy with the workmanship or where a service is not received. This is in line with our Repairs Policy and is common practice in the sector. To achieve 20% we would have to increase the staff establishment costs at a time where our rental income has incrementally reduced over the last 4 years. Statistically this would not provide additional benefit nor represent good value for money for our tenants. Timescale: N/A
Latest update:	No further action as per our response in February 2019.

Recommendation:	Give any positive feedback received from tenants on repair works carried out to the person or team who carried out the repair and include information on the number of compliments received in the annual report.
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Watford Community Housing's response::	<p>As part of our current business plan we have been measuring our ratio of complaints to compliments via our feedback software. We measure this on a monthly basis and over the course of the year we target to achieve a 50/50 balance. This was included in our Annual Report in 2017/18 as 51% compliments to 49% complaints, which we believe is very positive. On receipt, positive and negative feedback is already feedback to staff via their manager or team leader. We track satisfaction by member of staff which forms part of monthly one to one discussions around performance.</p> <p>Timescale: Already in place</p>
Latest update:	No further action as per our response in February 2019.

Customer service

Recommendation:	Ensure that records of tenant's casework were comprehensive, timely and kept up to date, and seek to introduce a computerised central recording system during the next financial year.
Watford Community Housing's response::	<p>We currently employ computerised systems for all core operational activities within our business. As discussed at the Task Group this action was about integration and development of our systems to create a more holistic view of customer activities. This forms part of our established ICT road map 2019/20. We are implementing a new tenancy module over the course of 2019/20. This includes a mobile working solution and new work flows. This will allow for all records to be in one place and further enhance the customer experience.</p> <p>Timescale: Already in place</p>
Latest update:	The tenancy visit module is currently in development and is being tested this month. Subject to satisfactory testing this will be deployed in October 2019 to operational staff.