

Summary report

Review period April-June 2019

Fencing review

Welcome to our ninth review. The Scrutiny Panel's role is to explore, examine and test Phoenix services on behalf of residents. We make recommendations to improve services and satisfaction. We chose to investigate Phoenix's approach to fencing because of the increasing number of complaints from residents that they wanted new fencing and disliked the current chestnut fencing.

How we carried out the review

We examined the service through a document review and requested key documents.

We also interviewed the Director of Property and New Business, Head of Contract Delivery, Partnership Manager and a Repair Service Operative to help us understand fencing repairs and major works.

The scope for the review was:

To review Phoenix's approach to fencing with the aim of investigating how it achieves value for money.

To measure the success of the review we set out to understand:

- Resident satisfaction with fencing repairs and renewals.
- Time frames and repair priorities for fencing repairs and renewals.
- The types of fencing options available.
- The sustainability and value for money of any fencing programme.



Meet the panel

The panel is made up of five members. Welcome to Gwen Smith, our newest member who joined us at the start of this review!

Join us!

If you'd like to help put Phoenix under the microscope, improve services and satisfaction, please get in touch.



Eileen Davies



Karen Stokes



Gwen Smith



Deirdre Kennedy



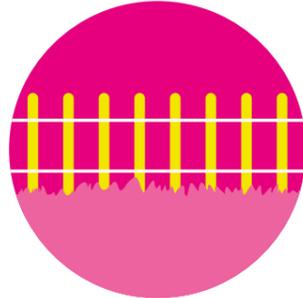
Simon Barlow

Our key findings

£647,000
6 years

Over the last six years, £647K has been spent on fencing.

The current fencing specification is to install two 6ft privacy fencing panels with the rest in chestnut fencing.

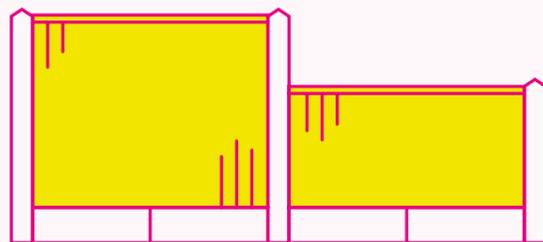


Phoenix does not have a fencing programme in place. Fencing is fixed when it is damaged or reported to Phoenix.

New trial

A new fencing specification is being trialled. Two 6ft privacy waney panel fences with the rest in 4ft waney panels, concrete posts and gravel boards.

6ft privacy panels **4ft** fencing panels



Although Phoenix does not currently have a fencing programme or method of continuously repairing or installing fences, it does achieve value for money (VFM) by:

VFM!

- Ensuring that the wood used for fencing panels is from certified sustainable sources.
- Having a sustainable fencing specification which uses concrete posts and gravel boards. Although initially this approach is more expensive, it lasts longer than other specifications and is quicker to repair or replace if needed.



Resident satisfaction!

71% satisfied



In 2018-19, 711 fencing repairs were carried out. 73 residents were surveyed on their experience following a responsive repair fencing job. 71% said they were satisfied overall with the repair.

In 2018-19 there were 84 general enquiries recorded which related to fencing including some follow ups from the same household. There were also seven complaints related to fencing.

The general themes from resident feedback and complaints with fencing are around:

- The type/height of fencing
- Delay in fencing work
- Ownership/boundaries
- Loss of privacy

When interviewing ...we noted

Director of Property and New Business - Lesley Johnson

Many housing associations do not provide fencing for their residents as they do not have a legal duty to do so. Phoenix has chosen to provide fencing for its residents.

Head of Contract Delivery - John Ball

There have been various approaches to fencing in Phoenix's history. This has ranged from pilot programmes, payable fencing services and major works improvements which included some new fencing for estates.

Partnership Manager - Jim Humm

Overgrown gardens are an issue that can delay fencing repairs and renewals.

Repairs Operative, Fencing Repairs - Rickie Mepstead

If fences are installed and looked after properly, they should last 15 years. Tenants should be encouraged to use creosote on fences to give them a longer life.

Recommendations

Our top five

5

At the end of our review in June, we made nine recommendations which can be viewed in our full report. These are the top five which help to improve resident satisfaction and achieve value for money:

- 1** Proceed with the new fencing specification (installing concrete posts and gravel boards) which promotes good value for money.
- 2** Ensure that there is full resident consultation on any fencing programme so that feedback is representative of all residents' views.
- 3** Phase in any fencing programme to ensure that value for money is achieved.
- 4** Consider using picket fencing for front gardens to identify property boundaries.
- 5** Consider using one type of fencing to avoid people comparing fences as well as communicating to avoid unrealistic expectations.



Constraints

Changes in 'ownership' of fencing and responsibility within Phoenix has changed recently. The Fencing policy is also due for review.

What we've learnt

There are many different fencing policies used across the social housing sector.

Traffic light monitoring

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To make sure that services are improved for all residents, we monitor recommendations from our previous reviews to track when actions have been completed.

We use a traffic light system to help us:

1 not started

- red (delayed)
- amber (in progress)
- green (completed)

What's next

- Start our review on the role of Housing Officers and Phoenix's approach to supporting residents 'at risk'.
- Follow the progress of recommendations from past reviews.
- Continue communications and engagement with residents to increase Panel membership.

Phoenix and regulatory standards

At the core of every scrutiny review, we look to improve services for all residents in line with the Phoenix Standards and regulatory code set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

In this review, we found that Repairs keeps the promises made under Phoenix standard 2 (Day to Day Repairs) and standard 3 (Tenancy). For standard 6 (Value for Money), the new fencing specification lasts longer and all the timber used is from UK based sustainable forestry sources.



The Phoenix Standards are available on the Phoenix website. If you require a hard copy, please get in touch with Phoenix.



More info

This is a summary version of our full report. If you'd like to read the full report, please call 0800 0285 700 or visit the Phoenix website.

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