

Summary report

Review period October 2017 – March 2018

Tenant Repair Volumes review

Welcome to the Scrutiny Panel: our role is to explore, examine and test Phoenix services on behalf of other residents. We also make recommendations to improve services if they are not meeting the standards. For this report, we chose to investigate the volume of tenant repairs as this is high despite £150m of major works investment.

How we carried out the review

Our review began in October. We requested key documents and carried out an initial desktop review looking at the volumes of responsive repairs and telephone calls. This included the high volume of repairs in houses and flats, repairs completed in the first year of tenancy and the call centre telephone script. We also compared the average cost of repairs with other housing associations.

As part of the review, we interviewed the Head of Contract Delivery, Partnership Manager, Strategic Asset Manager and Repairs Planner Team Leader to support our understanding of the repairs and major works services.

The scope for the review was to investigate:

- The volume of responsive repairs not including gas servicing and why this is higher for Phoenix despite £150m of major works investment.

To measure the success of the review we hoped to:

- Find the possible reasons for high volume of repairs.
- Identify value for money savings – specifically assess if the high ratio of repairs is value for money.

Meet the panel

The panel was formed in 2014 and is made up of five members.



Eileen
Davies



Deirdre
Kennedy



Sandra
Stephenson



Simon
Barlow



Karen
Stokes

Join us -

There are still vacancies for Phoenix tenants and leaseholders to join us. If you'd like to help put Phoenix under the microscope and improve services and satisfaction, please get in touch!

Our key findings

Service structure

The Phoenix Repairs Service (PRS) is a wholly-owned subsidiary that went live on 1 April 2015.

Surveys

Telephone surveys are carried out by a specialist company called Acuity to monitor resident satisfaction with the service. Acuity contact residents on behalf of Phoenix to carry out the survey.

Monitoring

Repairs performance by PRS is monitored monthly and reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Recording

Repairs are logged by Repair Planners, the planners are in a separate team to the main General Enquiries Team.



Repair Volumes

The high recording of enquiries in the year 2016-17 was clarified as being due to repairs being logged incorrectly – this had been recognised and training given to log items correctly in the next financial year.

There is evidence that through carrying out decent homes works, residents become more aware of other areas of their home that do not match these standards and they report these, perhaps after putting up with them for a long time prior to the works.

The volume of repairs in the first year of tenancy (when a new tenant moves into their home) is high. The common reasons for the high volume were due to blockages (pipes and drains) and damaged glass. Phoenix can use the Recharges to Residents Policy to recharge tenants for damage to their property.

When a tenant moves out of their home and the property is empty (void), the cost of repairs is high for the following reasons:



Garden clearance costs



Major works refused by the previous tenant



Plastering works – when the property is empty, this is an ideal time to carry out plastering works.



Some tenants not looking after their home



Resident satisfaction!

Resident satisfaction with the last repair is good at 92%.

The main reason why residents were not satisfied with the repair service were due to the repair being outstanding and not

completed. Previously, follow-on works were recorded as a separate repair but they are now logged as part of the initial repair.



When interviewing ...we noted

Head of Contract Delivery - John Ball

- There is also a lot of contract monitoring through Health and Safety compliance, Key Performance Indicators, lessons learned, warranties and defects guarantees.

Partnership Manager - Jim Humm

- When a resident is not happy with the quality of a repair carried out or where there are persistent recalls, a project manager or supervisor would visit and assess if the recall is justified. If the recall is justified, then the remedial work would be given the same repair number and Phoenix would not be recharged for any additional costs. If the recall was not justified, then a new repair would be logged.

Strategic Asset Manager - Sophie Tookey

- Kitchens tend to be renewed on a 20 year lifecycle while bathrooms are renewed on a 30 year lifecycle to make sure we meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Repairs Planner Team Leader - Anna Piczak

- The average length of time to train a new repairs planner is approximately two weeks but it depends on the individual.
- All Phoenix staff undergo Corporate Induction Training, which includes Safeguarding.

Recommendations

Our top five

At the end of our review in March we made six recommendations which can be viewed in our full report. These are our top five:

1. Consider allowing the Repair Planners to shadow Operatives out on site to increase knowledge and boost morale.

2. Review and record value for money savings at the end of the current major works programme and on an annual basis to ensure that service improvements and streamlined processes are captured for the Contract Delivery Team.

3. Explore options for managing tenant expectations with repairs and decent homes. For example, a YouTube video or games at Community Link events.

4. Review the number of repairs at the end of each financial year to check the volume of repairs are back to the level of tolerance expected and compare these with other housing associations.

5. Continue with pilot properties on major works programmes.

Constraints

There is a vast amount of information available to look at repair volumes – we focused on the main changes at a high level but there may be options for further review in specific trade or property areas.

Next steps

- Our next review topic will be on Caretaking – Inspection and Cleaning Standards.
- We hope to visit another scrutiny group to share ideas and good practice.
- We need more members so hope to launch a recruitment campaign to increase our membership!

What we've learnt

- It was reassuring to know that the high level of repairs was something staff were aware of and had taken steps to resolve.
- We learned that the new stock condition survey will be key to supporting decisions on future property standards for communication to residents and in decision making on future investment in improvements.

Traffic light monitoring

0

19

25

1 not started

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:

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

Other activities

Three members of the panel completed the Level 2 Open Award Accredited Certificate in Understanding Tenant Scrutiny. One member has completed and one is working towards the Chartered Institute of Housing - Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice.

“Having been on TPAS and CIH courses I feel more confident in delivering scrutiny as a panel member.”

One member of the panel supported Phoenix staff to deliver a workshop on Resident Involvement to housing professionals at the TPAS Engaging Communities Conference.



Phoenix Standards



We've been checking that Phoenix are meeting the local offers set out in the Phoenix Standards by reviewing evidence to show compliance. Look out for more information in our next report.



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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