

Thames Valley Housing Resident Auditors Repair Service (Responsive) Report Recommendations

Thames Valley Housing

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Report title Thames Valley Housing Resident Auditors Repairs
(Reactive) Report and Recommendations.

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1. Purpose of the Report

Thames Valley Housing Resident Auditors (TVHRAs) Report on the TVH Repairs (Reactive) service and its impact on residents.

2. Information

- 2.1 The Thames Valley Resident Auditors (TVHRA's) are an independent group of residents made up of tenants and leaseholders who were formed last year. The group's aim is to undertake audits of TVH services and develop Resident Led Self Regulation so that there is a *systematic resident inspection programme which is built into the associations continuous improvement programme*¹. In their first year we agreed to audit three service areas. One of these areas was day to day repairs. The audit took place between July and October 2009 culminating in a report with a number of recommendations (see below). This is the first audit to be completed by residents and will enable TVH to shape its service around resident's priorities.
- 2.2 The approach is based on the idea of Resident Led Self Regulation (RLSR) - The move towards RLSR came initially from the Elton Review in 2006, and was followed up by the Housing Corporation with a CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) report about how this could be achieved in practice. The TSA have

¹ 'Resident Led Self Regulation: development & application', Chartered institute of Housing (June 2007)

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also recently endorsed this approach as part of their move towards tenant empowerment and co-regulation.

- 2.3 The residents who are part of the TVHRAs team undertook auditor training provided by the Resident Involvement team and TVH Training Centre. They also visited other RSLs to exchange experiences and ideas with other residents carrying out similar work.
 - 2.4 The process of auditing and report writing has been an intensive learning curve for the residents who volunteered to undertake the auditing role. It has entailed learning auditing skills, speaking to an array of stakeholders and finally writing a comprehensive report.
 - 2.5 The Repairs audit covers all aspects of day to day repairs and is based on in depth interviews with managers, officers, the contractor (Mears) and residents as well as reviewing policies, shadowing staff and looking at systems. 146 residents were interviewed by the resident auditors, mostly at this years Road-show and Leaseholder events.
 - 2.6 The method of questioning and interviewing staff, contractors and residents was evidence based, and themes were developed through this process so that responses could be compared and cross referenced.
 - 2.7 The benefit for TVH is that a team of residents have examined a service area in depth, producing a report that is both critical and positive; the recommendations show how TVH is perceived to perform in a key area impacting on all residents.
- 3. A traffic light system was used by the auditors to gauge TVH performance**
- 3.1. **Green traffic light** – This is at or above the levels expected by residents.
 - 3.2. **Amber traffic light** – This is acceptable to residents but minor alterations could improve the service, customer satisfaction and possibly provide a cost saving in some instances.
 - 3.3. **Red traffic light** – This is below the level expected by residents, action on these points should improve the service and increase customer satisfaction.
- 4. TVH score in the Traffic light system**

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- 4.1 **TVH scored 24 green (44%):** a very positive sign that TVH were performing at or above the level customers expected.
- 4.2 **TVH scored 20 amber (37%):** also encouraging and means that TVH are either meeting their own published standards or meeting the expectations of their residents.
- 4.3 **TVH scored 10 red (19%):** the auditors feel that work needs to happen immediately on these areas.
- 4.4 The results emphasise that whilst residents were satisfied with the majority of the areas they looked at, there were definite areas where an improvement could potentially make a difference to resident's satisfaction with the service.

5. Summary of findings

- 5.1 The main area of concern relating to customer service by TVHA was that the CSC was not collecting up to date contact information when a repair was being reported. This was leading to complications further down the line and out of date contact information on our systems.
- 5.2 Auditors were also concerned that the main cause of jobs being aborted was lack of access and felt that TVHA should be doing more to follow this up with the residents concerned.
- 5.3 The highest number of areas scored as red however related to various aspects of satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping rather than the repairs service itself. We obviously need to improve our feedback to residents following these activities.
- 5.4 The Resident auditors found that there were also a significant number of strengths in the service, and these included the fact that TVH contacted residents if an appointment was not going to be kept and various aspects of communication with diverse groups as well as the speed of repairs.
- 5.5 The recommendations also pointed to areas where residents would like to see the service improved. This included Saturday and evening appointments and more focus on pro-active calling of residents rather than them having to chase up their repair. This was a particular concern where the repair had not been completed on the first visit.

6. Responding to the audit

- 6.1 TVHA management have provided responses with appropriate timescales to all of the findings and recommendations which form part of this report. The resident auditors have confirmed that they are happy with these responses.

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- 6.2 The TVHRAs Repairs report will be a public document, available on TVH website and on request.
- 6.3 The Resident Auditors will continue to track the progress against all of the management responses to ensure they are implemented. After the first round of audits' is completed, the Resident auditors will review the process to learn any lessons they wish to take forward to future reviews.

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The Auditing Process Made Simple

Key Lines of Enquiry KLOE
 These are found on the Audit Commission's Website, also copies with pack of info you have been given.
 This is what the Audit Commission use to base their auditing questions on and so should you.

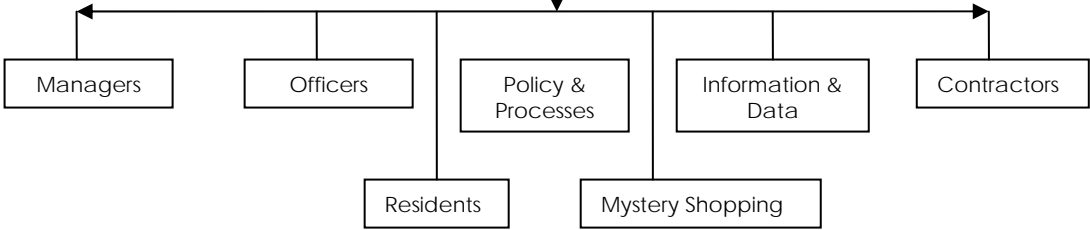
*Remember
CUSTOMER
FOCUS*

Checklist
 This is divided into two halves: one half for questions and the other for comments; that is your written comments.
 The questions should be put together using the KLOEs, your knowledge & experience as a resident and they should reflect your interpretation of TVH services.
 You should ensure your questions work for the audit. Keep to the point; remember you will be writing down the responses.

Checklist Example
 See example of checklist you have given to you.
 Remember you will be talking to TVH managers, staff, contractors and residents, so your questions and answers need to be good, legible and readable.



Public Interface
 How do TVH communicate in the service area you are auditing, and how effective is it from a resident's angle?



Checklist - TVH's Comments Agreed on by auditors

Audit Report

TVH Management Action Plan

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Scope of the Audit: The audit covered day to day repairs (communal and inside properties) within TVHA rented stock.

Audit team: The audit team was made up of the following residents: Steve McCallister (Chair of TVHRAs), Tony Elsom (Vice Chair), Rachel Herrity, Vijay Sachdev, Sarah Cobb, David Russell and Neetu Goyal

What Terms and Abbreviations Mean

TVH	Thames Valley Housing
CSC	Customer Call Centre: when you call TVH these are the people you speak with.
Project Cornerstone	This is the new data management system that will be installed in TVH. The project is ongoing and will be up and running in phases between November 2010 and October 2011. The system is like the nervous system of TVH it will contain all information that TVH possess and will be constantly referred to for all our activities from making appointments with contractors, such as Mears, all names, addresses and other contact details, to recording information on what has been done and what is going to be done. It will make TVH a more efficient, effective and resident friendly housing association.
TVHRA	Thames Valley Housing Resident Auditors

Red Column = this is below the level expected by residents, action on these points should improve the service and increase customer satisfaction

Amber Column = this is acceptable to residents but minor alterations could improve the service and or customer satisfaction and possibly provide a cost saving in some instances

Green Column = this is at or above the levels expected by residents.

	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
1	What percentage of residents report a repair by? a) letter b) face to face c) online d) through the	We analysed Statistical Information We spoke to the CSC We spoke to officers		The percentage of residents who report a repair online is very low compared to over the telephone, when we questioned residents as to why this may be, the consensus was: 1) The self diagnosis tool does not let you add comments and very	We are keen to encourage more on line reporting and the Housing database (including on-line services) is due to be updated in phase 3 of Project Cornerstone October 2011. The new system 'My Service' Project

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
	CSC	We asked targeted questions to selected residents We drew from personal experience		frequently does not exactly cover the repair required. 2) The response time when reporting a repair is longer and you do not get an E-mail confirmation that the job has been booked.	Cornerstone (October 2011) will be able to provide a more direct and immediate interaction between TVH and the residents. In the meantime we have replaced the on-line diagnosis tool with a free comment box and we will be checking and confirming receipt of these e-mails twice a day.
2	How do residents know how to report a repair?	We looked on the website. We looked in the hand book We asked officers We telephoned the CSC		We found that this is very well advertised and very straightforward	Glad to hear that this is clear.
3	What are the turnaround times from receipt of repair request by: • Letter • Face to face • Online • Through the CSC	We looked at statistical information We drew from personal experience We spoke to residents		When reporting a repair by letter this could potentially add ten days to the length of time the repair takes, The CSC is very quick at diagnosing and issuing repair requests.	There are very few repairs reported by letter, but we will respond to them the day they are received by CSC in the same way that we would for an e-mail.
4	Do you have more misdiagnosed faults if CSC not involved from the beginning?	We spoke to the CSC We spoke to the management		It was the opinion of everybody that there was no difference in the level of misdiagnosed faults if the CSC is not involved from the beginning.	Good to hear that level of service is consistent.
5	Ease of use of	We spoke to residents		The services are very accesible and	Good.

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
	service from residents point of view a)computer b)letter c)telephone d) through the csc	We carried out a resident survey We did some mystery shopping		through mystery shopping we were able to ascertain that all methods work well.	
Disability and minority (Equality & Diversity)					
1	Do you have a specific procedure for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blind person • deaf person • non English speaker 	We did some call listening We spoke to staff We trialed speaking to a non English speaking resident through language line		We listened in on various calls to the CSC and saw for ourselves this procedure in action which worked very well.	Good that is re-assuring.
2	Does this procedure work well?	We mystery shopped with three other different housing associations. We spoke to staff We witnessed the procedure in action through some work shadowing		This procedure works very well and based on our comparison with other similar organisations it seems that TVHA are far more advanced and are able to offer more services than most.	Reassuring to know that we provide a good service.
3	Do you have a written equality and diversity policy	We looked at the Online version of the Equality and Diversity Policy		The Auditors have examined this document online and feel that it could be enhanced with the inclusion of more	This will be added to the list of policies to be updated next year and will be completed by Sept 2010.

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
	procedure?			information on the facilities available to residents and how this policy is communicated.	
4	Do you think your current diversity policy is adequate?	We spoke to staff We carried out some resident surveys We discussed with a resident focus group		Through our research with residents it was felt that the current policy could be adapted to have better written communication for residents whose first language is not English.	This will be added to the list of policies to be updated next year and will be completed by Sept 2010.
5	What personal resident information is passed to the repairs team?	We spoke with members of the CSC We did some work shadowing with Mears We obtained an example of the flashcards		The Auditors have discovered the use of Flashcards which are used by Mears. Which would prove useful for a deaf person, maybe this is something that could be adapted and used by housing officers?	TVHA will review Mears' approach and make a decision by March 2010.
6	What personal information is available to the CSC team?	We did some call listening We looked at the flag system We examined the new profiling questionnaire We carried out some resident profiling We spoke to the CSC		The CSC said that this information is very out of date and incomplete and is only captured if the resident volunteers it. It was felt that this sort of information that can ultimately help TVHA to assist its residents should be actively obtained and not left to it being volunteered by residents.	Personal information is being captured for new tenants at sign up and we have been pro-actively collecting this information from residents since the beginning of the year (2,218 forms have been completed in addition to the 1000 we already had at the beginning of the year). We monitor this weekly and are about to start using our gas contractors to help with the collection.
Effective communication					
1	Are residents	We spoke to the CSC		88 % of residents surveyed said that they	This is high level that assures us that

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	always advised of the appointment date at inception?	We carried out a resident survey		are always given an appointment at inception, we felt that this was very acceptable considering the fact that some appointments cannot be booked directly by TVHA, and we discovered that it is TVH policy to offer an appointment at the earliest stage wherever possible.	appointment are being made at the inception and reducing the need for increased administration in making return calls.
2	Are residents always sent written confirmation before the appointment date?	We spoke to the CSC We carried out a resident Survey We drew from personal experience		We were advised that a letter goes out 100% of the time; however only 72% of the residents we surveyed had recollection of receiving them, when we drew from personal experiences every auditor could think of an occasion when they had not received a notification. This obviously highlights a problem somewhere that perhaps TVHA are not aware of it may be just be a poor postal service? Perhaps an E-mail communication or text message may be able to be used for some residents in the future.	Letters are posted out on a daily basis – the system automatically generates a confirmation letter when the initial appointment is booked but not for any subsequent changes to that appointment. The new Housing database will be able to generate text alerts and reminders and we hope to have this in place by November 2010 (Phase 1 Project Cornerstone).
3	If the appointment is not going to be kept do Thames Valley advise the residents?	We spoke to residents We spoke to the CSC We spoke to Mears		We found that this seems to be the happening the majority of the time with contact being made either through the CSC or Mears	There are instances where we hear first from the resident about missed appointments. Mears should be proactive in instances where operatives do not arrive for work and they are aware that there will be missed appointments during the day.
4	When taking a	We spoke to the CSC		It was claimed that TVH always update	We Accept that having up to date

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	repair do TVHA always update contact information?	We spoke to Residents We drew from personal experience We did some call listening with Mears We did some call listening with the CSC		contact information at every opportunity. We found in fact that this was very rarely updated and in fact we also experienced on many occasions the reverse effect of not having correct contact numbers for residents, and the frustration that it causes. We feel that everybody that has contact with residents has a responsibility to check and update a contact telephone number, Residents frequently change their numbers by the nature of social housing, and would not think to update their landlord. A tiny little bit more time spent at the initial stages could potentially save vast amounts of time and money for TVH and stop residents feeling that TVH just have not bothered coming back to them.	contact details is crucial for effective communication with residents. The CSC have re-issued an instruction to staff that they need to be doing this and they will be monitoring it through call listening and one to ones. We will also run an article in the next edition of Link Up to encourage residents to keep us up-to-date with their phone numbers. This article will be published in April 2010. CSC is currently updating information and increased importance raised during training in delivered in January.
Monitoring response times					
1	What are the target response times for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency • Urgent • routine 	We spoke to officers We looked on the internet We looked in the handbook We looked at 3 other housing associations		It was generally felt that these response times were pretty standard but not exceptional.	We have recently completed two resident involvement events to agree service standards across all areas. These will be incorporated into the contract negotiations with Mears before the end of the financial year. The new standards are much more resident focussed and challenging to deliver.
2	Who sets the	We spoke to the		It was the general feeling that the	The response times are industry

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	response time targets?	partnering manager We spoke to the head of property and asset management We examined the response times		response time targets may be due for review or consultation.	standard and allow for benchmarking and comparison between RSLs on the service provided. They were originally set by the regulator (Housing Corporation). With the TSA now regulating providers, it is likely that we can move away from the response times.
3	Are or were residents involved?	We spoke to the head of property and asset management		It was said by residents and staff that if a review was to take place it would be a good idea to seek some residents' views to ensure that TVH are providing the service that the residents want and are not over or under providing.	See comments above re. new service standards.
4	How is Thames Valley doing on its response times YTD?	Speaking to officers Attending partnering meetings Examining performance data		These are a little below the levels set by TVH but it is felt that these are still achievable and the fact that it is always monitored and under discussion with the contractor is a positive thing.	KPIs are regularly discussed and monitored at all levels and the monthly partnering meetings focus on what we need to do to improve performance.
Correct Job Booked					
1	Do you have incidents where the job that is booked is not exactly the job that is required?	Speaking to partnering manager Speaking to residents Speaking to CSC Speaking to Mears		We found that this is a frequent occurrence and would normally lead to a variation order being raised which is currently at what seems to be a very high level.	The CSC continues to receive on going maintenance training which helps them to capture the correct information that is needed. We have arranged for all staff to attend Technical training for non-technical staff in December and for 2 officers to complete a City & Guilds

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
					<p>Qualification by the end of the year. We also need to bear in mind the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The quality of information we receive from the residents – even with the right probing from the CSC, it may prove difficult to capture all of the correct information from the resident. 2. Some repairs can only be diagnosed by a tradesman on site i.e. a resident may report an issue with their WC and an order is raised to overhaul the ballvalve, when the plumber attends site he may advise it needs replacing hence the need for a variation. <p>We have also recently updated the repairs questionnaire to ask residents if they felt the repair was completed in one visit and this will be monitored alongside the other performance information.</p>
2	Do you keep analysis data for a percentage and reasons.	Speaking to the CSC Speaking to the partnering manager Speaking to the head of property and asset		We were told by all parties that although you <u>may</u> keep this information it is not used or reviewed for anything other than variations data. We feel that if this information was	The CSC agrees and this information should be reviewed to highlight specific trends. The Partnering Manager will review

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		management		reviewed it may highlight a common trend as to why you are getting so many variation orders or highlight a training issue etc.	the variations for the current financial year based on repairs within homes and to common parts to determine any trends. Due to be completed by end of December.
Visit Failure (abortive orders)					
1	What is the average percentage of abortive order visits?	Speaking to Mears Speaking to officers		There were 9% cancelled ordering 2008/9 and 10% in 2009/10.	The Partnering Manager will investigate the number of abortive orders and split between homes and communal areas and determine trends and any re-charge actions to be taken by the end of February.
2	What is the main reason for abortive calls? (visits that are made to residents homes when nobody is at home or when the operative cannot attend for one of various reasons)	Speaking to Mears Speaking to TVH Examining abortive call data		Resident not at home accounts for the majority of all abortive orders. It is good to know that the main reason is something out of TVH control.	We will be introducing a texting service to remind customers of their repairs appointments. The aim is to have this in place as part of phase 1 of Project Cornerstone October 2010.
3	Do you have a current procedure to help prevent this?	Speaking to Mears Speaking to officers Speaking to partnering manager		From our research we have found that you do not actively utilise the information you have available on abortive calls, it is felt that as Residents are the main reason for the abortive calls that this information should be more closely monitored. We found out that all abortive orders	Up to the end of Nov. '10 there were 13,163 orders raised so far this year. The abortive orders carried out during normal working hours carry a minimum order value of £15; while out of hours carry a charge of just under £79.

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				<p>cost TVHA money and that if this is down to residents not being in then they should be held accountable.</p> <p>We understand that you have a procedure for charging residents if they miss a number of appointments without valid reasons but this policy is not very actively followed through by TVHA.</p> <p>Our research shows that YTD there have been 182 abortive orders due to residents not being at home.</p> <p>It is the view of the residents that people who <u>persistently</u> avoid or miss appointments should be charged the fee otherwise this is being paid for by residents who do as they should.</p>	<p>We have recently reviewed our re-charges policy which is due to go out to residents for consultation before January. In the meantime we will share the list of jobs with Mears and work with them to identify the key culprits. The residents concerned will be contacted individually to remind them to keep appointments and a note will be made on their file for CSC to refer to when raising new works orders. If the outcome of the resident consultation on re-charging residents is positive, then we will enforce this for persistent offenders. To be completed by end of March.</p>
Appointments kept (TVHA & Mears)					
1	How does the appointment sysyem work?	<p>Visiting the CSC</p> <p>Speaking with officers</p> <p>Shadowing Mears</p>		<p>We found through talking to residents that the new 2 hour appointment system is widely appreciated, Now that the CSC have been working with it for a while it seems to be running more smoothly, and after speaking to a member of the SMT the Abortive order rate has dropped slightly.</p>	<p>Good to hear positive feedback. We are looking into the reason for the completion in time on Urgent priority.</p>
2	What percentage of appointments are not kept by	<p>Speaking to Mears</p> <p>Speaking to partnering manager</p>		<p>97.5% of appointments were kept by Mears so far this year.</p>	<p>97.5% of appointments were kept so far this year.</p>

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
	mears?	Analyzing reports			
3	What are the main reasons for the failed appointments?	Speaking to Mears Speaking to CSC Attending monthly partnering meeting		Generally there is always a valid reason for Mears or TVH missing an appointment and most of the time residents are advised of the reason and rebooked an appointment. We found this to be acceptable.	Can typical everyday events that affect business, such as staff sickness, transport and weather issues. Mears should assess resources and appointment commitments early in the day to determine if any appointment to be re-arranged and the resident informed.
4	How are residents kept informed if an appointment is not going to be kept?	Speaking to Mears Speaking to the CSC Call listening		We have found that TVH or Mears always try to make contact, the only issue is the out of date contact information. If TVH cannot make contact due to this, the resident is left not knowing, which refers back to the communication point that contact details must be updated at every opportunity.	As previously mentioned, the CSC will be making updating contact information compulsory, and this is being undertaken. When staff are unable to attend appointments either they inform residents direct, or request colleagues or CSC to inform residents.
Identification					
1	Do all Mears staff carry identification?	Attending Mears tool box talks Looking at satisfaction survey summaries Speaking to residents Mystery shopping		We did not really find any instances where Mears did not have identification although in some instances although we could see that they had some on their person it was not brought to our attention.	Good to know that identification is being displayed. We have re-iterated this at a recent monthly progress meeting with Mears as we had encountered an instance where ID and Mears clothing were not clearly displayed.
2	Is it a requirement that they show their identification	Speaking to Mears Attending partnering meetings		Through our audit we have found that although the operatives seem to always have ID visible on their person it may not	We will change the question and add in a 'don't know' category.

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	on each visit to residents?	Attending tool box talks Mystery shopping		always be actively offered, This is something that was pointed out by residents when we completed our surveys. One of the questions on the TVH satisfaction survey is - did the operative show identification? Some residents recorded this as a 'NO', because although they actually have ID, it is not actively shown. As this is something that TVH actually monitor perhaps there should be more emphasis on the showing of the ID or the question should be changed to - did the operative have any ID?	As Above we have raised this in the October Partnering Meeting with Mears and emphasised the need for ID to be displayed clearly on initial contact.
3	Would it ever be the case that operatives may not have identification?	Speaking to the partnering manager Mystery shopping		We were advised that all operatives must carry their ID on them at all times and should not attend residents' properties without it; we did not find any instances that this was not the case.	Operatives should always have identification, irrespective of whether Mears operative, sub contractor.
4	How do you check and ensure that the operative always carries their ID?	Repairs satisfaction surveys Speaking to residents Spot checks		One of an the main check used by Mears to highlight whether the operative is carrying the ID is the satisfaction questionnaire, however we found as highlighted in one of the points above the residents may not be scoring correctly as the question states did the operative show identification.	As above, it is compulsory for the Mears operatives to show their ID prior to entering a property to complete the repair and we will update the questionnaire, this is one of the questions on the current satisfaction questionnaire.
Completed 1st time					
1	Are residents happy with the	Speaking to residents Speaking to the CSC		This is not as bad as it seems, The real answer is 'yes' residents are happy with	We are pleased to hear that residents are happy with this aspect

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	level of jobs completed on the first visit?	Speaking to Mears Speaking to the management Team Satisfaction surveys		<p>the level of jobs completed first time, however they are confused as to what constitutes first time, most of the people we spoke to would class first time as first visit, which is not how TVHA class first time for example, first visit may be a surveyor or to measure up etc in which case the resident feels that this is not complete on the first visit.</p> <p>We feel there should be more emphasis to the customer on the exact process e.g. if you are attending to a broken window it is obvious to TVH (but not to the resident) that it is not going to be completed on the first visit, as long as this is explained to the resident at inception then they really do not mind.</p>	<p>of the service. Of the 7,849 orders completed to end of Oct. '10 7,010 were completed on first visit (89%)</p> <p>We will identify the orders which typically require a re-visit such as the example given and ensure that CSC include this in staff training and that staff inform residents at time of reporting call. This will take place by 1st April 2010.</p> <p>The questionnaire will also be updated as mentioned above.</p>
Waiting Times					
1	Are residents happy with the time it takes to complete a repair from start to finish?	Speaking to the TVH management Speaking to residents Customer focus group		<p>The main answer to this question is 'yes', however more pro-activeness from TVH would improve the experience, it is often left to the customer to chase TVH for the information rather than it being offered about follow up appointments, parts etc.</p>	<p>We have a process in place whereby the operatives' timesheets are checked on a daily basis and residents are contacted where follow up work is needed. We endeavour to make contact with the resident within 48 hours of the initial appointment. We have agreed to put more resources into this area from April when we will be phoning every resident at the point their repair is completed, finding out if there is any follow up work needed</p>

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					and programming it in. This may take some time to establish but it should all be up and running by the end of the first quarter.
2	Are Thames Valley happy with the current targets for job completion?	Speaking to TVH management and officers		The current targets for job completion seemed to be very fair and achievable.	The targets are set for the year and will be reviewed and set by Board for the following year. There will be increased focus on raising the level of service in responsive repairs. The VFM and level of service provided by the response service needs to compare favourably with other providers.
Quality of Repairs					
1	Do you think that residents are happy with the quality of repairs being carried out?	Speaking to residents Resident focus groups Drew from personal experiences		Yes residents seem very happy with the actual quality of the repairs.	Good.
2	Do Thames Valley have an approach that would prefer a repair rather than a replacment?	Speaking to TVH management		We found that this is acceptable providing quality parts are used which mainly seemed to be the case; ultimately it saves the residents money.	Good.
3	Who determines the standard or type of repair?	Looking at original partnering contract (ouch) Speaking to Mears		We were advised that the repairs were specified in the original contract and are for quality parts which we found to be correct, however our concern was that often and with such a high amount of variation orders with the onus on the	Agreed, we will complete an audit of variation orders to find out the cause and result of the variation. We will then increase the numbers of post inspection for these types of jobs. March 10.

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
				contractor to make the final decision as to whether to repair or replace. There does not seem to be an effective process for TVH for evaluating if the majority of these variations are correct. This could be potentially leaving TVH and ultimately their resident open to increased costs.	
3	What is the current satisfaction rate with the quality of reactive repairs?	Statistical information Speaking to residents		This is very good and very high in fact our surveys showed that residents were very happy with the standard of repair with very few exceptions.	Good to have this verified.
4	Do Mears make quality checks and what percentage?	Speaking to Mears		We felt that although there is not currently an issue with the standard of repairs TVH should be post inspecting more and not leaving them to the contractor who has a vested interest in not failing the inspection	We are reviewing our approach to post inspections following the resident events on service standards where residents requested more post inspections and an out-sourcing of this function. This has staffing and cost implications which we will report back to the resident audit committee by March 2010.
5	Do TVHA make quality checks and what percentage?	Speaking to TVH management		TVH only post inspect aprox 10 % of all repairs - is this a large enough quantity to get an accurate result?	Surveyors carry out the post inspections of works as part of their role but this is being looked at as mentioned above.
Complaints and Resolution					
1	Does Thames Valley have a	Looking at the website Looking in the handbook		The complaints process seemed to cover all areas of TVH Services	Good.

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
	formal complaints process?	Speaking to the CSC Speaking to residents			
2	What is the process?	Speaking to officers Speaking to the management Partnering meetings Call listening		<p>The process is very straightforward, however in the early stages it was felt that service failures were not always captured as such, and we could not really get clarification as to exactly what a service failure was, as it seemed to mean different things to different people. We feel that this needs clarification across the board as to exactly what a service failure is, we heard and found that if in doubt it was better not to raise a service failure as it created more work and affected the TVH results.</p> <p>At the other escalated end of the complaints process we found that there is no evidence that it is not impartial and we would certainly not like to suggest otherwise. From a residents point of view it is not independent, all the people making the decisions have a vested interest in TVH even the resident board member who is paid by TVH.</p> <p>At the final stage before the Ombudsman, TVH could make themselves more transparent and have a Resident sat on the panel which would instil more confidence and impartiality in</p>	<p>A service failure is defined as a notification from a customer that something needs to be rectified and we need to take action to address it. These are recorded so that we can learn lessons from them. A complaint is where we have not been able to sort out an issue to a customer's satisfaction. Staff have all had training on this recently but we will re-issue the information as a result of this audit.</p> <p>The complaints panel is made up of senior TVHA staff (Directors and Chief Executive) who have not been involved in the complaint and Board members. This is usual practice and acceptable to the Ombudsman. In practice this does provide a high level of scrutiny and recent panels show that the resident is given a balanced response. We would welcome a separate resident audit in this area.</p> <p>In practice complaint panels place</p>

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
				the process, as some residents feel that it is a foregone conclusion and so do not bother.	a heavy burden on staff and panel members and we would welcome a wider pool of trained panel members to choose from. We will therefore consider the recommendation to have more resident panel members and give the auditors a decision by the end of January 2010.
3	What percentage of repairs end up in the complaints process?	Speaking to senior management		We were advised that you do not gather this information you only have the total number of complaints but that the total would be very very low, you feel you do not need this information. We think that this information should be monitored closely and even reported as a % of jobs issued and we think that this information should be readily available through PPM, or alternatively it is a simple calculation. Surely it is only by looking at it in terms of % of jobs issued is the only true way of measuring it?	The number is less than one percent, but we do track the number of complaints and service failures for repair issues and these are reported to the partnering meetings. We have recently seen an improvement with a fall in the number of repairs complaints. We agree with the principle of looking at the number of complaints in relation to the number of jobs issued, but it would be difficult to track such a small number.
Satisfaction Survey					
1	In what ways does Thames valley gain customer satisfaction results?	Satisfaction surveys Call monitoring in the CSC Drew from personal experience		We found that TVH have many ways of trying to capture resident feedback and at times can do this quite effectively, but it seems to be very varied from month to month depending on staffing levels, if	The CSC capture this information, but priority is given to incoming calls so that in busy periods the number of questionnaires completed will be smaller. We have however recently

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		Spoke to the CSC Partnering meetings		TVH are really serious about satisfaction and feedback it should be more of a priority and have devoted resources, as it is only through this quality and quantity of feedback that you will see a true picture.	<p>had the results verified by an external consultant who found that the result of this survey is statistically valid and that the sample size is not such an issue so long as this is the case.</p> <p>We have also reviewed all our survey forms recently to reflect resident priorities and we will be introducing a more focussed approach to service improvements which can then be tracked through the results. This will be live from April 2010.</p>
2	What happens to the completed repairs satisfaction surveys?	Mystery shopping Resident feedback Speaking to officers Speaking to Mears Speaking to resident involvement		TVH say that they use the feedback to improve the service residents receive and to monitor the service provider. Residents believe that TVH do nothing with the surveys and therefore do not complete them.	<p>The survey results are presented and discussed at the Partnering Operational Monthly Meetings, the quarterly Core contractor meetings and the internal senior managers meetings.</p> <p>Individual issues which come up in the surveys are picked up by the CSC and results are also reported back to tenants annually (this year it will be in the form of a calendar).</p>
3	How is the information used?	Speaking to TVH staff		TVH say that the information is utilised to monitor the performance of the contractor and this has a bearing on the bonus or sanctions paid to them.	As above. The survey results have also been validated externally.

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
				The auditors can see that this information could be very useful but also feel that not enough importance is put on residents completing the survey, and with such a small percentage of residents completing the survey the feedback is not really an effective measurement tool at present.	
4	What happens if the resident has made any comments?	Mystery shopping Speaking to the management Speaking to the CSC Speaking to the residents		The residents feel that nothing is done and that they never receive any feedback on their comments, we tried some mystery shopping in this area and also did not get a response to any of the comments, after speaking with the wider group of auditors they also felt that no feedback was ever given.	There are systems in place to pick up specific resident issues but not comments. We know this is an issue and have identified an action for Resident Involvement to look at this issue across all the surveys and come up with a plan for getting back to respondents. We do complete some surveys each year so this will be a challenge. We will be looking at this in quarter one (April onwards) next year. Completed Repairs Satisfaction forms with literal comments are to be reviewed in the first quarter of 2010 to ascertain the feasibility of responding to the residents individually. In the meantime we have started a series of articles based on 'you said, we did' in Link Up.
5	How is the prize draw carried out?	Speaking to the Resident Involvement		We found it very difficult to find the answer to this question, with very few	The system randomly selects a

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
		team		people seeming to know the answer, however when we did find the information we found that the winner is picked by computer which seems a very fair way to do it, and this should be communicated to residents	number of residents and the winner is selected from the list. (In order to select the winner the CSC need to check the resident's rent account as well as any recent history of anti-social behaviour). This information will go into link up.
6	How are the results of the draw known?	Speaking to residents Speaking to the CSC Speaking to the Management		<p>This is one area that all Auditors and a lot of residents felt very strongly about, nobody at all that we spoke to had ever heard or known of a winner of the prize draw, many feeling that it does not even happen.</p> <p>We feel that the winners name should be published on the website and also in the quarterly link up magazine.</p> <p>We spoke to residents about this issue and it was felt that more people would be encouraged to answer the survey if there was potentially something in it for them, and with the low response rate at the moment the potential odds for a winner are quite high.</p> <p>It was also expressed by residents that more people would complete it if they could do it online, as it saves them having to purposefully go out to put it in the post box - obviously the more feedback the better for TVH.</p> <p>One final point that was raised frequently is connected to non-English</p>	<p>There will now be an update in the next Link Up.</p> <p>This definitely happens though in the past we have not actively publicised the prize draw winner due to privacy. An article will be going out in the next addition on how the prize is managed and run.</p> <p>Now we have a new website we will investigate the possibility of having an on-line response with a translation service and this will be reported back to the resident auditors.</p>

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
				<p>speakers, the form is always sent out in English, and many residents do not complete it as English is not their first language, if the form was available on line it could be translated by Babel fish, as the TVH website has this facility at present.</p> <p>In view of the number of non-English speaking residents; how viable is it for the paper survey to be sent in their main language as it is a standard form? As TVH is actively collecting this information but not utilising it.</p>	
7	If a resident has completed a paper survey does this exclude them from telephone surveys or a visit from a surveyor?	Talking to residents Speaking to the CSC Monthly partnering meetings		<p>TVH's answer to this is 'NO' and this is another frustration for residents, they may have theoretically completed a paper survey, had a phone call from Mears, a call from the CSC and a visit from the surveyor all asking the same questions, surely there is a way do stop this duplication. The concern of residents is that you are very good at asking for the information but not very good at doing anything with it, and if you have this information it is not very well communicated.</p>	If a resident has completed a paper survey and the information has been logged, the CSC does not carry out a telephone survey (unless they have made additional comments) with the resident as this is unnecessary duplication. Mears are given a list of residents who we have been unable to contact and they are responsible for trying again to contact these people. The only area where there might be duplication is with the post inspections which are designed to capture a range of jobs and orders over £500.
8	Why is ethnic monitoring	Speaking to the CSC Speaking to the		TVH have said that it is a legal requirement.	Agreed – we will review this to see if we can match the survey with

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
	relevant and part of every survey?	management Speaking to residents		It is felt that this is a big waste of time and money, every time a repair is issued two extra sheets of paper are sent out requesting ethnicity information, this helps fuel the debate that TVHA do not do anything with what you send them anyway, the average house has two repairs a year so in effect every year every resident is asked twice whether they are black or white etc. This information is very unlikely to have changed? So why the waste of time and ultimately our money collecting it? Once the profile information on the resident is entered on the system could this not then stop this form being sent out, saving both TVH and their residents' time and money?	existing household information so that we do not have to collect ethnicity each time. The may however require the address or job number to be quoted on the form. We will report back to the Auditors by the end of March.
9	What is the response rate from the paper survey?	Statistical Data		The current response rate for the paper survey is only 8% this is very low surely; something needs to be done to improve this? To combat this TVH are attempting to make phone calls to every resident to obtain the information, but even this is not proving totally effective as only aprox 50 % of the people called are obtainable; probably we feel due to the vast amount of incorrect and not recently updated contact information.	We are currently using all forms of customer contact to capture profiling information and are about to extend this to our gas contractors. Once we have got to 50% we will then be looking at other methods including out of hours contact to capture the people who are working.
Compensation					

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
1	In what circumstances would TVHA pay compensation to a resident?	Speaking to the management		The range of issues that compensation may be paid seemed to be very fair.	Good
2	Is there a written policy with regards to compensation available for residents?	Speaking to the CSC Speaking to management		We were told that there was but the auditors have not seen it, we were also told that it is not very good and it could do with a review.	The Compensation Policy is available on the website and intranet but is going to be reviewed shortly. We also have the Right to Repair compensation policy that we can use as per the resident handbook. Mears also compensate up the amount 10 pounds for a missed appointment. Clearly there is some need to better publicise the current and new policy (once approved) to staff and customers. This will be reviewed during the next financial year.
3	Who decides on the validity and amount of compensation?	Speaking to the management		We feel that TVH is best placed to decide on the validity and amount of compensation, our only comments, that have been raised by residents relate to the fact that TVH often refer the resident back to their household insurance, we understand that TVH will pay the excess, but feel that this does not fully cover the cost as after a claim the premiums historically go up in subsequent years and therefore residents are penalised for	We do often offer compensation as well as refer customers to claim on their household insurance where relevant. The compensation offered is in line with other similar complaint cases and in line with Ombudsman recommendations. We have recently identified the need to give staff better information about what is covered by our own insurance (highlighted by complaints

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	Questions	Evidence	Traffic Light	Auditors Comments Recommendation	TVH Response
				something that is not their fault, and incur an extra cost that had it not been for TVH/Mears would not have applied.	feedback) and this will be completed by the end of March. We are also in discussion with Mears about what compensation they will pay and this will be reported back to the auditors in April.

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Summary of Recommendations

On the whole it was the feeling of the residents and confirmed by the Resident Auditors that Thames Valley Housing is doing a good job and that the partnership with Mears is beneficial to both TVH and the Residents. Through undertaking our audit we felt that Mears has a fairly bad reputation with the residents, however, when we have looked into this further, it really is not fully justified and involves a lot of misunderstanding about what work Mears carries out, and the fact that they are often confused with other contractors, especially grounds maintenance, and the issues highlighted surrounding poor communication.

We have highlighted above some of the issues that are felt and experienced by residents on a frequent basis, we hope that by addressing some or all of these issues TVH would be going a long way towards improving the overall satisfaction rate with their residents.

Totals

Red = 10

Amber = 20

Green = 24

Through our auditing we have highlighted a number of areas that we and the residents would like TVH to look at. Below are areas not fully covered in the above recommendations but we feel have should be reviewed.

Out of Hours Appointments

One thing that frequently came up was the fact that TVH do not offer out of hours appointments or weekend, we then surveyed 146 residents to see how they felt about possibly having appointments later into the evening or at weekends, 92% of those questioned said that they would like an out of hours repair service even if this meant an increase in their rent. The general feeling was those on benefits would like the service and were not bothered by any potential increase in the rent as this would be covered by housing benefit anyway. Those that were working said that they would rather pay a bit more rent and have this service as opposed to losing a day or part days wages to take time off.

When we approached Mears we were told that theoretically they would have no problem with providing this service and felt that it may lead to a reduction in the amount of abortive orders. (We are advised that TVH offer a late night on Thursday but this is rarely utilised. None of the auditors were aware of this and interestingly not a single resident we questioned mentioned it either.)

TVH Response: We agree that we need to extend the service to cover evenings and weekend call outs and we will be discussing this with Mears in the to the contract negotiations before April.

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Summary of Recommendations

Courtesy call or Text

It was felt that a courtesy call or text to the resident the day before their repair appointment would be a very useful service. Some appointments are booked 20 days in advance and residents often find it hard to remember that far in advance, we felt that a service like this may also help to reduce the number of abortive orders and in so doing may be pretty much self financing. This sort of text system is now being used widely by schools and doctors surgeries, dentists the AA and British Gas amongst others.

TVH Response: Agreed – see comments in management responses. Linked to Phase 1 of Project Cornerstone.

Promotion of contractor

The auditors feel that their should be better promotion of the contractor to show the residents the good, and how they are improving on the bad, this would help to raise their profile with residents, we feel that they should have a permanent presence on the new website and a quarterly page in the link up even highlighting some of the added value CSC work that they undertake - by improving the reputation of the contractor it will improve the feeling of satisfaction of the residents. Residents often feel that TVH is stuck with Mears and nothing is being done to improve the service; this would be the ideal opportunity to say we have chosen Mears and this is what we are doing to improve the services you are receiving.

TVH Response: Some information has been included in Link Up, and we have recently produced a calendar for residents with more information on repairs performance. There is also information on our website. We will however talk to Mears about producing a joint publication once a decision has been made on the contract.

Communication

It was felt that follow up communication was very poor. The majority of the residents we have spoken too have mentioned poor or bad communication. It is widely felt that residents always have to chase TVH to find out about follow up appointments, when parts are in, if jobs are complete, what the progress is so far etc.

If TVH was more pro-active in providing information to their customers it would free up so much time of TVH, Mears and the residents, and improve the experience for their customers and therefore satisfaction.

Customers generally do not mind bad news if it is given to them, the news however is far worse if they have to chase TVH to get it. This is one thing that really frustrates TVH customers.

It also takes longer because the person they get through to when chasing is not necessarily the person who knows about the problem.

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Summary of Recommendations

We undertook quite a lot of call listening and we would estimate 65% of the time the C.S.C were fire fighting, a resource that would be far better used to get to your customers before they get to you.

TVH Response: We have updated our satisfaction questionnaire to include a specific question on communication by TVHA and we will be putting action in place to try and monitor this. As a result of this review we will be looking at the idea of piloting a pro-active role in CSC rather than just responding to incoming calls. Also, please see above responses.