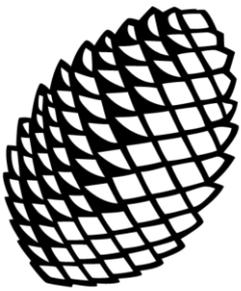


Customer Scrutiny Panel

Responsive Repairs Report



mhs
homes group

Customer
Scrutiny Panel

Review period – September-November 2022

Acknowledgments

The CSP are grateful to all the mhs Responsive Repairs office based team and operatives who welcomed and supported this review with time and valuable insight to inform this report.

A special thank you to Barry Waller for his leadership, enthusiastic cooperation and commitment to embrace and welcome the work of the CSP to deliver an effective review.

Thank you to the Governance and Communications Team for their support

Responsive Repairs Scrutiny activities completed by the following Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) Members:

Repairs Overview Presentation – Annette Beer, Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey*, Sharon Robinson

Tour of Call Centre, Jewson Warehouse & Royal Eagle – Annette Beer, Bex Conchie, Sharon Robinson

Shadowing of Call Centre & Planners – Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey

Shadowing of Operatives in the field – Annette Beer, Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey, Sharon Robinson, Tracey Huzzey

Focus Groups – Andrew Parkes, Annette Beer, Bex Conchie, June Patey, Kate Roberts, Oonah Lacey, Rafael Mitchell, Sharon Robinson, Tracey Huzzey

Document Review and validation of evidence – Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey

Office staff based Interviews – Bex Conchie, June Patey, Kate Roberts, Oonah Lacey

Repair Operatives Interviews – Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey

Customer Responsive Repairs Survey – Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey, Communications Team

Review management and delivery of Report – Bex Conchie, Oonah Lacey

Review support – Louise Humphrey

*Independent mentor and advisor to the CSP

Contents

1. Executive summary.....	page 4
2. Methodology.....	page 5
3. Key Findings and Solutions.....	page 7
4. Table of Recommendations.....	page 25
5. Conclusion.....	page 30
Appendix A – Responsive Repairs Review Proposal.....	page 30
Appendix B – Photographs from Tour of Call Centre, Jewsons Warehouse and Royal Eagle.....	page 32
Appendix C – Observation Template from Shadowing Operatives in the Field.....	page 35
Appendix D – Survey Template and Graph Data.....	page 36

1. Executive summary

1.1 The Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) has reviewed the management and delivery of the responsive repairs service focusing primarily on customer experience. However, this review offered the CSP the opportunity to review back office procedures and understand the complexity and challenges to deliver a service that not only meets customer needs but supports both management and the front line operatives.

1.2 This review provided a range of reality checking opportunities for the CSP to identify what works well, understand service challenges and identify potential new opportunities to be even better. There are positive indications that the responsive repairs service is embracing the mhs commitment to strive to consistently deliver a high quality and effective responsive repair service that recognises the needs and expectations of customers accessing the service.

1.3 Overall, it is clear that the responsive repairs service has undergone significant change over the last year and has ambitions to be even better – which is commendable and will be achieved if mhs continues to support innovation, investment in technology, and being open to ensure resources and structure and competency of those delivering the service are an integral part of the future delivery model.

1.4 This review has positively benefitted from the strong leadership and welcoming approach demonstrated by Barry Waller and his teams to allow the CSP to experience first hand the day to day management and delivery of Responsive Repairs. This trust has been greatly appreciated by the CSP and demonstrates the commitment to learning and recognising the value of the CSP as your critical friends.

1.5 Period of data collected: between September and November 2022.

1.6 Overall the key recommendations for improvement include:

- **Improving communication with customers, officers and other service providers in mhs**
- **Better technology especially an integrated repairs management system building on the DRS Scheduler**
- **Improving quality of repair reporting and allocation of SOR Codes**
- **Using vehicle tracking system to inform allocation of jobs**
- **Technology – expanding use and information on PDA's**
- **Team building – bringing operatives and office based teams together to inform change**
- **Stock management and disposal process to be fully developed**
- **Clear information on service standards – timescales for works**
- **Use customer feedback positively to support change**
- **Have a clear induction, training and review process for all operatives and ensuring that pay and conditions remain competitive**
- **Pilot new ideas – be brave and look at having dedicated repair call handlers**
- **Review administrative procedures so that all repair reporting routes see customers' requests being handled equitably- My Account customers wait longer for jobs to be processed**
- **Review management structure and roles with a clear competency framework**

1.7 The CSP are keen to ensure that this report is shared with those that participated with the review and would welcome the opportunity to help shape the service improvement plan with Barry and the team.

2. Methodology

2.1 The methodology for the review included:

- **Developing a review proposal in conjunction with the Assistant Director of Repairs – appendix A**
- **Repairs Service Overview Presentation from Barry Waller & Tour of Call Centre, Jewson Warehouse and Royal Eagle – appendix B**
- **Observation by CSP – the call centre at Broadside, Jewsons Warehouse and the Royal Eagle premises.**
- **Shadowing of Call Centre and Planners**
- **Shadowing of Repairs Operatives in the field – appendix C**
- **Customer Survey – appendix D**
- **Focus Groups**
- **Document review – Handbook, Website, Performance Data etc.**
- **Interviews with Repairs Management & Operatives**

NB: the CSP were not able to receive detailed complaints/compliments information to support the review. The Focus Groups were held virtually and attendance was low indicating that perhaps a face to face opportunity may be a preferred option for future reviews.

2.2 Observation & Shadowing of Call Centre & Planners

2.2.1 Members of the call centre provided headphones to those shadowing to be able to confidentially listen in on calls made by customers wishing to report a repair. This enabled the CSP to identify any common issues and challenges that might occur within this method of customer contact.

2.2.2 Following job shadowing the call centre, the CSP members spent time with the planners who are responsible for the allocation of repairs jobs to the operatives that carry out the repairs.

2.2.3 Planners were able to show the CSP members how they receive and allocate jobs and the process used to form manual reports on data such as: repair jobs requiring call-backs (for an operative or ADM to revisit the job completed), carded jobs and pre-inspections.

2.2.4 Planners were also able to show other responsibilities within their role such as the monitoring of inboxes for the repairs, pest control and void properties email addresses.

2.2.5 Through shadowing the call centre and planners, the CSP were able to identify what works well within the diagnosing, reporting and allocating of repair jobs, and the various ways in which the current processes and system used are challenging and can therefore be improved.

2.3 Shadowing of Repairs Operatives in the field

2.3.1 On the day of the shadowing task, each member participating was paired up with an operative and appropriate PPE was supplied. A risk assessment was carried out and a group photo was taken to document the experience.

2.3.2 This task enabled CSP members to observe a range of responsibilities carried out in the role of an operative such as: using the PDA mobile devices to accept jobs and read job descriptions, contacting the office when necessary to extend jobs or report further issues, trips to Jewson Warehouse to collect materials, trips to Royal Eagle to dispose of old materials, customer engagement in both positive and challenging circumstances, and the processes, tools and skills used to complete the repair job.

2.3.3 This method of observation allowed the CSP to identify how well operatives were able to carry out their jobs on a day to day basis and where the process of carrying out responsive repairs could be improved for both operatives and customers.

2.3.4 The CSP developed a bespoke template to input findings from their observations – **appendix C**

2.4 Customer Survey & Focus Groups – appendix D

2.4.1 A survey was created to send to customers to understand customer perception of the responsive repairs service. Customers were able to submit answers based on their experience (in the last 12 months) of a repair being completed within their home. Refer to appendix D to view graph data created from survey answers.

2.5 Document Review – Analysis of Policies, Performance Statistics and Customer Handbook

2.5.1 The CSP felt it important to review complaints and compliments data in order to understand what kinds of issues prompt a customer to register a complaint (and how many complaints have been received in the past 12 months) as well as what kinds of compliments the service receives which indicate customer satisfaction.

2.5.2 The Customer Handbook was requested for review so that the CSP could understand what information mhs provides to customers upon registering as a new tenant. The CSP feel it's important that the information given on which repairs are the customers' responsibility is clear in its intention to manage their expectations and is consistent across all platforms.

2.5.3 mhs repairs policy information was requested so that the CSP could gain an understanding of the aims and objectives that the repairs service features in the delivery of responsive repairs.

2.5.4 A review of responsive repairs information on the mhs website was completed to ensure accuracy, consistency and guidance on reporting and responsibility of mhs and the customer for completion of responsive repairs.

2.6 Interviews with Repairs Management & Operatives

2.6.1 From interviewing operatives with a range of specialist trades and multi skilled operatives, the CSP were able to understand the different roles and responsibilities of each trade and the varied challenges faced in each role.

2.6.2 From interviewing management staff, the CSP gained a wider knowledge of how the staff structure works and who is responsible for carrying out tasks beyond the operative's responsibilities, in order to collectively manage and deliver the repairs service as a whole.

2.6.3 These interviews were very beneficial to the review offering operatives and managers with a chance to be open and honest about the positive and challenging experiences faced on a day to day basis. They also were able to express their hopes for the future delivery of the repairs service. All interviews were bespoke to the role and responsibility and information provided is treated as confidential. All feedback included in this report is anonymous.

3. Key Findings and Solutions

3.1 Repairs Service Overview Presentation from Barry Waller & Tour of Call Centre, Jewson Warehouse and Royal Eagle – Positives identified

3.1.1 The CSP were provided with an overview presentation regarding the call centre at Broadside, Jewsons Warehouse and the Royal Eagle premises. Through our reality checking activities, the CSP were able to note and confirm: how many call handlers work in the call centre, what their working environment is like, effectiveness of the new partnership with Jewsons and how it's improved since the switch from Graftons, and the benefits of Royal Eagle providing services such as: recycling facilities, storage for excess materials and estate management machinery, meeting and computer rooms for training, kitchen and lunch area for operatives and an operational base for the Estate Management Team.

3.1.2 Barry Waller was very welcoming to the CSP and expressed a keen desire for the CSP to be open and honest in delivering a report that highlights the key positives and negatives of the repairs service, in order to help shape the way the service is delivered in future with a focus on customer satisfaction.

3.1.3 The call handlers in the call centre were observed handling a variety of calls when the CSP were given their tour. Their work spaces were mostly clean and clear and from the calls briefly observed, they maintained a professional, friendly manner when speaking to customers. All calls were picked up quickly demonstrating that waiting times and dropped calls are now not happening which should be reflected by increased customer satisfaction.

3.1.4 It was explained to the CSP that customer calls were monitored throughout the week by the manager in order to identify any key issues or topics that came up through the week from customers. This was done so that further training in how to deal with these issues going forward could be implemented and how best the call handlers could then support customers.

3.1.5 The CSP were informed that while there were approximately 11 people in the call centre that day, they also had staff working from home as well to maintain the volume of calls received. This enabled staff who for various reasons weren't able to work in the office a chance to still help maintain the call centre while being in an adapted setting due to their circumstances.

3.1.6 The CSP observed all handlers efficiently using their computers to seek and upload information onto the system.

3.1.7 The staff at Jewsons were welcoming and friendly to the CSP and were happy to engage in conversation and answer the questions they had.

3.1.8 The materials stored at Jewsons Warehouse were well organised, clearly labelled and grouped into sections which enabled fast and efficient collection ready for when operatives arrived.

3.1.9 The 5 collectors at Jewsons who are responsible for taking orders from operatives and gathering the requested materials ready to be collected were fast and efficient in their role.

3.1.10 Materials that were most frequently used in the day to day repairs of customers' homes were kept well stocked in advance to allow for minimal waiting time once the repair was scheduled to be completed. Since the move to Jewsons, the larger storage space means they can house a high level of stock at all times.

3.1.11 It was explained to the CSP during their tour that staff from Jewsons had engaged in helping the local community by donating materials and their time to improving therapy rooms for young people, which was not only well received by the community but also provided an effective and enjoyable team building exercise for staff.

3.1.12 Jewsons were able to make recommendations on particular materials which may be more suitable for repairs, which demonstrates forward thinking and a desire to maintain a high standard of work among customer's homes and enables the repairs service to be as efficient as possible.

3.1.13 Stock levels were monitored regularly to keep ahead of which materials would need to be ordered in advance or may need assessing if there were to be a problem with sourcing the materials usually used. This demonstrates that Jewsons is effective in keeping the service up-to-date and where possible removes the possibility of long lead times for certain materials that may become harder to source due to economic factors.

3.1.14 The CSP identified during the tour at Royal Eagle that the various work areas were kept clean, tidy and efficient which contributes to a professional working environment.

3.1.15 The staff kitchen displayed several posters and notices advertising job perks and opportunities for operatives to book and enjoy – this contributes to morale and enables operatives to feel appreciated for the hard work they carry out within the repairs service.

3.1.16 The storage spaces used to house excess materials, such as windows that were due to be fitted in customer's homes, and estate service machinery were clear and safe. The machinery was kept in clean condition while being stored.

3.2 Repairs Service Overview Presentation from Barry Waller & Tour of Call Centre, Jewson Warehouse and Royal Eagle – Key issues identified

3.2.1 During the repairs service overview presentation, it was explained that the process of operatives auditing the stock on their van and submitting a request for materials to restock was already in place and available to operatives. However, when the CSP carried out job shadowing of operatives in the field, several operatives explained that they did not do this at present but would hopefully be implementing it soon. This highlights the current issue of vans not being stocked where possible to enable operatives to complete repairs without the need to go to and from Jewsons to collect parts and thus wasting valuable time, fuel and productivity.

3.2.2 Through interviewing operatives and managers, it became clear that not all operatives currently use a PDA device to assist in job allocation and make the process of uploading information and data easier

and more efficient – however, the CSP were led to believe that these devices were used by all repairs operatives.

3.3 Shadowing of Call Centre & Planners – Positives identified

3.3.1 Shadowing of the call centre was completed on two occasions during the review period.

3.3.2 From shadowing the call centre, the CSP were able to witness the techniques used by call handlers to diagnose repairs reported by customers on the telephone, and understand the process in which the repairs requests are created and sent to the planning team.

3.3.3 Each participant within the call centre that was spoken to was welcoming and friendly to the CSP. They were happy to assist by answering questions about the calls they receive from customers regarding repairs and their role in communicating with customers.

3.3.4 The work stations of call handlers were clean and mostly clear which showed a professional and organised approach to their role.

3.3.5 While observing calls coming through to the call centre, those calls were picked up promptly and answered in a consistently professional manner. The volume of calls was exceptionally low on the second visit which we understand is not normal and there was no reasoning for this experience.

3.3.6 No call handlers showed any hesitancy in dealing with a customer's request to book a repair. Where necessary, the call handlers were happy to seek further information once placing the caller on hold, in order to try and resolve the issue first time.

3.4 Shadowing of Call Centre & Planners – Key Issues identified

3.4.1 From talking to several call handlers, they shared that 60% of their calls are from customers reporting a repair. Seeing as the call centre are responsible for dealing with many issues in relation to wider customer support, they expressed their concern at not being able to consistently deal with the volume of calls regarding repairs with the dedication needed. This highlights the potential consideration to allocate say, 4 repair dedicated call handlers into the planners' team where they have access directly to managers and planners to assist with diagnostic and complex repair issues. This has been an approach adopted by some other housing providers and may be worth consideration – even as a pilot for say 6 months.

3.4.2 From observing several calls made regarding repairs, there was a lack of effective questioning to diagnose repairs. On one particular call, the lack of information meant that a second call was made by the customer as they felt that they weren't able to give as much information as they intended to and that the urgency of the repair wasn't understood by the first person they spoke to. Call handlers are conscious of any customers waiting in line to get through and therefore sometimes aren't able to take the full time necessary to get as much information within the first call. There needs to be a balance between speed and quality of call – failure to gather enough information at the first point of contact may be attributable to the high number of repairs being wrongly diagnosed and operatives not able to complete jobs on a first visit which is frustrating for customers, a cost to the service and time loss to the operative.

3.4.3 There's a concern that customers can at times exaggerate and manipulate the reporting of a repair to indicate that it's urgent or an emergency which then leads to a misdiagnosis by the call handlers. Without further effective questioning, repairs are submitted as urgent or an emergency when this may not be the case and therefore can impact (or introduce) a backlog of repairs.

3.4.4 There is a need for improved definition of Emergency, Urgent and Standard repairs to be reviewed and improved in depth description to enable call handlers to effectively diagnose the repair at the start of the recording of a work request.

3.4.5 The ability for customers to submit photographs of a repair doesn't appear to be an often used method to support diagnosis which can also impact the way repairs are categorised and delivered. There is a need to gain as much information as possible (particularly where the customer is able to assist) at the initial reporting of a repair so that call handlers, planners and operatives are able to appropriately allocate the right SOR code(s), time and resources to the job to achieve right first time.

3.4.6 The scheduling system currently used by planners is confusing and does not have a consistent approach as to how much time an operative is given to complete a job, choosing the operative based on current location (in order to be efficient with time, travel and fuel consumption) or travelling time for collecting necessary materials at Jewsons.

3.4.7 The CSP recognises that the planning and allocation of jobs within the DRS Scheduler used by planners is already due to undergo system changes and therefore issues identified within the scheduling of repairs are apparently currently being addressed for improvement. This must be given a high priority as this is critical to improving experience for the support team and operatives.

3.4.8 Considerable opportunity identified for human error within the excessive manual spreadsheets created to store data and form ongoing performance reports. In order to complete the report, each line of data has to be investigated further by looking at other spreadsheets and areas within the system – this makes it a very time consuming task and open to human error. Automation is essential.

3.4.9 Planners experience issues with scheduling repairs when there is not enough descriptive information available about the job from when the call centre accepted the customer's request, or the right SOR code(s) selected. There is no information in the form of a detailed description of the repair, photographs and even a lack of investigation as to what could already be on the system about the customer's property or the repair itself. The lack of information means that the planners have to request more information about the repair by asking the call centre to call the customer back to find out. This then delays the process of getting the job booked in appropriately and has a knock on effect on when the repair can be completed and other jobs looking to be scheduled. This again supports the value of having a dedicated call handler positioned with the planners- working smarter not harder comes to mind

3.4.10 When jobs are cancelled, this data eventually goes into a spreadsheet to then form a report on why jobs have been abandoned. However, one of the challenges faced by planners is the lack of information added to the system when a call handler updates the job after having spoken to a customer who's requested to cancel it. This means the planners have to investigate the system to find any additional information on why the job was cancelled or contact the call handler responsible for cancelling the job to ask them why, or ask them to further ask the customer.

3.4.11 When pre-inspections are submitted or requested by the call centre, the planners find that this isn't always a necessary course of action and therefore delays the ability to book the repair in. This is again due to lack of effective questioning from the call centre to the customer and a lack of detailed description and/or images to assist in diagnosing. For example, where a pre-inspection for asbestos has been submitted before a floor tile repair can be completed, the information on the latest asbestos survey of the customer's property is potentially already on the system and could be accessed by the call handlers

– therefore meaning that the asbestos survey would give an indication on whether the repair can be carried out or not.

3.4.12 There are a certain number of jobs within the system that have to be closed down manually rather than via the operatives' PDA devices. This was found to be the case for jobs requiring 2 operatives or when a job note is added. Without the ability for operatives to close the job down, this leaves it open and confuses the data on which jobs are not completed.

3.4.13 Along with their usual responsibilities, the planners field questions from call handlers in some instances where more information is needed for raising a repair or adding description. However, this too proves to be time consuming for the planners when needing to switch from one area of the system to another to help answer the query, or even unnecessary when the answers needed are accessible via the system or handbooks available to the call handlers.

3.4.14 The planners have such a key role allocating SOR codes to jobs and providing jobs for the operatives based on their trade/multi skilled. When an operative completes a job they allocated the next job. The CSP questioned whether any consideration to location using the vehicle tracker was used to influence allocation and they confirmed that they were not allowed to refer to the tracker. This is a missed opportunity to reduce travel time and increase number of jobs that can be completed and the question is, why invest in a tracker system and not use it?

3.5 Shadowing of Repairs Operatives in the field – Positives identified

3.5.1 The CSP carried out job shadowing to gather first-hand information on what a day in the life of a responsive repairs operative is like, with a particular focus on any challenges faced when completing one repair to the next and whether repairs could be completed right first time.

3.5.2 All operatives were welcoming to the CSP and were keen to share their views.

3.5.3 Management effectively planned, briefed operatives on the purpose of the process, and allocated CSP members to an operative ensuring all trades were covered and a range of works observed.

3.5.4 The majority of operatives' vans were clean and well cared for, with some demonstrating materials and equipment stored carefully and accessible to speed up time to complete jobs. Others had no apparent system and spent considerable time searching for materials and equipment- there needs to be a storage system put in place as searching is lost time.

3.5.5 All operatives involved used a PDA to access job requests and navigate to locate properties effectively. However, we learnt that there are 25 PDAs and that another 35 are needed so that all operatives have the same device for recording, receiving information etc. and those that don't have a PDA use paper recording that means the information has to be later inputted which is time consuming. So investment in additional PDA's is required urgently to ensure consistency and accuracy of data recording.

3.5.6 All operatives wore mhs uniform and the majority wore lanyard identification.

3.5.7 Driving performance was reported as careful and considerate to other road users following all Highway Code requirements. There is definitely an appreciation of the new vans and understanding that the electric vehicles are not open to the responsive repairs operatives due to mileage incurred.

3.5.8 Parking was at times more challenging especially for street properties but consideration was given to not obstruct resident driveways and restricting access by emergency vehicles.

3.5.9 Engaging with the customer was always professional and handling of complaints regards number of visits to get a job done, time taken to attend, and failure to have the right parts etc. were in the main well handled.

3.5.10 Repairs that were able to be carried out were completed to a good standard and all customers were happy with the end result.

3.5.11 Where an emergency arose at the end of the day requiring several operatives to attend and deal with the issue, all operatives remained professional and dedicated to dealing with the repair despite the challenges faced. In particular, the main operative who was scheduled to attend the repair was determined to resolve the issue by staying at the address longer than initially scheduled to, as opposed to referring the repair to the out of hours' team.

3.5.12 In one particular instance an operative was met with a tenant's very hostile partner. The operative dealt with the persons rude and confrontational comments and behaviour professionally and was able to diffuse the situation by not engaging in the confrontation. The operative displayed a calm manner throughout and was able to complete the repair without further interruption.

3.5.13 All CSP members reported having enjoyed the experience and found it helpful and informative.

3.6 Shadowing of Repairs Operatives in the field – Negatives identified

3.6.1 Some CSP members reported that the operative did not have materials and parts on the van to complete jobs and that between each job had to return to Jewsons to collect. This resulted in considerable time wasting and highlighted the fact that the process of holding stock and parts and refreshing stocks weekly was not happening with all operatives. The stock in vans set up process needs to speeded up and a record of why parts had to be collected for routine jobs monitored to identify where and who is not embracing the new policy.

3.6.2 There is frustration that jobs allocated for the day to an operative are not visible at the start of the day so that they can ensure materials/parts are on the van and visits co-ordinated so that travel time is minimised. The operatives only get a new job after they have completed a job. It was suggested that to be able to accommodate emergency jobs that one operative could be assigned that role for the day so that help can be provided but allow others to have the opportunity to manage their days more effectively and complete more jobs – it was clear that productivity could be greatly improved, providing operatives with less time spent in traffic and repeated visits to collect materials. On average, operatives suggested that they could complete an additional 4/5 jobs per day if they could manage their jobs and route. It would appear that it could be beneficial to pilot handing out all jobs for the day and monitor whether productivity is increased and reduction in fuel costs as journeys more economical

3.6.3 Operatives were observed attending homes to complete emergency repairs and the tenant was not at home. The operative followed the right procedure, knocking loudly, calling the tenant on a mobile number and if not able to make contact, completing a green form indicating that a call had been made and photographing the completed notice and front door. The CSP does think that if the tenant has agreed to be at home and fails to advise that they cannot be at home that mhs should introduce a charge of £15 that will be charged to their rent account. It is felt that this could be applied where there is no good reason for the missed appointment and will make customers aware that they have a responsibility to

keep mhs informed. Failed calls are frustrating and it would be worth writing to those that are not at home as agreed and warning that they could be liable for a charge for a failed call. Another approach could be for the operative to text the customer to say that they are attending and on their way. At the moment the operative does not contact the customer prior to arriving and this could save time and reduce aborted visits.

3.6.4 The CSP reported that at no time did any operative offer to wear a face mask, shoe coverings or use a dust sheet to protect the flooring or furniture when carrying out works. We understand that wearing a face mask is not required by law but offering to wear one especially where customers are unwell or elderly should be considered. Also it is respectful to put on shoe covers and use dust sheets. At no time did operatives use hand disinfectant when leaving a home or arriving – should consideration be given to protect the operative and customer?

3.6.5 Where parts are replaced there is no formal disposal policy. The operative will add to the work job that a part has been replaced but as there is no requirement to hand in the old part to get a replacement there is no actual proof that the part has been used. The CSP has identified through benchmarking that external audit did identify at another housing organisation that not having a formal disposal policy did encourage theft and ultimately the dismissal of their operatives. The CSP would like to see mhs agree with their auditors a policy that protects operatives and the business from potential for abuse.

3.6.6 Where uniforms become old and worn and tools become less usable and break, there is again no formal disposal policy. Operatives are able to request new tools without having to return old, unusable tools beforehand ensuring that unnecessary requests aren't being made and that the new tools are actually being used to complete work rather than for personal use. It was found that some operatives had requested and been given new tools, but were still carrying their old, broken tools on their van. Though the tools in question may be small or compact, this can still impose a lack of organisation and the futile effort of carrying what isn't needed.

3.6.7 mhs has invested in a vehicle tracker system, which is very helpful. However, this is not being used although we were advised by the planners that they are not allowed to use the device to allocate an emergency job to an operative close to the home to visit. On the day of shadowing it was noted that 2 operatives to complete the same job type were working very close together and one had travelled a considerable distance to do the job and if the tracker had been used the office would have known that they already had an operative close by that could have completed the job. It is all about working smarter and not harder.

3.6.8 The inconsistency of use of SOR codes meant that time allocated to particular jobs varied by a matter of hours even though the jobs required the same repair. For example, one repair job for the fix/replacement of kitchen taps was allocated an hour to complete the job entirely, but a second repair job requiring taps to be fixed/replaced was allocated an hour per tap. The inconsistency means the potential for as many jobs to be completed in one day is not achievable and does not help maintain a consistent diagnosis of SOR codes by the call centre or planners.

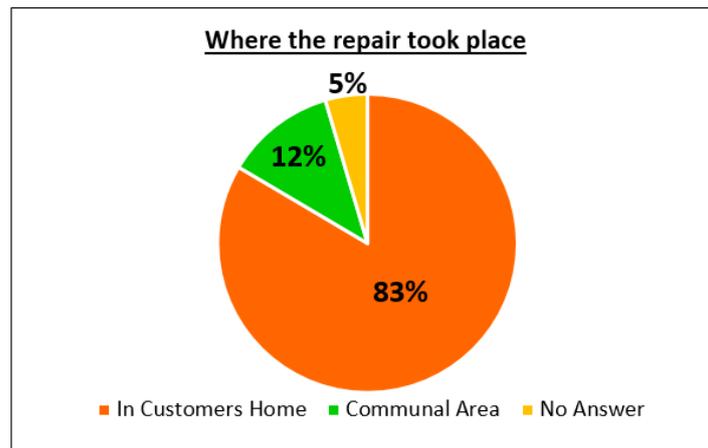
3.7 Customer Survey – Positives identified

3.7.1 This method of data collection provided the CSP with varied examples of customer experience and highlighted several ways in which mhs is providing a dedicated repair service its customers, and ways in

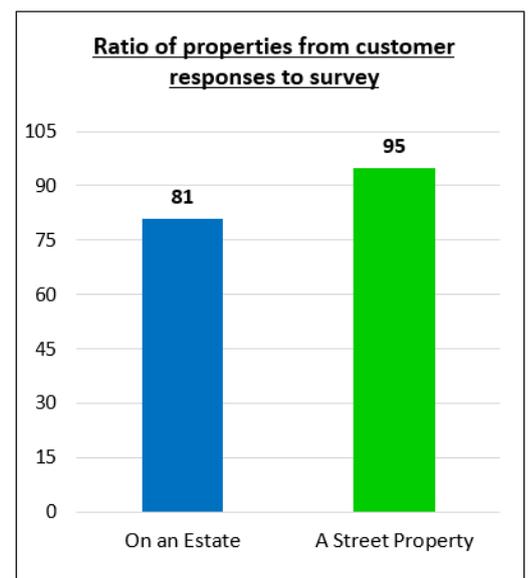
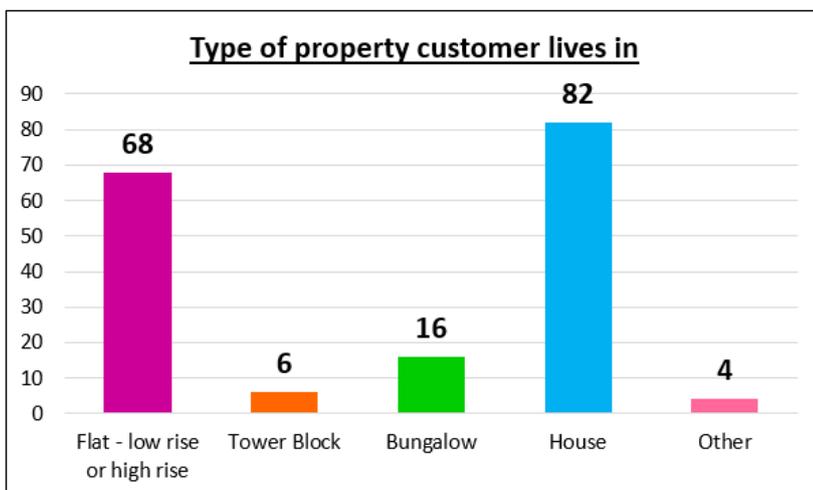
which the service can be improved to increase the rate of jobs completed right first time, customer communication and overall efficiency of the repairs service.

3.7.2 There were a total of 179 responses to the survey which shows a desire from customers to contribute helpful feedback to mhs and shows the importance of the CSP being able to conduct this form of feedback and data collection.

3.7.3 Where this review is focusing on in-home responsive repairs, the below graph highlights that the vast majority of customers who took part in answering the survey have had repairs completed in their home in the last 12 months and this was therefore a highly beneficial method of customer feedback for the CSP.

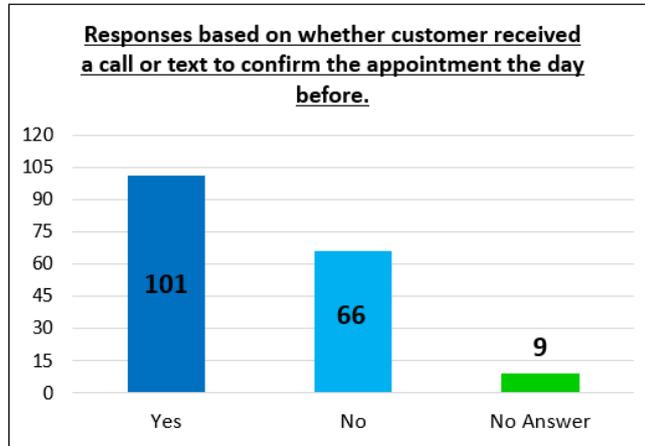


3.7.4 Through conducting the customer survey, we are able to provide varied feedback that highlights a range of responses from customers who live in diverse types of properties, both on estates and in general housing areas.

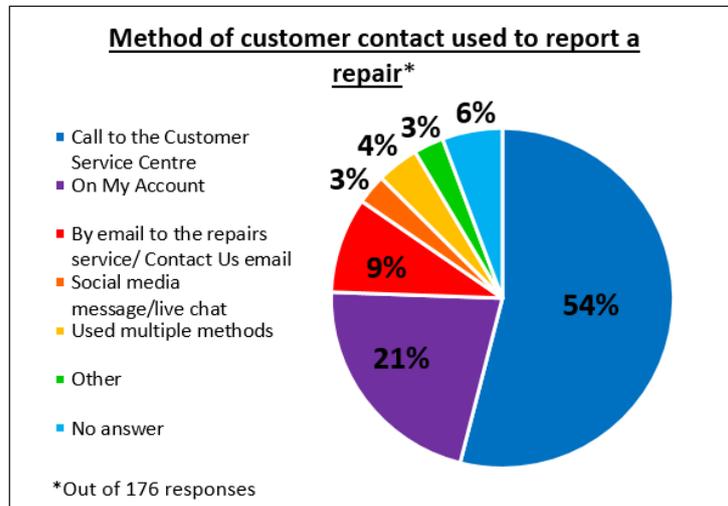


3.7.5 This review has highlighted that customer communication is key when delivering responsive repairs from the initial reporting of a repair, carried on right through to the completion of the repair. The below

graph indicates that among the 176 people who completed the survey, the majority reported being contacted the day before their repair was due to be completed, however there is room for improvement in order to maintain a consistent effort in keeping customers informed and to lessen the opportunity for missed appointments and a backlog of jobs.



3.7.6 The below graph strongly highlights the importance and effectiveness of the call centre with how many customers choose to use this method of contact to report a repair. This further supports the CSP’s recommendations to dedicate a select number of call handlers to diagnosing repair requests as and when they’re raised. It is key to achieve an accurate repair diagnosis as early as possible within the journey of a repair, so that repairs are delivered right first time and to a high level of efficiency.



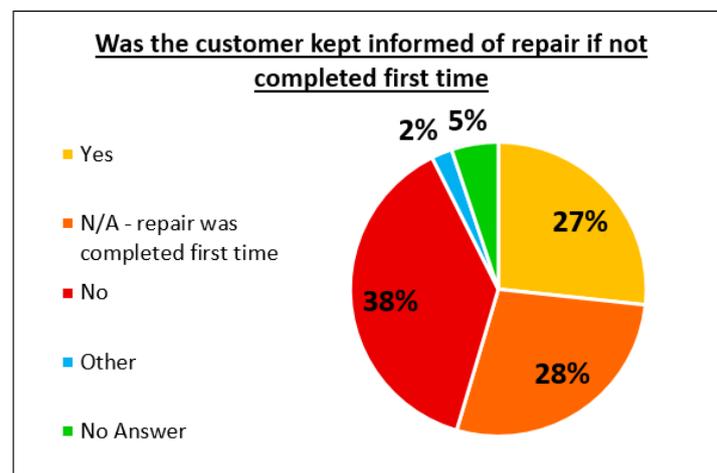
3.8 Customer Survey – Key issues identified

Negative customer comments from survey:

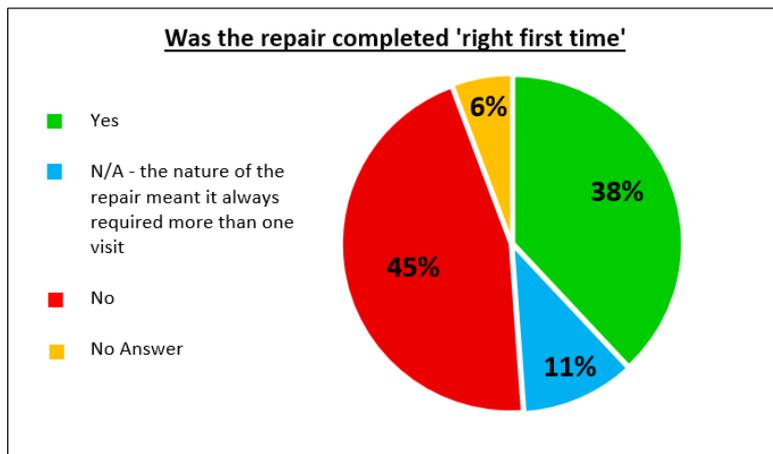
- Contact tenants if problem with attending repairs or if needs to be rebooked
- Have a co-ordinator to chase contractors and let people know what is going on with any delays
- Being kept in the loop
- Communication with the resident is key
- Communication needs improving massively

- Better Communication
- Kept informed
- Keep us updated so we don't have to keep ringing back to find out what is going on
- Send the plumber with the right part by at least the 2nd time not by the 5th or 6th
- Provide detailed information the repair men. Notify us through My Account that the job has been completed
- Make the repairs within month
- Keep in regular contact if repair can't be finished and while you are waiting for them to come and finish the job
- Fix it on 1st time visit
- Not having to wait weeks for a repair to be even looked at let alone completed
- Have a co-ordinator to chase contractors and let people know what is going on with any delays
- More customer friendly time slots
- Follow through complaints
- Have a dedicated manager who answers phones and oversee the basics. It's a joke currently
- Make sure correct parts are ordered and not months between appointments for ongoing issues
- Do the work required before it becomes a bigger issue
- Being more consideration for people that work
- Allow us to rebook same repair on the website

3.8.1 The graph below demonstrates that where a repair was not able to be completed right first time, a high number of customers were not kept informed on what would happen in this situation. This goes on to affect the customer belief that mhs don't aim to communicate with customers appropriately when a repair will need to be fixed at a later date. A vast amount of comments from the survey (including some from the above list) are regarding a lack of communication and where submitted when asked what could be done to improve the service.



3.8.2 Customers are unhappy that there is a delay in their repair being completed the first time. From looking at performance statistics, as of 30th Sept 2022, the average waiting time is 23 days for a repair to be looked at. Where operatives are not then able to repair the issue first time, (either due to lack of parts, incorrect diagnosing of operative needed, or it being an issue requiring a more in depth fix etc.), customers face a longer waiting time which then adds to their frustration and even possibly further complicates the repair if the nature of it means it will worsen over time until fixed.



3.8.3 Several customers commented on the need for more customer friendly time slots. The CSP appreciates that it is a difficult task to ensure that each customer is given a specific time slot and date that is also suitable to operatives (based on many factors). However, there is a need to review the effectiveness of the time slots available to customers as a whole, but particularly those who have work commitments and aren't as able to stay home all day or for half a day, when there is no direct indication of when the operative will arrive.

3.9 Document Review – Handbook, Website, Performance Data

3.9.1 The CSP were not able to obtain detailed compliments and complaints data to include in this report.

3.9.2 Performance statistics data was requested so that the CSP could gain an understanding on how well the repairs service has been performing in 2022, in comparison to the previous years' data and what targets are intended to be achieved in the coming year.

3.9.3 Through reviewing the customer handbook and the repairs information on the mhs website, the CSP have identified consistent information shared on what repairs responsibilities lie with the customer and mhs. However, there is quite a long process involved in order for a customer registered on My Account to be informed on whether they are responsible for the repair or not. It is not until customers are in the process of trying to book an individual repair that the information is then available. It would be beneficial for the information to be readily available and accessible on one main page for customers to access or be directed to.

3.9.4 The CSP have identified that where responsibility for particular repairs lies with the customer, simple demonstration videos would be helpful for customers to access – this would help to manage customer expectation. Pictures with clear demonstrations and instructions may also be of help to customers wishing to fix a repair themselves who are initially unsure on whether they should; this may actively encourage people to do so if they're informed that there is a quicker solution than say, ringing the call centre. In a similar vein, information on using energy saving light bulbs would be helpful considering the current cost of living and rising energy cost crises.

3.10 Office based Staff Interviews – Positives identified

3.10.1 The CSP received a copy of the management structure and were able to then request interviews with repairs operatives and managers. Interviews were held virtually and in person at Royal Eagle. A total of 17 managers and operatives who were responsible for overseeing the day to day management of the repairs service were involved with this process.

3.10.2 All office based staff interviewed showed a keen approach to answering the interview questions frankly and honestly, for which the CSP is very grateful for. They were keen to share their current difficulties and ways in which they would like to see improvements across the service to then achieve improved efficiency and customer satisfaction.

3.10.3 Managers expressed the view that all operatives are a pleasure to work with and are professional, hardworking and supportive of each other.

3.10.4 There is better gender mix of office based staff, and it was noted that there are currently no female operatives and perhaps this may be corrected through the introduction of apprenticeships.

3.11 Office based Staff Interviews – Key Issues identified

3.11.1 The lack of information gathered by the customer team when reporting repairs onto the system sometimes means that unnecessary inspections are carried out in customers' homes and further adds to the waiting time for repairs to be completed. This leaves customers feeling frustrated that someone has visited their home to view the repair but isn't able to carry it out the first time. It also means that valuable time has been taken up by inspecting a repair that, should it have been diagnosed properly, could have been added to the system and repaired by an operative on their first visit.

3.11.2 Officers expressed frustration that the workforce is lacking in enough operatives to carry out the volume of repairs among the current and developing housing stock. It was shared with the CSP during the overview presentation that there are approx. 9,500 homes currently managed by mhs and that future developments will see more housing added to that number. There is a real concern that the older housing stock is now suffering from quicker disrepair and that the ability to deal with these repairs effectively first time around isn't achievable going forward with the many challenges faced.

3.11.3 The system used to book repair jobs and spreadsheets used to form reports is archaic and complicated, and contributes to the difficulty in viewing the clear objectives within management staff's responsibilities. The confusing system therefore means staff encounter a large volume of emails which is time consuming to address and view, as opposed to a universal dashboard that can be accessed by all necessary and maintain a transparent view of the tasks needing to be completed. This doesn't enable clear enough communication between managers and results in loss of information and timewasting.

3.11.4 Managers expressed the difficulty of managing operatives at times due to bad habits gained from previous employment or lack of management in previous years. For example, some operatives were choosing to go to Royal Eagle in Strood for lunch when they were based in Chatham or further afield, which takes up more time (sometimes up to an hour) and fuel and is potentially an unnecessary journey compared to staying in the same area as their previous repair job.

3.11.5 Managers detailed ways in which the workload for themselves and operatives was increased due to newly developed properties needing special repairs or requirements alongside maintaining the aging housing stock. New developments feature new materials and fittings which mhs then potentially struggle to source some months later. There is a need for developers to work closely with the repairs service to maximise the efficiency of new properties' materials and fittings, to ensure that when repairs are raised,

standard fittings across the housing stock are able to be used thus maximising the potential to deliver a quick turnaround time.

3.11.6 When decisions are made by senior management, it is felt among managers that they are not always consulted on ideas they might have that could maximise the potential of the repairs service. Many managers have been in their role for a number of years and have gained valuable experiences of what does and doesn't work well among the delivery of the service. It was felt that more communication on all levels of management would be beneficial to the service overall and would contribute further to a positive working relationship among staff.

3.11.7 There is a concern that the increase in responsibility on both the managers and operatives will potentially see staff leaving their role. There is currently a wealth of experience and knowledge among those that have been employed within the repairs service for a number of years, so to lose their valuable experience and skills would put the repairs service at a huge loss and further decrease productivity. If mhs is to retain their skilled operatives, they need to focus on improving the service overall so that the many responsibilities carried out by all are managed more realistically and enable each officer to maximise their working potential.

3.11.8 Through carrying out pre-inspections of repairs, managers are noticing an increase in properties that are not maintained by customers, which is further impacting the workload among the repairs service. The addition of housing officers who are able to communicate with customers about their responsibilities in their homes would be beneficial.

3.11.9 Managers expressed that customers often comment on the long turnaround time for their repairs to be completed, but have said that they would understand the issues that contribute to this if it was explained to them earlier when reporting the repair. There is a strong need for customer expectations to be managed but also, better transparency with customers as to why their repair isn't urgent or may take some time to be fixed. This kind of communication and explanation could potentially see a better rapport between mhs and their customers.

3.11.10 It was felt that there needed to be better communication between managers and senior management to achieve a united approach to delivering a highly functioning repairs service. Managers are under the impression that when something is reported or discussed, all senior managers are kept up to date with the information shared, however this has proven to be not the case as when other senior managers are spoken to, they are unaware of what has previously been shared.

3.11.11 There is a view that interview and recruitment of operatives is not based on consistent competences, and requirement for specific qualifications is not a requisite but emphasis on experience stated by the applicant. This has resulted in a number of operatives being taken on that are not at the required standard and with no formal training offered leads to a higher number of job recalls and frustration of the experienced and able operatives. It was stated that new multi skilled operatives needing support are given experience in void properties to up skill. There is a view that it is a numbers game rather than taking the time to recruit effectively and offer a sector competitive salary to retain and attract well qualified operatives. However, with electricians' level 2 installation qualifications required at point of employment and then put through training to achieve level 3, there is a need to take qualified electricians to prevent mhs having to cover the cost of training – training that is facilitated through working in voids under supervision. It is worth noting that operatives have no formal personal training plan and this means that career progression may be more limited. Although it was pleasing to see that some managers have progressed their careers from the tools into management. However, they have not as managers had to

then complete training to develop their management skills and this maybe because there is no perceived time to take them out of the day to day job to allow them to train. Training needs to be given a higher priority across the repairs team covering all roles.

3.11.12 Managers do not consider that they have the time apart from completing individual 3 monthly review meetings to go and job shadow and do formal assessments of operatives. This was an approach used 4/5 years ago and has been dropped, but some consider this should be reintroduced.

3.11.13 Managers report what they term, 'an atmosphere', between those working at Broadside and Royal Eagle, which results in practices and procedures differing. There needs to be more joint meetings so that relationships are built and the 'them and us' perception are eliminated. In addition, it has been stated that repairs and estates team do not get on and are reluctant to help each other; internal politics. This needs to be addressed as ultimately the customer suffers around communal repairs.

3.11.14 Managers feel that they are over stretched and feel that the service is 'run on a shoestring'. They focus on what is important that can control service call backs but often other things just get dropped. No tracking of staff and 'firefighting' describes their working day. For example, it was stated that RGW Contractors have described the repairs service as having archaic reporting systems reflecting the 'dark ages'. There is a need to do process mapping so that waste and duplication can be eliminated and ensuring that there is a good reason for doing something and not just because it has happened for the last 15 years! Technology and investment represents value for money to increase accountability and control and reporting opportunities especially where contractors are concerned because they do need to be carefully monitored to ensure you are only paying for what has been delivered.

3.11.15 There is a strong view that mhs has failed to have an effective annual homes maintenance program over the years and this has resulted in growing responsive repairs demand; this combined with new developments introducing less robust fittings continues to put a strain on the operatives. Managers want to be part of the decision making of fittings in new homes to ensure that future repairs can be managed and be cost effective. Managers have absorbed the additional work associated with managing and delivering a responsive repairs service for new homes but do feel that resources are not reviewed in line with the increase in homes added.

3.11.16 Customer expectations are growing but there is no recharging even where repairs or replacement is a direct result of customer abuse. Managers feel that mhs must take a harder approach to enforcement and making sure that customer responsibilities are clear and followed. There is also concern that the 'menu' options offered and taken up by customers especially with kitchens etc. that customers have been paying monthly a contribution but do not receive accounts detailing what has been paid and any outstanding balance; this needs to be addressed to ensure that customers are not overpaying and can proceed to have a replacement kitchen where this is required. It was unclear on whether there is a central database dedicated to monitoring payments as part of the 'menu' option.

3.11.17 It was reported that the service has faced a number of restructures but still remains top down and fails to look at things from the perspective of the front line. However, some managers stated that they have held focus groups to get views from operatives on proposed changes but feedback indicated that managers self-select who can be involved, perhaps eliminating the more vocal and challenging operatives. This may mean that valuable feedback is being missed.

3.11.18 The responsive repairs service has been under pressure clearing the backlog of repairs accumulated during the pandemic, which has not been helped by staff shortages and so the time scale of

30 days for a responsive repair to be completed is frustrating for customers.

However, there is a need to manage customer expectations and be clear what is an emergency – there is not a consistent definition applied. Much of the root cause is around the diagnostic process for repairs and failing to apply the right SOR code so some jobs are awarded excessive timeframes to complete work and others the time allocation is too tight especially around electrical jobs. Although this may be remedied in part by the new SOR version 7 which offers more code options, but you have to get the diagnosis correct at the first stage – this is the key starting point to improve productivity and to work smarter.

3.11.19 Managers are considered to offer different approaches to requests for time to attend hospital appointments, with some agreeing and giving the time and others allowing the time but making the lost time to be worked. Operatives feel that having flexibility will lead to operative's long term giving back more as they will feel more valued.

3.11.20 Managers do feel that they have a varied but challenging role, having to problem solve, do inspections, surveys, administration, reallocating jobs and signposting and liaising between customer services and complaints. Allocating resources especially where jobs require 2 operatives and dealing with checking why jobs cannot be completed first time is time consuming and means that 'managing' staff and checking on wellbeing and training needs get put aside, which is not helpful for the service and individuals.

3.11.21 The £500 cost of living increase bonus paid as part of the mhs support to staff across the business has been appreciated. However, some felt that after tax was paid the actual benefit was around £300 and there is a fear that many will have to put loyalty to mhs aside to seek improved salaries elsewhere. Overall, managers and staff consider that mhs is a great organisation and the pension and benefits are good, but currently this is being overtaken by the need to support their families and that means chasing a better salary. Clearly there needs to be a benchmarking exercise across the teams to ensure that salaries are competitive but also affordable. However, the CSP understands that with the rising costs for materials and labour and the increasing regulatory requirements on the standard of homes that financial pressures will make it difficult to increase salaries etc. in the current climate, but retention and having resources is key to delivering a quality service. Clearly the Executive and the Board are having to make some difficult decisions and the financial viability of mhs must be a key driver as part of these concerns.

3.11.22 Leadership of the service over the last year has been focused on step changes and really understanding the business. This has included: job shadowing of 10 operatives, creating DLO Forum that meets every Wednesday, holding service manager meetings and adopting an open door policy. However, the challenges facing the service are:

- Skilled labour shortage
- Competitive recruiting
- Increasing costs across the business and contractors
- Average of 5-6 vacancies at any one time
- Lost productive time for holidays/sickness
- Technology- everyone competing for service/resource so challenging as technology key driver for productivity
- Getting the basics right- changing habits of the past
- Management structure and skills base needs reviewing to meet the new service delivery requirements

- Career development improving and 2 apprentices starting in January 2023
- Aging workforce so need to capture knowledge of housing stock for the longer term
- Toolkit talks need to restart
- Need a dedicated bonus scheme for the repairs service that is linked to targets and customer satisfaction
- Need to review the DRS system for allocating jobs and van stock expected to be in place by Christmas
- Agree that team away days have not happened over the last 12 months
- Next year focus on lone working, customer care etc.

3.11.23 Overall managers have highlighted the following points as key:

- Improved technology- stop use of excel spreadsheets
- Review of job roles and responsibilities
- Training to be formal as well as on the job training
- Have dedicated call handlers for responsive repairs with planners
- Review management structure and resources
- Reduce contractor spend where workforce can take on work
- Management of operatives to be consistent and listen to feedback
- Diagnostic training and use of correct descriptions and photographs to be introduced
- Review and train on allocation and use of SOR codes
- Use tracker to allocate jobs and know where your operatives are at all times- not big brother but efficiency and better work experience
- Pilot allocating all jobs scheduled for the day to operatives- see if this reduces travel, increases productivity etc.
- Revisit definition of a responsive repair because a number of 'takes' were shared with the CSP
- Work towards having a united DLO looking at things collectively- be united and agree to disagree but have an open mind to try new things
- Need national and local KPI's to really understand service performance at all levels
- Increase number of PDA's so all operatives have access
- OpenHouse needs updating along with repairs automation
- Managers to be trained in handling HR issues and encouraged to obtain qualifications
- Remove silo working between contractors and finance – with finance seen as dictating to repairs rather than a service support partner- i.e. the focus is then not on customer needs and experience
- Multi-traders not always the fastest at completing jobs compared to specialists, so ensure that retention of specialists is given the priority needed.
- Review opportunities for change by piloting new ideas
- Ensure that new homes have standard fittings, involve repairs managers in design choices and make sure works are to a high standard to reduce future responsive repair needs
- Make succession planning a key part of retention and to give stability to the service

3.12 Operative Interviews – Positives identified

3.12.1 Operatives praised their fellow colleagues and expressed appreciation to be working as part of a friendly, supportive work force. Where repair jobs require 2 operatives to work together, operatives stated they never felt any apprehension at doing so as they felt confident in their work colleagues' ability to be professional, hardworking and sociable alongside them.

3.12.2 Operatives in the main spoke highly of their managers and expressed that they always felt supported with both professional and personal matters. They felt that the support given by managers contributed largely to their desire to remain working within mhs as the positive working relationship was something they hadn't always experienced at previous employment.

3.12.3 Operatives expressed that carrying out their day to day repairs responsibilities was an enjoyable task as they were confident in their abilities to adapt to many situations. They also shared that they felt a sense of pride when completing repairs successfully for customers and could see customer satisfaction.

3.12.4 It was shared that any positive feedback that operatives receive either face to face from customers or from management via emails and updates was responded to positively and contributed towards morale.

3.12.5 Operatives were happy to be able to use their work vehicles to and from home in order to maximise efficiency.

3.12.6 Operatives have been very open and honest with the review and credit must be given to them and management for having the confidence that feedback will be managed sensitively by the CSP.

3.13 Operative Interviews – Key Issues identified

3.13.1 There is concern that operatives work schedules do not make efficiency a clear outcome, because planning and allocation of work is haphazard and there is no control given to the operative. They want to manage their time and increase their daily jobs completed and spend less time in traffic and picking up parts.

3.13.2 Operatives welcome customer feedback and being recognised for doing a good job. There is a consistent intention by all operatives to do a good job and get no call backs.

3.13.3 Life balance between work and home life seen by most as their top priority. Not having to travel into London and seeking work is a bonus but they do want to be paid the going rate for the work they do. Some felt that working for mhs was great and this is reflected by some operatives leaving and then returning- grass is not always greener comes to mind. Clearly the economic challenges are affecting views and it would be a pity to lose your expertise for money and not taking into account the full package and job security offered by mhs.

3.13.4 Obtaining equipment to carry out work is authorised easily and managers helpful. There is no formal requisition approach but just need to ask manager. Unclear if there is an equipment disposal policy and what is the annual spend and allocations per operative.

3.13.5 There are mixed views from operatives about the service offered by Jewsons. Those that have been around longer clearly miss going to their local stores but once the stock at Jewson is finalised perhaps the hankering for the past will reduce. The pressure is on Jewson's to keep operatives happy!

3.13.6 There is a feeling that customers should be charged for missed appointments, damage to homes and be responsible to look after their home because the condition of homes varies considerably. More home visits by the tenancy team to check on the tenant and the home may be helpful to identify problems early.

3.13.7 Key concerns and requests by operatives include:

- Feeling valued and listened to – helping to shape service changes
- Ensure Jewsons has the stock needed
- Ensure that job descriptions are accurate- better diagnostics and photographs where possible
- Provide daily all job tickets- can plan work day better
- Improved bonus opportunities based on jobs completed and quality of work
- Having well trained managers and supervisors and encouraging self-reflection and engaging positively through team meetings and away days to build relationships
- Improved –technology and information provided on PDA
- Hardest part of the job is managing traffic and time lost- use tracker to allocate jobs
- Dedicated call handlers that can be given building and materials training so that they reduce the issues of having to rearrange appointments
- Create a mhs training academy, use experienced skilled operatives to train and support apprenticeships- train the trainer
- Training on dealing with difficult customers and developing interpersonal skills
- Educating customers and managing expectations of work to be carried out and charge for damage and missed appointments- not every repair is an emergency
- Reintroduce a suggestions box for ideas to be shared about how service is delivered and award a voucher for best suggestion- view that operatives do not have ideas and nothing they say is implemented
- Ensure that succession planning career opportunities are open to all operatives, to negate the view that only the chosen few get these opportunities
- Understanding that the Assistant Director of repairs is part time and never seen by operatives and would not recognise if met in the street- visible management very important.
- Ensure that operatives are kept up to date as currently negativity is being generated by fear that there will be no bonus next year- whether true or not needs handling
- Operatives receive mhs bulletin every Friday but they want a repairs service update as well
- Look at pre-inspection process because many reported that multiple inspections have to be completed due to inadequate information recorded and customers very unhappy – need to train inspectors properly and make them accountable for failing to do their job correctly first time
- Perks of the job are listed as: take vans home, holidays, sick pay, pensions, regular work Monday to Friday – great team of operatives overall
- Need more resources to get workload to a manageable level – particularly with increasing housing stock and aging of old housing stock not managed

4. Table of Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Priority to customers	Priority to business
1	<p>a) Complete a total review of technology used to deliver and monitor the responsive repairs service – there is a need to eliminate the many manual excel spreadsheets and remove the potential for human error and save time. Where possible, a universal system would be beneficial for access by either call handlers, (or dedicated repairs handlers if implemented as recommended) and planners. Eliminates the need for time consuming searching and miscommunication between teams.</p> <p>b) Currently the operatives have 25 PDA's and the repairs service requires an additional 35 so that all operatives have the same device to receive job details.</p> <p>c) Customers reporting repairs through My Account will experience a delay getting their work logged into the DRS account because details have to be manually exported by the planners. It also creates 'white space' on the planner's scheduler for operatives which hinders their ability to allocate further jobs. An interface is required to automate the transfer of information – currently the quickest way to report a repair that is logged directly is by calling the Call Centre and will prevent users from using digital services</p> <p>d) There is a need for an integrated repairs management system building on the current DRS Scheduler – a universal dashboard that all managers can use and access to keep work transparent and efficient, and be able to delegate tasks needing completing between them. Allows for easy viewing and keeps everyone on the same page.</p> <p>e) Plentific should be considered to allow customers to report repairs, book an appointment and load photographs of the work required. This may be a more cost effective approach that is widely used and tested with customers.</p> <p>f) The information provided on PDA's needs to be reviewed by the users and identify any additional information required and access to book additional appointments whilst with the customer when required, rather than needing an additional call by the customer services team to make an additional appointment.</p> <p>g) Training needs to be incorporated when new technology or updates are provided. There was no training for operatives when they received their PDA.</p> <p>h) Vehicle tracking is an expensive but helpful device used by repair services. Currently the tracker is only in place to meet the requirements of mhs insurance provider. However, this facility should be used to know where operatives are and being able to schedule emergency jobs or jobs nearby an operative to minimise travel and ensure the best use of resources and increase productivity and reduce fuel costs. There was feedback that operatives are travelling long distances from where they are working to have lunch at Royal Eagle resulting in loss of productivity, time and wasted fuel, although they have been</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>

	<p>advised not to do this. If this is happening, then accessing the vehicle tracker will confirm whether compliance is being followed.</p> <p>i) Stock management is very important to mhs. Currently there is no stock or equipment disposal policy and agreed process. A formal system is required rather than disposing into a bin at the depot all items should be handed over and recorded. There are currently too many opportunities to encourage misuse that could be costly over time. Perhaps this process could be combined with the stock management system and one manager could be responsible for making sure compliance is maintained that will be acceptable to both internal and external audit.</p>		YES
2	<p>Communications</p> <p>a) The survey highlighted that customers do not feel that they are kept updated about repairs and that appointment times are too wide and that many have to take time off work for a whole day to accommodate a repair. It would be helpful to develop shorter time slots and get operatives to text or call customers to inform that they are on the way and will be there at an estimated time using the navigation facility incorporated into the PDA.</p> <p>b) The Resident Handbook is helpful but could have more detail advising customers how to manage repairs that are their responsibility including the use of energy efficient light bulbs etc. A further addition could be having helpful videos on the website for completing basic repairs which can be purchased cheaply and would be helpful to the less technical customers</p> <p>c) A number of customers stated that when they had for example, a new kitchen, they were able to purchase from a 'Menu' an additional cupboard and repay the cost through a weekly contribution charged to the rent account. However, customers now needing a replacement because of time are unsure whether they still owe money or if they have paid in full etc. Could the balance owing be included as part of the rent statement. This may encourage customers to pay off the debt and increase revenue for mhs.</p> <p>d) Although staff receive the weekly corporate newsletter there was a strong feeling by managers and operatives that a dedicated repairs version which could be less frequent would be helpful and prevent gossip becoming fact! This may offer an effective opportunity for officers, operatives and other service providers in mhs.</p> <p>e) The CSP survey was completed by 179 customers and the results are significant to indicate performance covering a number of measures. There needs to be a repeat of the survey in 12 months' time using the same measures to determine service improvement. The CSP are happy to facilitate this to support the service. The detail is far more comprehensive than the standard national performance indicators</p> <p>f) Keeping customers updated on service standards is key to managing expectations. Currently the responsive repairs service is not meeting the service target times so it is helpful to have this message on the website stating that recovery from the pandemic backlog is clear but we are being affected by the economic</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>	

	climate regards resources and access to certain supplies – customers will understand and respect the honesty.		
3	<p>Management</p> <p>a) There is a need for a complete review of the management structure looking at roles and responsibilities and have a competency framework and training plan to support all through the transformation of the repairs service. This will reduce fear and lift morale because managers are currently operating under immense pressure and ‘firefighting’ may be a good description. It is important that change embraces working smarter and not harder along with the resources and technology to bring about change.</p> <p>b) The main driver for improvement is getting the repair diagnosis correct and this all stems from the initial moment of contact or receiving a repair request. Managers have identified the root problem that the contact centre has a great team but they do not have the time to always gather the correct detail of a repair request because they are driven by the speed of answering the call and lack knowledge. 60% of the calls to the centre are repairs related and this offers the consideration of relocating say 2/4 call handlers with the planners and repairs managers. This means that they can have advice on hand, can build the specialist knowledge and prevents planners and managers having to send information to call handlers to relay back to customers and make calls for follow up appointments. The CSP recognise that this proposed change needs careful consideration but a pilot for say, 6/9 months, would prove whether this is the answer to resolving the diagnostic issues that cause frustration to managers, planners, operatives and the customer. There are additional administrative tasks that the relocated call handlers could complete if call numbers are lower at any time, so they would be occupied 100%.</p> <p>c) It is good to see that some managers have had promotion to supervisors/managers and demonstrates that career opportunities are on offer. However, there needs to be management training along with learning on the job to build expertise and confidence in the new role. There is no formal training offered and this needs to be addressed – as a manager, there is a need to learn new skills and how to deal with staff covering a range of needs. Hence there is a perception by some operatives that support or time to attend hospital appointments is handled differently depending on the manager.</p> <p>d) It is clear that the management of complaints cannot be used as a learning tool because the level of description recorded was inadequate and it appears numbers of complaints is given the priority, rather than using root causes and failures to improve. Having a repairs service learning log would be helpful to managers and to share with operatives.</p> <p>e) It is clear that managers are busy processing repairs but there appears to be little control over operative conduct when visiting customer homes. The CSP noted that no operative showed their name badge, asked if they should wear shoe coverings, wear a mask, or use dust sheets. Many of these requirements should be mandatory. Also some operatives used the customer toilet which</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>	

	<p>is usually not encouraged but there appears to be no enforced operative code of conduct – this maybe a result of having no formal induction process for new starters to follow or refresher for existing operatives. There needs to be guidance provided for operatives and managers should be observing and enforcing best practice.</p> <p>f) It was noted that call handlers have their calls monitored and training offered to help deal with incidences. It is unclear whether repairs managers are trained to train call handlers on repairs and whether they are invited to join these training sessions. It would be helpful to consider ‘train the trainer’ training so that this additional support can be offered.</p> <p>g) Silo working by the repairs team is a contributing factor and they need to integrate more with sharing their knowledge with the tenancy team and encouraging officers visiting homes to alert the repairs team about damage identified in homes. Perhaps attending joint meetings may help to build a positive working relationship.</p> <p>h) Managers are operating with 5/6 operative vacancies which is not helping to meet the demand and target times. Recruitment and retention appears to be an ongoing issue and every operative complained that mhs operative salaries were not competitive with other local housing providers. It is clear that a benchmarking exercise needs to be carried out especially around electricians. To be equitable it should include all operatives. There is also a need to promote all the great benefits of being a mhs employee demonstrated by the £500 cost of living bonus paid, access to holiday homes, discount excursions etc.</p>		<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Operatives</p> <p>a) Operatives are frustrated by not having sight of jobs allocated for the entire day and state that this leads to excess mileage, and reduced productivity. The CSP would like to propose a pilot of 6 months issuing all jobs at the start of the day and monitoring the outcome. If as stated by operatives, they could complete an additional 4/5 jobs a day, that would certainly reduce the backlog and increase customer satisfaction and demonstrate value for money</p> <p>b) If the above is adopted, then there could be a couple of operatives a day allocated to emergency calls so the service can have the flexibility needed.</p> <p>c) Not all operatives are currently holding basic stock and refilling on a weekly basis. There needs to be a deadline set to ensure all are following the agreed process now that Jewsons are set up. Working with operatives is key to ensure they’re confident that they have the complete van stock they need – use their valuable knowledge and experience to drive the service forward.</p> <p>d) To accommodate carrying of stock there needs to inspections of vans so that stock is stored carefully and readily accessible. Because considerable time was spent trying to find a part!</p> <p>e) There is a fear that operatives will not receive a bonus next year. However, it is evident that operatives are motivated by money and perhaps creating a bespoke bonus scheme may have a positive impact. This should be investigated to ensure the general consensus is not gossip/speculation.</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>

	<p>f) Operatives do feel a level of frustration when customers are not at home and would like to see a penalty of £15 charged to start raising awareness that to get a repair completed requires both sides to deliver what is needed. In addition, they do feel that mhs does not recharge customers where deliberate damage has occurred and that this should be looked at.</p> <p>g) Operatives feel that the recruitment process is not robust enough and there has been a move away from seeking experienced qualified operatives and this has generated more call-backs. As stated above, ensure that that there is formal skill assessments and ongoing observation where operatives fail to meet the mhs standard.</p> <p>h) There is concern that only what they term 'compliant' and less challenging operatives are invited to meetings to share ideas and help make changes. As a result, it is felt that many improvements and ways of working are not shared with management. Open up feedback to all operatives and set clear attendance rules so that the meetings can be positive- offer incentives for suggestions that improve service delivery</p> <p>i) There is a need to have a better annual home maintenance service that would if in place, reduce repairs required and sustain the life of fittings.</p> <p>j) There is a general feel that operatives would like more cooperation from developers when installing new fittings within new developments – to help explain the importance of having universal fittings which can be easily sourced and implemented when new builds eventually come to need repairs alongside aging housing stock, and operatives are responsible for these repairs. They face customer frustration when customers are led to believe the new fittings will be like for like, but in reality, mhs and operatives can only deliver what is available which may not be the same.</p>		<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>
5	<p>Planners</p> <p>a) The role and responsibility of planners is critical to the process for managing the recording of repairs, allocating operatives etc. With a wide number of tasks to manage they do need improved technology to remove many of the manual tasks and a complete role review and mapping the work process as it appears they are duplicating some work that call handlers are responsible for. It is clear that planners need training in allocating SOR codes because the reality on the ground was that the approach was not consistent with many having been given 1.5 hours for a job that took 15 minutes etc.</p>		YES
6	<p>Call Centre</p> <p>a) Positively consider the option of a pilot move of call handlers to the repairs team – monitor the impact of having more effective questioning, photographs and in depth detail of repairs where possible to improve the key diagnosing of the repair at first contact. This may enable the journey of a repair to be more time efficient, improve productivity and fuel costs for operatives and achieve higher customer satisfaction if the repair is able to be completed right first time.</p> <p>b) Training to be implemented for call handlers on where to access information on customers' homes – e.g. asbestos survey results, to eliminate the need for further lengthy investigation by call</p>	YES	YES

	<p>handlers or planners, when trying to book a repair that requires this information first. The information is there so it needs to be accessed as much as possible.</p> <p>c) Training where possible to handle the more difficult conversations with customers who express high expectations of repairs that are their own responsibility, and how to effectively redirect customer to the website which, if implemented, has directions and tutorials on how to complete a number of simple and safe repairs.</p>	YES	
--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------	--

6. Conclusion

The CSP can confirm that mhs is, in the main, managing responsive repairs well whilst in a difficult environment and during a period of service transformation. There is definitely a need to tighten up on using feedback information as a learning tool for the service, and utilising the key knowledge and valuable experience of the many operatives and management staff who strive to deliver a positive service that mhs and customers alike can be proud of.

The service needs vast investment in technology, the ability to recruit and stronger working practices. Never be afraid to pilot change and understand whether the change brings about positive advancements – in particular: reducing operating costs, increasing a one team approach across all teams involved, and increasing customer satisfaction.

There is strong leadership and ambition by Barry Waller to do things better and see a positive change to the service. Already, his first year has delivered improvement and continues to seek further investment and change, but there is so much more to do to ensure that the service is running as efficiently as possible at every level.

The CSP has thoroughly enjoyed this review and the new opportunities to observe and job shadow were so helpful. Thank you to Barry – it was a pleasure to have your cooperation. Please note – you make a good cup of tea!!

Appendix A

Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) Review Proposal Responsive Repairs

Title of Scrutiny Review	
Review of management and resident experience of responsive repairs	
Date presented to Scrutiny Champion	August 2022
Reason(s) for Scrutiny Review	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs service is a highly valued and used service by all customers • The service was affected by COVID and has strived to remove the backlog- an opportunity to review how the service is performing • Opportunity for the service to benefit from an independent resident led review 	
Scope of review (what will be included)	
<p>The review will look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recording and recharging of communal repairs - Service improvements completed, planned - Use of technology to drive the service - Information provided for residents- communication - Reporting repairs- methods, effectiveness - Resident satisfaction/compliments - Complaints and compensation - Quality of service- - Customer experience in their home - Maintenance and management - Appointment process - Right first time 	
Methodology	
<p>The methodology will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desktop review – analysing, interpreting, gap analysis • Surveys /questionnaires with staff and residents • Focus groups with residents - 4 • Tailored interviews with staff members - split strategic and operational • Interviews with Board • Job shadowing - observation and understanding of roles and responsibilities • Observation of job allocation/structure • Mystery shopping – testing service and procedures • Benchmarking with other organisations • Site visits • Survey of operatives • Service overview briefing – at start of process 	
Desktop review	
<p>The Scrutiny Panel will require access to the following documents/information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and procedures • Residents handbook • KPI information for the last 2 years • Complaints information for the last 12 months • Compensation payments last 12 months • Resident satisfaction questions/ results • Compliments 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer requirements for contractors • Management structure
Staff interviews
<p>The Scrutiny Panel requests interviews with the following staff members:</p> <p>Head of service Customer services Operative from randomly selected trades Director of repairs Director Operations</p>
Focus groups
<p>The Scrutiny Panel requests to hold focus groups with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents (3 dates)
Surveys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenants - Leaseholder - Staff
Job shadowing
<p>The Scrutiny Panel requests to carry out job shadowing of the following members of staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operatives from a range of trades • Supervisor/manager • Job allocators
Mystery shopping
<p>The Scrutiny Panel will carry out or commission mystery shopping on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Call Centre - Repairs carried out in any CSP members' homes (if applicable)
Benchmarking
<p>The Scrutiny Panel wishes to carry out the following benchmarking activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golding Homes
Duration
Commence September report to x Board meeting

Appendix B

Photos taken during the tour of the Call Centre:

Tour of new mhs electric van fleet:

Tour of Jewsons Warehouse:

Tour of Royal Eagle Close:

Appendix C

Questions featured in template for shadowing operatives in the field:

- Date of observation
- Time slot given to the repair- SOR
- Operative name
- Name of CSP member observing
- Customer address visited
- When was the repair reported?
- What is the job to be completed?
- Which trade is being used to do the repair?
- Time allocated for the job?
- Start time and planned end time
- Information shared by customer
- Did the operative show an ID badge, wear shoe coverings or wear a mask?
- Did they use protective materials in the customers' home?
- Were the skills required in job description appropriate for completing the job?
- Time spent setting up
- Any interruptions from customer, office, other?
- Was the job as expected based on the work ticket?
- Were the tools and materials right for the job?
- Was the customer ready for the visit?
- Did the operative have to go back to the van a lot?
- Did the customer delay the operative in any way?
- How was the job completed?
- What was the customers approach?
- Did the operative explain what they were doing?

- Observations made of engagement with others
- Was it easy to access the area/issue needing repair?
- Was it completed right first time?
- Was the customer happy?
- Was the issue tested once repaired to check problem resolved?
- If another appointment was necessary, did the operative report a further booking and inform the customer?
- Did they check if customer needed help with anything else?
- Was the customer asked to complete a satisfaction report for the job?
- Anything that could have been better for the operative/customer?

Appendix D

Questions featured in customer survey:

- Type of property lived in
- If the property was a street address or part of an estate
- When the repair was reported
- What type of trade/specialist was required?
- What the repair job was
- Whether the repair was completed in their home or in a communal area
- Where in the home or where in the communal area it was completed
- Method used to report the repair
- How easy it was to report the repair
- Whether the customer received a text reminder the day before to confirm the appointment
- Was the repair completed in the time advised? *
- Whether the date and time given for the repair was suitable for the customer*
- Did the repair team arrive within the agreed time and date to complete the repair?
- Was the repair completed right first time?
- How the customer rated the quality of the work completed*
- Whether or not the property was left clean and tidy and no materials left behind after operatives had completed the repair
- How satisfied the customer was with the repair team that attended the repair*
- Whether the repair was inspected or checked as being correct either by a visit or telephone call
- Whether the customer was kept informed if the works were not able to be completed on the first visit
- How the customer rated the overall repairs service based on their personal experience
- Did the process make the customer feel valued*
- Anything that could be done to improve the way repairs are delivered that would help the customer*

*and an opportunity to explain further detail.

Additional graphs using data from customer survey:

