



Customer Excellence Panel

Aids and Adaptations

September 2012



Report by

Hannah Fitzhenry

Customer Excellence Officer

Findings

- The Panel acknowledged that Helena are only involved with parts of the service
- Evidence from the 2011/12 survey confirmed that customers are happy with the whole of the Aids and Adaptations service. All elements of the satisfaction survey are over 80% with most being over 90%.
- Areas that could be improved are the time before works began at 85% and being told when workers would call at 89%.
- Analysis should be conducted to identify satisfaction with Helena only work
- The Panel were particularly impressed that all customers who responded to the service would recommend it to a friend, although not just relating to Helena it still means all involved in the process must be delivering their part of the service to a high standard.
- The Panel were pleased with the elements relating to members of staff within the process, all respondents agreed that staff were 'polite and helpful'
- Quality of work at 93% was high and the Panel were pleased with this, in addition they were pleased with the time taken to complete works at 91%.
- On review of the website they concluded that there was very little information provided about the service and that more information is needed including a key contact and service standards.
- Based on personal experience that Panel also suggested that customers should have more control over the Adaptation taking place in their home and the specification should be accurate when work begins.
- From previous knowledge the Panel would like Helena to make use of any information and data that would be useful,
- Let adapted properties to families who can make use of them in the first instance
- Service standards are tenants focused but should be customer friendly and widely publicised
- The panel were pleased that the service is delivering good value for money.

Introduction

The Customer Excellence Panel is one of a range of Helena's initiatives that aims to enable tenants to have a greater say in the decisions and have an influence in service delivery. The Panel provides an enhanced scrutiny role across Helena which is an important function to ensure that our customers receive a high quality service which also provides good value for money.

The Panel monitors Helena's performance mainly in relation to customer related elements of service delivery. They are not a consultation group and therefore do not advise on policy and procedure but as a scrutiny group who challenge and make recommendations to improve Helena's service's based on evidence from our wider tenant base. The Panel also set targets for performance along with reviewing and setting service standards.

Listening to our customers at this level gives us another dimension to our process and ensures our services meet the needs of our customers.

The Panel has been in place since 2009 and have since carried out a range of service reviews, the work of the Panel has gained significant amount of recognition and were thrilled to be announced as one of ten scrutiny groups who were awarded as 'Co-regulatory Champions' by the TSA for their progress around scrutiny.

For more information about the Panel along with details of how they carry out their reviews and how they prioritise their work please visit the Panel's website at www.excellenceathelena.co.uk

Aims of the Aids and Adaptations Review

Specifically for this service area the Customer Excellence Panel service review aimed to:

- Review and scrutinise performance and customer feedback (including complaints)
- Review current service standards
- Agree Customer Excellence Performance Indicators
- Recommend areas of improvement and identify time bound actions
- Check that recommendations from a previous review have been implemented
- Consider if the service is providing good value for money and delivering an excellence service to tenants

Method

An overview of Aids and Adaptations performance drawing of a range of performance information was presented to the Panel. Breakout sessions were held throughout the presentation of the information to gather the Panel's feedback on current performance, throughout the sessions the Panel challenged, scrutinised and questioned performance. At the end of the review members were given an opportunity to put forward there recommendations for the service.

All feedback is structured around the Panel's set workbook which aims to ensure decisions are based on evidence from wider feedback. The workbook focuses around the following:

- What matters most to our tenants? (*Complaints, Customer Inspector Findings and Survey analysis*)
- Service Standards
- Performance Indicators
- Value for money
- Future update



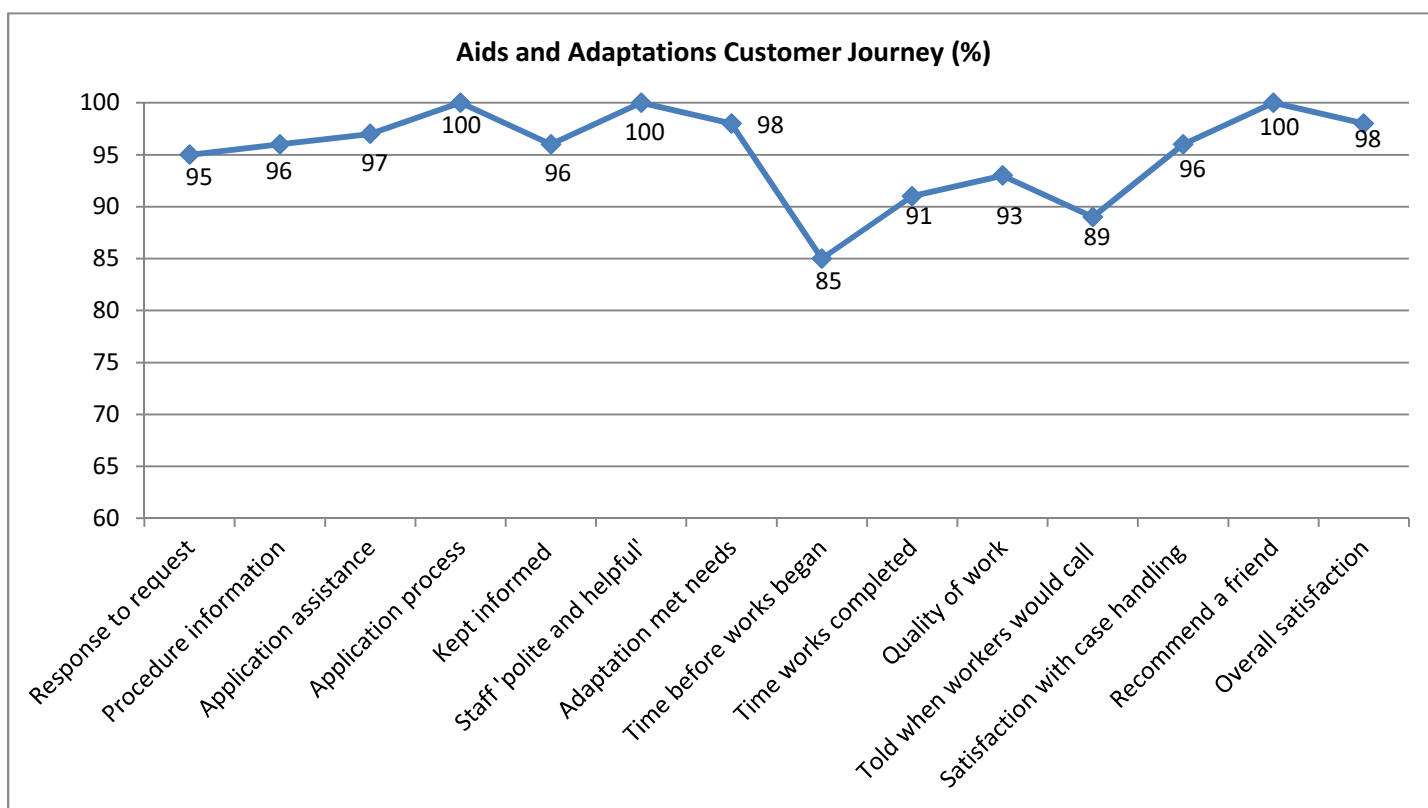
Throughout the sessions the Panel make recommendations for improvements to the service in line with improving customer satisfaction with the service. On completion of the workbook the Panel agreed an action plan with the Gill Healey who manages the service.

What matters most to tenants?

The first area the Panel considered as part of their review was 'What matters most to tenants?', this section enables the Panel to analyse all the feedback we gather from our tenants in regards to the service. Specifically the Panel reviewed feedback from the recent satisfaction survey and complaints.

During the review the Panel made use of the 2011/12 satisfaction survey results for Aids and Adaptations service. This is the most up to date survey as it takes place on an annual basis. They did however acknowledge that Helena are only involved with parts of the service mainly relating to the later elements when the Adaptation is installed into a customer's home, in addition they also acknowledged that Helena are one of the contractors which fit Adaptations in St Helens and therefore understood that the results incorporated the service that they provide.

The diagram on the below makes use of the 2011/12 satisfaction survey results it demonstrates the average journey a customer goes through when they are accessing the service.



Satisfaction

Evidence from the 2011/12 satisfaction survey confirmed that customers are happy with the whole of the Aids and Adaptations service. All satisfaction displayed is over 80% with most being over 90%. The Panel were impressed with this.

The Panel considered that the areas where satisfaction was lower were areas that could be improved, specifically this relates to time before works began at 85% and being told when workers would call at 89%.

The Panel felt that whilst Helena could impact on the element relating to being told when workers would call they did acknowledge that it may be other contractors who are not carrying out this element of the service, they therefore suggest that in future a breakdown of the survey results is conducted to identify which Adaptations were carried out by Helena to assess the level of satisfaction with this element of the service. However considering this the Panel were keen that the team involved should be reminded of the need to tell the customer before arriving at their home.

Time before works began was also lower than the other parts of the service with satisfaction at 85% whilst the panel were satisfied with this performance they felt it could be improved to demonstrate similar satisfaction to other parts of the service. The panel also acknowledged that this is not something that Helena necessarily have control over.

The Panel were particularly impressed that all customers who responded to the service would recommend it to a friend, although not just relating to Helena it was still considered that the service is performing well therefore meaning that all those involved in the process must be delivering their part of the service to a high standard.

Members of staff

The Panel were pleased with the elements relating to members of staff within the process, all respondents agreed that staff were 'polite and helpful' again meaning that all staff from the different organisations are delivering a high level of service when in contact with customers.

Elements specific to Helena

The Panel highlighted that some satisfaction elements within the survey relate to the installation of the Adaptation whilst this didn't relate entirely to Helena they did suggest it gave an indication about the level of performance.

Quality of work at 93% was high and the Panel were pleased with this, in addition they were also pleased with the time taken to complete works at 91%.

Websites

The Panel turned to Helena Extra website to find out more information about the Aids and Adaptations service provided by Helena. On review of the website they concluded that there was very little information provided about the service. The Panel recommended that more information needs to be provided to customers who want to make use of the service it was recommended that details of the process, who can be contacted along with details for customers who will be using Helena for as their contractor should be included on the website.

The Panel also suggested that Helena's related service standards should be provided on the website for customers to access.

Additional Panel comments

During this review the Panel did make some additional comments not based on evidence but on their personal experience of the service. It was discovered during the review that a number of members had experience of the Aids and Adaptations service. Whilst this can be taken as evidence it is worth noting that it is based on a small number of personal experiences which limits its validity. It is suggested that as the service manager for the service you would like to commission further research on this area before any action is undertaken.

It was suggested by those who had experience of the service that customers should have more control over the Adaptation taking place in their home. They highlighted that some customers were able to incorporate their own tiles into their bathroom adaptations whilst some had to stick with the set white tiles provided by the contractor.

In addition they noted that the time between the specification for the adaptation taking place and the works being carried out can sometimes mean the initial specification is no longer accurate. For example they detailed that a customer's health may deteriorate and therefore they may need slightly different adaptations to the initial specification. This led them to suggest that a personal approach should be adopted to meet each customer's needs.

The Panel have developed their knowledge of Helena as a whole since they began in 2009. They were aware that Helena obtain large amounts of data and information on their customers via a range of different methods and through different members of staff and services. They suggested that this information should be used intelligently and if possible should highlight customers who may require an adaptation in their home. If of a benefit they recommended that this should be implemented straight into the customer's home.

It was suggested by the Panel to ensure adaptations especially those that are costly are effectively used when incorporated into a Helena property that they should be let to another family who would need such Adaptations in their home. This would reduce the cost of refitting any adaptations or the removal of them which can be quite costly. They did however highlight that this would need to be conducted on a case by case basis.

Additional research

Whilst the Panel did not request any additional research to be carried out they did however suggest that further analysis be completed on the on-going satisfaction survey. The Panel requested that a breakdown be regularly completed on the adaptations that Helena carry out to identify if they are high or lower than the overall satisfaction levels.

Service standards



On consideration of the presented evidence the Panel reviewed the service's set of standards, which are ultimately the promises to Helena customers. The Panel were generally happy that the service standards for the service were along the right lines in regards to 'what matters most to tenants?' – the Panel agreed evidence from the survey supported this.

Although making no changes to the actual service standards the Panel did highlight they could be clearer for tenants to understand. They recommended that the service standards in relation to what Helena must do be written in a customer friendly format and communicated and publicised appropriately.

It was suggested by the Panel (*based on personal experience as highlighted*) that more flexibility should be available for example if the customer wants a more expensive tile then they should be able to pay an additional cost for this.

Performance Indicators



The Panel recognised the importance of measuring quantitative information to evidence compliance with set service standard and performance indicators. They have their own suite of measures which they can use to identify Customer Excellence, these measures are analysed on a quarterly basis.

Occasionally adaptations take too long, the panel were keen to acknowledge that performance was not something Helena always has control over as it is a service that is predominantly with St Helens Council. Performance around contractors will be impacted by the fact that works are not just carried out by Helena Propertycare.

From consideration of the time breakdowns the Panel suggested that on occasion time length can be very long. Considering adaptations are generally for vulnerable people they should be acted upon as quickly as possible.

The Panel considered what performance measures they would like to monitor on a quarterly basis from the Aids and Adaptations service. They would like to continue monitoring,

- Overall satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Although they do not wish to continue monitoring it they have requested that Helena monitor the performance of works conducted by Helena contractors in relation to if they call at a customer's home along with how long it takes to complete the work and the quality of works.

Value for money

The panel were pleased that the service is delivering good value for money. Since 2002 Helena has paid £546,000 per year to cover adaptation costs provide by St Helens Council. In 2011/12 £1.2m worth of adaptations were undertaken on Helena properties, of which Propertycare won £45,000. It was considered that the service gained a fair amount of the cost back and was therefore able to continue with the service.

Recommendations

In order to ensure continuous improvements are being demonstrated and the service is continuing to listen to its customers and act on feedback the Panel have made the following recommendations:

- Operatives should be reminded of the need to contact a customer before they visit their home to complete an adaptation to their home
- Monitor just how Helena are performing in relation to when workers would call, time before works begins and time take to complete a repair (a different contractor may be impacting on performance)
- More information of the service provided should be detailed on Helena websites (including how it differs from the responsive repairs service)
- Helena should have the discretion to just carry out some simple and straight forward Adaptations to tenants homes straight away using their existing knowledge of customers
- When looking to re-let, someone suitable for the empty property get priority before removing adaptations to let as a general needs home
- To ensure the best value for money equipment should be recycled where possible which should be considered when something is fitted
- The service should develop a clear set of service standards for Helena's elements these should be customer friendly and easy to understand. The standards should be available on Helena websites for customers to view.

Although the panel acknowledge that Helena do not have control over some elements and therefore changes to the service may not be possible they did however suggest the following recommendations:

- Specification for the adaptation needs to be accurate when fitted, this needs to be checked before fitting as circumstances can change between the specification being developed and the adaptation being implemented.
(Based on personal experiences)
- Contractors have varying flexibility, for example some will use only the specified tiles whilst some will fit what the customers wants *(Based on personal experiences)*

Next steps

An action plan has been developed in response to the panel's recommendations, service managers have agreed set actions along with key dates for their implementation. (See following pages)

Outcomes of the review have been shared with all key senior members of staff and along with promotion on the Intranet to ensure all members of staff are aware. In addition details of the report can be found on the Customer Excellence Website (www.excellenceathelena.co.uk).

Action Plan