



# **Right First Time- Repairs**

**Initial Findings - December 2013**

**Updates & Recommendations - March 2014**

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**Recommendations Updated March 2014**

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## **1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The members of the **ETHOS** who took part in the initial scrutiny project

- **Peter Browne:** North Liverpool
- **Beth Edwards:** Runcorn
- **Margaret Guppy:** South Liverpool
- **Ian Leybourne:** North Liverpool
- **Joyce Lyle:** South Liverpool
- **Mary MacAndrew:** North Liverpool
- **John Williams:** North Liverpool
- **Wociecz Grajewski:** North Liverpool

**ETHOS would like to thank** the staff who took part in interviews and provided information during the course of the project. These included:

- **Customer Service Centre:** Amanda Le Noble, Ben Tyrer, Jan Conroy, Lali Kelly, Claire Hughes, Karen Edmonds & Barbara Martin
- **Business Intelligence:** Sam Smith & Jolene Dunlope
- **Property Services:** Mike O'Dwyer & Neil Devaney

**The initial scrutiny project was facilitated & supported by**

**Jo Phillips, Debbie Despres & Steven Sahota** from the Resident Involvement Team

## **2. PURPOSE**

- The purpose of this report is to present the initial findings of ETHOS scrutiny of the Right First Time repairs service
- A separate survey of customer's experience of the Right First Time service has also been completed. A summary of these results is available as an appendix to this report.
- A combined set of recommendations has been drafted as a result of phase one and two of this scrutiny project

## **3. FRAMEWORK:**

The Initial scrutiny of the Right First Time Repairs Service entailed an overview of current service delivery, performance and customer feedback to explore what currently worked well, identify where improvements could be made and recommend actions to implement these changes.

- **Stage One: Fact Finding:**

ETHOS considered the following information:

1. Draft Symphony Right First Time indicator definition
2. LHT Customer Service Standards 2010
3. Contractor Commitments
4. Self-Assessment against HCA standards (Repairs & Maintenance) 2012 & 2013
5. KPI Information Quarter 4 2012-13 results
6. New Quarterly performance report for AMP
7. Repairs tenant focus group October 2012
8. 2011 STAR Survey- Repairs and Maintenance Snapshot
9. Hosemark Benchmarking Information- Response Repairs Snapshot 2011-2012
10. Contractor Handbook- Measuring Up
11. AMP Project Presentation
12. Response Repairs Policy

The policy & performance data (as detailed above) was presented by Sam Smith from the Business Intelligence Team.

An **initial presentation & overview of Right First Time Repairs** was delivered by Service Managers from the following departments

- **Property Services:** Mike O'Dwyer & Neil Devaney
- **Customer Service Centre:** Amanda Le Noble

In addition to the standard data set managed by the Business Intelligence Team further performance and satisfaction information was requested from the two service teams. This included the following data for the period 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 & 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013.

- Repairs completed Right First Time (incl reason for fails)
- Repair Satisfaction Survey Questions, Figures & Orchard generated reports

- **Stage Two: Compare & Challenge:**

Initial scoping of the project resulted in the identification of 3 Key Areas of Focus:

- **Focus One :** Approach to customer service and access
- **Focus Two:** Right First Time definitions and reporting process
- **Focus Three:** Tenant feedback and satisfaction

A number of key scrutiny activities were then selected to facilitate further exploration of the RFT service. The activities chosen were:

1. Observation visit to Customer Service Centre
2. Overview of RFT Recording Process & Interview with Service Manager & Project Accountant
3. Desktop Analysis of current customer satisfaction collection and data reporting

- **Stage Three: Findings**

Whilst a number of initial findings emerged within the course of the scrutiny, ETHOS were unable to consider or correlate any specific customer feedback against itemised repairs raised due to restrictions and limitations to the current reporting process and utilisation of repairs survey responses.(See section 4.3)

ETHOS therefore felt strongly that more detailed, qualitative customer experience and feedback was required in order to make final recommendations in relation to Right First Time process and specifically tenant satisfaction.

Mindful of the timescale and commitments of ETHOS to complete an agreed annual scrutiny programme, it was agreed that the Right First Time Project would be completed in two phases: with the second being undertaken by a small number of the panel. This has allowed the next ETHOS project of "Communications" to commence in parallel and without delay.

This report therefore outlines the initial findings; success and issues phase one has revealed. The results of the more detailed customer experiences is outlined as an

appendix to this report. Both sets of findings and a combined set of recommendations will be presented to Board.

## **4. INITIAL FINDINGS:**

### **4.1 Focus One: Access to Repairs and Customer Service**

Shadowing of the report logging process for tenant's repairs was completed by four members of the ETHOS panel during a visit to the Customer Service Centre. Each panel member was given the opportunity to sit alongside a Customer Service Officer to listen in to repairs calls and observe the process by which information was extracted and recorded on the Orchard Repairs Module.

Whilst the session only provided limited time to witness calls, those who participated in the session were impressed with the obvious commitment to customer service by both Repairs and CSC teams to ensure high standards are maintained through structured and well organised systems and procedures.

In particular ETHOS commended:

- Staff appeared to be well trained, knowledgeable and professional
- Clear process of monitoring the quality of calls, service and information provided to tenants
- Impressive communications and sharing of information between CSC and Repairs Teams: including Keeping In Touch Meetings and regular liaison with Contractors. This included attendance of a tenant representative from the AMPanel.
- Staff well supported in completing repairs by the Diagnostic Tools available to them on the system which they utilise when accurately raising jobs. Evidence of good relationships and support with area surveyors in order to resolve issues and customer queries.

As detailed analysis of the long standing repairs satisfaction survey is not available or undertaken by LHT which ETHOS found surprising and disappointing. (This is explored in more detail in section 4.3) It is the intention of ETHOS to utilise their own Tenant Audit/ Customer Journey Mapping exercise to test the extent to which the processes and relationships highlighted in their visit to the CSC indeed support a positive experience of the service for customers.

The nature of the repairs reporting process means that a tenant may come into contact with various staff and contractors in the process of reporting and receiving a repair. Anecdotally ETHOS feel that feedback from tenants often reveals that while overall satisfaction may be good there can often be parts of the process, (written communication, cleaning up after a repair) that may be less positive. ETHOS are therefore keen to explore directly with tenants if their experience of the whole

process reveals any specific trends or issues which could offer learning opportunities and improvements.

Some specific areas of focus include variations between Districts, Repairs Types and reporting access routes i.e. CSC, Online Diagnostic, Local Office) have an impact on the attainment of a “Right First Time” Repair.

## **4.2 Focus Two: RFT Definitions & Performance Figures**

### **4.2.1 Performance**

LHT demonstrates a clear and effective commitment to completing repairs which are right first time (as required by HCA Home Standard). Information provided by the Repairs Managers and Project Accountant in two meetings during the initial scrutiny phase, demonstrated a comprehensive performance management system to record and report on RFT Repairs.

Measured on a monthly basis, impressive top quartile results (98% in May 2013) are regularly achieved when benchmarked against other Housemark contributors.

In particular ETHOS were impressed with the following service provisions and developments to support RFT:

- Established set of Contractor Commitments with mechanisms in place to monitor and raise any issues (via monthly Contractor Meetings)
- Ensuring Contractors have adequate van stock or WOW (Warehouse on Wheels) Vans to ensure where possible broken parts can be replaced on the first visit.

### **4.2.2 Definition**

The definition of Right First Time adopted by LHT measures

“Number of Repairs completed Right First Time as a % of the total number of repairs completed”

At the outset of the project, ETHOS members expressed concern that “tenant satisfaction” is not being used as part of the calculation (but reported on as a separate internal indicator).

A benchmarking exercise with other neighbouring organisations including:

- Contour Homes
- Your Housing Group
- Great Places
- Regenda

- Guinness Northern Counties

revealed evidence that RFT definitions continue to be extensively debated/ discussed within the housing sector. Your Housing Group for example have re-defined their PI as “Right First Fix” in acknowledgement that their calculation does not refer specifically to a measure of tenant satisfaction within the process. Overall however the majority of organisations continue to use a similar methodology which does not utilise Tenant Satisfaction figures in its calculations.

While ETHOS acknowledge that LHT have adopted the same approach as their benchmarking peers, they remain concerned of the risks in this methodology in overlooking/ neglecting the experiences of tenants which could result in “disguising” genuine issues and problems tenants are experiencing with the repairs service.

In this context therefore ETHOS were keen to explore how commitments to and use of qualitative data about tenants satisfaction and feedback is utilised by LHT: specifically by both Property Services teams but also other teams/ partners that support the repairs process such as repairs service for example the CSC and Contractors. These initial findings are outlined in the section to follow.

### **4.3 Focus Three: Tenant Feedback and Satisfaction**

#### **4.3.1 Collection Methods & Reporting**

LHT currently use three different methods to collect Repair Satisfaction information from tenants: phone, postal and text surveys dependent upon the priority category of the repair. Paper surveys are generated and issued to tenants along with electronic repair appointment letters, whilst emergency jobs are followed up by a telephone survey. Both processes are managed by the CSC who record returned responses against the repair job number. Once inputted the data is then reported upon by the Property Services Team.

The survey questions remain the same for both postal and telephone methods- with 13 questions in total being asked of tenants; however ETHOS were concerned to discover only ONE question “Were you satisfied with your repair” is reported on formally by Property Services for their recording of Repairs Satisfaction. The remainder of the data collected is provided to contractors but doesn’t appear to be regularly used in-house by either the repairs or CSC teams. Specific issues and findings highlighted with the current system incl:

#### **4.3.2 Ineffective analysis and use of feedback:**

Reports on the other 12 survey questions can be run from Orchard but analysis appears to be difficult and ETHOS were advised that responses cannot be drilled down (by address level for example) meaning that any meaningful and comparative



checking of tenants feedback directly against the RFT figures (which are available at address level) cannot be completed.

It is therefore unclear how service areas utilise this information effectively.

As analysis is limited, there does not appear to be a mechanism by which common trends or issues in terms of customer's experience of the service are tracked and improved upon.

#### **4.3.3 Communication with and monitoring of Contractors performance:**

ETHOS felt it was really positive that a clear and consistent process of sharing findings of tenant surveys with Contractors is in place. Contractors are given the original paper copies of the surveys through which to identify any service issues or problems with individual operatives and these are discussed at Contractor/ LHT liaison meetings.

Concern was raised however that the handing over information in paper form only, without production of a report or formal recording of the issues raised could result in missed opportunities to track learning outcomes and changes required to services. Moreover, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness ETHOS felt that reliance on paper format was very "old fashioned" and concerned that original records were not retained by the organisation.

#### **4.3.4 Value for Money & Efficiency**

Overall ETHOS were disappointed that valuable feedback from tenants isn't fully and effectively utilised. There are clear issues relating to value for money and efficiency incl:

- Postage Costs
- Officers Time including Data Inputting & Telephone Surveys  
*E.g. Phone calls take up a lot of time- 4 minutes per survey (9.5) hours in the one reporting period (Figs taken from report to AMP June 2013)*
- Expensive Prize Draws

Importantly the current approach was felt to be "wasting tenants time" and staff resources to request and collect so much survey information for only one question to be used regularly in performance monitoring.

There are also current issues with Text Surveys which are not reported on due to technical difficulties. In spite of this tenants are continuing to receive and respond to texts and this will often be a duplicate request alongside a paper form. Whilst ETHOS clearly acknowledge this issue goes beyond the control of Property Services they feel strongly that an appropriate decision should be taken by the Organisation as a whole to stop these services until the issues can be resolved.

#### **4.3.5 Satisfaction Figures and Return Rates**

As outlined earlier “Satisfaction with a Repair” is reported upon by Property Services on a monthly basis as part of their performance indicator set. Very positively customer satisfaction figures remain consistent across all Districts with an average of 96.3% attained in Quarter 4 of 2012-2013 ensuring that LHT remains within the upper quartile against a target of 97.5%. *(KPI Report)*

In addition ETHOS commend the use of these figures being integrated together with complaints information within the well-established Contractor Performance League Table operated by the Property Service Team

ETHOS do however have some concerns about the calculation of this indicator as outlined below:

- When satisfaction figures are considered within the context of volume of complaints about repairs and other repair satisfaction figures (produced for example with STAR returns) which on average produce much lower satisfaction figures- Overall Satisfaction with Repairs 86% (STAR 2011) there appears to be a significant gap in experience?
- The sample and response rate for the current Repairs Satisfaction varies depending on the survey method used. Telephone surveys are used for P1 and P6 category repairs with a target of 33% return (or 1 in 3 tenants) with three contact attempts being made for each repair. A postal survey is automatically generated when a Priority 2 & 3 repair is raised and this is sent directly to the tenant along with their appointment letter. Between November & February 2013 for example only 7.7% of postal surveys were returned by tenants and 20% of attempted telephone contacts were answered enabling a survey to be completed *(Figs provided to AMP June 2013)* ETHOS do however acknowledge that this issue has been identified by teams who are seeking to use technology to improve the number of returns.
- An assumption is made that tenants who do not return satisfaction forms are satisfied with their repair- however given the low response rates achieved the final high satisfaction figures could arguably be misleading and disguising some real issues. For example tenants unhappy with service provided may use the complaints system to log their dissatisfaction- however there is no cross referencing/ utilisation of complaints data in the current calculation of figures.

#### **4.3.6 Pilot Satisfaction Collection-via Contractor PDA's**

ETHOS acknowledge that the Property Service & Business Intelligence Teams have already identified some of the issues and have developed a joint pilot project with the

intention of trying to resolve and overcome some of these problems. Whilst initially piloting the use of a text messaging survey- given the technical issues (already referenced) an alternative technology pilot was proposed. The new initiative to collect repair satisfaction data directly from tenants by the Contractor using PDA's is currently being developed in the North District and is expected to commence in early 2014. ETHOS feel this is a positive approach from the service teams to try and overcome issues and were pleased that the project has been introduced in consultation with the Asset Management Panel- demonstrating Property Services strong and clear commitment to tenant involvement.

The outcome of the pilot and decision of whether its full adoption will replace the existing Satisfaction Collection Methods has clearly already been designated as that of the Asset Management Panel. ETHOS are keen to support this and ensure they avoid making any recommendations which duplicate or challenge this. The findings of ETHOS's Customer Journey Mapping/ Audit may however provide some useful insight and evidence which could feed into the review of the scope of current repairs satisfaction collection and the panel will therefore be requesting that the PDA project considers its final report and findings as part of their overall review.

## **5 Phase Two- Customers Experience:**

### **5.1 Customer Experiences**

The feedback on the Right First Time Service provided to ETHOS by participants in the customer experience survey are attached as appendix one of this document.

### **5.2 Collation of findings from Phase One & Two**

The results and findings of both phase one and two have been collated to develop a short set of recommendations in relation to the Right First Time Service.

### **5.3 Presentation to Board by ETHOS**

The final Report and Action Plan will be presented to Board by members of the ETHOS Panel. An election for the Chair & Vice Chair of ETHOS was completed in late February 2014 with Ian Leybourne elected Chair & Peter Browne to the Vice Chair Role. It is anticipated that the presentation of the final report will also be the first opportunity for the newly elected representatives to meet with the Board.

## **6 Comments/ Response from Service Manager and Director:**

We would like to thank the Ethos team for their hard working completing this report. Achieving high levels of customer experience is at the heart of what we want to achieve and the findings of this report will be used to continue to this area of work.

We acknowledge the findings of the report and support the additional exercise to enable a further understanding of right first time performance.

We would like to acknowledge the following;

- Ref 4.1 Access to Repairs & Customer Service
  - *There are a range of ways Property Services seek to understand the level of performance which include the tenant star survey, complaints data etc. We are also now integrating CRM data within our overall approach to ensuring we deliver a positive customer experience.*
  
- Ref to 4.2.2 Definitions
  - *Best practice states that housing organisations need to discuss and agree RFT definitions with their customers. LHT have undertaken this with the AMPanel who agreed the current definition.*
  
- Ref to 4.3.1 Collection Methods & Reporting
  - *There is currently a process of change in relation to customer feedback for the repairs service. Whilst there is a current move towards one question based surveys by Text or PDA- If a customer is not satisfied it is proposed they would be further to ask a range of other satisfaction questions.*
  
- Ref to 4.3.5 Satisfaction Figures and Return Rates
  - *There are differences in the surveys. This may be explained as the STAR survey involves assessing satisfaction with the overall repair service. Repairs satisfaction seeks to understand the level of performance relating to a repair that has completed. However we do acknowledge the difference and use this*

## **7 Comments/ Approval Exec Team:**

We would like to thank all the members of Ethos for their work in completing this report.

It is vital we deliver an excellent customer experience to our tenants and we will ensure we respond to the findings and make every effort ensure we deliver the highest level of service we can.

8 Comments from LHT Board:

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank ETHOS for this report on Right First Time. The Board are aware that ETHOS has had a few changes in membership during this project and despite those changes the panel have tried to deliver an informative report that helps us understand the customer experience of our repairs service. Right First Time is in itself, something that the sector cannot reach agreement on and it was therefore an ambitious undertaking.

We want ETHOS to know that both the Board and the Executive team want to support ETHOS to be successful and the challenge is to stay focused on the remit of each scrutiny project and to highlight the customer's experience of our service and to provide us with some challenging feedback or to recognise good service as evidenced. By achieving this challenge then ETHOS will add real value to our business.

Clare Nelson  
Chair of LHT

## Right First Time- COMBINED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE ONE & TWO.

Ethos Scrutiny Report: Right First Time (March 2014)						
ACTION PLAN.						
	Recommendation	LHT Response/ ETHOS response	Action	Who	When	Status
<b>1</b>	<p>(Whilst still in use) Explore alternative options for more effective reporting of Repairs Satisfaction Survey Results.</p> <p>(Current reporting facility on Orchard is very limited- could alternative system be used?)</p>	<p>A pilot approach using PDA's to assess customer satisfaction is currently in progress. Alongside this there is a project being led by our Business Intelligence team which will incorporate a broader review of customer satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>As part of the evaluation process decisions will be taken about long term approach.</p>	<p>The pilot currently underway in the north area only will end in July with an evaluation and recommendation made to the Asset Management Panel (AMP)</p>	<p>Jolene Dunlop/ Michael O'Dwyer/ Amanda Le Noble</p>	<p>August 2014</p>	
<b>2</b>	<p>Maintain electronic record of issues with individual Contractors to assist in monitoring issues.</p> <p>(Currently paper forms are issued without taking copies)</p>	<p>All postal returned satisfaction forms are entered into our management system by our CSC. Emergency repairs that do not receive satisfaction forms are contacted by telephone (1 in 3). The bi monthly performance meeting with contractors focuses on responses that include unsatisfactory works. The paper copies are handed to the contractors at performance meetings to use at their own internal performance meetings.</p> <p>As above we are looking to change our performance collection via PDA's subject to analysis at the end of the trial period and Asset Management Panel (AMP) approval.</p>	<p>Property Services will obtain the data collected and provide to look for trends that maybe affecting performance. The focus will be on survey data that has come back as unsatisfactory and the contractors will be given an action plan to improve their performance against defined targets</p>	<p>Kathey Jones/ Michael O'Dwyer</p>	<p>May 2014</p>	

			<p>agreed at bi monthly meetings</p> <p>The paper survey will no longer be passed to contractors.</p>			
<b>3</b>	Cease sending of text message surveys until such time “technology” issues for reporting feedback are resolved	There are currently a number of methods that LHT use to collect satisfaction information. Text messaging has been suspended while the the PDA pilot is ongoing and a decision on the future of texting will be made after the evaluation.	LHT will agree a single method to collect satisfaction information for response repairs when the pilot has been evaluated.	Michael O’Dwyer/A manda Le Noble/ Jolene Dunlop	September 2014	
<b>4</b>	Customer Journey Mapping Exercise to be programmed into 2014-2015 Resident Involvement Work Programme	Agreed – A further Customer journey mapping exercise will be incorporated into the plan for 2014/15	Commission Resident Involvement team to undertake the exercise and incorporate into 2014/15 Plan	RI Team/ Michael O’Dwyer	July 2014	
<b>5</b>	Request for Update on Pilot PDA Project to be provided to ETHOS at 6 monthly review. For Info Only	Agreed – a summary report will be provided to ETHOS outlining progress of the PDA pilot	Ethos will be updated with results of the pilot and decision of the Asset Management Panel (AMP) following the evaluation	Jolene Dunlop/ Michael O’Dwyer	September 2014	

