

Scrutiny Panel



February 2016

Kitchen Repair Service Review Report

1. Introduction

SLH Scrutiny Panel's sixth service review covers SLH's approach to kitchen repair versus replacement. The service review was agreed by the panel due to concerns over the number of complaints relating to kitchen repairs reported as day to day repairs where tenants felt a replacement was necessary.

Between April 2015 and January 2016, 290 kitchen carpentry repairs were reported, of these 3 resulted in a replacement.

Since April 2015 SLH has had 62 formal complaints and 152 informal complaints 8 of which related to kitchen repair versus replacement. Of the 8 complaints received, 6 were informal and 2 were formal, 1 of the informal complaints received a replacement and both formal complaints resulted in a replacement. There were also 4 MP enquiries during this time, all relating to the same home, these enquiries did not result in a replacement but the home did receive additional kitchen works as an outcome of 3 of the 4 enquiries.

The panel set aims at the start of the review which were to support SLH to achieve:

- Reduce the number of complaints about kitchen repairs being offered instead of replacement, in the main arising from the practice of offering best match door replacement
- A fair, transparent, consistent process which provides value for money whilst improving satisfaction for tenants, taking into account the cost of dealing with complaints and surveys and enforcement when abuse is apparent
- Customers and staff understand the new approach

This report will cover the findings and recommendations for improvement.

2. Recommendations

As a result of the review, the Scrutiny Panel have made a series of recommendations to be considered by Executive Management Team, these are detailed at the back of the report. Board is then asked to review the recommendations and Executive feedback.

3. Methodology

The review was carried out in five parts:

- Staff interviews
- Policy and procedure review
- Comparison with others
- Communication review
- Satisfaction analysis

4. Detail

4.1 The policy and procedure

The service is covered by the Repair and Maintenance Policy and Procedure which Scrutiny Panel feel is effective and similar to other organisations.

However at times the decision making process appears to vary, whilst the panel felt it was right to survey each repair or replacement request individually they were concerned that parameters of the decision making process for repair of kitchen versus replacement were not clearly documented and that this could lead to inconsistent levels of service delivery which could have cost implications as well as generating customer dissatisfaction.

Clearly any decision to repair elements of the kitchen or replace the entire kitchen must be considered in line with budgetary restraints and the timing of any planned improvements but should also bear in mind the possible future cost of repairs.

Recommendation 1: Process to be developed which clarifies to staff and customers the parameters of decision making around kitchen repairs with value for money in mind.

4.2 Satisfaction analysis

As part of this review we wanted to understand the customer profile of those who were satisfied with their kitchen repair and how their circumstances differed from those who were dissatisfied. We analysed 220 customer satisfaction surveys for kitchen repairs over the last 5 years, the key findings were as follows:

- 45% of customers who were dissatisfied with kitchen repairs are in arrears. It should be noted however that arrears are not taken into consideration when deciding on whether to repair or replace a kitchen. Unlike other forms of investment like fencing the requirement to meet the decent homes standard takes precedence.
- Customers who have raised kitchen repairs report almost double (22) the average number of total repairs (12) over a five year period
- Tenants who are dissatisfied tend to be newer tenants who have been in their homes for a shorter amount of time Scrutiny Panel felt this was useful information which linked well with their findings around the handover process for new tenants and the information provided around kitchens and tenants responsibilities.

4.3 Learning from others

As well as looking at SLH's policy and procedures the panel looked at how SLH's service delivery compared with other local housing providers including:

- Plus Dane
- Liverpool Housing Trust Mutual
- Liverpool Mutual Homes
- Magenta Living
- Knowsley Housing Trust

From the review it was clear that SLH's policy is very similar to other providers.

The panel considered the private rented sector and their response to kitchen replacement requests ahead of planned improvement.

The panel found that the private sector is very clear about the condition of each aspect of the home they let at handover whilst SLH's current documentation is lacking in room by room detail. The private sector will also recoup any losses due to excessive wear and tear through a bond, taken and held in trust at sign up.

The panel viewed and welcomed the new documentation recently proposed for use by officers as part of the handover process as it sought to improve record keeping and clarity but believe this could be improved further and used during later home inspections to determine any future tenant damage.

Recommendation 2: Consider the introduction of a bond (usually four to six weeks rent in the private sector) as a requirement for all new

tenancies in addition to a month's rent in advance before handover takes place.

Recommendation 3: Amend new handover documentation to include dates of original installation of kitchens, windows, doors, bathrooms and likely dates for replacement and consider photographic evidence of the home upon handover paying particular attention to these areas.

Recommendation 4: Consider using the handover document as the basis of home inspections both during starter tenancy and subsequent regular inspection visits with any tenant damage costs offset against the bond upon termination.

4.4 Communication with tenants about planned improvements

The panel looked at the website, Bulletin and letters to tenants. Whilst the panel appreciated that kitchen improvements are managed differently to other services like fencing it was felt that communication to tenants on the timing of improvements planned for their home could be improved.

Recommendation 5: Consider reintroducing website planned improvement page to enable tenants to look up when their kitchen improvements are likely to take place.

Recommendation 6: Introduce factsheet about our approach to kitchen repairs and replacement so that staff and customers are clear on the process.

Recommendation 7: Communicate any new process to staff and both current and prospective tenants through the website, Bulletin and in the first time tenancy workshops.

5. Conclusions

Whilst SLH has similar policies to other providers and the current practice of replacing kitchen doors with best match is not out of kilter with other local providers the Scrutiny Panel feel that satisfaction and value for money could be improved.

We feel that our aim can be achieved through the recommendations made. Satisfaction and value for money will improve through developing:

- A consistent and documented process to kitchen repair and replacement
- Improved understanding and recording of stock condition at handover to new tenants
- Improved understanding about the consequences of any damage

- Improved communication to both tenants and staff to ensure clarity and fairness of process

Report compiled by:

SLH Scrutiny Panel

Number	Recommendation	EMT response	Status	Action to be completed by	Delivered by
1	Process to be developed which clarifies to staff and customers the parameters of decision making around kitchen repairs with value for money in mind	The Property Services Manager will attend upcoming team meetings to update staff on the approach to active asset management and the decision making between replace or repair. A paragraph will also be include on the SLH Website when the 2016/17 programme works is uploaded	Ongoing	13/05/2016	Head of Assets / Property Services Manager
2	Consider the introduction of a bond as a requirement for all new tenancies in addition to a month's rent in advance before handover takes place	EMT do not believe that this would support SLH with either it's charitable aims or with letting homes to those most in need	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Amend new handover documentation to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dates of original installation of kitchens, windows, doors, bathrooms 	Works are currently in the process of amending the handover packs for empty homes and this information will be included going forward.	Ongoing	30/04/2016	Property Services Manager

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> likely dates for replacement photographic evidence of the home upon handover paying particular attention to these areas <p>The document should also be clear about the possibility of recharge against this bond for tenant damage, signed by both the SLH Officer and tenant and recorded against the house file, with a copy to the tenant</p>	Information is already included in relation to tenant recharge			
4	Consider using the handover document as the basis of home inspections both during starter tenancy and subsequent regular inspection visits with any tenant damage costs deducted from the bond	<p>This is already used by the Neighbourhood Officers when required on home visits.</p> <p>The tenant recharge process will continue to be used</p>	Complete	11/04/2016	Property Services Manager
5	Consider reintroducing the website planned	This will be updated for the 2016/17 programme of works	Ongoing	18/04/2016	Head of Assets

	improvement page to enable tenants to look up when their planned improvements are likely to take place				
6	Introduce factsheet about our approach to kitchen repairs and replacement so that staff and customers are clear on the process	This option will be reviewed later in the year once other recommended improvements have been implemented	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Communicate any new process to staff and tenants both current and prospective through the website, bulletin and in the first time tenancy workshops	Process will be communicated to both staff and tenants	Ongoing	13/05/2016	Property Services Manager