



KFTRA

Scrutiny Panel

Kirklees Federation for Tenants and Residents Associations

Tenant Scrutiny 7 - Handyperson service

SUMMARY REPORT

For presentation to KNH Delivery Committee 19 August 2015



The seventh investigation for KFTRA Tenant Scrutiny considered the handyperson service offered by Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing.

Terms of Reference

To scrutinise the handyperson service offered by KNH and to suggest how the service could be improved in terms of value for money, quality and usage.



The **objectives** of the task were to consider;

- The value for money associated with the handyperson service, including whether the service could provide more for less;
- The policy, procedure and processes for the handyperson service, including ways of accessing the service and maintaining quality;
- The synergies between the handyperson service and different departments including the caretakers and minor repairs service;
- Whether the scope of the handyperson service needs to be broadened;
- The communications around the handyperson service and whether improvements could be made;
- The allocation of time for tenants using the handyperson service;
- The usage of the service and whether this could be increased; and
- The tools and equipment available to the handypersons.

The Panel's investigation included;

- Interviewing KNH staff and management for more detail on the service;
- Considering the communications used by KNH;
- Exploring the database records concerning the usage of the service;
- An internet trawl to benchmark the service provided in Kirklees against other housing providers;
- Speaking to service users

The topic was identified as one which was suitable for a 'quick' investigation i.e. to be completed within five meetings and three months. This approach was piloted with this tenant scrutiny panel and the evaluation from volunteers and officers will be presented to the delivery committee for comment.

The Handyperson service

The handyperson service was developed by KNH and KFTRA in Autumn 2006. There is an emphasis on helping tenants who are not able to do small jobs for themselves, to avoid them having to buy the service in from private contractors.

The KNH handyperson service is a free scheme offered to tenants who are;

- New (within the first four weeks of their tenancy); or
- Under 19 or over 60; or
- In receipt of a disability benefit.



Tenant Scrutiny 7 – Handyperson service

New tenants have access to the service as a one-off two hour appointment to help with small jobs associated with moving in, such as fitting curtains and blinds, putting up shelving, and assembling furniture. The other two categories of tenancy are entitled to three two-hour appointments per year.

KEY FINDINGS

The Panel has prioritised its recommendations A to F and the supporting evidence for each finding is listed;

Recommendation A:

Improve the marketing of the service by;

- targeting the most vulnerable tenants i.e. severely disabled and those over the age of 80;
- ensuring better promotion at sign up/handover, particularly in North Kirklees. This could be achieved by inclusion on the sign-up checklist;
- KFTRA fieldworkers providing a template for welcome letters/cards to be used by TRAs when new tenants move into the area.

The Evidence:

- Panel members agreed that housing stock would be in a better condition if the uptake of the service was improved. Fewer properties would deteriorate in value due to poor workmanship if usage was increased.
- The panel found from talking informally to tenants that many do not know about the service. KNH officers had also recently spoken to Tenant and Resident Committees and had found a similar lack of knowledge about the handyperson service.



KFTRA

Scrutiny Panel

Tenant Scrutiny 7 – Handyman service

- There is some evidence of the service being targeted at retirement living schemes, but this may be dependent on the scheme coordinator. There has also been some promotion of the service amongst younger tenant groups. The Panel agreed that the service was in need of better targeted marketing to the most vulnerable people in the area e.g. severely disabled tenants, very elderly tenants (over 80s). This could be piloted in one area of Kirklees and then rolled out to other areas to avoid putting a strain on capacity.
- For new tenants, the leaflet is included in the information pack which is given to them at sign up. However the service is not mentioned during the hand-over process. The Panel thought that it was important for new tenants to know about the service.
- Informally, it was found that many Tenant and Resident Associations will introduce themselves to new tenants moving into the area and some will send welcome letters or cards. The Panel agreed that a welcome card template could be used to give new tenants essential information including details of the handyman service. This could be extended by KFTRA to cover areas without an active TRA.

Full report pages 17-18

Recommendation B:

Provide clarity around the handyman service for operatives and management, including;

- an agreed set of aims and objectives for the service;
- a flowchart of the process, incorporating performance management and quality standards.

The Evidence:

- Panel members were concerned that there are no clear written aims and objectives for the service and would be keen to work with officers to agree these.
- A flowchart of the service was also not available. It was felt that a flowchart or procedure document would aid consistency amongst handymen, provide clearer performance management measures and could be used for the induction of new staff.



KFTRA

Scrutiny Panel

Tenant Scrutiny 7 - Handyman service

- The standard for how long each visit should take and if this should include travelling time was muddled between managers and operatives. Written work instructions could overcome this confusion.

Full report pages 10-11

Recommendation C:

Agree a statistically significant sampling size for quality checks to be carried out by the handyman team supervisor and keep a record of these checks.

The Evidence:

- The Performance Management Framework for handypersons/caretakers focuses on whether target times for completion of work have been met, not the quality of that work.
- A random sample of work is checked for quality when time permits the supervisor to do so. This has not happened recently due to supervisor workload.
- The Panel considered that there needs to be measures in place to prove the quality of handyman work. This in turn would ensure that the service provides increased value for money and reduces the cost of re-work.
- Monitoring of the number of recalls on handypersons' work was also considered as a suitable means of monitoring the quality of the jobs completed.

Full report pages 22-23



Recommendation D:

Continue to allow the handyman to use discretion on the eligibility of customers and the amount of time spent on each job.

The Evidence:

- The handyman service is quite flexible and discretionary and visits would not be restricted in cases of genuine need. The handyman will also use their discretion and stay beyond the two hours if the work is unfinished and their diaries allowed.
- If a job can't be completed due to lack of appropriate materials by the tenant, the handyman has the discretion to arrange another date on request.
- The Panel congratulated KNH on the way in which handymen were allowed to use their discretion when visiting customers, based on need and vulnerability. This they felt was much better than being a bureaucratic system.

Full report page 16

Recommendation E:

Formalise the current arrangement of caretakers and handymen sharing their workload and re-draft promotional materials to reflect this arrangement.

The Evidence:

- The handymen are therefore not working to their full capacity.
- KNH have been trialling a joint service between caretakers and handymen where the workload for the four person team is split into geographical areas. This offers the service more efficiencies in terms of travelling time, flexibility and responsiveness.
- Panel members were keen to ensure that the current arrangement with caretakers and handymen sharing the work should be made permanent. They were adamant though that systems should ensure that caretaking work does not take priority over handyman tasks.

Full report page 19-20



Recommendation F:

Extend the period by which new tenants can access the handyperson service.

The Evidence:

- New tenants can only access the service within the first four weeks of their tenancy. This means that they need to be quite efficient in making their request to obtain the free service. Some new tenants may need more time, particularly if there are guaranteed repairs to be completed at the property before they can start making improvements to their home.
- The four week period allowed for new tenants to receive the handyperson service was thought to be inadequate (in line with Tenant Scrutiny 3 recommendation).

Full report page 14

The full report includes further detail of each recommendation and the related evidence, incorporating 'Panel Views' sections for ease of reading.

Report produced by:



rebecca.morrisonps@gmail.com

07931 471131

On behalf of:

Kirklees Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations
Campaigning to improve housing and the environment for all the community
Tel: 01484 223466 Email: general.admin@kftra.net

