

HOMES & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
18 JANUARY 2021

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS PRIORITIES

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to gain approval to adopt new responsive repairs priorities introduced temporarily in July 2020 to assist the Council with managing our service during the early days of the pandemic.
- 1.2 This change will provide a more customer focused, simplified service to our customers and result in shorter waiting times generally whilst maintain high levels of satisfaction with the service.
- 1.3 The breadth of repairs contained within the Priority 1 (P1) category has also been extended and these are highlighted in section 3.2 of the report.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 As we start to move forward working with Covid, we want to take the opportunity to look at best practice that has been used to improve services to customers over the last 9 months and incorporate them permanently into our day to day processes and procedures.
- 2.2 Previously we operated a 6 priority system set out as follows –

P1 – Emergencies – 24 hours
P2 – Urgent – 3 days
P3 – Routine – 7 days
P4 – Appointed – 20 days
P5 – Planned – 6 months
P6 – Planned – 12 months

This system was a rigid way to deliver our Responsive Repairs service and gave no opportunity to flex and to meet the fluctuating seasonal demands that often presents. It also caused a lot of confusion; for not only our customers but also our teams taking the calls and booking in the works. There was a lack of clear guidance on what repair sat within each category and was often used to move priority works into a lower category than necessary to accommodate higher priority jobs.

- 2.3 The average customer satisfaction rate during the pilot scheme was 94%. When we reviewed the comments from the surveys they were very positive with remarks such as –

“I am very satisfied with the fact that the lock was attended to and repaired on the same day as I reported it.”

“They came within about 4 - 5 hours and on the same day. It was very good.”

“The electrician attended the day following my call, and usually I have to be firmer when requesting repair work but not on this occasion.”

“I have been met with nothing but politeness and kindness with all my dealings with people in various departments of NSDC and very grateful for all they have done for us. I was very pleased that that the drain layer came out the same day within a few hours of my calling the repairs service.”

“Given the nature of the work, I was pleased with the fact that it was less than 3 weeks from my initial call to the job being undertaken and completed, as I was seriously concerned about the pathway freezing over in the winter months.”

“The repair was completed within an hour and 20 mins of me reporting it, and I was extremely satisfied with that.”

2.4 This table shows the improvement in customer satisfaction from last year. The only time this year that the satisfaction dropped significantly was in October and this is when we had over 20% of the workforce off due to isolation or testing positive with Covid.

Month	2019	2020	Better/Worse
April	94%	94%	=
May	92%	96%	
June	96%	95%	
July	93%	95%	
August	89%	94%	
September	90%	94%	
October	94%	90%	
November	90%	94%	
December	92%		
January	89%		
February	89%		
March 2020	91%		

2.5 The table below shows the increase in P1 Emergency repairs that we have completed since the pilot started in July 2020.

Month	Number of P1s 2019	Number of P1s 2020	Increase
April	151	158	7
May	141	162	21
June	132	197	65
July	183	317 (Start of pilot)	134
August	99	284	185
September	114	397	283
October	134	434	300
November	133	419	286

2.6 On the surface, extending the timescales for routine repairs from 20 days to 6 weeks looks like a reduction in service and a worse offering to our tenants. However, widening the response time allows us to schedule more effectively by completing more immediate routine repairs earlier on in the 6 week period move routine repairs than are not so urgent to later in the 6 week period. This approach goes hand in hand with training for all involved in the repairs process so that we consider the urgency of the issue and the circumstances of the tenant reporting the repair.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The proposal is for us to move to a simpler and more robust priority system:
P1 – Emergencies – 24 hours
P2 – Appointed – 6 weeks
P3 – Planned – 6 months
- 3.2 Breaking the priorities into only 3 categories allows for a clear and transparent service for those and those delivering the service. For the pilot, the following repairs were identified as an emergency:
- Smoke/heat alarms (sounding all the time)
 - No heating or hot water
 - Total loss of power
 - Damaged or unsafe power cables
 - Electrics affected by a water leak
 - Total loss of water supply
 - Uncontainable leaks (either roofing or pipework)
 - Blocked Toilet (WC)
 - Blocked main drain (overflowing)
 - Board up broken windows or doors (Also includes windows/doors that won't open)
 - Changing locks to gain entry for residential access
 - Make collapsed ceilings safe
 - Fire door repairs (if unable to use the door)
 - Dangerous chimney stacks (make safe)
 - Roof tiles hanging dangerously (remove and make safe)
 - Repair any unsafe guttering that is hanging off the property
 - Building structure unsecure
 - Repair Insecure Fencing or Gates (Not replacement)
 - Total or partial loss of Gas supply
 - Carbon monoxide alarms
 - Blocked drains
 - Bathroom and Kitchen light repair
 - Smoke alarms - intermittent sounding
 - Cooker socket repair / replace
 - Dangerous stairs / stair rail
 - Partial loss of power - socket or lighting circuit
 - Electric shower repairs (if only form of washing)
 - Communal lighting repairs (where it causes issue)
 - No hot water (Unless they have an immersion heater or shower)
 - Tap repairs (unable to use / leak / running)
 - Partial loss of water supply
 - Shower repairs (only form of washing)
 - Soil pipe leaking internally
 - Toilet not flushing
 - Repair or replace locks (Only if the property is unsafe)
- 3.3 This has allowed us to prioritise resources to attend to any emergencies that arise during the day without having to reschedule other customers' repairs and it has also allowed us to review our appointed repairs.

3.4 Finally with planned repairs forming our P3 category, this ensures we get better value for money by pooling together a number of similar job types, for example fencing repairs, external brickwork, groundworks or fascia and soffit work within one contract/programme.

3.5 Where an external contractor may be required, such as roofing or paving this allows us to tender for the works and ensure overall value for money and an improved service for our customers.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 This simplified approach to the repairs service ensures that urgent repairs can be addressed without unnecessary impact on day to day repairs that can be appointed. This provides a better service to those who may require support with booking and attending repairs as well as making the system simpler for everyone.

4.2 The impact of these changes on vulnerable tenants will be monitored and form part of an update report in six months' time.

5.0 Digital Implications

5.1 Our current system can be adjusted to reflect these new categories and will require an update into the Capita, DRS and Total Mobile systems which will have a minimum resource requirements from our dedicated Housing Systems colleagues in IT.

6.0 Financial Implications – FIN20-21/2411

6.1 The budget provision for the current year for responsive repairs service, along with planned, programmed and empty properties repair work has been agreed and approved prior to the commencement of this financial year.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 Aligns with objective to review and improve the Responsive Repairs service.

8.0 Comments from Housing Advisory Group

8.1 At the meeting on 21st December 2020, the group required further information be added to the report to explain the positive impact of the extension of the time frame and that we work flexibly to reflect individual circumstances and their impact of the urgency of a repair.

8.2 The Assistant Business Manager for Housing Maintenance & Asset Management will work with our Customer Services Team to refresh and enhance how we assess and classify repairs to account for the feedback above.

8.3 Also, the average days to complete a repair will be monitored and reported back as part of an update in six months' time on the impact of this proposal as well as monitoring the impact on vulnerable tenants.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That Homes and Communities Committee approve the proposal to move to the three priorities system
- 9.2 At the request of the HAG, that a further report will be brought to this committee in six months' time to provide an update on the impact of this service change with regard to performance, tenant satisfaction, complaints/feedback and training completed across both Customer Services and Responsive Repairs.

Reason for Recommendation(s)

This change will provide clear and concise repair definitions and improve customer satisfaction through a more efficient method of scheduling repairs. The time to tender for some works will also increase value for money across the financial year.

Background Papers

None

For further information please contact Sally Skipworth-Cooke – Assistant Business Manager, Housing Repairs and Asset Management

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