

## **Scrutiny Question: Does the out of hours caretaker service meet the proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures?**

### **1. Why we chose to scrutinise this topic**

In the Financial Year 2019/2020 SIFT members scrutinised the Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) general Caretaker Service to see if tenants are satisfied with service delivery. In that scrutiny report SIFT members recommended that, “The Rapid Response Team need to complete tasks in accordance with their job description.” The Rapid Response Team is now referred to as the 24/7 Team.

The recommendation was made because there was some evidence that not all of the tasks in Team members’ job descriptions were being carried out. Therefore SIFT members now wanted to scrutinise the 24/7 Team’s service delivery, using components of the proposed new fifth Consumer Regulatory Standard, which uses the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

The 24/7 Caretaking Service is provided to approximately 4,000 customers of YHN who live in multi-storey tower blocks. Each customer pays £15.67 per week to receive the service. As this service can make an impact on customers’ lives and living conditions, SIFT wished to explore how customers access the 24/7 service and if service delivery meets tenants’ aspirations.

### **2. Scope of the Review**

SIFT set a clear scope for the scrutiny, which is:

- To explore what activities the Team undertakes and to compare those against job descriptions
- To identify the policies and procedures in relation to caretaking 24/7
- To assess how YHN measures and monitors activity
- To recommend changes to policy and practice where required.

### **3. How we scrutinised this service area**

During this scrutiny we completed a number of activities to gather evidence, these included:

- Briefing by the lead officer
- Review of Home Standard and proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard
- A list of the schemes the 24/7 service is provided in
- Understanding the main functions of the service through exploring Team Members’ Job Description

- Looking at service performance information and service standards
- Looking at the number of Formal Complaints
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey of the service
- Focus group of tenants
- Work shadowing
- Undertaking a benchmarking exercise to see what other housing providers offer to tenants.

#### **4. Equality Impact Assessment**

SIFT members considered the nine protected characteristics contained within the Equality Act 2010 to assess if any of them would be negatively impacted by carrying out this scrutiny topic. SIFT does not consider that any internal or external groups would be negatively impacted by the scrutiny.

#### **5. Factors to consider in completing the scrutiny**

The scoping for the scrutiny was sent to the Fairer Housing Unit (FHU) on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022, for the scrutiny to start on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The FHU then passed the scoping to the lead officer and asked for comments on it. No comments were passed back to SIFT members, who then made the assumption that the lead officer felt that the scoping was appropriate and that they were familiar with the tasks they had to carry out.

In order to improve how the scoping is delivered in future it is recommended that once the lead officer receives the document they should formally contact SIFT's Chair to acknowledge receipt of it, agree any changes which should be made and discuss their role in carrying out the tasks listed in it.

#### **6. Briefing by Claire Lyddon, YHN Operations Manager**

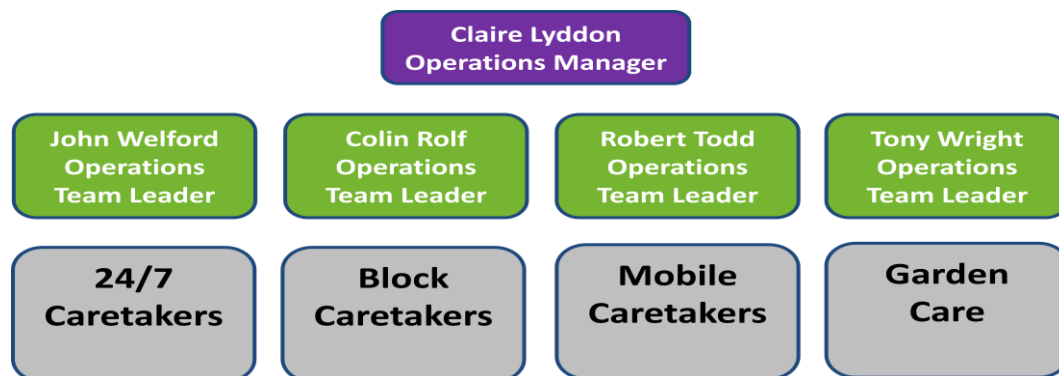
Claire Lyddon is the Operations' Manager who heads up the Caretaking Service. Claire gave SIFT members a briefing on the 24/7 Caretaking Team. As a starting point Claire explained that she has not been involved with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and that therefore it was currently difficult to link them to the 24/7 Service. She went on to explain that YHN have not rolled the TSM out yet and the responsibility for the roll out was with the Engagement Manager, Emily Sinclair and the Communications Team, nevertheless Claire said that she had a slide which identified potential TSM to link to the scrutiny.

Claire then gave information to introduce the Service. In May 2019 the Concierge Service was replaced with the Caretaking Service, after tenant consultation. The service is provided to 44 blocks of flats throughout the City, with 4,000 customers each paying a weekly service charge of £15.67, the service charge is pooled across the City. The Team consists of 50 Caretakers, who take ownership for ensuring the blocks are kept clean and tidy.

All tenants are provided with a leaflet with a picture of their individual Caretaker on it and with contact details (mobile phone number) so that they can access the Caretaker Service. There are 30 block-based Caretakers, eight Mobile Caretakers and 12 24/7 Team members.

The 24/7 Team work 365 days a year on a basis of three staff on duty at any one time on two shifts: 7.00am to 7.00pm and then the relief Team work from 7.00pm until 7.00am, they can be contacted by the intercoms in the blocks, which then transfer to the Contact Centre. The shift pattern is three days on then three days off, and when they come back to work they go on to nights. The only time that there is not three staff on duty is if there is someone taking Annual Leave or is on Sick Leave. If there are only two staff on they are doubled up in case there is any problem, for example anti-social behaviour. A lot of the work that comes through from the intercoms is handled by the Contact Centre staff – it is the staff members’ decision to pass on that information.

Claire then went on to explain the structure of the Team, see below.



The type of work the 24/7 Team carries out can include dealing with noise complaints, helping the emergency services accessing the blocks, repairs to broken glass, removal and signposting of rough sleepers, meter readings, health and safety, etc. All of these activities are included in the Caretakers’ Job Descriptions.

Claire then talked through the activities which the Team may encounter on a typical night shift. She picked a random day (12<sup>th</sup> April 2022) to illustrate what may occur. Activities included:

- Checking on a smoke alarm going off in Hunter House
- Checking on an intruder alarm in Melbourne Court
- Molineux court sprinkler system seems to have gone off but with no alarms or flashing lights just excess water leading from the bin shutter
- Removing children (who should not be there) from the ground floor of Proctor Court.

Claire explained that the Caretaker Service does not monitor performance in the normal statistical way but looks at the outcomes, the relationships and feedback from tenants.

On average, per week the Team carry out:

- 300 initial block inspections
- Around 250 water outlets are reported on to ensure compliance with water hygiene guidance
- 44 weekly smoke alarm tests
- 132 additional touch points cleaned per week during the pandemic preventing possible transmission of COVID-19.

Claire then opened the discussion for questions.

A question was asked about why used bin bags are just left overnight in the blocks, sometimes from Friday night until Monday morning. Claire explained that she had tackled this on a number of occasions so if it keeps happening she will take further action.

A SIFT member asked why paramedics did not remove biohazards after incidents in the blocks so Claire explained that the Caretaking staff are trained to remove biohazards.

A discussion took place about the relationship between the Caretaking staff and Housing Management staff: there was an expectation that the Housing staff would take action if the Caretaking staff passed on any concerns. A SIFT member stated that when the Caretakers passed on information to the Housing staff quite often no action was taken and the Caretakers did not get any feedback: there is a lack of communication.

A SIFT member asked about staff turnover: Claire explained that the Team was very stable and very few vacancies occurred. Many Caretakers were very popular with the block tenants: petitions were received from tenants when the service changed, stating that they wanted to keep the specific Concierge as their Caretaker after the changeover.

A SIFT member asked about value for money for the weekly fee and stated that it is not very clear how the money is used and the standard of service for the money is not very good. They asked how the service standards were established. They also stated that commercial cleaners used to deep clean communal parts of the block every one or two years, but that this has now ceased. Finally they asked about replacing staff if they were on long-term Sick Leave – how they were replaced.

Claire explained that she had never heard of any pressure washing taking place, but that she would look into it and report back. Again, window cleaning was not part of the Caretaking Service Charge, but she would look into how the windows were cleaned. (Claire subsequently did report back.) She went on to explain that relief cover provision is not of the normal standard of service provided by the usual Caretaker, it is light touch. What has been agreed is that if the usual Caretaker is taking more than a week of Annual Leave someone else would be put in place. If it was more than two weeks then Claire would put a temporary Caretaker in place to cover.

Claire then addressed the question about the service standard and explained that YHN do not currently have a Corporate satisfaction measure in place for the Caretaking Service, it has been on hold for a while. So the only measure she has at the moment is the feedback she gets from tenants when she investigates issues raised by tenants. She gets more informal complaints from tenants rather than formal, but she can rectify the informal complaints very quickly by taking appropriate action. She tries to establish a relationship with at least one tenant in each block so that she can get regular feedback.

Claire ended by explaining that the Caretaking Team deal with the block and issues within the physical building: Housing Management deal with tenancy related issues. She stated that her Team take a lot of 'heat' for issues which should be dealt with by Housing staff. There is currently a review taking place about the staffing structure and maybe that will deal with the disjointedness.

The Independent Tenant Advisor to SIFT asked Claire if regular liaison meetings between the Caretaking Lead and Housing Management staff took place to jointly solve any communication issues. Claire stated that the relationship is currently disjointed – probably because of Covid and meetings did not take place.

## **7. Review of Home Standard and proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures**

The Regulatory Home Standard includes required outcomes with regard to the quality of accommodation and repairs and maintenance. The 24/7 Team are not responsible for carrying out general repairs and maintenance, but are responsible for carrying out minor repairs and for the quality of cleaning communal areas out of business hours. Therefore the Team should be contributing to YHN's compliance with the Home Standard.

SIFT members reviewed the proposed questions from the TSMs in order to assess which of the Tenant Perception questions are applicable to the work of the 24/7 Team. The following questions were selected:

(TP04) Thinking specifically about the building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord provides a home that is well maintained and safe for you to live in?

(TP05) How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the extent to which your landlord listens to your views and acts upon them?

(TP07) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“My landlord treats me fairly and with respect.”

(TP08) If yes, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your landlord keeps these communal areas clean, safe and well-maintained?

(TP10) How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour?

(TP12) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? “I know how to make a complaint to my landlord if I am not happy with the service I receive.”

These questions were then used to carry out a survey of tenants receiving and paying for the 24/7 service.

## 8. Tenant Satisfaction Survey of the service

Using the TSM questions listed above SIFT members surveyed 54 residents of Newcastle tower blocks. Not everyone gave a response to all questions. TP07 and TP12 have been separated from the other selected TSM because a different way of responding to the question was used (a different Likert Scale).

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
<b>TP04</b>	2	9	20	11	5
<b>TP05</b>	8	5	33	3	2
<b>TP08</b>	5	3	22	7	6
<b>TP10</b>	8	10	5	24	2
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>TP07</b>	7	4	27	7	3
<b>TP12</b>	1	5	22	12	8

The responses indicate that there is a general level of satisfaction with the service, which suggests that the service is provided adequately. The exception to this is TP10, the landlord’s approach to tackling ASB, when 54 percent of responders gave a rating of Satisfied or Very Satisfied to the question.

An interesting use of language was flagged up by TP08, satisfaction that the landlord keeps the communal areas clean, safe and well-maintained: the residents of one tower block stated that it was not the landlord who carried out these tasks, but rather the Caretaker, residents not making the connection between the Council as landlord, and YHN as the managing agent who employs the Caretakers!

## 9. Focus Group

SIFT members originally intended to hold a Focus Group of tower block residents to gather evidence about their views of the 24/7 Caretaker Service. However, as a result of a late request to identify participants for the meeting the Focus Group could not take place.

SIFT did not want to lose the opportunity to gather this evidence so the question they wanted to ask were turned into a 'Survey Monkey', to which six people responded.

The following questions were asked:

- Do you know how much you pay for the Caretaking Service? Do you think the 24/7 service is value for money?
- Do you know what the role of the 24/7 caretakers is?
- Do you know how to contact the 24/7 caretakers service? Have you any experience of issues when asking for access to the 24/7 service via the Contact Centre?
- Do you have you any direct experience of asking for the 24/7 Caretaking Service? If YES, how long did it take for them to respond?
- Do you know how to complain about the service if you are not satisfied with it?
- Do you think the 24/7 service has been publicised enough? Did your Housing Officer tell you about the service when you took up your tenancy?
- Are you aware that you could pay more for any extra services on top of what you already receive and pay for?
- Do you think anything is missing from the service or should be removed from it?
- Have you any other comments about the 24/7 service?

The results are listed below.

**Question 1** Two people stated that they did not know how much they pay for the service, two people stated that they did know how much they paid, but did not think it was value for money, a fifth stated that it was 'definitely not value for money.' Another stated that 'yes they knew what they paid, but too much for the little work they do.'

**Question 2** In response to being asked if they knew what the Caretakers did one person said 'cleaning and looking after the building.' Three people stated that they did not know the role of the Caretaker. Another stated that 'they keep the block clean and report faults.' The sixth person stated that 'day time staff are responsible for keeping the building clean, report repairs if needed and keeping bin chutes clear, night time staff are responsible for reporting rough sleepers and deal with emergencies, for example, noise problems.'

**Question 3** In response to do you know how to contact the 24/7 service and have you had any problems when asking for access to the service via the Contact Centre two people responded, 'no, I do not know how to contact them.' The second person's response was 'you contact them by telepathy or smoke signals as they don't answer the phone or intercom.' A third person stated, 'yes, lots of bad ones.' The fifth person stated 'yes, on the intercom in the flat or call the concierge.' The sixth response was 'yes, I know how to contact them but don't use them.'

**Question 4** In response to the question do you have any direct experience of asking for the 24/7 Caretaking Service three people said no, one person said they were still on hold at the point of completing the survey. A fifth person stated 'yes, but it was a long time waiting and often no response or action.' The sixth person stated 'yes, they called today as no cleaner had been in to clean the floor, which was full of dust and it has still not been done – called using the YHN number twice and no one has been out.'

**Question 5** In response to being asked do you know how to complain about the service if you are not satisfied with it five people said no, the sixth said 'yes, but what is the point, they are not interested and you are deflected.'

**Question 6** In response to the question do you think the 24/7 Service has been publicised enough and did your housing officer tell you about the Service when you took up your tenancy five people said no, the sixth person stated 'the Service has been publicised, they've ticked that box, but the response is soul destroying.'

**Question 7** In response to the question are you aware that you could pay more for any extra services on top of what you already receive and pay for all six people responded no. Extra comments included 'but I wouldn't like extras because they don't do much now anyways with how much we pay already. Why would we pay more and for what?'

**Question 8** In response to the question do you think anything is missing from the Service or should be removed from it two people said no, one person said that they 'would like weekend cover but emergencies only ever happen during office hours.' Another person stated that 'people skills are missing and the YHN deflection script should removed.' Another person stated that 'YHN should let the tenants know about the Service' and the final response was 'we need the concierge service brought back on site like it was.'

**Question 9** In response to the question have you any other comments about the 24/7 Service one person said no, a second person stated 'the name is a misnomer', a third person stated 'it is terrible I've documented it for 10 years', a fourth person stated 'yes, the price needs lowering the service has gone downhill, we hardly see the cleaners about and after today calling twice for something and still the thing hasn't been done.' The last response was 'the whole service is not very good, our block is quite dirty, the cost goes up, the level of service stays the same. Often in winter we have problems with homeless sleeping in the building and nothing is done. I never use the intercom because no one answers, you just ring Benton House, it is easier.'

## 10. Work Shadowing

24/7 Caretaking Work Shadowing 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022

The member of the 24/7 Caretaking Service staff I work shadowed informed me that they never know what to expect when their shift begins.

A member of the staff is usually assigned an area such as the west or east of Newcastle upon Tyne, but their duties cover all the tower blocks within the Newcastle upon Tyne area.



The 24/7 Service has to prioritise assigned jobs such as fire safety when fires occur; monitoring activated smoke alarms and attending any incidents when the Fire Service has to attend a situation. They also have to prioritise action if customers are trapped in lifts.

Work also includes the visual inspection of communal areas, looking for anything that is in need for their attention, and communicating with YHN customers and visitors to the buildings in an appropriate, assertive manner. Team members also assist customers with small jobs that may not be included in the 24/7 Team's Job Description.

Another aspect of the 24/7 Caretakers' duties involve the clearing up of rubbish outside of buildings that are blocking fire exits or pose a fire risk or a risk to customers' safety. They also have to clear up bodily fluids found inside communal areas such as passageways, on doors and in lifts.

Another role of the 24/7 Caretaking Service is to open the locked cupboards where the electric meters are located for contractors and for customers who purchase their electricity with an 'electricity key.' This aspect of their job has become more commonplace with the rise in the cost of electricity, and the 24/7 Caretaking Service may be required to give customers access during their shift when customers' supply runs out.

The member of staff I shadowed informed me that they had requested the equipment to check the electronic chips in fire doors for safety reasons when they felt the need to do so but this request has been not granted. Claire subsequently explained that this was a repairs service issue.

Another responsibility of the Team is the safe management of keys that are kept in 'key safes' that may be used by other persons who have access to these safes such as the Fire Service. A problem occurs when contractors fail to return keys and this hinders the 24/7 caretakers in carrying out their tasks. Another job is also to put out bins when block caretakers are unable to attend and deal with the repeated incidents of vandalism or wind blowing bins, particularly at the weekends.

I was also shown and given a full explanation of how the bin chute cupboards are checked on each floor and shown the fire safety measures that are in place in connection with bin storage areas. In addition I was shown areas where gravity-fed water pumps work and the water filtration systems in operation, and shown the heating systems in operation in the buildings I visited.

In the car park of a visited building the member of staff I was shadowing was approached by a customer who asked if the hole in the car park had been reported. The member of Caretaking staff actively listened to everything the customer said and then examined the hole which was a repair that had collapsed. The member of staff reported the hole to the coordinator who will send a contractor to repair the hole as soon as possible. The caretaker did not leave the area until the hole was made safe and a fluorescent traffic cone was placed over the temporary repair.

The member of staff I work shadowed informed me of the problems when there is staff taking holidays and when incidents of staff having time off work due to illness can result in shortage of staff which leads to increased workload to remaining staff members. This can also be a problem when dealing with anti-social behaviour incidents.

Another problem members of the 24/7 Team have is getting from various buildings when they have to travel in vehicles such as rush hour, when the roads are busy with traffic.

The member of staff also discussed various difficult situations they have to deal with such as having to cope with seeing a deceased person in a state of decomposition in their home and having to assist in moving a deceased person, possibly who may have died in their flat or having to cope with being the first person to see an individual who has committed suicide when they regrettably occur.

Another member of SIFT completed a work shadowing session. They accompanied a member of staff from the 24/7 Team around the East End of the City.

They visited a number of blocks to see where there were very few issues with fly tipping, graffiti etc, and some blocks where rubbish and vandalism can be a big problem.

They started with a walkabout of one of the high rises, starting on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, working down, checking every bin chute room for refuse and any rough sleepers. The SIFT member noticed dried blood on one of the window frames in the stairwell and they pointed this out to the member of staff. The member of staff explained they would go grab supplies from the van to clean the mess up but that they would take a photo before and after as they have had residents in the past say something has been there for a few days and almost accused the staff of deliberately leaving it there. With photographic evidence, they can prove it was cleaned when they said it was.

Whilst doing these walkabouts throughout the East End, the member of SIFT noticed and that there were a large number of fire doors smashed and fire doors on properties that had been vandalised and painted over, compromising them and making the block look undesirable. The same blocks have a large number of issues with anti-social behaviour which the 24/7 Team are often called out to deal with.

One of the questions they asked the member of staff was about how they get jobs to go to. They drive from block to block doing spot checks whilst they wait for work to come through to them, then they will prioritise what they go to first.

The SIFT member explained that SIFT had received a number of reports of the Contact Centre staff themselves prioritising jobs, for example, large amounts of rubbish blocking fire exits and the Contact Centre telling the customer that it's not a priority or "what do you want us to do about it?" and they would get somebody out when they could.

The member of staff explained had they received that call, they would have attended straight away to remove the refuse without question. They would much prefer the calls to come directly to them where they could prioritise what got completed first.

## 11. Benchmarking

In order to compare YHN's Caretaking Service to other organisations' provision SIFT members looked at the YHN's staffs' Job Descriptions. Activities included:

- Responsible for the delivery of caretaking services, garden/environmental maintenance and facilities management against agreed timescales and budgets whilst complying with all legal requirements of health and safety, and other relevant legislation
- Responsible for carrying out home safety visits, and undertaking accompanied views with prospective customers
- Responsible for ensuring sites are safe and clean at all times complying with relevant health and safety legislation
- Ensure service deliver [sic] is undertaken in accordance with corporate strategies, policies and procedures, and is fully compliant with relevant legislation
- Responsible for ensuring work is carried out to agreed standards and to the satisfaction of customers.

SIFT members did not receive any information from YHN about agreed timescales and budgets, so the information is not transparent for tenants. The last bullet point, relating to agreed standards and to service delivery to the satisfaction of customers cannot be judged as there are no published or agreed service standards.

It is evident from the survey and the Survey Monkey feedback that sites are not clean at all times.

The following information was gathered by accessing the organisations' websites. The information provided in each case was similar, but presented in variable ways.

### Gateshead Council

- Caretakers clean the internal communal areas to the published service standards (displayed in the entrance on the ground floor of blocks)
- Caretakers work 37 hours per week, usually Monday to Friday. Their hours of work and contact details are on display in the block's main entrance
- Outside of these hours, the Council provides a call-out service to deal with health and safety emergencies. This includes spillages, which should be reported to the duty caretaker, so they can be cleaned immediately

### Home Housing Association

- Gardening and grass cutting in communal (shared) gardens
- Cleaning communal (shared) areas, stairs and car parks
- Lighting communal (shared) areas
- Maintaining door entry systems and other safety features



- Window cleaning in communal (shared) areas
- Maintaining communal (shared) lifts so they're clean and working properly
- Litter picking in the communal (shared) areas or outside
- A management fee (to cover the cost of administering the services provided)

### **Thirteen Housing Association**

- Communal gas, electricity or water
- Grounds maintenance
- Door entry system costs
- Routine work that we're legally obliged to do, for example fire alarm and Emergency lighting maintenance, PAT electrical testing and water sampling
- Cleaning communal areas
- Concierge, building support or caretaker costs
- Administration and management of the services provided, and the calculation and maintenance of the service charge accounts.

### **Tower Hamlets**

- Caretakers keep a watchful eye on estates, feeding back to the landlord on any issues they see.
- They also do monthly fire safety inspections.
- In case of bad weather such as heavy snow or ice they will grit footpaths and communal entrances to make sure tenants can get to and from their home safely.
- When needed caretakers unblock rubbish chutes, remove dumped waste, check play areas and remove weeds and leaves.
- Once a year a contractor cleans all communal windows and bins.
- The service also has a mobile Team on call 24/7 for any urgent health and safety issues.

### **Birmingham City Council**

- Caretakers keep the communal or shared areas of high rise blocks of flats clean and tidy.
- Estate caretakers clean the communal or shared areas of high rise blocks and some low-rise blocks.
- More about the caretaking and cleaning service can be accessed by looking at the notice board in the lobby area of blocks. There should also be information displayed about the service, including who provides it and who to contact if there is a problem.

### **Riverside Housing Association**

- Cleaning and vacuuming; removing dust, cobwebs, spills and stains
- Checking and cleaning communal light fittings and external porch lights; cleaning light covers (annually).
- Cleaning walls, windows and doors, including skirting boards, radiators, vents, glass panels and window sills; removing dust, marks and cobwebs
- Cleaning internal bin stores; removing litter, dust, cobwebs and marks
- Cleaning and deodorising lifts; polishing mirrors.
- Removing junk mail, litter, leaves, chewing gum and graffiti.

In summary the information available on each website is very variable in length and specific content. What is noticeable is that about only 50 percent mention the service charge, with even less explaining how it is calculated.

Two of the benchmarking organisations have published service standards, and one carried out a consultation exercise on how satisfied tenants are with the service.

## **12. Complaints**

There have been 10 formal complaints since May 2019.

Two were not upheld and one was partially upheld, seven were upheld. The complaints received were:

- Two relating to bin storage issues and cleanliness at Melbourne Court
- Four regarding a member of staff's attitude to them in their block (two not upheld)
- One regarding cleanliness at Mill House
- Two regarding driving issues from members of the public.

One driving complaint was received specifically regarding the 24/7 Team, but it was not upheld, it was on a public road and received from a member of the public.

## **13. Conclusions**

YHN's Caretaker Service, and specifically the 24/7 service, have not developed Service Standards, unlike Gateshead Council, which displays the Caretaking Standards at the entrance of each tower block and monitors performance against these. Instead, YHN use the outcomes, the relationships and feedback to monitor performance. SIFT members think that monitoring the service in this way does not make performance transparent for customers, nor can customers easily see if service standards are being delivered in an appropriate way. SIFT members feel that, together with customers, YHN should develop appropriate Caretaker Service Standards.

Once the TSMs are introduced (from April 2023) SIFT members think that responses from tower block residents, and perhaps from other types of housing such as Sheltered Accommodation should be separated out from general needs responses to provide an annual review of satisfaction with the Caretaker Service.

SIFT members think that the Service Charge fee should be more clearly explained to customers so that it is transparent what services they are paying for.

The evidence from the work shadowing exercise appears to indicate that there is some frustration from members of the 24/7 Team about how customers contact them, as currently customers must go through the Contact Centre. Indeed SIFT in its scrutiny of the general Caretaking Service in the Financial Year 2019/20 did recommend that all calls to the Contact Centre requesting service from the 24/7 Team should be passed on, without Contact staff deciding priorities.

The management response to this recommendation was, 'We will work with the Contact Centre to ensure they understand the Caretaking Service offer. [We will] ... arrange meetings with Contact Centre managers and ensure procedure/service offer

is shared with all Contact Centre staff. The evidence from the survey and the Survey Monkey exercises indicates that this approach to meetings to ensure that the Contact Centre staff understand the service offer has not worked. SIFT members believe that service from the 24/7 Team would improve if there was a dedicated number for service requests from customers for action by the 24/7 Team.

Responses from both the survey of 54 customers and the six responses from Survey Monkey indicates that the level of knowledge about the service, how to request service and how, if everything fails, to complain is low. SIFT members think that a new publicity campaign about the general and 24/7 Caretaking Service should be developed and launched so that customers are clear about how to use the service effectively. In addition, if customers are voicing dissatisfaction with the service perhaps staff could be encouraged to ask the customer, 'would you like to open a formal complaint?' Complaints may then be monitored and used to improve the service.

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Recommendations	Management Response	Proposed Actions	Timescale	Responsibility
1. Together with tenants, YHN should develop service standards for the Caretaking Service				
2. An annual review of tenant satisfaction with the Caretaking Service should be carried out using the Tenant Satisfaction Measures				
3. Effective communication between caretaking and housing management staff should be established, take place on a regular basis and monitored to ensure it is working well				
4. The service charge fees should be more clearly explained to tenants so that it is transparent what they are paying for				
5. A dedicated telephone number for the 24/7 Team should be established so that requests for service do not have to go through the Contact Centre				
6. A new publicity campaign should be launched about the Caretaking Service so that greater numbers of tenants understand how it operates				



<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Management Response</b>	<b>Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
7. YHN's staff should be encouraged to ask tenants if they would like to open a formal complaint if they detect dissatisfaction with service.				