

Tenant-Led Scrutiny Report Number 9



Executive Summary



An investigation into whether the service charges for caretaking reflect the actual service received.

Overview

This scrutiny exercise was produced by the Tenant-led Scrutiny Pool known as SIFT (Scrutiny, Involvement For Tenants)

supported by an Independent Tenant Advisor.

The purpose of the exercise was to:

- To explore what activities caretakers, undertake and to compare those against job descriptions
- To identify the policies and procedures in relation to caretaking
- To assess how YHN measure activity and cost service charges accordingly
- To recommend changes to policy and practice where required.

Methods used to Scrutinise the Service

The methods used on this first scrutiny included:

- Briefings by service managers
- Desktop review of all relevant information
- Comparing levels of old and new service against the cost of service
- Caretaker Focus Group
- Customer Focus Group
- Workshadowing

The main findings included:

- Overall
- It became evident that customers do not know the range of activities that caretakers can offer
- Staff sometimes have to wait a long period of time for equipment before they can start a job such as gardening tools
- Caretakers believe that customers think that all of the service charge just covers the caretaker service, which is simply not the case
- A main criticism was that the out of hours service is poor compared to the weekday service

SIFT's main recommendations are:

- Promote the new service, as there is confusion about what new tasks the Caretakers can carry out and help, they can provide to Customers
- Communication to be improved between Caretakers and their team leaders/management
- Improve the speed for the delivery of equipment and tasks requested by Caretakers
- Service Charge statements should be itemised and the term 'concierge' should be removed from rent statements and the tenancy agreement
- All calls to the Enquiry Centre should be passed on to the Rapid Response Team immediately without Enquiry Centre Staff prioritising
- The Rapid Response team need to complete tasks in accordance with their job description

The full report details the findings and recommendations of this scrutiny exercise, which took place during January, February and March 2020 can be found by going online at www.sift-newcastle.org.