

# Tenant-Led Scrutiny Report Number 1



## Executive Summary



## An investigation in to how responsive Your Homes Newcastle Enquiry Centre staff are to requests for service

### Overview

This scrutiny exercise was produced by the newly-established Tenant-led Scrutiny Pool known as SIFT (Scrutiny, Involvement For Tenants) supported by an Independent Tenant Advisor.

The first topic chosen by SIFT to scrutinise was “what evidence is there to say that YHN is a ‘can do’ company in terms of meaningfully responding to communication from tenants?’ The scope of the investigation was to look at how responsive the YHN Enquiry Centre staff are to requests for service.

### **The purpose of the scrutiny exercise was to:**

Determine the different roles NCC and YHN had in call handling

Explore how the service is provided

Identify how effective and responsive YHN staff are to tenants’ enquiries

Recommend, where appropriate, changes or improvements to service provision.

### **Methods used to Scrutinise the Service**

The methods used on this first scrutiny included:

- Briefings by service managers
- Desk top review of performance information
- Assessment of relevant complaints
- Mystery Shopping exercise of both Centres
- Work shadowing of staff in the YHN Enquiry Centre
- Staff Focus group for YHN Enquiry Centre Operatives
- Tenant Survey (9,000 on-line tenant users).

The main findings included:

- Staff require a great deal of knowledge about an extensive range of subjects in order to be able to effectively handle the calls made by customers
- Staff often deal with emotive and complex issues without the benefit of professional counselling
- On the whole staff handle customers' calls well, and in an empathetic and problem-solving manner
- The IT systems staff use are complex and are not updated frequently enough to enable customers' queries to be handled comprehensively
- The data collected for performance monitoring is not sufficiently focused
- Housing staff do not always leave their contact details on tenants' telephone answer machines when responding to requests for service
- Housing staff do not always update the IT system upon resolution of a customer's request for service
- The IT systems are complex to use with eight different systems needing to be accessed to deal with callers' enquiries.

SIFT's main recommendations are:

- Effectively publicise who is the landlord and the role of the managing agent
- Conduct an investigation into the feasibility and cost of offering a free phone service for customers to use on both YHN's Enquiry Centre and NCC's Call Centre
- Increase staffing levels at the Enquiry Centre across busy times
- Provide a counselling service for staff who have handled traumatic calls
- Housing staff should update logs more frequently, leave contact details on answer phone messages and let the Centre staff know when all members of their section or department will be unavailable to take transferred calls
- A named contractor should be provided for tenants when work is being carried out in their area
- A review of the eight IT systems should be conducted.

**The full report details the findings and recommendations of this scrutiny exercise, which took place during April, May, June and July 2017. The report can be accessed by contacting Eileen Adams at [eileen.a@engage3.org](mailto:eileen.a@engage3.org) or telephoning free phone 0800 612 8280**