

## ReAction Report For Estates Service Workers Focus Group 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Thank you for attending the focus group. You should have received the notes from the meeting you attended on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010 but if by some chance you did not receive the notes and would like a copy sent to you, please contact our Customer Services Team on 0800 408 2000 or you can visit our web site [www.gloscityhomes.co.uk](http://www.gloscityhomes.co.uk)

When you attended the Estates Service Worker focus group meeting, we asked you a number of questions, which you replied to. We can now respond to your suggestions and give you some details on what we intend to do in the future to address these. We asked you:

### What do you think Gloucester City Homes is doing well or could improve upon?

You Said:	Our Reply:
1. We need more Estates Service Workers	1. Thank you. Since that Focus Group meeting we have taken on two temporary Estate Service Workers (ESWs) on six months contracts. These are youngsters who have been unemployed for more than 26 weeks before joining us. These post attract Government funding and the cost to tenants is minimal. Both are proving to be a real asset. In addition we have appointed three other temporary Estates Service Assistance to cope with the season demand arising from the number of gardens the ESWs have to tackle every year.
2. Some Sheltered Schemes have a handyman but that there was confusion as to what he can and cannot do.	2. This was raised at a Sheltered Action Group (SAG) Meeting and his duties explained. One of the 6 month placements has been allocated to the Sheltered Scheme ESW and this has increased his capacity
3. Di Wilkes has previously raised estate services at previous SAG meeting including the pricing of one more ESW	3. The SAG group rejected this proposal as the additional cost was considered prohibitive. However, as mentioned above an additional resource has been brought in at virtually no cost.
4. Tenants felt that half a day per Sheltered Scheme per fortnight is	4. It is a full day per fortnight but that is an average and is dependent upon

# REACTION



unacceptable	the fluctuating demand of each scheme..
5. It was raised that general housing and sheltered schemes have different needs and different services.	5. It was in response to this very point that we split one ESW from the rest of the team to concentrate on the specific needs of sheltered housing.

## Review of the Service Standards.

- A. Remove items from housing designated land that is identified as a health and safety risk within 24 hours. The group agreed this was good but felt that it doesn't always happen.

**Response** *The standard should be within one working day to recognise the fact that ESWs work predominately Monday to Friday*

- B. Remove leaves, ice, snow in communal areas i.e. paths and entrances and the gritting of sheltered housing schemes within 24 hours. The tenants from the sheltered schemes commented how estate service workers were not doing this and how scheme managers had done these duties.

**The group commented how they felt this service should be extended to include all areas with a high density of elderly people. It was also noted about the lack of grit available for these areas**

**Response** *This standard should also be within one working day to recognise the fact that ESWs work predominately Monday to Friday. We recognise that Scheme Managers also undertake this duty wherever possible. This service is also dependent staff availability which may be reduced if the weather is particularly bad. On the subject of the grit, there was national shortage in January and February 2010 due the extreme weather conditions.*

- C. Clear alleyways on housing designated land on request within 28 days. Lisa Howarth commented she was unaware of a program of works. 28 days seems fair unless it poses a health and safety risk.

**Response** *This is not a programme of works but is a responsive demand led service.*

- D. Erect chain link fencing on request within 28 days from request. The group felt this was satisfactory but needed clarification. Lisa Howarth explained this was regarding where gardens extend onto public land not between properties.

**Response** *This should actually repair chain link fence rather than erect as the ESWs do not have the facility to concrete in fence posts. This type of work would be done either through our repairs contractor or a specialist fencing contractor.*

- E. Assist new tenants with central heating operation within 5 working days of request. The group pointed out that 5 days was fine during the summer but in winter maybe this should be a 24-hour priority.

The group also felt maybe this could be the housing officers duty when showing new tenant around property.

# REACTION



**Response** *This is now done by the Gas safety contractor when they turn on and test the gas supply at each new letting. In practice the ESW's still do this as a 'refresher' for tenants who have forgotten how to programme their heating. Housing Officers do give a basic instruction on the heating when requested.*

F. Remove graffiti, offensive/ racist within 24 hours and non-offensive within 5 working days. The group felt the timescales were suitable but felt the Estate service workers need to consider graffiti removal on other surfaces such as shiny lift doors.

**Response** *The ESWs would remove graffiti from any surface provided that the chemicals available would not damage the surface. As with service standards above the timescale is within one working day rather than within 24 hours.*

G. Complete repairs for elderly, vulnerable or disabled tenants that would normally be their responsibility within 28 days of request. The group agreed to this but there was some confusion whether the Estate Service Workers are allowed to change light bulbs.

**Response** *The ESWs would normally replace light bulbs on request. In practice they carry out only minor repairs as other work would be done by our main repairs contractor.*

H. Lisa Howarth noted that the service standards are inconsistent in that some points are made in days others in working days.

**Response** *The response times should be in working days to reflect the Monday to Friday nature of the role. The standards will be amended accordingly.*

I. Complete garden works to empty homes 28 days after letting. The group felt the property should be presented in the condition we expect it to be maintained in. Gardens should be checked during pre-termination check. The group would like to see this changed to 28 days from pre termination inspection.

**Response** *The ESWs would not now normally undertake this work as it is part of the Responsive Repairs contract. The contractor is expected to undertake the work prior to the new tenant moving in. If it was done prior to the former tenant moving out (28 days from pre termination inspection) the garden could be overgrown by the time a new tenant moves in if the re-letting process takes three weeks.*

## Other business

A. The group would like to see acknowledgment cards for service requests with a job number and an appointment slot AM/PM

# REACTION



**Response.** *Unfortunately this is not possible with our current IT systems. We would also likely to achieve this but is not likely to happen during 2010/2011*

B. Our customers also felt it would be helpful if service workers could contact customer when appointments over-run.

**Response.** *We would agree with this and we will ensure that the ESWs have the information, such as customer contact details to enable this to happen.*

If you have any further questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us:

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