

Gloucester City Homes



Mystery Shopping Evaluation

Anti-Social Behaviour

March 2009

Introduction

Gloucester City Homes currently gains feedback from customers in various ways including satisfaction surveys, focus groups, resident groups, block and street representatives, compliments, comments and complaints. Mystery shopping enables us to identify where our service standards and procedures need to be developed.

On this occasion, we evaluated advice given to our customers regarding anti-social behaviour when they contacted Gloucester City Homes.

Timing of Exercise

The mystery shop was conducted between 27th February 2009 and 12th March 2009.

Executive Summary

Six trained tenant mystery shoppers carried out the exercise. There were five different scenarios: three non-urgent cases and two urgent cases.

In summary, the Mystery Shop exercise found, on the whole, a good response.

Areas of strength are:

- Calls generally answered in the manner required.
- Good advice provided on appointment times, recording of incidents and possible actions that might be taken by Gloucester City Homes to resolve the issues.
- Good advice provided regarding help and advice available from external agencies such as the police and Environmental Health.
- The mystery shoppers gave positive comments about five of the six staff members including their politeness and helpfulness.

An area of weakness is:

- There was a lack of assurance given to the callers on three occasions that the identity of the complainant would be confidential. It should be noted that two of these occasions involved the Out of hours call centre, managed by a contractor on behalf of Gloucester City Homes.

Details of our response to the above issue can be found in the corresponding Reaction Report.

Results

How the calls were answered

When the mystery shoppers contacted Gloucester City Homes, they explained that a friend or relative has problems with anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood and they would like advice on their behalf. The following table records how the calls were answered.

Results of enquiry: initial telephone technique

How quickly was the call answered?	After 1 ring	1		
	After 2 rings	2		
	After 3 rings	3		
	After 4 rings	0		
	After 5 rings	0		
	>5 rings	0		
Did the staff member confirm you have got through to Gloucester City Homes?	Yes	6	No	0
Did the staff member give you their name?	Yes	5	No	1 (Out of hours call centre)
Did the staff member ask if they can help you?	Yes	6	No	0
Was the staff member courteous?	Yes	6	No	0
Were you transferred to another team?	Yes	1	No	5
Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Officer dealt with query as there was no ASB Officer available (x2) The officer was very polite. 				

Scenarios 1a and 1b – Request for advice on a non-urgent case of anti-social behaviour

Three mystery shoppers each described a case of non-urgent anti-social behaviour to the member of staff and asked a series of questions. The scenarios were:

- 1a:** a friend/relative is having problems with a neighbour who is persistently playing loud music late at night. **NB dealt with by Customer Service Officer.**
- 1b:** a friend/relative has problems with the behaviour of their neighbour's children. They are knocking on the door and running away and sometimes throwing stones into the garden. **NB dealt with by ASB Officer.**
- 1c:** a friend/relative has problems with the neighbour's dog persistently barking during the day when they are out. **NB dealt with by Out-of-hours Call Centre.**

Results of enquiry: questions asked and staff responses

Question	Staff response
If your friend/relative want to discuss this in person with someone, how soon do they have to wait for an appointment?	Within 1 working day 0 Within 5 working days 3
Should they keep a record of the incidents?	No 0 Yes 1 Yes and we can send a log sheet out 2
What sort of steps might Gloucester City Homes take to sort this out?	Mediation 3 Voluntary agreements 2 Legal action 0 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter will be sent to the perpetrator. • Actions will vary depending on the perpetrator's housing status.
What sort of legal action might possibly be taken?	Court injunction 0 Possession proceedings 0 Anti-Social Behaviour Order 2 Support criminal prosecution 0 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal action is a last resort.
Is there any other agency who can help with this problem?	Environmental health 2
Your friend/relative is concerned what might happen if their neighbour finds out they complained. Is there a possibility they will find out?	No, we have a strict confidentiality policy 1 (Sc 1b) Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reassurance of confidentiality given (Sc 1a) • the neighbour may at some point find out but his was not usually the case (Sc 1c)
At the end of the conversation, did the staff member ask if there was anything else they could help with?	Yes 2 No 1
Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very courteous and helpful although very anxious to identify the victim. This might put stress on a helpful friend (Sc 1a). • Very understanding and advised that my friend should call to discuss the situation in more detail (Sc 1b). • Polite and very helpful - provided me with a phone number for Environmental Health (Sc 1c) 	

Scenarios 2a,c – Request for advice on an urgent case of anti-social behaviour

The other three mystery shoppers described a case of urgent anti-social behaviour to the member of staff and asked a series of questions. The scenarios were:

- 2a:-** a female friend/relative is having problems with a male neighbour who is harassing them. The neighbour often knocks on the door and tries to invite himself around against the person's wishes. **NB dealt with by Customer Service Officer.**
- 2c:-** a friend/relative suspects their neighbour of drug dealing. There is a continual stream of visitors and there is sometimes a strange smell coming from the property. **NB dealt with by ASB Officer and out-of-hours call centre.**

Results of enquiry: questions asked and staff responses

Question	Staff response
If your friend/relative want to discuss this in person with someone, how soon do they have to wait for an appointment?	Within 1 working day 1 Within 5 working days 0 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff would see my friend as soon as possible. Suggested my friend could call into the office. (ASB Officer) • Unsure. Complaint would be passed to ASB team to make contact (Call centre)
Should they keep a record of the incidents?	No 0 Yes 3 Yes and we can send a log sheet out 3
What sort of steps might Gloucester City Homes take to sort this out?	Mediation 2 Voluntary agreements 1 Legal action 2 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug use would have to be established before any legal action is taken.
What sort of legal action might possibly be taken?	Court injunction 1 Possession proceedings 1 Anti-Social Behaviour Order 1 Support criminal prosecution 1 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal action possible if mediation fails.
Is there any other agency who can help with this problem?	Police 3 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Health (Sc 2c)
Your friend/relative is concerned what might happen if their neighbour finds out they complained. Is there a possibility they will find out?	No, we have a strict confidentiality policy 2 Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsure - complainant would need to talk to ASB team. (Call centre)

At the end of the conversation, did the staff member ask if there was anything else they could help with?	Yes	2	No	1
Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Officer very pleasant and helpful – she said to ring back if I needed to or try and get friend to ring. Suggested someone else might have complained about the same problem. Unable to gain much positive information. If I was genuine, I would have been very disconcerted at the reply about confidentiality (Call centre). 				

Results Analysis

Strengths

How the calls were answered

- All six calls were picked up within the Service Standard of five rings.
- All calls were answered in the manner prescribed by the Service Standards except one occasion when the Out-of-hours Call Centre staff failed to provide their name.
- One mystery shopper commented that the staff member was “very polite”.

Response to questions

Scenarios 1a-c:

- The correct appointment waiting time of up to 5 days was given on all three occasions.
- All three callers were encouraged to keep a record of the incidents and log sheets were offered on two occasions.
- Both mediation and voluntary agreements were mentioned as possible solutions to the problems. These were appropriate answers given the nature of the cases.
- The ASB Officer did well to emphasize that legal action is always a last resort.
- Environmental Health was given as a possible avenue of further help and advice for the two noise-related scenarios.

Scenarios 2 a,c:

- A prompt office appointment was offered by the ASB officer.
- All three callers were advised that the complainants should keep a record of the incidents and log sheets could be sent out.
- A wide variety of legal and non-legal options to deal with the problems were given. On two occasions, the staff members emphasised that legal action would only be taken if other steps fail or if illegal activity was proven.
- The staff members correctly advised the callers that the police should be contacted if necessary.

Mystery shopper comments

- Very courteous and helpful.
- Very understanding and advised that my friend should call to discuss the situation in more detail.
- Polite and very helpful - provided me with a phone number for Environmental Health.
- Customer Service Officer very pleasant and helpful – she said to ring back if I needed to or try and get my friend to ring.

Weaknesses

- On three occasions (Customer Service Officer and out of hours call centre on two occasions), there was a lack of assurance given regarding the complainant's anonymity. One mystery shopper commented, "If I was genuine, I would have been very disconcerted at the reply about confidentiality."

Conclusion

In summary, the results of the Mystery Shop were, overall, very good. Calls were generally answered in the manner required and good advice was given on appointment times, recording of incidents and possible actions that might be taken by Gloucester City Homes to resolve the issues. Good advice was also provided regarding help and advice available from external agencies such as the police and Environmental Health. The mystery shoppers gave positive comments about five of the six staff members including their politeness and helpfulness. The issue of confidentiality of complainants was identified as an area requiring attention. Details of our response to this issue can be found in the corresponding Reaction Report.

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