

# Gloucester City Homes



## Mystery Shopping Evaluation

### Communication

### Introduction

Gloucester City Homes currently gains feedback from customers in various ways such as 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 communication with our customers by testing the quality and efficiency of the Gloucester City Homes' website, our response to the request for information and general customer service.

### Timing of Exercise

The mystery shop exercise was conducted between 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

### Executive Summary

Five trained tenant Mystery Shoppers carried out the mystery shop.

There were two scenarios:

- **Scenario 1 – Gloucester City Homes' website**

The first scenario had two parts involving the use of on-line reporting forms on our website: a) to test our response following the report of a complaint and b) to test our response following the request of a rent statement.

- **Scenario 2 – Request of information**

The second scenario was designed to test our response following the request of information either by a) telephone or b) email.

**Footnote:** One tenant completed scenario 1a; four tenants completed scenario 1b  
Two tenants completed scenario 2a; three tenants completed scenario 2b

The mystery shop exercise found that the website received good feedback for its appearance and ease of use and the completion of the on-line reporting forms were responded to quickly. Information requested by telephone or the website was sent within the required timescales and was found to be clear and professional. However, the response to email requests was poor and therefore a procedure for responding to emails needs to be developed. Staff also need to be reminded to include explanatory letters and contact details with all correspondence. Finally, all the mystery shoppers found that staff were polite and friendly, answered telephones promptly and provided help sometimes beyond that required by the Service Standards.

### Results

#### Scenario 1 - Gloucester City Homes website

### Scenario 1a: Report of a complaint

The on-line reporting form was used to report a complaint and to request a call back from a member of staff to discuss the issue. When the staff member telephoned the Mystery Shopper, they were told there was no longer a problem.

#### Result of enquiry

Was the website easy to negotiate?	Yes 1 No 0
Was the on-line reporting form easy to use?	Yes 1 No 0
Did you use Browsealoud or the translation option?	N/A
If yes to above, was the website easy to understand?	N/A
Did you like the appearance of the website?	Yes 1 No 0
How soon did someone phone you?	1 working day 1
Did the staff member give their name?	Yes 1 No 0
Did the staff member give their job title?	Yes 0 No 1
Did the staff member explain the reason for contacting you?	Yes 1 No 0
Was the member of staff courteous?	Yes 1 No 0
<b>Tenant comments</b> Staff very polite and advised if problem crops up again not to hesitate to get in touch on the free phone number.	

### Scenario 1b: Request of a rent statement

The on-line reporting form was used to request a rent statement to be sent to the tenant via the post.

#### Result of enquiry

Was the website easy to negotiate?	Yes 4	No 0
Was the on-line reporting form easy to use?	Yes 4	No 0
Did you use Browsealoud or the translation option?	N/A	
If yes to above, was the website easy to understand?	N/A	
Did you like the appearance of the website?	Yes 4	No 0
How soon did you receive your statement?	1 working day	1
	2 working days	1
	3 working days	2
Was your rent statement clear and easy to understand?	Yes 4	No 0
<b>Tenant comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was telephoned to advise my statement would be on it's way.</li> <li>• I received an email the same day to confirm the statement was being sent out.</li> <li>• I had an email the next day to let me know the statement was in the post.</li> <li>• I did not expect to receive a reply by email when I had requested the statement to come in the post.</li> </ul>		

## Scenario 2 - Requesting information

### Scenario 2a: Information request by telephone

The Mystery Shoppers requested information from a variety of options by telephone.

#### Result of enquiry

Information requested

Anti-social behaviour policy or procedure	Yes	1	No	0
Complaints policy or procedure	Yes	1	No	0
<b>Customer service</b>				
How quickly was the call answered?	After 1 ring			0
	After 2 rings			1
	After 3 rings			1
Did the staff member confirm you have got through to Gloucester City Homes?	Yes	2	No	0
Did the staff member give you their name?	Yes	1	No	1
Did the staff member ask if they can help you?	Yes	2	No	0
Was the staff member courteous?	Yes	2	No	0
Were you transferred to another team?	Yes	0	No	2
<b>Tenant comments</b> Staff very polite				
<b>Reception of information</b>				
How soon did the information arrive?	1 working day			0
	2 working days			0
	3 working days			1
	4 working days			0
	5+ working days:			1 (10 days)
Was a letter included with the information explaining what was enclosed?	Yes	0	No	2
Was the information provided clear and concise?	Yes	2	No	0
Was the wording and layout of the information professional?	Yes	2	No	0
Were contact details provided for further information?	Yes	0	No	2
<b>Tenant comments</b> Post strike delayed information arriving on one occasion.				

### Scenario 2b: Information request by email

The Mystery Shoppers requested information from a variety of options by email.

### Result of enquiry

<b>Information requested</b>				
Complaints policy or procedure	Yes	1	No	0

Rent arrears policy or procedure	Yes	2	No	0
<b>Reception of information</b>				
How soon did you get an initial response?	1 working day		1	
	2 working days		1	
	5+ working days		1 (9 days)	
How soon did the information arrive?	2 working days		1 *see Evaluation	
Was an explanation included in the email explaining what was attached?	Yes	1	No	0 *see Evaluation
Was the wording and layout of the email professional?	Yes	3	No	0
Was the information provided clear and concise?	Yes	3	No	0
Was the wording and layout of the information professional?	Yes	3	No	0
Were contact details provided for further information?	Yes	0	No	3
<b>Tenant comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from the email the only way to get back in touch was by going into the office.</li> <li>• I was referred to the Gloucester City Homes website to view the policy.</li> <li>• The information followed a second request – I was advised to look on the website instead of being sent the policy as requested.</li> </ul>				

## Results Analysis

### Scenario 1a – Report of a complaint via Gloucester City Homes’ website

One of the five Mystery Shoppers completed this scenario. The Shopper found that the website and the on-line reporting form were easy to use and they also liked the website appearance. There was a very good response from staff in telephoning the Shopper within one working day – this is within the Service Standard of five working days. When the staff member phoned, they did give their name but they omitted their job title as required in the Service Standards. However, the Officer did explain the reason for the call and they were also “very polite” and helpful by encouraging the customer to call Gloucester City Homes should there be any more problems.

### **Scenario 1b: Request of a rent statement**

Four of the five Mystery Shoppers completed this scenario. As above, all the Shoppers found that the website and the on-line reporting form were easy to use and they all liked the website appearance. All of the Shoppers received their rent statement through the post within the Service Standard of five working days and all found the statements were clear and easy to understand. In addition, staff members exceeded the Service Standards by informing the Shoppers either by telephone or email that the rent statements were being sent out imminently.

### **Scenario 2a: Information request by telephone**

Two of the five Mystery Shoppers completed this scenario by requesting a policy or procedure via the telephone. The calls were both answered within the Service Standard of five rings by the Customer Services Team. Both times the staff confirmed the caller had got through to Gloucester City Homes, although one staff member did not give their name as required. However, on both occasions the staff asked if they could help and they were courteous, with one Shopper describing the staff member as "very polite".

The information requested arrived in the post for one Shopper within the Service Standard of five working days. The other item arrived in 10 days although this can be explained by the postal strike. In both cases, no letter was included with the information to explain the content and no contact details were provided for the customer to reply as requested in the Service Standards. However, both Shoppers found the information sent to be clear, concise and professional in wording and layout.

### **Scenario 2b: Information request by email**

The final scenario was completed by three of the five Mystery Shoppers by requesting a policy or procedure via email. Only one Shopper had an initial reply within the Service Standard of one working day. The other two were responded to in two and nine working days. The latter followed a second request by the Shopper. One Shopper received their information by email within the Standard of five working days. However, the other two did not receive the information as requested but instead were referred to view the policy or procedure on the Gloucester City Homes' website. The one Shopper who did receive the information also received an explanation in the email detailing the attachment. All the Shoppers found the wording and layout of the emails professional and all thought the policies or procedures were clear, concise and professional in wording and layout. As above, no contact details were given in the email to provide further information.

## **Remedial Action**

### **Scenario 1 – Gloucester City Homes' website**

There is no remedial action identified for the Gloucester City Homes' website.

### **Scenario 2a: Information request by telephone**

No explanation letter was included with the policies or procedures sent out by post and no contact details were provided should the customer require further information.

**Action:** Customer Services Officers to be reminded that letters or compliment slips must be included with items sent following a request from a customer.

**Responsibility:** Customer Services Team Leader

### **Scenario 2b: Information request by email**

Only one out of the three requests for information by email had initial responses within the target of one working day – one Shopper had to wait nine days. Two Shoppers were not sent the information as requested but were instead referred to the GCH website. Although the ability to view the website was a logical assumption to make by the staff member, the request to have the information sent by email was not actioned. As above, no contact details were provided should the customer require further information.

**Action:** Procedures and service standards are in place for responding to communication, however these lapses will be addressed with the Customer Services Team.

**Responsibility:** Customer Services Team Leader

### **Customer service**

On two occasions staff members omitted their job title or name when speaking on the telephone.

**Action:** Customer Services Team Leader to ensure that service standards are met at all times

**Responsibility:** Customer Services Team Leader

## **Conclusion**

The website received good feedback for its appearance and ease of use and the completion of the on-line reporting forms were responded to quickly. Information requested by telephone or the website was sent within the required timescales and was found to be clear and professional. However, the response to email requests was poor and therefore a procedure for responding to emails needs to be developed. Staff also need to be reminded to include explanatory letters and contact details with all correspondence. Finally, all the mystery shoppers found that staff were polite and friendly, answered telephones promptly and provided help sometimes beyond that required by the Service Standards.