

How repairs satisfaction leads to overall tenant satisfaction

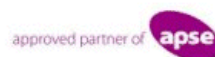
ROCC Computers White Paper

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With the provision of services by social landlords becoming increasingly resident rather than asset focussed, the recording and measuring of tenant feedback is of growing importance.

Tenant feedback can take a number of forms. In England, the STATUS Standardised Tenant Satisfaction Survey has been required by the regulatory bodies for more than 10 years. Although this provides a measure of the effectiveness of an organisation's services and enables comparisons between landlords it does not in itself provide the detail required to enable landlords to improve tenant satisfaction.

In contrast to a periodic survey such as STATUS, repairs satisfaction deals with specific customer issues, often resulting in actions to help dissatisfied tenants. The survey becomes a useful operational tool in addition to providing general statistical information.

Continuous service monitoring

Continuous monitoring of service delivery has many benefits, although in the past the administrative overheads have been too high to justify the benefits. Often the landlord service that has most frequent tenant contact is the repairs and maintenance function. With annual gas inspections and often 4 or 5 responsive repairs per annum, the landlord has a number of opportunities to gauge both the quality of the service and the tenant's satisfaction. As more repairs work is sub-contracted there is also the opportunity to monitor the performance of any sub-contractors.

The technology available to landlords for running and managing repairs and maintenance now enables the collection of continuous tenant satisfaction data with minimal administrative overheads. The use of mobile technology, appointed visits, automated workforce scheduling and telephone surveys all play a part. There are a number of ways in which repairs satisfaction data can be collected:-



Questionnaire Cards

Customer satisfaction cards can be left for subsequent completion but this then requires some effort on behalf of the tenant to fill in and post. Even with incentives such as prize draws, returns may be low and data must be captured from the forms either manually or using scanning and character recognition technology.

Handheld survey

Some organisations include a tenant sign-off screen on the operatives PDA (personal digital assistant) where the tenant can indicate that a job has been completed to their satisfaction. There may however be reluctance for a tenant to complain face to face to the operative.

Telephone Surveys

Traditionally telephone surveys were reliant on the tenant being at home and many calls went unanswered. However with a greater percentage of tenants now having a mobile rather than fixed line phones, telephone surveys are more effective.

Where a mobile data solution is used for responsive repairs there is the benefit of real-time job completion notification to the office based staff. This means that a customer services operative knows immediately that a job has been completed enabling the repairs satisfaction call to be made knowing that it is likely that the tenant is still at home and available. Completing the survey onscreen as an electronic form (rather than a paper form), means that the data is recorded in electronic format at source, removing the administrative task and potential errors of transcribing the information from paper to electronic. Ideally the electronic forms/screens used to capture the survey data are configurable and flexible enough to be tailored for specific needs. The surveys can be directly linked to a specific job, tenant or property to enable resulting actions to be recorded and analysis reports to be run. The software should also be easy for any customer services operative to use with minimal training and ensure a structured approach to be taken with each call providing qualitative and quantitative feedback.

Benefits of timely feedback

Getting immediate feedback from tenants has a number of benefits. It enables problems with individual operatives or contractors to be identified and resolved before other tenants are affected. It also enables faulty workmanship or materials to be rectified more readily, before further damage is done. This improves the quality of service to tenants and minimises further costs.

Although the STATUS survey has specific questions on repairs and maintenance, the response to many of the other questions can be greatly influenced by a tenants experience in dealing with the Repairs and Maintenance function. Questions about 'the overall quality of your home', 'the property condition', 'the value for money of the service' and the 'quality of contact with the landlord' are all to a greater or lesser degree determined by the quality of the repairs and maintenance service.

Dealing with repairs jobs promptly and courteously goes a long way to meeting overall tenant satisfaction and achieving the ideal goal of 100% of 'very satisfied' tenants.

About the Author

Andy Cush is a Business Development Manager with ROCC and has over 20 years experience in the IT industry specifying and delivering business solutions to central government, local government, not for profit and commercial organisations. Clients include RSL's, ALMO's, local authority housing departments and repairs and maintenance contractors. Andy has worked on a number of customer satisfaction projects with organisations customer service departments and market research organisations.

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