

Repairs and Maintenance Service

Report to Scrutiny Committee 7th January 2021

Impact of COVID Pandemic

Summary

The Repairs and Maintenance Service employ 640 staff to maintain the 38912 Sheffield City Councils Housing Stock.

The COVID Pandemic has significantly impacted the Repairs Service throughout 2020 and is likely to continue to have a significant impact into 2021 in the following areas:

- Plans to improve performance on existing levels of live work in progress and overdue Repairs, specifically a backlog of planned work and working at height roofing work have been disrupted.
- Plans to diversify into and deliver planned Heating work, Acquisitions and Capital Design Service projects in the City Centre have not fully been delivered to programme.
- Plans to implement a new Target Operating Model with the aim of modernising the Service for Tenants has been challenging but with some success.
- Impact on Gas Servicing performance due to no access has resulted in more properties passed into the Legal process.
- Throughout the first and second lockdown the Service saw 40,000 repairs logged compared to 64,000 repairs historically over the same period. Therefore, there is a future potential demand of 24,000 repairs that could be outstanding.

Background

The Repairs and Maintenance Service employ 640 staff to maintain the 38912 Sheffield City Councils Housing Stock.

The Service was insourced from Kier in 2017 and is in the process of implementing a new Target Operating Model following a review of its operations.

The objectives of the new Target Operating model are to modernise and improve the Repairs Service for the Tenants and there are several initiatives under way to achieve this.

The improvements include:

- Restructuring the Service to remove Client Contractor roles and reduce operating overheads. A new senior management team has been recruited and is in place.

- Shifting the balance of reactive repairs to more planned and cyclical maintenance.
- Improving Customer focus and collaboration with key stakeholders. Including working with the Corporate Contact Centre to improve the customer offer through self-service, improved script and priority status for vulnerable tenants, diagnostics of repairs and text confirmation of appointments.
- Modernising Service delivery through the investment in ICT. A new Repairs system has been successfully procured and implementation is underway with the aim of being operational by August 2021.
- Developing an organisational development strategy that empowers our staff with the skills to deliver a first-class repairs service.
- Developing a workforce plan that aims to bring more direct self-delivery and less reliance on subcontractors. This includes the recruitment of up to 45 Apprentices due to start in January 2021 bringing the overall number of Apprentices to 95 within the Service.
- Improving performance management, reporting and productivity.
- Improving Financial awareness and management.
- Improving Procurement and Supply Chain Management. A procurement strategy has been completed with the emphasis on the use of Local Sheffield contractors and merchants. The Procurement process is set to commence in April 2021.

Operating Safely During COVID

Since the awareness of COVID mid-March, the Repairs and Maintenance Service has put a significant emphasis on Health and Safety of both staff and our customers. In doing so there have been several changes.

The offices have been made COVID secure in line with National Guidelines. This includes stickering on desks to identify which can be used. 2m floor stickers are in place. Capacity has been calculated working with our Facilities Management Colleagues.

PPE – Guidance of the 5 categories identified by IMG has been introduced. Specifically, categories 1 and 2 which apply to the Repairs teams and category 4 which takes extra precautions to protect vulnerable tenants.

Risk Assessments – These have been completed for the relevant workplace areas. Additionally, there is a Risk Assessment in place to allow front line staff to enter properties safely and clear guidance required to work safely.

Home Working – In line with Government and corporate guidance, the service has reduced staff working in the workplace as much as possible.

First COVID Lockdown

Prior to the first COVID Lockdown the Service had 11000 jobs at work in progress stage (live). This comprised of 8000 jobs normal through put with an average of 2000 job per week including all categories of work and a backlog (overdue) of 3000 jobs largely planned work and working at height roofing work.

We had 260 live Voids with the Repairs Service.

Properties with a current Gas Certificate was 89%.

Throughout the COVID Pandemic the Repairs Service followed and continue to follow the instructions and guidance of the Councils Incident Management Group (IMG) and operated a reduced Service responding to critical activities only which included Housing Emergency Repairs, Compliance related activities such as Gas Servicing and Void Property work to continue to provide much needed housing.

Throughout the first COVID lockdown the Service was delivered with a reduced number of staff. 190 staff having been vulnerable and shielding and the remainder on rotas to cover critical activities as per the Government and IMG guidance.

Surveys, planned work, Routine Repairs and non-urgent works were not carried out.

Carrying out Emergency and Urgent repairs significantly reduced the normal repairs demand from 2000 per week to 600 per week.

Throughout the first Lockdown we experienced problems with gaining access for Gas Servicing which impacted the number of properties with a current Gas Certificate and increased the number falling into the Legal process.

On the 15th July the Councils Incident Management Group gave approval to reinstate the Service and following staff undertaking risk assessments, inductions and essential training we returned to full-Service delivery.

At the end of the first Lockdown we had a work in progress of circa 9500 Repairs, 200, voids and a gas compliance of around 88%.

In total the service had been reduced to non-essential activity for 20 weeks including the re-introduction of staff.

Second COVID Lockdown

Prior to the Second lockdown the Service had circa 9,000 repairs at work in progress stage. The repairs service did see an increase in repairs, but this was not significant, and tenants appeared to be apprehensive about wanting operatives in their home which enabled the service to remain on top of the workload.

We had 220 live Voids with the Repairs Service which has risen due to a large influx of voids after choice-based lettings were reinstated.

Properties with a current Gas Certificate was 90%.

Throughout the second lockdown the Repairs Service again followed and continue to follow the instructions and guidance of the Councils Incident Management Group (IMG) and operated a reduced Service responding to critical activities only which included Housing Emergency Repairs, Compliance related activities such as Gas Servicing and Void Property work to continue to provide much needed housing.

However due to the seasonal change external work to roofs, damp and water escapes were classed as urgent work and carried out to reduce the impact of water damage to tenants' properties.

Throughout the second COVID lockdown the Service was delivered with all staff working on critical activities with only 16 classed as extremely clinically vulnerable shielding or working from home as per IMG instruction.

Surveys, planned work, Routine Repairs and non-urgent works were not carried out.

Carrying out Emergency and Urgent repairs only significantly reduced the normal repairs demand from 2000 per week to 800 per week. This was an increase on the first lockdown due to the re classification of roofing and damp work.

Throughout the second Lockdown we continued to experience problems with gaining access for Gas Servicing which impacted the number of properties with a current Gas Certificate and increased the number falling into the Legal process.

Concerned about the level of no access and the numbers falling into the Legal process a team was set up to attempt to gain access over and above the normal number of attempts we would make given the exceptional circumstances to reduce the number going into the legal process.

At the end of the Second Lockdown we had

a WIP of 8,000 Repairs, 230 voids and a gas compliance of 90.5%.

Summary Performance

Throughout both Lockdowns the Repairs Service have successfully responded to Emergency and Urgent Repairs and reduced the overall repairs work in progress, improved performance on Void Properties and Gas Servicing and made progress with implementing the new Target Operating Model through recruiting a new management team, Procurement of IT System and consulting with Trade Unions on plans for the future modernisation of the Service.

	Prior to first Lockdown	Post first Lockdown	Prior Second Lockdown	Post Second Lockdown
Repairs Work in Progress	11,000	9,500	9,000	8,000
Void Properties with Repairs	260	200	220	230
Properties with a current Gas Certificate	89%	88%	90%	90.5%

Operational Response

In Response to the impact of the COVID pandemic and subsequent lockdowns the Repairs Service have:

- Planned and organised resources to have the ability to respond to critical activities in the first instance which included Emergency Repairs, Gas Servicing and Void properties.
- Developed a tracker to compare actuals to projected volumes to understand financial and resource implications.
- Batched work up such as High Value Fire damaged properties, Acquisitions, Roofing, Windows and Doors, Plastering, and worked with Housing

- investment colleagues to deliver some of this work using their framework contractors.
- Increased the volume of work delivered by our framework subcontractors.
 - Recruited agency's workers to supplement our teams with additional resources.
 - Encouraged our teams to work flexibly and overtime to gain additional capacity.
 - Improved communications with stakeholder and established a dedicated phone line and email address for Councillor's enquiries.

General Impact

Historically the Repairs and Maintenance Service complete 2,000 repairs per week. 104,000 Repairs per annum.

Prior to the first COVID Lockdown the Service had 11000 jobs at work in progress stage. This comprised of 8000 jobs normal through put with an average of 2000 job per week including all categories of work and a backlog of 3000 jobs largely planned work and working at height roofing work.

Throughout the first and second lockdown the Service saw 40,000 repairs logged compared to 64,000 historically repairs over the same period. Therefore, there is a future potential demand of 24,000 repairs that could be outstanding.

The combination of the Work in progress prior to lockdown and the potential future demand for repairs and the no access for Gas Servicing will be a significant challenge for the Repairs Service both in terms of impact on budget and resources to achieve normal levels of performance with a reasonable timescale.

Work is currently under way to assess the potential impact in more detail and to develop plans to respond to this challenge.

Latest Update

Following the Prime Ministers announcement on the 4th January 2021 putting the Country into a third lockdown the Repairs Service are working with the Councils Incident Management Group (IMG) and implement our business continuity plan which will at the very least prioritise the safety of our Staff and the General Public, respond to critical activities including Emergency and Urgent Repairs, Gas Servicing and work in Void Properties.

Mark Freeth

Head of Repairs

Sheffield City Council.

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