

**Report for:** Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Committee - 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**Title:** Housing Repairs Performance

**Report authorised by:** Cllr Carlin, Cabinet Member for Housing, Private Renters and Planning

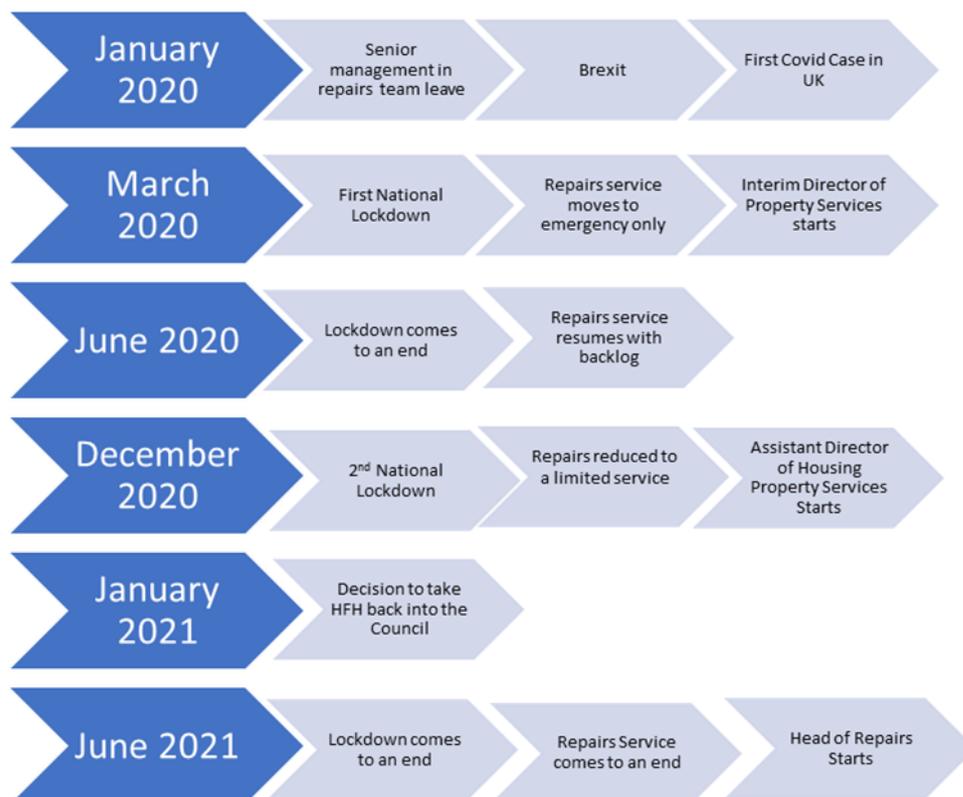
**Lead Officer:** Judith Page, Assistant Director of Housing Property Services  
07976960670

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non-Key Decision:** Non-Key Decision

## 1. Introduction

1.1. It is acknowledged that a significant level of improvement is still needed in the housing repairs service to reach the standards that the Council and residents expect. At the point of transfer to the Council in June 2022, the service had experienced significant instability both internally and externally for the previous two and a half years. The timeline below shows some of the internal and external factors which have impacted on repairs service delivery during this period:



- 1.2. The wider economic climate continues to impact with significant labour shortages and price rises in materials and other costs across the construction sector. However, despite this context the service has identified areas which will have a positive impact on service delivery and the resident experience.
- 1.3. The Haringey Housing Stock has never met the Government's Decent Homes standard (appendix 1). Currently 69 per cent of stock meets this standard. With the exception of the new build homes which have been handed over in the last few years. All of the stock is over 40 years old, and the majority is significantly older. Even for the properties where Decent Homes was achieved, the standard tended to concentrate on the internal condition of the flats and we are finding a lot of problems with risers in blocks which were not upgraded when kitchens and bathrooms were replaced. The major works programme was impacted by Covid, as no work was undertaken during the first lockdown. There were high levels of refusals for works as many residents would not let us undertake works within their homes due to concerns about transmission of the virus.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. The delivery model for the repairs service is through an in-house repairs team. The majority of jobs (80 per cent) are completed by a labour force employed directly by the Council. The remaining jobs are completed by external contractors, referred to in this report as supply-chain, who undertake specialist works such as scaffolding, damp proofing and asphaltting of roofs. They also provide a top up service for periods of high absence such as school holidays and to smooth out peaks in demand especially in the winter months.
- 2.2. All of our gas work is sub-contracted including communal heating systems and heating repairs and replacements. There have been issues with the sub-contractors supporting the main repairs service for the past 18 months. For procurement reasons, the supply-chain historically used by Homes for Haringey could no longer be used and due to market conditions, it has been difficult to procure a new supply-chain to support the service. A procurement strategy is being developed to work with Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) within Haringey and neighbouring boroughs.
- 2.3. The majority of jobs are raised by phone, through the Council's main call centre. There is a limited digital offer which results in e-mails being generated when queries are raised on the website and this inbox is also managed through the call centre.
- 2.4. About 45,000 jobs (a job may include numerous visits to the property) are undertaken by the service annually. Additionally, to this, surveyors undertake circa 1500 visits to properties annually, these are usually where the initial repairs visit has not resolved the issue.

2.5. Forty-two per cent of all complaints received about the housing service, relate to property service issues and the majority of these are about repairs and maintenance. The service receives between 100 and 120 complaints and members enquiries a month. About 2.5% of repair jobs result in a complaint or members enquiry, which is high, as good performance would be less than 0.5% of jobs that are escalated. The main themes of complaints are failure to receive a service or quality of work relating to damp, water leaks, fencing and in the early part of the year plastering. We acknowledge that not all residents contact members or make a complaint, so this is not necessarily a complete indication of the quality of service.

### 3. Current Performance and benchmarking information

3.1. This section covers the KPIs which are currently reported to Housing Board and were previously used to monitor Homes for Haringey's performance by the Council. As 2020/21 performance was impacted by Covid, the sample we have used is for the previous 5 years. The benchmarking information is provided by Housemark, an independent benchmarking organisation used across housing providers and our benchmarking group is 9 London Councils.

3.2. **KPI: Appointments made and kept** applies to routine repairs and excludes emergency and communal repairs (circa 35% of jobs are done as emergency and out of hours):

Repairs	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Appointments made	32,261	28,373	28,035	16,993	21,835
Appointments kept	31,260	27,850	27,437	16,404	21,538
% of non-emergency repairs where appointment made and kept	96.9%	98.2%	97.9%	96.5%	98.6%

3.2.1. The current performance in this area is higher than it has been in previous years. In 2020/21, our performance was upper quartile compared to our benchmarking peer group, as is shown by the graph below. From the feedback which we receive from residents, missed appointments is not a significant issue. Although, in 2020/2021 through customer feedback we were made aware about concerns regarding our supply-chain missing appointments.

#### 3.2.2. Benchmarking Information 2020/21

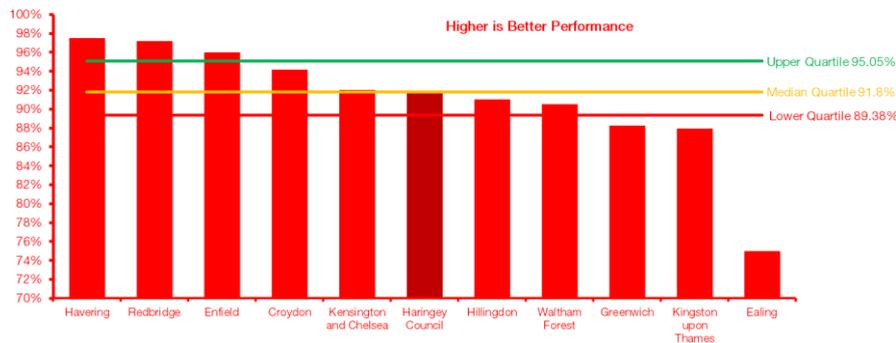


3.3. **KPI: First time fix:** this excludes emergency appointments and is based on jobs completed on the first visit. It is recognised that there are jobs, such as replacing a window unit that cannot be completed in a single visit.

Repairs	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of repairs	#	39,447	#	37,661	41,475
First Time fixed	#	35,902	#	34,563	37,474
% of all repairs first time fixed	92.5%	91.0%	87.2%	91.8%	90.4%

3.3.1. Performance in this area is slightly lower than in previous years and our performance in 2021 is in the median quartile compared to our peers. Work is on-going on looking at van stocks and operative skills to improve performance in this area. There are jobs which should be completed on the first visit that currently are not due to operatives not being able to carry out one or more of the ancillary jobs, such as tiling, which means a second unnecessary visit. Initial conversations have taken place with CONEL regarding training in this area.

### 3.3.2. Benchmarking Information 2020/21



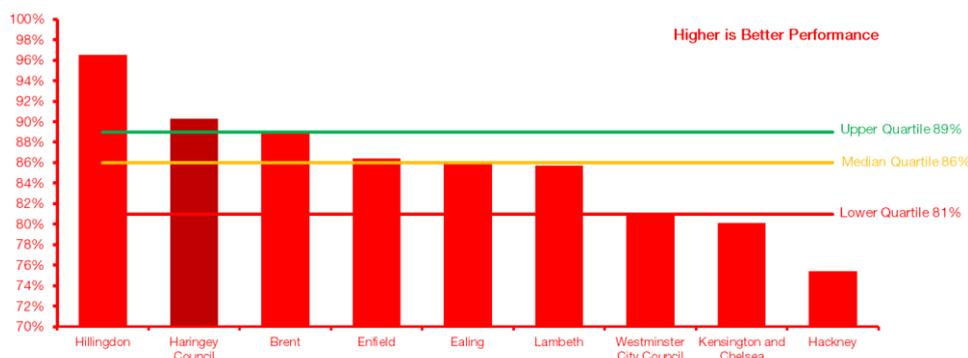
### 3.4.KPI: Satisfaction with last repair

Ref	Repairs	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
TX 06	Number of surveys	#	1,657	2,872	1,713	2,229
	Number satisfied	#	1,379	2,619	1,546	1,942
	What is your overall satisfaction with your last repair?	77.8%	83.2%	91.2%	90.3%	87.1%

3.4.1. This survey is carried out through a text survey after the repair has been completed. This is an area where Haringey pre-pandemic had been significantly improving performance and in 2020/21, we were in the upper quartile of our Housemark peer group. At the start of this financial year, the satisfaction score with the last repair fell to the low 80 per cents, the issues with having a limited back up sub-contractors supply-chain and shortages of materials especially in relation to roofing works were a contributory factor in the decreased levels of satisfaction. In recent months, levels of satisfaction have started to improve but is still significantly below the 93% target.

3.4.2. The themes which have come through the resident feedback have been length of time to complete a repair from time of reporting the job, quality of the repair and issues with being able to raise a repair.

### 3.4.3. Benchmarking Information



## 4. Areas identified for improvement

There are some key areas which have been identified to improve our residents experience with the councils' repairs service:

### 4.1. Better use of our IT systems

- 4.1.1. Northgate is our main housing management system and is used by the call centre to raise repairs, it then interfaces with Service Connect which is the system used to schedule and control the work delivered by the in-house repairs service and our subcontractors.
- 4.1.2. We have recently had Service Connect undertake a health check on the way in which we are using the system as due to changes in key personnel and the pandemic, we believed the system was not utilising its' full potential. The health check identified 38 actions to be undertaken which they have identified will improve our job management.
- 4.1.3. There is also a need to improve the interface between Northgate and Service Connect which will improve the customer journey with the call centre, as they will be able to answer more queries at the first point of contact.
- 4.1.4. Training on service connect has been identified as a key area of improvement. Analysis of recent disrepair jobs and complaints has shown that the system not being used properly is one of the main causes of service failure. This is especially true when a follow up job is required but the job is closed due to operative error.

### 4.2. Disrepair

- 4.2.1. Across the housing sector there has been an increase in the number of disrepair cases being raised. For our residents to raise a legal case it reflects a high level of dissatisfaction with their experience with the council's repair service. It is critical that these cases are resolved quickly to address their concern and limit costs to the council.

4.2.2. Resources are being made available to reduce the existing number of cases and to put improved processes in place to manage and prevent future cases.

### **4.3. Modernising current processes**

4.3.1. The schedule of rates is the way in which housing services identify the jobs which need to be completed by a repairs service. The current version which is used by the repairs service dates back until 2014. The National Federation of Housing, work across the sector to improve these and in the coming months we will be updating to the latest version. As part of this process, we will need to map and update all processes which relate to managing repairs jobs. This will include diagnosing repairs through the call centre and the potential for this process to be used when a digital offer is put in place by the Council. Mapping operative skills to complete an appropriate job and the job management process.

4.3.2. By undertaking the exercise, we will be able to fully review the customer journey and improve it. We will also be able to identify training needs for operatives and work with CONEL to provide training courses which will enable more jobs to be completed on the first visit.

### **4.4. Wider customer experience and digitalisation**

4.4.1. From residents and members feedback it is clear that keeping residents informed of progress on repairs and closing the loop when things go wrong is an area which needs significant improvement. It is unclear whether the culture issues in the service regarding updating residents has been historic or whether it has become more prevalent during Covid with staff working from home, staff turnover and inconsistent induction and training during this period. The culture change needs to be prioritised especially in light of the regulatory changes which are outlined in the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill, which is progressing through parliament and the recent Coroners comments on the death of Awaab Ishak. Listening to residents is at the centre of the improvements needed and we will work with residents to improve our service offer in this area.

4.4.2. The first area of improvement we are working on is the management of disrepair cases, ombudsman enquiries and members enquiries. A casework management approach is being introduced to ensure that commitments given are met within the identified timescales to reduce escalations and improve resident satisfaction.

4.4.3. The Council is undertaking a piece of work to digitalise the customer experience and provide a Customer Relationship Management System (CRM). The housing service will link into these pieces of work at the appropriate time.

## **5. Conclusion**

5.1. Phase 1 of Repairs Improvement is underway and is focussing on the four areas outlined in the report for the next 6 to 9 months to ensure that the change is embedded in the business. It is recognised that resources are needed to support these changes and clear existing backlogs, especially in disrepair cases so that the changes are introduced when the service is in a stable state to receive them.