# Scrutiny Report Review of "Enquiries responded to within 24 hours"

**Report Compiled by: OVH Tenant Scrutiny Team**
**Date of Issue: April 2019**
**Review Date: October 2019**

# 1.  Introduction

**The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England.**

## 1.1    What are the benefits of Tenant Involvement and Empowerment?

Tenant scrutiny is a key aspect of the Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England which allows for the following benefits:

- The formulation of their landlords housing related policies and strategic priorities
- The making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- The scrutiny of their landlord and making of recommendations about how performance might be improved

## 1.2    What are the benefits of Scrutiny?

Tenant scrutiny can bring benefits for all stakeholders, as follows:

- **Residents** – improves services
- **OVH** – reviews performance and identifies areas for improvement
- **Regulators** – demonstrates regulatory compliance with the consumer standards
- **Partners and Stakeholders** –illustrates the benefits of partnership working, and continuous improvement.

## 1.3    Selecting Service for Scrutiny

A key role of the Scrutiny Team is to review key service areas by scrutinising the performance and customer intelligence data, identifying areas of concern and making recommendations of how to improve services.

- Reviewing the Performance Indicator "Enquiries dealt responded to within 24 hours" was highlighted to the Scrutiny Team via the Performance Team as a possible topic for our next Scrutiny Review. The Performance Team highlighted that this had been discussed at the Customer Intelligence Steering Group who had made a decision to refer to the Scrutiny Team for some tenant input.

The Scrutiny Team members involved in undertaking this scrutiny were:
**Pam Holliday – Chair**
**Ken Williams  - Vice Chair**
**Tony Bailey**
**Bernie Blackmore**
**Ian Leybourne**
**Glenys Bowen**
**George Carter**
**Richard Goldston**

## 2.    Scope of the Review

The Scrutiny Team were presented with a summary of the performance figures for the previous year for all key departments across the organisation. Following this they carried out a survey of key staff to establish the key issues with current performance. From this they were able to gleam information which lead to interviews of the key staff who use FLOW across the following departments:

- Neighbourhood Services
- OVH Repairs and Maintenance
- SPS
- Customer Access
- Investment

The Scrutiny Team also extensively looked at other organisations' to see how they responded to enquiries. (please see Appendix 2).

The Scrutiny Team then carried out their Scrutiny Review and made findings/ recommendations listed in Appendix 1.

## 3.    Scrutiny Process

The scrutiny process followed a 10 step plan and covered the following stages:

- Identify service for review
- Run an initial diagnostic test of the service area
- Agree scope and identify evidence requirements
- Desktop review of evidence
- Reality checking exercises
- Development of final report
- Presentation of report
- Agree Improvement Plan

The next step will be for the Scrutiny Team to receive six monthly and yearly feedback on improvements made since recommendations.

# 4. Findings and Recommendations

Attached is all of the Scrutiny Team's agreed findings and recommendations (see Appendix 1).  On the 18th March a meeting was held by the Scrutiny Team to agree the recommendations, during this meeting we summarised all the evidence presented across the 10 steps of the scrutiny process and discussed areas for improvement.

Following this review, the scrutiny team has made  recommendations to ensure that the performance of this area continues to improve and to ensure effective future monitoring of the standards takes place.

# 5. Conclusion & Acknowledgement

The Scrutiny Team would like to note that without the close working partnership with the Performance and Customer Insight Team, Neighbourhood Services, Investment, SPS, Customer Access and OVH Repairs and Maintenance and Customer Empowerment Teams this Scrutiny Review would have been impossible. The Scrutiny Team would like to thank the contributions made by all individuals and groups involved in conducting the review for their assistance and co-operation. The Scrutiny Team would also like to record thanks to all other One Vision Housing and Sovini staff involved in the scrutiny process.

**Appendix 1**

| FINDINGS<br>(information discovered as a result of the investigation ) | RECOMMENDATIONS<br>(suggested action resulting from the findings) |
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| Out of five managers interviewed four **do** consider 24 hour target reasonable however the consensus between the Scrutiny Team and managers spoken to, is that the FLOW system does not support the target "Enquiries responded to within 24 hours", this is backed up by performance figures.<br><br> Example: full diaries with appointments, travelling and reactive situations may not permit access to FLOW (even with mobile FLOW). ST feel that staff members are restricted to the hours of one normal working day.<br><br>Time pressures do not always allow for the target to be met. | Consider target being changed to close of play, next working day |
| Benchmarking was carried out to ascertain what other Housing Associations standards are.<br>Please see attached research findings | |
| There currently seems to be no implications for departments non or underperformance with the flow turnaround targets | The recommendation from this would be for EMT to consider and advise. |
| FLOW does not have the functions OVH and Sovini require<br>-FLOW can be used as a messenger service at times<br>-There is no out of office facility | Staff Training required for cultural organisational use of FLOW. |

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| -There are no notifications<br>-Unable to copy in additional recipients<br><br>There is no escalation procedure (ie when FLOW is 1 hour from target there is no flag up to manager)<br><br>Suggestion of lack of consistency over whether FLOW gets sent to individual or team in-tray.<br><br>Some team in-trays are not specific enough eg SPS does not break down into workstreams ie. gas, day to day etc | New system we procure for the future needs to be more robust and intelligence led |
| Culture may exist whereby call back requests are sent back to originator/ other persons at times when they are sent to the wrong person, which could lead to it being passed round the wrong staff and going out of target. | Staff Training to deal with the existing cultural issues- best practice to be shared across the organisation |
| Suggestion that cases are closed before completion to avoid the target going red | |
| Every FLOW failed is classed as a failure by the organisation- we do not know the full impact on customers however it is surmised that it will cause confusion, loss of trust and additional avoidable contact if we say we will call back within hours and then do not. | Sharing of best practice from better performing departments across organisation. |

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| We believe the overall responsibility lies with EMT<br>Day to day responsibility of meeting the target should lie with departmental managers<br>There is a suggestion this performance indicator responsibility lies with the Performance and Customer Insight however we do not believe this should be the case. | Awareness sessions carried out with all staff to ensure staff are aware that each department is responsible for this target |
| Performance of target not been included in SRG agenda pack for all services | PI to be included for all service areas in SRG packs<br><br>ST recommend this PI be changed to a Key Performance Indicator if possible. |
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**Appendix 2**
**Returning calls, Call back - What other Housing Associations are doing.**

During the last couple of meetings I (Tony Bailey) agreed to have a look around at what other housing associations are doing in terms of agreeing with their residents a time scale to return/reply to telephone calls.

There are many housing associations that do not seem to have any agreed service standard on this issue, and as you will see from the example sample below, those that do, appear to have a very wide variance in the standard that they publish.

This article is some years old but it does provides an example as why turning customer enquiries around quickly can be important to a housing association.
https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/oct/28/five-tips-housing-customer-service

Adactus Housing Association aims to return calls next working day or when agreed. They also publish performance data for 2 working days.
https://aha.adactushousing.co.uk/Information/289

West of Scotland HA aims to return calls in 1 working day
https://www.westscot.co.uk/uploads/2017-08-21-12-33-12-customerservicecharterpdf-82542.pdf

Pentland HA aims to return calls in 2 working days
https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/23060/sitedata/files/Customer_Care_Charter.pdf

Muir Group aims to respond to calls in 2 working days
https://www.muir.org.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93jijm4n483.pdf&ver=574

Zebra Homes – returns calls within 1 working day
https://www.zebrahousing.com/about/customer-care-charter/

Warrington HA aims to call back within 48 hours

https://www.wha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WHA-0170-Leaflet-Customer-Services-Charter-Version-4-1.pdf

Charter Housing Group aims to return calls within 24 hours
http://www.charterhousing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/our-commitment.pdf

Catalyst HA publishes that it will return calls by the next working day unless the member of staff is absent.
https://www.chg.org.uk/residents/tenants/your-home/our-service-standards/customer-service/

Waterloo HA responds within 2 working days
https://www.waterloo.org.uk/about-us/our-vision-mission-and-values/whats-the-deal-our-customer-service-standards/

Grampian HA aims to return calls within 24 hours but no later than 3 working days.
https://www.grampianhousing.co.uk/en/grampian-housing-association/our-services/customer-care-plan

Hightown Housing Association will inform callers when their call is likely to be returned but do not publish a uniform standard target for all calls.
 https://www.hightownha.org.uk/media/7376/customer-charter-2016.pdf