

Housing scrutiny panel

Review of the BTS repairs

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1. Date of review and staff involved

Date of review boot camp – 10 August 2021

Date report to be presented to Service Director housing and BTS service manager: Atika Choudhury - service director Housing and Tim Keogh – BTS service manager

Review Lead: Steve Berresford

Report author: written and agreed by all Scrutiny Panel members

Scrutiny members directly involved in the review:

Steve Berresford (Chair)

Doreen Chindezwa (Vice-Chair)

Barry Firmin

Vanessa Moffat

Jaqueline Stephens

Christine Williams

John Parker (part)

Marion Brooks (no direct involvement)

Staff involved in the review:

John Price – Team Supervisor

Abid Qheshi - Business Intelligence & Complaints Manager

Claire Risk - Customer Service Officer Suzanne Wright – Customer Service Officer

Maureen Herdman – Tenant participation Manager

Maurice Franks – Tenant participation officer

Scrutiny Review of the Boot Camp & BTS review

Notes of the meeting held on 04 February 2022

Steve: We were very short on Scrutiny members at the final review meeting.

Barry - The 98% tenant satisfaction (internal). Panel asked for an independent review. No. But, on the minutes form BTS said they have an independent review (6.6)? STAR?

Christine - an example discussed in the review (October 2021 Christine's front door), job still not completed. Inspector visited on 8.11.21, Christine to check

Vanessa – BTS need to advertise the 0800 number more extensively. 5.3: 15 December target – where is the communications plan promised for 15 December?

There should have been an update on how the divert of numbers to BTS was working.

20 May – John Price, John Hagger & Abid for briefings. Learnt the 2 surveys are different. Everyone was on the defensive. Uneasy about the responses.

10 August next meeting – ladies that answered the phone were very helpful. The felt like the managers didn't feel this review could be helpful.

It felt like BTS didn't take ownership of the review.

BTS have not provided info on the independent review that discussed.

At the final meeting Tim (Head of BTS) was a breath of fresh air and answered the questions raised. Colin (Head of Housing) did too.

Action: Panel to focus more on the review – need more ammunition facts to back up what's reported. Action: TP Team could help more, provide more facts, suggest what is more

Action: Needed more Scrutiny Panel members there.

Action: the 'Right' managers need to be at the meetings. The John's maybe were not the right people?

Action: Report could have been clearer on what BTS did well and how we explained why the review was done and why it's good for BTS.

Action: What are BTS against an external review of satisfaction? External audit – it felt like they were ignoring the question about the 98% satisfaction with repairs, and they provided no concrete evidence of how the internal survey worked?

KPI's – number of repairs completed within target. Panel didn't feel that they were listened too. John Price was sent, and he couldn't answer the questions. The Panel also needed to know who set the targets?

In the future: If the Panel feels that they haven't the right info. The Review will be paused to allow staff to organise it.

Information requested was never provided

It felt like BTS is cooking the results and questions raised on monitoring were brushed aside. The panel did not feel like the questions were answered.

- Scepticism came when staff didn't answer the questions asked
- Seems like most issues arose from the wrong officers being there
- Panel had too short a time to prepare
- Report was crucified as Tim explained some of the things we asked for are either being done or in hand
- Maybe the Panel could be asked staff to prepare a report beforehand on the questions
- Sarah and Maureen to attend a BTS managers to feedback the comments.
- Next meeting - Feedback of BTS – issues raised on 13 April
- Next review – look at Sarah's PI's, Tenant Board ideas, discuss maybe 2-3 ideas

2. Executive summary

The Housing Scrutiny Panel (HSP) agreed to review BTS repairs service after a desktop review showed a difference in the results of internal satisfaction surveys and the bi-annual STAR satisfaction survey carried out externally. The purpose of the review was to determine why this difference existed and review the efficiencies and effectiveness of the repair service overall.

3. Recommendations

1. That management note and agree the report
2. That management agree and support an improvement plan to implement recommendations

3. That managers' report on progress against the improvement plan to the Housing Scrutiny Panel in six months' time.

4. Background

A project scoping meeting was held on 20 May 2021 for BTS managers and HSP to discuss the processes and procedures utilised for day-to-day repairs and communal repairs. Issues were raised for further investigation at a Scrutiny Boot Camp. Boot Camps are events in which a group of housing residents and staff get together to scrutinise a service. Boot Camps give the opportunity to determine what's working well, what's not working as well and what could be done better.

A Boot Camp scoping meeting was carried out by six of the eight members of the HSP. They were joined by two BTS managers, two BTS staff and the TP manager and team on 10 July 2021 at Stockwood Park Discovery Centre. The issues raised at the scoping meeting were reviewed by HSP.

It was agreed to ask tenants who had recently had a repair carried out to provide their views at the Boot Camp. Twelve residents with recent repairs gave their feedback on their experiences. The questions asked were:

- How easy was it to report the repair?
- Were you offered an appointment for the repair?
- How satisfied were you with the repair?
- Where you offered the opportunity to give feedback?

Note: BTS repairs service spans many different areas however HSP focussed on resident's day-to-day repairs and communal repairs.

5. Purpose of the service review

The HSP agreed the purpose of their review was to:

- Investigate what works well and where things could be improved
- To review policies and procedures
- To review satisfaction data and formal complaints made with a view to use learning to improve the repairs service

The disparity between the BTS customer survey and the results of the same questions when asked in the STAR survey (independent stratified sample survey) were discussed. The BTS survey (in which they aim to contact and record satisfaction levels with 10% of tenants who have had a repair) show results that are much higher than the STAR survey.

Determining why the STAR survey results are lower could help improve the repair service.

6. Methodology

The panel used a range of methods to carry out the research for this service review, this included:

Document review

- BTS Day-to-Day Repair Process Chart

- Customer Feedback Performance Reports
- Housing Performance Report
- BTS Complaint Report
- BTS Service Level Agreement
- Internal Customer Satisfaction Survey results 2020/21
- External bi-annual satisfaction survey results (STAR) 2019 – including comments
- BTS listings of repairs completed between April and July 2021
- Review of formal complaints 2020/21
- BTS performance reports 2020/21

Other methods of investigation

- Interviews with residents who had a recent repair
- Benchmarking (via STAR) with other authorities and housing associations of a similar size.

7. Positive findings

The repairs service provides an overall good service to the residents of Luton. Most repairs are quickly processed and completed in a satisfactory manner.

Tenants reported that the quality and standard of completed works was very good. Nine randomly selected residents gave comments on their repair. Of those residents, eight were very satisfied with their repair, but all said they did not have the opportunity to provide feedback after the repair was completed.

8. Areas for improvement

Housing service computer software – Tenant’s phone numbers, emails and other pertinent information on the council’s housing database sometimes needs updating and this can result in delays when BTS do not have the correct contact details of tenants reporting repairs. A resident could have a hearing impairment and not hear the BTS repairer knocking on the door. BTS informed they cross reference phone numbers, however it’s up to Housing Officers to update the database.

Coordination/relationship between Housing Officers (HO) and BTS – HO’s are not involved in any way with BTS repair issues. The HO may be aware the resident has disabilities (learning disability, mental health, physical disabilities like hearing and sight impairment) which would assist BTS when visiting the property.

Action: Consider housing officers and BTS staff induction – should it include housing officers spending a short time at BTS?

BTS 0800 phone number for repairs – The 0800 BTS Customer Service number for repairs is not widely known by residents and some tenants think it’s costly to call this number. A resident normally gets a reply within one minute if they call the 0800 number. However, many residents contact LBC Customer Service for repairs, and this can result in an average 40-minute wait to speak with a customer service representative. Once the customer speaks with the LBC Customer Service staff, the query is merely forwarded to the 0800 number.

Action: An advertising campaign for the 0800 number could assist.

Advertise repairs slots - Customers are currently offered morning, afternoon or a school time slot. But tenants often request repair times which work around their work or school schedule, and this cannot always be met as the majority of requests have the same time based upon picking children up from school or residents work schedules. BTS informed they are unable to give firm arrival times as some repairs may take longer than anticipated. The BTS repair person does not inform when they are on their way to a customer because this not the model they use.

No action.

Text message by BTS confirming the repair – The resident receive a notice of repair which does not say what type of repair is being made and only receive one repair per text. Alongside this gas servicing appointments are sent out as 'repairs appointments' too. The resident receives a text message saying the repair person is arriving but not what for. This could be an annual service of the boiler or a repair. BTS informed the database does not allow them to change the wording (i.e. service or repair).

Action: Investigate changing the text to 'gas service' or 'repair', if possible, add the trade of the repair. i.e. plumbing, electrics, etc.

Value for money – The HSP were uncertain of the schedule of rates and felt they needed more information to confirm that repairs are value for money.

Action: provide schedule of rates to HSP.

9. Recommendations

Service level agreement between the Council and BTS should be reviewed as it's ambiguous and overdue for review.

Action: BTS and HSP to agree a timetable for this review

Relationships - Closer working relationships should be developed between BTS, housing officers, the concierge service and BTS. The Panel recommends quarterly meetings should be held between Housing and BTS managers to discuss the last quarter of performance and develop a learning log.

Action: Put this in place in 3 months and provide minutes of the meetings to the HSP at the 6-month review.

Text service - Improve the text service that confirms a repair appointment. Currently the same text is sent for any repair or gas service. Use the text to confirm a gas service or repair. If possible, include the type of repair/trade or service too. (i.e. gas service, repair, inspection, etc.).

Action: Develop and plan for this improvement and monitor satisfaction with it. Report to HSP at the 6-month review

BTS's freephone number

- Some tenants still call the Customer Service centre instead of the BTS Freephone number. Could the customer service centre number direct tenants to BTS via their press 1 for BTS, 2 for council tax etc.? Can a message inform of the Freephone number?
- Consider holding an advertising campaign for the 0800 freephone number.
- Consider providing an information leaflet/magnet to advertise the 0800-customer service number. Discuss with communications.
- Ensure good link from Luton Council website to BTS and information on both sites about the Freephone number.

Action: develop and implement an advertising/improvement plan and report back to HSP at the 6-month review.

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Monitoring tenant satisfaction - Work with the panel to agree how tenant satisfaction could be monitored by BTS in the future.

Action: Consider a quarterly/six monthly review of the data with TSP.

Independent audit of tenant satisfaction - consider this to validate the levels of service and performance presented by BTS.

Action: TSP to work with BTS on the parameters for this review.

STAR survey questions not the same as BTS survey questions - BTS to review their internal survey questions to allow effective monitoring.

Action: Link to internal audit of tenant satisfaction.

Formal complaints - Provide more information to HSP on formal complaints made and learning from these. This would help BTS to ensure they are ready for the requirements under the Housing Ombudsman Service. Agree from this how learning, improvements are reported to the wider tenant audience.

Action: HSP to work with BTS on an improvement plan and report back in 6 months.

Value for money – HSP recommend an independent review to determine if what's paid for repairs is value for money. HSP recommend this, because in their view as there is no means of market testing or of a contract term it is even more important to establish a means of proving value for charges against industry norms.

Statistics - Confirm to wider tenant audience how statistics are collected and used to improve the service.

Action: BTS and HSP to develop a plan for this and report back in 6 months' time.

10. Summary

BTS managers and staff are thanked for being pro-active in gathering information, attending the discussions and showing commitment in providing an excellent service to the tenants. HSP were a little disappointed that the issues and questions they raised at the first meeting in May had not been progressed by the time of the second meeting in August.

Although BTS provides an excellent service, a few minor changes could enhance the service. For change to occur smoothly BTS will need to consider management, political, financial and systems issues. For change to occur smoothly all parties will need to work in harmony and look at systems to invest/improve which would allow the minor changes to happen and improve the customer experience.

The HSP noted that many of the recommended changes will not require a significant restructure of processes, finances nor management style.

11. Next steps

The TSP will present their report to key strategic managers on Wednesday 22 September, 09.30am at Stockwood Discovery Centre.