



Performance Advisory Group (PAG)

3 June Board Room 4th Floor Barnet House

Main Meeting 6:30pm until 8:30pm

Present:

John Davies	(JD)	Chair
Aruna Bhatt	(AB)	Vice Chair
Norah Fallon	(NF)	Member
Maxwell Doku	(MD)	Member
Aletah Drake	(AD)	Member
Norah Fallon	(NF)	Member

Deborah Beckford	(DB)	Customer Engagement Co-Ordinator
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Zac Gonis	(ZG)	Observe
Brenda Mavata	(BM)	Observer
Linda Beard	(LB)	Observer

Terry Rogers	(TR)	Chair of TBG board
Carly Williamson	(CW)	Complaints & Information Manager
Elliott Sweetman	(ES)	Group director of Operations & Property
Laura Davison	(LD)	Head of customer experience
Emily Burley	(EB)	Project manager
Charlotte Raynor	(CR)	Project manager
Angel McLennan	(AM)	Project manager

Item	Title	Action
1	Apologies and welcome Apologies received from Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Carol Douet and Angela Shine	

2	Minute Approval All agreed the minutes were a true reflection.	Minutes to be published on website
3	Matters Arising No matters arising	
4 4.1	Barnet Homes complaints performance Overview The Barnet Group's complaints performance is significantly driven by that of the Gas and Repairs services, which routinely receive the highest volumes of complaints across the business. In 2018/19 Gas and Repairs complaints constituted 75.8% of all Barnet Homes complaints (766 of 1011). The number of Stage 1 complaints received has decreased from 1,297 in 2017/18 to 1,011 in 2018/19 (-28%). This performance is largely driven by a significant reduction in the number of complaints about the Gas service, which we must attribute to improved contractor performance. In 2017/18 we received 594 complaints about Gas, with a 54% reduction to 273 in 2018/19. During 2017/18 we received an average of 49 complaints (Stage 1) per month about the Gas service; in 2018/19 this reduced to 23 per month. Despite the lower total volume of complaints, performance in time has declined in comparison with the previous year (-3%) to 93% at Stage 1 and 92% at Stage 2, although this remains above the target of 90%. This decline in performance can be attributed to the Repairs and Estates teams due to the volume of complaints about these services, with a 3% reduction in performance-in-time within this department. The department has experienced high turnover of complaints-handling staff in 2018/19, which has affected service delivery. However, it should be noted that although performance in time has decreased for Repairs and Estates, departmental performance remains relatively strong at 96% in time; higher than the performance in Housing Management, Property, and Corporate Services, and equal to that of Housing Options.	Action DB to ask CW for a break down of the stage 1 complaints Action CW to arrange a meeting with AB to discuss LH complaints Action DB to invite Stephen Pugh to the September meeting Action CW to set up 1-2-1's with members to discuss certain area's in more detail

	<p>Generally, performance-in time may be addressed through managers being more proactive in reviewing their direct reports' QL work-trays to monitor performance and address any issues. More consideration could also be given to discussing more complex cases with the customer and agreeing an extension the time for a full response to be provided. The central Complaints and Information team does not have access to complaints once they been assigned to team-level complaints handlers, so it is essential that managers take ownership of complaints regarding their service areas.</p> <p>We have seen an improvement in the proportion of complaints fully upheld at Stage 1, with this reducing to 53% from 63%. The proportion of complaints either fully or partially upheld has improved by 6% at Stage 1 (70%) and 2% at Stage 2 (56%) despite an increase in fully upheld complaints at Stage 2 (+8% to 37% fully upheld). Complaints upheld performance is driven by that of the Repairs and Gas services due to the high volumes of complaints about these services areas, and we have seen a reduction in the percentage of complaints fully upheld about the Gas service from 89% in 2017/18 to 78% in 2018/19.</p> <p>Despite the reduction in the number of complaints being fully or partially upheld, we have seen an increase in the proportion of complaints escalated to Stage 2, from 4.9% in 2017/18 to 8.5% in 2018/19. Where Stage 1 complaints have gone down, Stage 2 complaints have increased, from 63 in 2017/18 to 86 in 2018/19 (+36.5%).</p> <p>The majority of Stage 2 escalations are for the Repairs service, and we see that the number of complaints about Repairs increased by 8.8% from 453 in 2017/18 to 493 in 2018/19. The number of Stage 2 complaints about the Repairs service increased by 68% to 32.</p> <p>The biggest cause of complaints at Stages 1 and 2 remains customer care, with high volumes also due to service failure and delay at Stage 1. The ability to report on themes of complaints has been in place for a year now, so trends will be compared and monitored to improve understanding of complaints.</p> <p>Complaints related to service failure resulted in the highest total Stage 1 compensation payments (£663.67), with 38% of all compensation being paid following complaints about this. Despite improvements to the service, the Gas service was responsible for 65% of compensation paid; however, it should be noted that compensation for missed appointments is</p>	
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	<p>eligible to be reclaimed from contractors. Improved reporting of compensation payments is also being introduced to enable comparisons over time. At Stage 2, 44% of total compensation paid (£400) was for complaints regarding customer care, with 44% of the total payment made by Housing Options.</p>	
4.2	<p>Stage 2 escalation drivers</p> <p>Themes are captured for each complaint; these reveal the key drivers for Stage 1 complaints to be customer care, delay, and service failure – particularly in the Gas and Repairs services. At Stage 2 in the higher volume service areas, the most common themes were delay (Repairs), customer care (Housing Options and Neighbourhood) and service failure (Housing Options).</p> <p>Requests to escalate to Stage 2 are confirmed or denied by the central Complaints and Information team. In order to escalate a complaint, the complainant is asked to demonstrate that the complaint has not been answered satisfactorily. This may include a failure to address all aspects of a complaint, which is frequently due to a failure to undertake timely remedial action. On occasion a complaint may be escalated to Stage 2 despite a lack of evidence, if it is considered to be in the customer's or Barnet Homes' best interests to progress it through the process.</p> <p>Reasons for Stage 2 escalations vary across the services, and can include a lack of communication, delays to works or remedial actions, disagreement with policy, dissatisfaction with compensation offer, or disagreement with decisions. Within the Gas and Repairs services, a failure to progress actions or works following a Stage 1 complaint is a common cause for requests to escalate.</p>	
4.3	<p>High-volume complaints areas</p> <p>Although performance regarding the Gas service has improved significantly in comparison with 2017/18, complaints-handling performance for the Repairs service has declined and the volume has increased. Despite performance in time reducing for both service areas compared to 2017/18, it does remain above the target of 90% and significantly influences the overall performance for the organisation.</p> <p>In contrast to the proportion of Gas complaints that are fully upheld decreasing compared to 2017/18, the Repairs performance in this area has worsened to 59% from 53%.</p>	

4.4	<p>The increase in the Repairs complaints has risen by 8.1% so these declines may partly be attributed to a growing workload for complaints handlers. Some resourcing issues have been felt by this service area, and further work will be completed with the service to understand the declining performance.</p> <p>Repairs</p> <p>There is an upward trend of complaints for the year, with Mears Repairs high number of complaints correlating with a period of poor overall performance. As a result of declining contract performance throughout the year, contractual action is now in place in the form of an improvement plan. Whilst this has started to have a positive impact upon other key performance indicators, complaints remain a concern.</p> <p>The number of complaints for Mears Repairs has risen considerably compared to previous years and the main drivers relate specifically to the service concerns identified through a service assessment in the autumn last year. This includes delays and failure to prepare for order priority changes, a lack of stability in staffing, poor management and supervision of staff, significant failures in the plumbing service, and generally poor planning and scheduling. Many of these failures relate to not following contractual and internal procedures, which Barnet Homes has identified and managed.</p> <p>Barnet Homes has requested specific analysis to be carried out by Mears on complaints. This request has recently been fulfilled, however the information has not been presented in a way that will enable future monitoring and assessment. The existing General Manager of Mears is leaving the contract and a replacement is due to start imminently. Barnet Homes has met with him and the Regional Director of Mears and they have agreed to place complaints at the top of their priority list. They have committed to providing Barnet Homes with full analysis and actions plans related to complaints in a meaningful template. This will be assessed at every monthly contract group to identify trends and improvements.</p>	
4.5	<p>Gas</p> <p>Gas performance in 2018/19 is much-improved compared to Robert Heath's poor performance in 2017/18. Whilst we expected initial difficulties due to work inherited from Robert Heath, Mears Gas' performance resulted in declining complaints through the year. We expect seasonal variations with an increase in complaints in the colder months, and the</p>	

4.6	<p>number of complaints has increased slightly compared to the warmer quarters; however, positively, the volumes are significantly lower when compared with the same time in the previous financial year. Barnet Homes set a challenging target of no more than 60 complaints in Q4, which usually is the Gas service's most difficult period; however, this target was met.</p> <p>There remain areas to improve, notably reducing missed appointments, improving customer care and call handling, and generally communicating better. Despite the decrease in complaints received in 2018/19, the percentage of complaints being fully or partly upheld is also generally high regarding the Gas service (78% in total), although this is improved on the previous year's performance.</p> <p>Housing Options</p> <p>In 2018/19, Housing Options complaints focused primarily on the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor customer service (27/75) • Suitability of temporary accommodation (19/75) • Delays in provision of service (16/75) <p>The number of complaints that involve poor customer service decreased in 2018/19 compared to the previous year, from 40 to 27. The implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) in May 2018 placed a significant additional administrative burden upon housing officers. Customers have most frequently complained about being unable to contact their housing officer, or not having received responses to emails and telephone calls. Both Housing Needs Officers and Housing Needs Managers have large caseloads and the HRA has led to capacity issues around making contact with clients. Despite these additional challenges, the number of complaints in this area have decreased by a third.</p> <p>Complaints about suitability of temporary accommodation have risen this year. These complaints were generally in regard to the condition and location of the temporary accommodation. The compliance programme is ongoing and Compliance Officers inspect temporary accommodation to ensure that it meets our lettings standard. When a property is of a poor standard, the service hands it back to the provider and discontinue using it.</p> <p>Complaints regarding a delay in the client's rehousing or banding process often arise as a result of a lack of</p>	
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4.7	<p>communication from their housing officer. As stated above, Housing Needs Officers are experiencing large caseloads and greater administrative burdens due to the HRA Act. The service is monitoring the compliance with the HRA Act in regard to completing casework within set timeframes and will continue this into 2019-20.</p> <p>The percentage of upheld complaints was only 8%, a significant reduction on the previous year of 17% upheld complaints. Clients can often link their general frustration with the application process and the lack of suitable and affordable properties in Barnet to other unsupported general complaints about the service they receive.</p> <p>Neighbourhood</p> <p>In 2018/19, there were 9 Complaints related to ASB of which 4 were partially upheld. Upon investigation, the 4 that were partially upheld were due to a lack of follow up contact by an officer. In one case the customer had a 10-day call back as arranged by the Contact Centre but the customer expectation was that she would be called back within a day.</p> <p>To address this, a training session for the Contact Centre has taken place where the importance of advising when the call back will happen e.g. within 24hrs, within 5 days, within 10 days etc. was discussed. It is hoped that this will keep the customer more informed regarding next actions.</p> <p>Complaints related to the Neighbourhood team of which 16 partially upheld and 7 were fully upheld. Of the 7 that were fully upheld, these largely related to communication, either that no actions had been added to prompt the officer to contact the resident, the wrong email address had been added to the system or the officer had not replied in a timely manner.</p> <p>Similarly, of the 16 that were partially upheld, the trend appears to be that of a communication and expectation issue, where either the officer did not communicate in time either because the customer expected a communication in a shorter timescale, or that the officer did not respond until a complaint had been made (4 of these). There were also 5 complaints that related to issues that crossed various teams that were not solely a neighbourhood issue but the response was done by Neighbourhood as the main issue was for them.</p> <p>Staff use of QL is still an issue across the business as some complaints were due to not having a call back but in these cases, QL has been checked and no contacts had been</p>	
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4.8	<p>added to show that the customer had contacted us. Each team needs to ensure that they update QL with customer contact and they must assign a relevant action. If QL is not used then the customer experience is immediately compromised as contacts are not visible.</p> <p>A team briefing has been held and staff have all been advised about the importance of checking the contact details with residents (correct email/phone no) and setting expectations. Just as the Contact Centre have been briefed about the importance of managing the customer expectations, the Neighbourhood team must do the same and give clear timescales when actions will happen. To advise that “you will be called back” is not sufficient and the timelines must be made clear by all staff.</p> <p>Where there were complaints that related to issues that crossed various teams that were not solely a Neighbourhood issue, the managers should to meet and discuss these cases and agree what action should be taken and who should own this action.</p> <p>Lessons learnt and service improvement</p> <p>Repairs</p> <p>A full improvement plan with specific and tailored performance targets has been introduced, and will be monitored on a weekly basis by the General Manager of Mears, and Senior Contracts Manager at Barnet Homes. This will then be reviewed at Contract Group Monthly, with an escalation to Core Group on a quarterly basis. This improvement plan has definitive targets to improve their overall service offering. Performance will be closely monitored in Q1 2019/20.</p> <p>Although the new General Manager is not yet in place and he will shape the direction of the service, the following areas have been targeted for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Control Process – this process monitors the job at each stage; however, the schedulers were failing to use this. The Regional Director noted this failure and is now monitoring this. The new General Manager will be responsible for this moving forward and will take action against staff who failure to adhere to policy • Complaints analysis and tracking – Mears has committed to using complaint data to improve its service and 	
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	<p>will analyse and present data to Barnet Homes on agreed dates. This will then form part of Contract Group meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity – Mears has altered the way they can monitor their operatives to ensure they are working as per the terms of the contractual requirements. This has been flagged and is now being monitored robustly with action taken against staff. • Scheduling – this is the main cause of issues and a review of the service will be undertaken by the new General Manager. 	
4.9	<p>Gas</p> <p>The Gas team has requested analysis of complaints regarding customer care, which stands out as a concern despite the improved performance in 2018/19. Appropriate actions will be taken in order to address this, and complaints will continue to be monitored. Promisingly, April 2019's performance continues to improve.</p>	
4.10	<p>Housing Options</p> <p>Housing Options is carrying out a service review in 2019, which includes completing 1-to-1 client interviews to gather feedback on the Housing Options processes. This is expected to be completed in Q1 2019/20 and the outcomes will be focused on developing new processes to improve the service provided to clients.</p> <p>Some proposed changes to the Temporary Accommodation Team function will be implemented in Q1 2019/20 as a review of the team will reach its completion. These changes are anticipated to more efficiently handle temporary accommodation tenants' complaints and concerns through the centralised Accommodations Solutions Team</p> <p>As part of the outcomes of the Housing Options review, the service will be addressing ways to manage clients' expectations earlier on in their Housing Options journey, with statistics given out at the first appointment on social housing availability and waiting times.</p> <p>The Housing Options service is also currently in the process of recruiting additional Housing Needs Officers, as well as exploring the options of administrative roles within teams to relieve some of this burden and allow more time for dedicated casework.</p>	

5	Bench marking	
5.1	Background <p>It is a contractual requirement of the Barnet Homes Management Agreement with the Council that we participate annually in the full annual HouseMark benchmarking exercise reviewing both cost and quality related measures. Additionally, effective benchmarking allows for informed decisions regarding service reviews, performance management and organisational efficiency.</p>	
5.2	Benchmarking Analysis <p>The results of the 2017/18 financial year benchmarking exercise were available in February 2019. This exercise is a management agreement requirement which allows valuable comparisons with our peers across London on a wide range of cost and quality measures. The general areas which are analysed as part of the exercise are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service area costs (direct, overhead and total) • Service performance • Customer satisfaction 	Action DB to send out the full report to members
6	Customer Experience	
6.1	The purpose of our discovery exercise... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How easy is it for customers to get what they need? How can we make it easier? 2. What matters most to customers? How can we make customer experience feel better? 3. What problems do our people experience when providing services? Where are we wasting effort and/or adding little value? 	
6.2	Customer Experience Discovery exercise – the how... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering and analysis and case study reviews to understand how enquiries come into us and how well they are handled • Team engagement – shadowing, skills self-assessments, workshops, activity logs to better understand problems • Customer Journey Mapping – speaking with customers and teams to understand what matters most and 	

<p>6.3</p>	<p>current pain points (service specific and cross-cutting themes) Do we know our customers and what is most important to them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile working requirements gathering <p>Customer Experience Customer engagement</p> <p>Since September 2018, through customer journey mapping we have engaged with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89 customers via interviews • 215 customers via surveys • 26 customers via focus groups <p>Customer journey focus: Repairs, Antisocial Behaviour, Rents, Housing Options Identified cross-cutting concerns and improvements too about experience of Barnet Homes</p>	
<p>6.4</p>	<p>Customer Experience Discovery exercise key findings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is not easy for customers get what they need from us – handling of enquiries is problematic for customers and teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main Contact Centre (CC) is not equipped to deal with the majority of non-Repairs enquiries • ‘Right first time’ handling by CC is low for repairs enquiries too – supporting processes do not work • Multiple access points cause problems for customers and teams • 80% of enquiries dealt with by Housing Management duty teams could be handled by CC in future 2. Existing ways of working (processes and systems) make some journeys very problematic for customers and effort heavy for teams to assist <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is especially difficult for customers with non-simple repairs (complex processes and no mobile working), new Housing Options customers (post HRA review) and leaseholders (unclear offer) • Processes shared across teams = a lack of customer ownership and lots of internal chasing 	

6.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting things right is overcomplicated e.g. missed appointments and repair progress checks <p>Rental Income Team Discovery exercise findings</p> <p><i>The main themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to make it easier and more convenient for customers to pay their rent We need to broaden the payment options available. Customers know when they haven't paid their rent and feel that they need more support offered instead of repeated phone calls and letters requesting payment. Lack of clear communication from the beginning of the tenancy 	
6.6	<p>ASB Customer Journey Mapping Discovery exercise findings</p> <p><i>The main themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to report ASB is difficult: passed to different departments, given different information from different people, officers can be rude and/or abrupt Communication during open ASB case is poor: No updates, customer has to chase to find out what is going The process is unclear/customers not getting what they wanted out of a case 	DB to set up a separate workshop for members to look at this in more detail
6.7	<p>Customer Experience Discovery exercise key recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Make it easy for customers to get what they need from us <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equip the Contact Centre to deal with the majority of customer enquiries with a 'right first time' approach Improve supporting processes to enable improved right first time by the Contact Centre e.g. appointment scheduling Encourage self-serve where this meets customer needs through exploring new options e.g. a payment app, online Direct Debit set up and encouraging use of existing self-serve e.g. balance checks via our portal 	

	<p>2. Equip our people to consistently do best what matters most to our customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign our most problematic processes to provide better value for customers and the business – improve repairs delivery, the front-end of the Housing Options service and how we provide services to leaseholders • Make experiences feel better – a) address customer pain points and b) equip teams to consistently get right what customers have said matters most e.g. for repairs, next appointment booked in before operative leaves e.g. cross-service improvements such as customer care training and a relaunch of our customer service standards • Ensure we are measuring what matters most e.g. ‘was your first appointment kept?’, ‘did our teams treat you with respect?’ and that we are equipped to do something when we identify problems • Introduce a more proactive approach to keeping customers updated with technology supports this e.g. updates on repairs progress, updates about out of service lifts • Introduce real-time mobile working for priority mobile activities e.g. raising orders whilst on visits 	
7	<p>Members Update</p> <p>No updates</p>	
8	<p>AOB</p> <p>AB asked for an update on the fire doors</p> <p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Monday 22 July 6.30-8.30pm CL-4.1 Chapman Room - Colindale</p>	

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