

Customer Voice Service Review – October 2020

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About Customer Voice

We are group of tenants and leaseholders who meet weekly, supported by Derby Homes Engagement Officers, to scrutinise and recommend improvements to the services Derby Homes delivers to its customers.

Customer Voice Members:

Shirley Green (Chair)
 Lyn Gadsby (Acting Chair)
 Allison Burke
 Cindy Carter-Foster
 Gill Studdard
 Hayley Birch
 Heather White
 Kevin Ellaway
 Lesley Buxton-Kay
 Patricia Bhurton
 Roy McHay
 Win Buchan

Phase One – Customer Survey

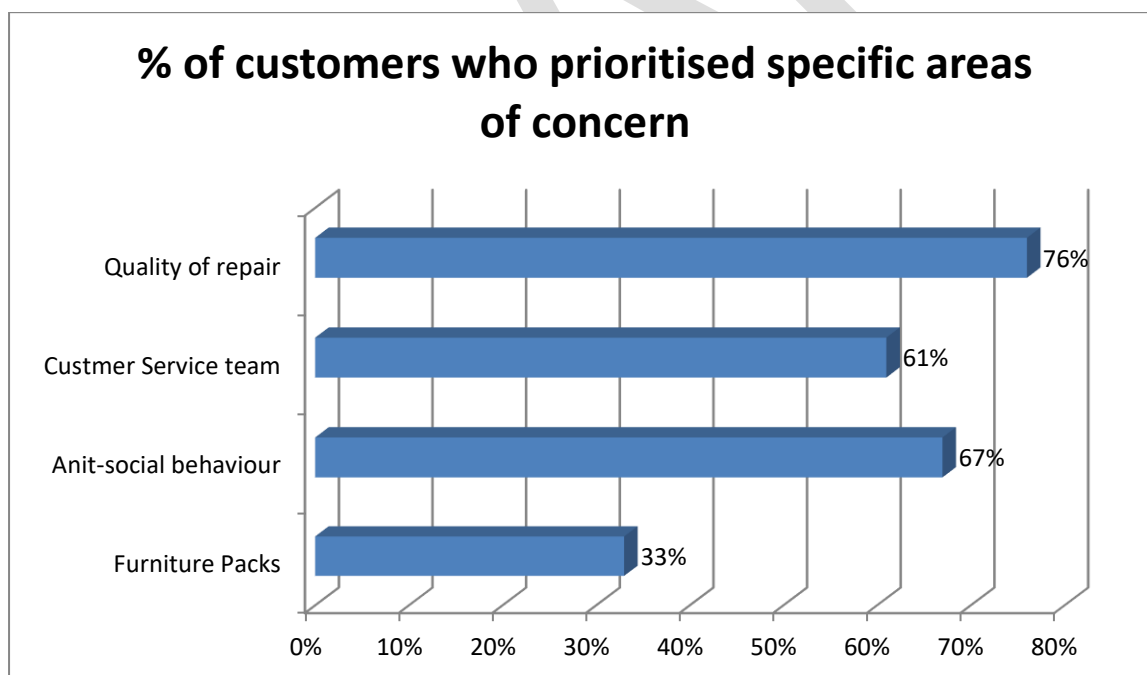
To help us identify what areas of Derby Homes services we wanted to look into, we created a survey to send out to customers requesting feedback and any specific concerns.

The following options, given to customers in the survey, were decided after Customer Voice spoke with the Complaints team, looked at complaint trends and reviewed KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) to establish areas that were low performing or receiving a high number of complaints.

We agreed the following issues;

- Anti-social behaviour
- Quality of repairs
- Furniture packs
- Customer service team

During November 2019, the survey was sent out through email and Facebook to approximately 5000 customers and we received 46 Responses (Appendix 1). The highest reported issues were around quality of repairs with 76% of respondents listing it as “the most important” and 67% of customers listing anti-social behaviour as a priority.



We then created a scoping document to help prioritise what we needed to investigate further but we considered the primary question to be “How frequently do repeat repair jobs occur and what are the underlying causes?”

Phase Two – Researching the Scope

Meetings with staff

On 10/02/20 we met with the Contracts Manager Responsive Maintenance and the Head of Repairs to clarify customers initial responses and to help us fully understand the service they provide. This was a valuable exercise for Customer Voice as it highlighted further areas for review. We expressed our own ideas and identified improvements to develop the service such as creating a repairs handbook to give to new customers. This could include household information, basic repairs, repairs procedures, and the responsibilities of customers and Derby Homes. It would also give opportunity to highlight other services available from Derby City Council such as the Handy Person Service and Pest Control for example; services not covered within Derby Homes tenancy agreements.

The Contracts Manager Responsive Maintenance explained that customers are sometimes unaware of their responsibilities and call Derby Homes to a visit their property to carry out maintenance that is their responsibility. Having a handbook or an online guide and handy tips would hopefully help alleviate these calls and visits.

We expressed value in having a designated repairs team within the customer service team who could be specifically trained on repairs and could organise some shadowing with the operatives. However, The Contracts Manager Responsive Repairs highlighted the difficulties due to a high turnover of staff in the team.

Research with other providers

During the investigation we contacted other Local Authorities such as Stoke-on-Trent and Rutland Council to see if they had a repairs booklet for their customers to use as examples when developing our own, specifically, making it user friendly and the types of information we needed to include. In addition, we asked them how they managed their repairs process and looked into our own policies and procedures for comparison.

Both Rutland Council and Stoke-on-Trent have their own dedicated repairs teams to triage calls before allocating jobs. Both feedback that they found this way of working to be efficient and beneficial to both the organisation and customers.

Whilst speaking with Rutland Council, they explained that they now prioritise Guttering jobs. This was due to having a lot of damp issues in their properties. By prioritising the guttering jobs it prevents any damp/leaks getting into the property meaning less work and upset for the customer and Derby Homes.

Toolbox Talks

Moving forward from this, we attended 'Toolbox Talks' with the Operatives to find out what they thought were the issues/barriers to them completing the jobs effectively and contributing to the 'quality of repairs'. This is a general meeting held weekly to distribute roles and responsibilities and highlight any issues. The toolbox talks that we attended consisted of four trades: Plumbing, Roofing, Electrical and Plastering.

One of the issues raised from the Operatives was about how repairs and maintenance work was allocated and accurate job details/notes being passed to the Operative attending the job. Operatives felt that they didn't always have the correct information, tools or long enough time slots to complete the jobs correctly.

The Operatives felt that they and the customer service team need further training on how the planning system works to provide them with a better understanding of the various stages and procedures between reporting and completion of a repair. This would also allow the customer service team a better understanding of job allocations. Operatives felt that customers should be advised by the customer service team what the visit is for, at the time of booking the appointment. For example, where there is a broken window, a customer sometimes assumes that Derby Homes are attending to replace the item on the first visit whereas they most likely are attending to measure for a replacement. Operatives are often met with disgruntled customers who may have taken a day off work. Providing additional training for the customer service team or having a triage team would hopefully help keep the customer informed.

At the electrical Toolbox talk concerns were raised about attending blocks of flats for light replacements. Mostly they have to attend more than once as they don't know which light it is that needs replacing. If there was a floorplan in each block with each light numbered and Derby Homes has information about the lights at each number, they can report this to the Customer Service Team who can raise the job and the correct equipment could be sourced prior to the visit.

Planning team

We met with the Works Planner from the planning team to discuss the concerns raised by the Operatives. When discussing these with the planning team, they explained that every job was priced in accordance with the "schedule of rate". A schedule of rates is a set priced list of repairs that allocate a time slot to each job.

It was explained by the team that they had limitations with the system and struggle to allow extra time for Operatives at jobs.

The planning team explained that they sometimes get call outs to jobs that do not form part of Derby Homes responsibilities. Having a repairs booklet and online guides would help provide clarity to customers.

Another barrier to repairs being completed effectively is My Account, it can sometimes provide issues with repairs being reported as it isn't as technical and specific as the team would like. Allowing customers to report their repairs online and at a convenient time to them is a useful tool, but the current system isn't very user friendly.

The issue of the same operative completing return visits was discussed although this is not currently a set procedure. It was also explained that assigning the same operative may create delays in repairs being completed due to staff absence and other repair diary commitments. For example, the planning team were currently

assigning approximately 60 emergency repairs daily. These would take priority and could require the operative assigned to the planned return visit.

It was also discussed that sending the same operative can create difficulties where the quality of repair is unsatisfactory. However, the planning team do have the option to block an operative being assigned to a property at the customer request. It was acknowledged that in this scenario the operative's supervisor would address any issues with the operative. In addition, the planning team would not receive information about unsatisfactory return visits and the information would generally come to management through the customer complaints procedure as part of the reporting process.

Customer Voice feel that the system should allow for it to be flagged if the same job is being put on the system numerous times and an operative is having to keep visiting about the same job.

When addressing the complete process of reporting to repair completion, it was explained that communication can break down when customers report and the wrong information is sent to operatives. For example, an electrician, being sent to repair a gas operated shower system. This supports what Customer Voice evidenced when listening to the recorded telephone conversations and highlights a customer service training need.

Customer service calls

We were given the opportunity to listen to phone calls that had been received through the customer service team which had different scenarios of repairs.

All calls that are received through the Customer Service Team are recorded for training and monitoring purposes. We listened to the recordings to see if there were any trends. To decide which calls were listened to, we provided the Customer Service Team Leader with a spreadsheet of return to jobs. He pulled off a random selection of telephone calls for us to listen to. We wanted to investigate the repair to see if we could find out the reasons for the repair not being completed.

After making the calls and carrying out investigations, we found out that on some calls it was apparent that a barrier was the customers and staff (Customer service team) are both non-technical and not trained in that area. It makes it extremely difficult to determine the correct trade to send with the correct tools, meaning the quality of repair is affected or not completed.

Having dedicated triage team would hopefully improve this situation due to their training and knowledge.

Unsatisfied Customers/Text Messaging

Once a repair job has been actioned on the Operatives devise, a text message is sent to the customer asking if they was satisfied, if they are not they press 1. We spoke with the team who manage this process to find out more.

Upon investigation, any dissatisfied customers receive a call to find out more about their issue and look to resolve. This information could be used to pick up trends and look at ways of improving the service. To learn from customers and improve the service, we feel it would be beneficial to have a survey sent to customers via my account with more specific questions relating to their repair. This would also enable Derby Homes to focus on the good areas as well as negative.

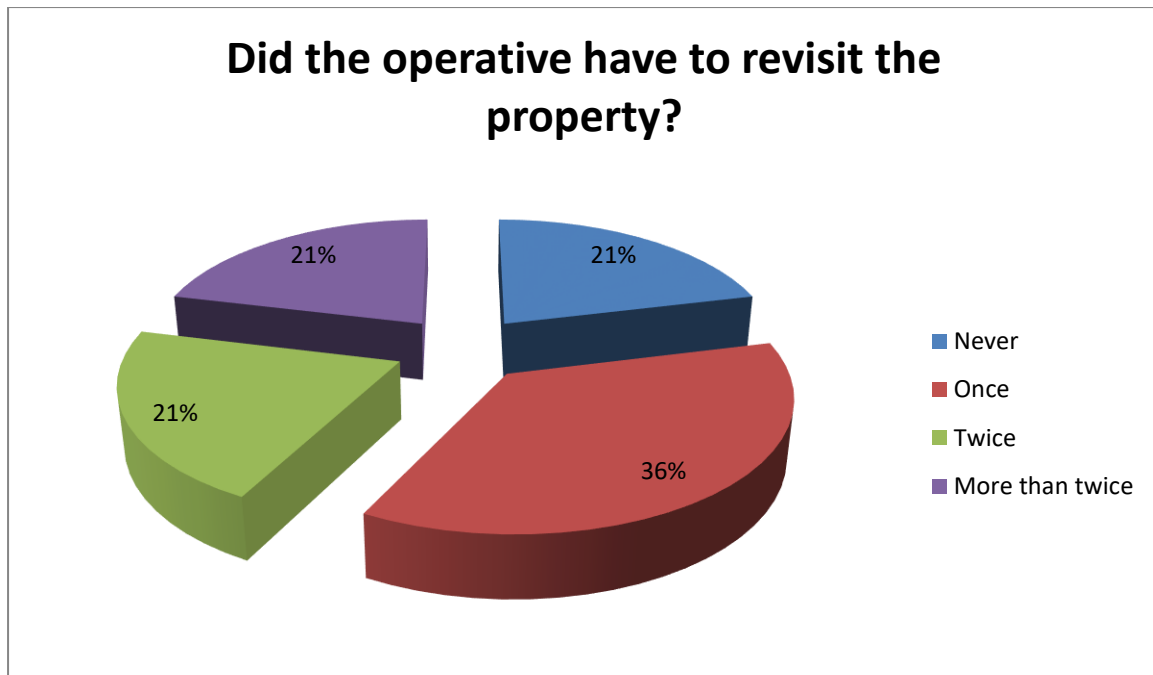
Complaints

We looked at complaints that Derby Homes has received from customers regarding repairs and the return revisits to individual jobs. Although, it gave us a brief insight, it was felt that the sample was too small and further investigations would need to be carried out with the customers in general to get a greater perspective.

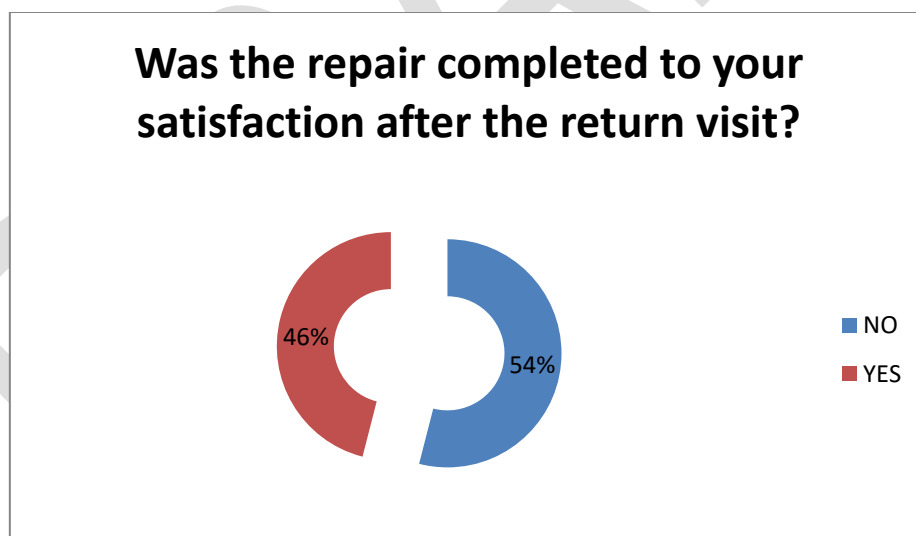
We were keen to receive feedback from customers and had planned workshops during March – April 2020 to invite customers who had a recent repair to get an insight on their experience. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these had to be cancelled. However, as we still wanted customers to be involved, we developed a Customer Complaints Satisfaction Survey to send out instead. The survey was sent through email and Facebook to 140 customers who had complained about maintenance work carried out during the previous 6 month period.

We received 15 customer survey responses (appendix 2) and found there were elements where customers were dissatisfied. Although we received only a small number of responses, the individual issues raised had common threads and are therefore included in this report.

50% of the complainants said the operatives were not aware of the repair details and in every case the customer had to explain the job. After the initial visit, only 21% of respondents did not require further visits from an operative.

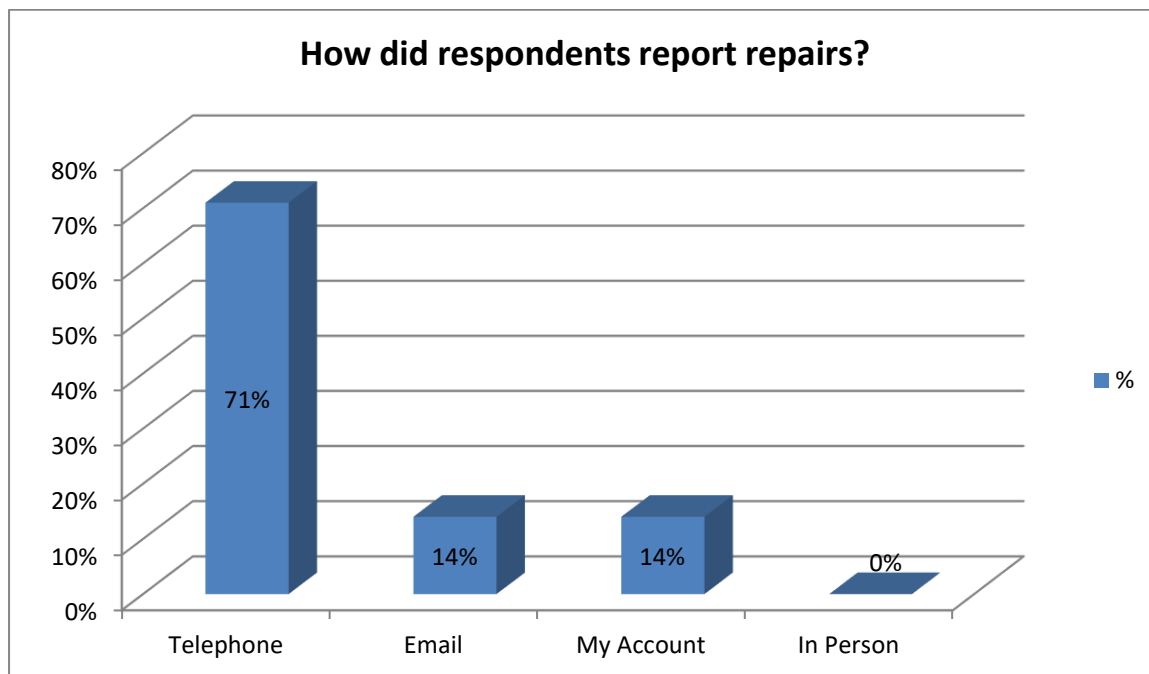


Reasons given by customers for the revisits and dissatisfaction fell into 3 categories: communication breakdown; poor work quality; incorrect or missing equipment. Of those, 3/15 customers still had the repairs outstanding, (up to 5 months later) at the time of the survey.



The responding customers' recommendations focused predominantly around improving communication to ensure the correct person, equipment and parts are sent to the property. Within the customers additional comments there is a general sense that the quality of repairs should be upgraded.

The breakdown in communication may also be a result of how customers report repairs and a simple case of misinterpretation. Customers who completed the Complaints Satisfaction Survey reported using 3 different methods of reporting. 28% of these methods are done electronically and therefore cannot be explored further by the customer service team. In those cases, the team is reliant on the information provided and customer's knowledge of the work required when recording.



Following customer consultation we concludesurvey

We recently met with the Contracts Manager Responsive Maintenance to discuss our findings to date.

It was explained to us that the Responsive Maintenance team are creating a new repairs diagnostic programme. We were pleased to hear this as it should alleviate some of the current issues raised in this report and is aimed to be operating in May 2021. Customer Voice has been invited to be involved in the evaluation process during December 2020 prior to the programme going live.

It would address some of the current issues, these include; a detailed online reporting system to reduce the cost of return visits. While visits for measuring doors, for example, would still need to be undertaken, other repairs such as leaking toilets would be allocated to a specific operative and the work would be undertaken in a timely manner. In addition, customers will be able to select dates of availability for the repairs and therefore, reduce no access visits.

It was agreed that the improved system would not provide a consistent and inclusive service for customers unable to access internet services and would require either an alternative reporting provision or an improved version of the telephone reporting system. However, providing customers with a hand booklet and handy tips would help with customers not online.

The consultation echoed the need for Customer Service training specific to reporting and the repairs process. There is a concern that the implementation of the new diagnostic programme, while making good progress, is a lengthy process and further unsatisfactory services would continue in the interim.

The current Pandemic and subsequent lockdown has impacted on our plans to finalise our findings. We had organised to:

- Shadow operatives during repairs and maintenance work
- Review job sheets (not possible due to sharing personal customer data via email)
- Run customer workshops to gain feedback on recent repairs and maintenance

The recommendations set out below are agreed by Customer Voice. However, there may be further action required by the Customer Voice team and additional recommendations when services can resume to normal.

Customer Voice Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Comments from management	Update in six months time
1.	A repairs triage team dedicated to deal with repair calls from customers and be trained to advise when a repair may need several visits, e.g. For taking measurements of window / doors to a further visit to fit them.	From listening to Customer Service calls we found some return visits could have been avoided if the correct equipment was supplied. Greater Customer Service clarity was needed during reporting and non technical people were not clear about the work repair details and specification. A triage team will ensure continuity. The team can be specifically trained to understand repair reporting procedures and follow a given check list to inform operatives clearly.	Agree to scope - Obviously, this is a big change from the current way of doing things. We do believe that specially trained triage repairs staff would bring benefits in the repairs reporting process. This could improve customer interaction and bring some efficiencies to the service.	
2.	Create repairs booklet to include mutual responsibilities for customers and Derby Homes	Our research shows no clarity of what constitutes a repair and whether it is customer / Derby Homes responsibility. It would also identify any customer or property exemptions. A repairs booklet would create a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities. Provide guidance for simple work where operatives are not necessarily required – Changing light bulbs or unblocking systems, broken toilet seats or fencing, for example.	Agree to scope - The web site is in a period of development. A repairs booklet could be produced online. However, for those tenants with no internet access other formats such as a booklet can be looked at.	

3.	Provide the repairs booklet online for existing customers and as a hard copy for new customers.	Online - to reduce cost. Hard copy – with an aim to eventually provide every household with a copy during the sign-up process	Agreed – as above. Some spare booklets could be provided for the elderly or those without computers.	
4.	Return repair visits to be undertaken by the same operative where possible.	Our survey highlighted return visits with different operative caused difficulties in communicating the problem and varied operative skill base. Providing the same operative sets expectations for customers and stops promises not being followed through. It avoids communication breakdown.	Agreed - Wherever possible we try to send the same operative back on the same job. However due to holidays, sickness and unforeseen circumstances this is not always possible.	
5.	Prioritise guttering and roof tile replacements to stop damp in properties	It would prevent further problems at the properties requiring more serious repairs. When researching other authorities and their repairs policy, those who made guttering and roof tiling a priority have a significant reduction in associated repairs.	Agreed - Our capital team already have a roofing programme. The Repairs Team are identifying issues and working with the Capital Team to prioritise which roofs need doing first.	
6.	Individual communal area lights to be labelled on a floor plan as reference guide and available to customers (on notice board or similar)	Evidenced through consultations with operatives and planning team. Provides clear information when reporting repairs. Required equipment and parts can be easily identified at point of reporting. It would avoid operatives returning.	Agree to scope - With over 240 blocks with multiple floors this would be a massive undertaking and might be difficult for some residents to understand. We are looking If it would be possible to number each light with a small sticker on the ceiling so our residents can report which light is out and	

			we will not go to the wrong light.	
7.	Planners staff to shadow operatives	After attending the Tool-Box talks, we found training and shadowing could improve the allocation of jobs. Time scales for allocated repairs could be modified to fit the work. Planners would have a clear understanding of additional time consumption – not having clear access to the repair impeded by customer's furniture and personal belongings, for example.	Agreed - Subject to Covid-19 issues it would be good for CST staff and planners to shadow on occasion. We have done this previously however for new staff and for refreshing the understanding of our current staff this is something we can re-introduce.	
8.	My Account to be updated and made more user-friendly.	Customers identified in the survey and that the current My Account requires attention to make more user friendly. Feedback reflects it is not user friendly, time consuming and difficult to report repairs. Improving the electronic access and content would improve and increase customer usage. Repairs could be reported more accurately and it could be used as a point of feedback, consultation and complaints.	Agreed - We are currently looking at procuring a new online system to log repairs, using a diagnostic system with the ability to book appointments online. In November are introducing a video reporting system where our customers can show us a video or photographs of the issue or repair that needs doing. This will allow for more accurate diagnosis and also give us a greater opportunity of doing the job right first time.	
9.	Information about simple repairs with diagram / videos available online and on My Account	From Tool-Box talks and planners we recommend an online how-to guide for basic repairs not the responsibility	Agreed - We currently have put together a number of videos and how to guides	

		of Derby Homes. Supports customers and reduces invalid reporting. For example, online “how-to” tutorials could include: bleeding radiators, tightening kitchen cabinet doors, replacing a toilet seat, etc. Therefore, reducing costs and operative call-outs.	including condensation and boiler pressurisation etc. As time goes on these will be added to. We are working with the Comms team to have these put onto the website. Once the online repairs reporting system is up and running it should be possible to include this information in the on line repairs area.	
10.	A satisfaction survey to be sent through My Account after repair has been undertaken. Triage team/Customer service team to take necessary action of dissatisfied customer response - including, where required, contacting the customer, schedule a revisit, inform the relevant repairs team.	Customer Voice identified a need to have a system that collates information regarding dissatisfaction with a greater and more immediate response. It reduces costs to further property damage, creates good customer service and identifies poor practices. It highlights strengths and weakness within the process.	Agree to scope - We carry out approximately 35,000 repairs each year. results as they come back. We are looking at a new texting system. This will allow our customers to give more feedback both positive and negative. The system should be able to categorise and separate the information into specified areas without human intervention.	

Appendix 1 - Customer Voice Survey 2019
Appendix 2 - Complaint Satisfaction Survey

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