

Auditors *working with* *Westward*

Estate Inspections at Tarka Housing.

Introduction and Methodology

The Resident Auditor Team reviewed and assessed the Estate Inspection process using the following methodology.

Site Based and Desktop Review

- Resident Auditors accompanied Housing Officers on Estate Inspections.
- The information was collated from Housing Officers Estate Inspection.
- The Auditor Team accompanied all Housing Officers on all Estate Inspections over a two month period.
- Assessed Individual Housing Officers management of process on their Estate Inspections.
- Assessed and monitored the process between Housing Officers/ Repairs and Surveyors department.
- Investigated long standing repairs constantly reported by Housing Officers.
- Reviewed the effectiveness of IBS system as part of the Estate Inspection process.
- A telephone survey of 100 tenants was carried out to ascertain their understanding of and satisfaction with the Estate Inspection process (see appendix)

Interviews.

The Auditor Team interviewed Joshua Jackson who is responsible for Asset Management.

- He has comprehensive knowledge of Tarka.
- Very professional.
- He has a good understanding of the Estate Inspection process and welcomes the Auditor teams input.
- Auditors learnt about Bob Paddon who is the Charge-hand for the direct labour force at Tarka Housing.

The Auditor Team interviewed Paul Wingard who is responsible for repairs and maintenance.

- He stated he does not read Housing Officers e-mails, but then went on to say his Repairs Officers read them.
- Paul knew all the people who were responsible for repairs.
- Paul mentioned that Tarka Work Contractors say they contact all tenants via telephone to arrange to carry out the works.
- He said he knew all the staff of Tarka Works who carry out 70% of the work.
- Auditors are puzzled how 30% (other work to contractors) is allocated.

- Auditors were told that customer satisfaction on repairs was 95%. Auditors questioned this because it does not tie in with information regarding complaints or speaking to tenants whilst on telephone or estate inspections.

Neither Josh Jackson nor Paul Wingard gave any detailed information about contractors i.e., Appollo who are based at Tarka Housing.

Strengths:-

- Resident Auditors were very impressed with Tarka Housing Officers and thought they were very professional.
- The Housing Officers recognised problems before they had developed into complaints.
- Tarka publishes a procedure on Estate Inspections that includes:-
 - Regular visits to Estates from Housing Officers.
 - An appointment system for tenants to speak directly to their Housing Officers.
- The majority of staff are keen to see improvements made to the Estate Inspection process.
- The Auditor Team recognises Craig Jarman's conscientious approach to work.
- There is monitoring of disability and ethnicity.

Areas for Improvement:-

- Initial and ongoing training is needed for Housing Officers on Estate Inspection process,
- Area allocation, i.e. review individual Housing Officer areas.
- Logging of data.
- Better time management.
- Tenant recognition of Housing Officers.
- Better feedback between all departments.
- Workload of Caretaker is too great and could be managed better.
- Completion of repairs should be mandatory, as it was discovered that some repairs were never completed.
- Utilisation of Housing Officers reports (photos etc).
- Calendar (change the way Tarka Housing publicises inspections.)

Value for Money Review for new Process Recommendations:-

- Housing Officers valuable time is wasted chasing up existing repairs, when detailed information, including reports and photographs sent by Housing Officers, is not always utilised by other departments.
- Lack of feedback from repairs/surveyors team on spreadsheets, causes problems for Housing Officers, when relaying updated information back to tenants.
- All updates to be initialled.
- All repairs must be carried out within an acceptable time limit, as currently some set timescales are not being met.
- The Auditor Team feels if issues were addressed and the system working correctly, approximately 25% of Housing Officer time would be saved allowing them to do their job more effectively.

- Better cover is needed i.e., illness/holidays.
- A universal Housing Officer spreadsheet utilised correctly would save considerable time by all concerned.

Recommendations:-

- The Auditors feel that a new leaflet should be produced to replace the Calendar that tenants currently receive.
- Current Calendar is sent out annually. The new leaflet should be sent out quarterly or half yearly.
- Better clarity on Housing Officers/Surveyors areas for tenants i.e., using current area coding.
- New leaflet should include photographs and basic information about Housing Officers.
- Better initial and ongoing training for Housing Officers.
- Housing Officers to put together a more detailed timetable of all Estate visits either monthly/bi-monthly/quarterly visits.
- Improved maps for areas.
- Reduce areas for inspection i.e., by reshuffling.
- Individual Housing Officer areas should be reorganised.
- Logging of data should be initialled
- Time guidelines/limit for logging jobs.
- To reduce Housing Officers time spent chasing the existing repairs.
- Better cover for illness/absenteeism.
- Better structure needed to improve the process.
- More time to be spent on estates to improve rapport with tenants.
- Universal spreadsheet for Housing Officers.
- Better communication/co-operation between departments.
- Help for Craig Jarman the Caretaker.
- All repairs must be completed in an acceptable time and timescales must be adhered to.
- All areas of Housing Officers reports/information and photos should be used in an efficient way.
- Housing issues if telephoned in should be logged immediately (same day), this to be followed by an e-mail same day and to be initialled by Housing Officer.
- Reflecting on this report we feel that in areas such as Asset Management and Customer Care a future Audit of Repairs and Surveyors would be necessary.

Interviews with Housing Officers.

- Housing Officers at present spend 4.5 to 6 days per month out of the office on Estate Inspections, but they are unable to carry out all the visits thoroughly or to fit in appointments with tenants.
- Craig Jarman is highly thought of by all staff involved during this process.
- Housing Officers are keen to improve the existing system.
- The annual calendar is not frequent enough therefore cannot be updated when/if changes are made.
- Re-charge and other update information are poor.
- More training and better packs would be welcome.

Value for Money.

Better transparency of relevant staff to tenants and a greater understanding of the Estate Inspection process would add value to Tarka Housing.

Improved training of staff would create a better quality of service to tenants and improve staff morale.

Extra Caretaking staff would increase work completed, and decrease complaints.

If all repairs flagged on Estate Inspections were completed, this would lessen complaints and make for happier tenants.

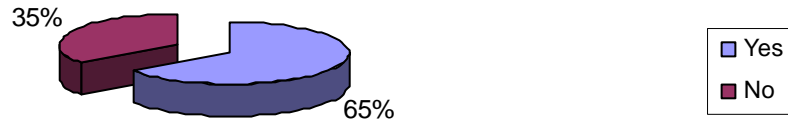
The Auditor Team concludes from this information that the main concern seems to be internal communication between departments.

Reflecting on this report we feel that in areas such as Asset Management and Customer Care a future Audit of Repairs and Surveyors would be necessary.

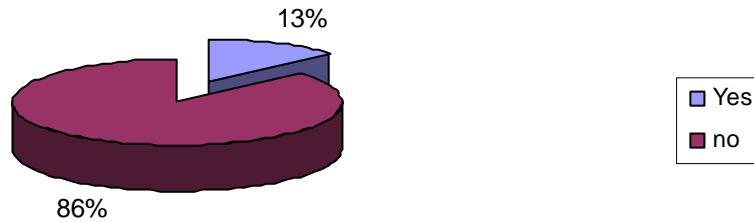
The Auditor Team feels if their recommendations are agreed and implemented, this should go a long way to improving the service.

Appendix

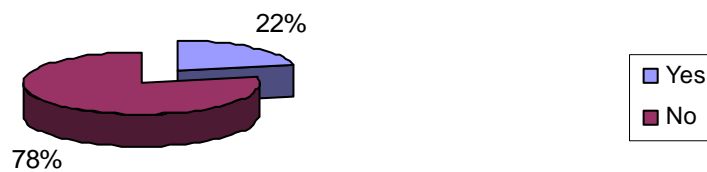
Are you aware that Tarka Housing carry out Estate Inspections?



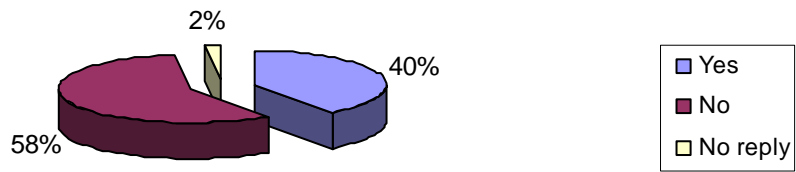
Do you know how often they take place?



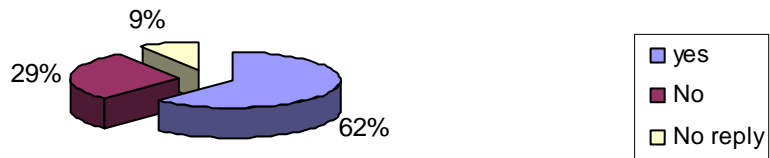
Have you ever seen your Housing Officer on an Estate Inspection?



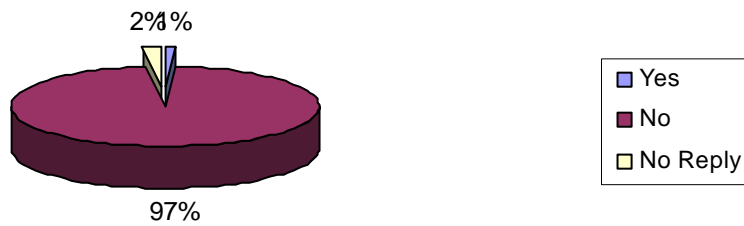
Have you seen the annual calendar in Tarka Times?



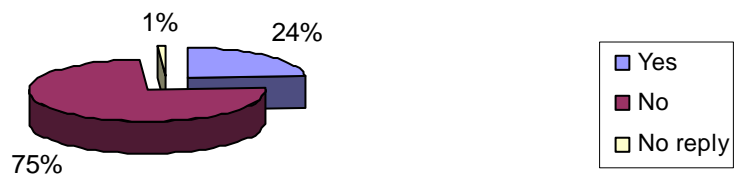
Would Quarterly be a better frequency for the timetable in your opinion?



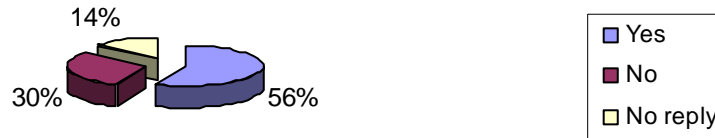
Have you ever been on an Estate Inspection?



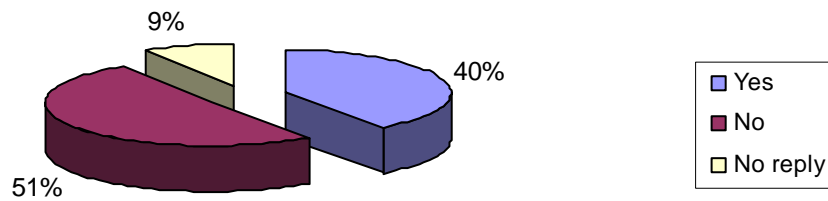
Would you be interested in going on an Estate Inspection?



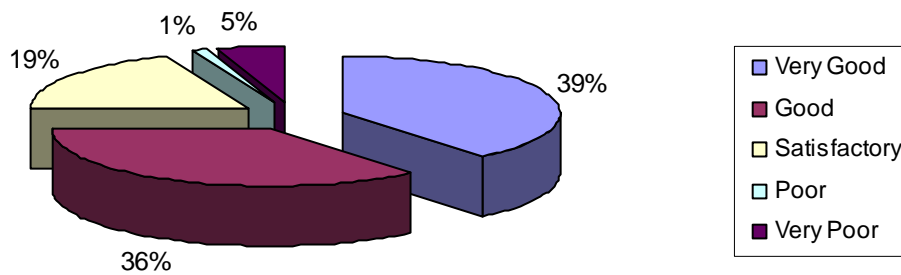
Have you noticed an improvement in the Quality of Estate Properties since they have been transferred to Tarka Housing?



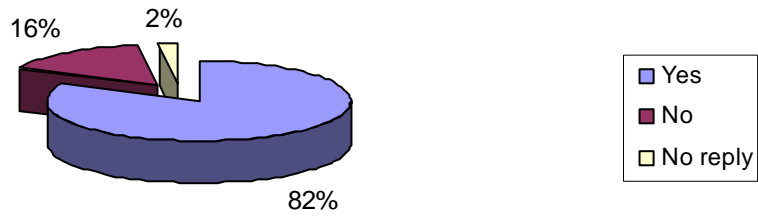
Do you have any ideas for improvements you would like to put forward for your area?



How would you rate the quality of your estate?



Would you like to know the results of this survey?



Would you be interested in joining any of the following discussion groups?

