

FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM

Date: 16 July 2003
Report of: Chief Executive, First Choice Homes Oldham
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Title:

Customer complaints.

Purpose of Report:

To further inform the Standards Committee of the number and type of complaints received and subsequent action taken by FCHO.

For Decision:

Members of the Standard Committee are asked to note the contents of this report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A report was presented to the Standards Committee on 20 May 2003 outlining the number of complaints in relation to First Choice Homes Oldham.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee requested a further detailed report analysing reasons for the complaints and details of any action taken to improve complaint levels.

2.0 Complaint Analysis

- 2.1 The following table details the reason for complaint:

2001/02	1st Qtr	2 nd Qtr	3 rd Qtr	4 th Qtr	Year Total
Anti-social behaviour	11	16	4	12	43
Rehousing	24	22	6	22	74
Repairs	33	30	28	26	117
Parking		1			1
Grants		3	1		4
PFI		1			1
Compensation	3	2	2	2	9
Graffiti	1	1			2
Heating	3	3	7	6	19
Water rates	10	1			11
Staff	1	6	6	2	15
Grounds Maintenance	2	4		2	8
Lettings Policy	1	3		1	5
Tenants Fund		1		1	1
Cleansing	2	6		2	10
Arrears	6	3	5	5	19
DPA	1	1	2		4
Drainage	1	1			2
Security	1	3	1	2	7
Poor information	1	1			2
Access	1	1			2
Advice	1	1	1		3

TV Aerial	2	1	1		4
Lighting	2	3	3		8
Non housing matters	2	2	2	1	7
Policy	1	1	1	1	4
Fire Prevention		1	1		2
Level of service		1	1		2
Workmanship			1		1
Health & Safety				1	1
Refuse				1	1
Tenancy Management	1			1	2
Insurance				1	1
Home Steading				1	1
Housing file				1	1
Qtr Total	111	120	73	90	394 Year Total

2.2 The service areas where most complaints are received are in ranked order:

- 1) Repairs 29.5%
- 2) Rehousing 19%
- 3) Anti-Social Behaviour 11%
- 4) Heating and arrears both account for 5%

2.3 The data needs to be assessed as part of an overall picture of the extensive range of services FCHO provides to numerous customers as well as 18,000 properties, with a workforce of over 700 staff. Advice, services and information are also dispensed on behalf of other service providers. FCHO operates a clear complaints system advertised and accessed widely.

2.4 The information extracted from the complaints analysis is used by FCHO to inform heads of service and work to improve areas of concern. FCHO inform complainants direct of action taken and a wider basis feedback to the general public and tenants takes place via our “You told us – we listened” posters. They highlight the nature of complaint and the service improvement

made with the measured outcome. A high number or pattern of complaints is clearly directed to a Senior manager with a designated specialism for development of the service area. The most recent example being the improved performance of our heating contractors in direct response to complaints made.

3.0 Service Developments

3.1 Complaints have always been apparent in areas of sensitivity mainly in relation to arrears and rehousing. In relation to arrears the service has been developed to incorporate in house debt advisors, a Corporate Debt Policy and a Social Exclusion and Anti-Poverty Policy. A service level agreement also operates with Housing Benefits in order to deliver a fully comprehensive package of service and solutions to our tenants.

3.2 Rehousing complaints often emerge when expectations of applicant enquiries do not meet the reality of property available. Recent improvements have been made to the quality of information and advice given to our tenants and customers and seen the launch of the Housing Options centre.

The Direct Exchange matching service, advertising of Housing Association property and Choice Homes have been launched to give further choice to applicants and meet customers expectations.

3.3 Anti-social behaviour has been at the forefront of FCHO services for a great many years. FCHO have a wide range of ASB procedures and experienced staff at the frontline. FCHO are in partnership with the Mediation Service and the Community Safety Unit. A dedicated legal team currently dealing with the ASB and ASBOs support the work of the CSU. FCHO sit on the Crime & Disorder Partnership developing policy and initiatives with partners.

7.2 Repairs have been the area of most complaint over a number of years and has been fully recognised through the BV review

of the repairs service, the General Tenants Survey of 1999 & 2003 and our Customer Satisfaction feedback data.

The merger of repair operatives with FCHO completed in Feb 2003 and all 6 areas now operate local repair teams. Customer satisfaction surveys from the pilot area of Failsworth and Hollinwood were very high. A total completion level of all jobs remains at the 90% and above levels. As the area teams rolled out on a staggered programme each has now brought performance up to the same level.

7 Environmental Implications.

- 4.1 Co-ordination of improved services to estates improves the overall appearance, combats anti-social behaviour and helps sustain estates.

8 Customer Care Implications.

- 5.1 Improved information to existing and prospective tenants adds to customer satisfaction. Research from the Customer Complaints data will enable FCHO to continue to develop its services to the advantage of the customer.

9 Implications for equalities and community cohesion.

- 6.1 Access through development of housing options offers choice to all applicants. Improved information, public enquiry points and delivery of service provide equality. Development of Anti poverty and Corporate debt policy promotes social inclusion and reaches the most vulnerable to ensure equality of services and opportunity.

7.0 Summary.

- 7.1 FCHO operates a complaints system that ultimately informs service development and addresses areas of poor performance.

- 7.2 FCHO have restructured and created four posts of Customer Service Manager, dedicated to a recognised need for improved and focused service delivery on a Customer need basis. All Customer Service Managers assumed their post from March 2003.
- 7.3 FCHO log and handle all complaints addressed to the organisation and liaise as appropriate with others in order to resolve diverse service issues from a number of different service providers.