



Hydewide
Residents Eye
**You speak,
we listen**



Hydewide Residents Eye Inspection Update

Service Charges inspection – final summary

The aim of the inspection was to explore dissatisfaction in Hyde's Service Charges service – and to identify ways for the service to work more effectively so that resident satisfaction could be improved.

The inspection involved four resident inspectors, and involved interviews with staff and residents, website and document reviews, reviews of case studies from social media, Hyde's customer relationship management system & complaints, as well as surveys.

For further information about HRE inspections contact the Resident Engagement team on email: residentengagement@hyde-housing.co.uk

1. Outcome – both residents and staff to be fully confident about the accuracy of services being included within service charge accounts

During the inspection HRE found:

- Information about what services are being delivered on estates/blocks - that are payable by service charges – is not consistent
- Residents are not clear on the specifics of service delivery contracts i.e. I am paying for fire safety, but what does that actually entail; what can I expect to see?

HRE recommended that:

- Property Managers (PMs) should be given the relevant and most up to date service charge estimate for each block/estate/property from the Service Charge Team and check every property for confirmation of services actually received
- The correct information needs to be updated on the new service charge system

Agreed actions

- A. PMs to review service charge estimates/actuals in Feb 19 to ensure only relevant services are being charged for. Data to be correctly uploaded so that the 2020 estimates are accurate
- B. Hyde will have a process in place by the end of May 19 to reconcile service charge costs and services on a quarterly basis rather than yearly. This will make sure that any changes to service costs are picked up earlier

Agreed actions (continued)

- C. Following feedback gained in the inspection, a full audit of Hyde's service charges by an external auditing company was initiated in Feb 19. The results will be shared with HRE at their May 19 meeting
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2. Outcome – for residents to be able to easily obtain accurate itemisation of their services and information about contract specifics when requested. Residents to feel confident that they receive the services they are paying for

During the inspection HRE found:

- Itemisation of services and payments is not always available
- This increases dissatisfaction and distrust of services as residents are not clear on what they are paying for and whether this is being delivered

HRE recommended that:

- Full itemisation of service charge estimates and actuals is required for residents and Property Managers. Hyde needs to bring in a project to deliver this

Agreed actions

- A. Hyde will carry out an impact assessment - including cost and benefits - of providing itemised statements
- B. A progress update, including proposed timescales, a next steps report and any relevant findings of the external audit, will be delivered to HRE by end of June 19
- C. HRV to also be sent a report in July 19 around the discussion/next steps (this will include a clear statement of intent around whether this project is deliverable or not and if so, when)
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3. Outcome – to increase satisfaction with the value for money of services being delivered (within the service charge account)

During the inspection, HRE found:

- In general residents are concerned about the value they get for the charges they are paying
- Residents feel that a number of contracts do not provide good value for money services. Some were concerned that unnecessary services are sometimes delivered; costing Hyde/residents for unsubstantiated services
- No evidence was found during this inspection of value for money checks that had been completed or processes in place to complete these

HRE recommended that:

- Value for money checks on contract specifics must be completed, documented and available to residents if requested
- The format of this resident communication should be agreed by involved residents

Agreed Actions

- A. There is a process in place for delivering value for money checks – the process maps will be shared with HRE for review
 - B. A project will be put in place to ensure that the staff responsible for these checks understand and can deliver this process
 - C. A communication template will be created – and checked by involved residents - to publicise VFM checks, local information and service delivery updates for residents
 - D. HRV were forwarded the overall communications plan for service charges in March 2019 and are now monitoring the implementation of the plan
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4. Outcome – to ensure that Property Managers are clear on their responsibilities relating to local works and services, and are able to effectively communicate updates to residents

During the inspection, HRE found:

- There were a few cases of Property Managers not being informed about local works taking place e.g. why scaffolding had been put up, and so they could not effectively update residents
- Property Managers were not always clear about whose responsibility local works were, and the communication around the works was at times patchy and unclear

HRE recommended that:

- Property Managers should be informed about any aspect of works that falls within their responsibilities and remit of their neighbourhoods
- Better relationships and improved information sharing is needed between the departments delivering services and local works to ensure this
- There needs to be more clarification across Hyde about what Property Managers are responsible for
- Staff should have clear guidance about who is responsible for keeping residents informed and how they can do this

Agreed Actions

- A. Plan to be put in place by July 19 to make sure teams delivering compliance planned works to local areas understand the role of PMs and how they should contact them with appropriate updates. This will ensure that the relevant information is then communicated to residents

5. Outcome – ensure that Hyde staff know who sets budgets so that they can answer service charge enquiries quickly and accurately

During the inspection, HRE found:

- It was identified that budget setting, especially for grounds maintenance and cleaning, does not currently make good use of the expertise and local knowledge of the Service Charge Coordinator and Property Manager roles
- Communication between people involved in the budget setting process and front line staff – including Customer Services, who have to answer queries about the budgets – could be improved

HRE recommended that:

- Budget setting meetings should include the relevant Property Manager, Service Charge Coordinator & Contract Manager
- Budget setting procedure to be reviewed and publicised to relevant Contract Managers, Resident Services Team and Service Charge Team
- Budget holders/budget managers/contract managers roles to be made clear and shared as the point of contact for relevant staff

Agreed Actions

- A. A new budget setting approach has been developed; this includes joint meetings and a clearer guide to which roles manage which budgets, as well as a process map for how to contact them. This will mean that front line staff are better equipped to get the answers they need to respond to resident queries
- B. Evidence to be provided to HRE with timescales for when this will be up and running – an estimated target date of June 19 has been confirmed for this

6. Outcome – simplified process and communication around invoice packs; more time for Service Charge Team to deal with service charge queries

During the inspection, HRE found:

- Too much of the Service Charge Team's time was being taken up with trying to locate invoices – often stored in different places – when residents request an invoice pack
- Invoices that were available often did not show much detail in terms of itemisation

HRE recommended that:

- The process of Invoice pack creation needs to be reviewed, to make the process faster and easier for the Service Charge Team
- More itemised & detailed invoices need to be provided by contractors
- There needs to be a clear communication back to residents to explain how long the creation of the invoice pack will take, to manage expectations

Agreed Actions

- A. Access to invoice packs will be made available to residents within 28 days of their request. This action has been completed - residents are able to view a whole pack or single invoice at their local office within this time
 - B. If Hyde are not able to stick to the 28 day turnaround time this should be explained and progress given
 - C. The process for collating and sending out invoice packs will be considered as part of the impact assessment and audit see point 2 above
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7. Outcome – for residents to be better informed about the impact of a service failure report and what will happen next

During the inspection, HRE found:

- Residents were often not aware of what would happen after they report a service failure of a contractor they are paying a chargeable service for, i.e. grounds maintenance
- Residents often report the issue - to the Property Manager or Customer Service for example – but hear nothing more
- Property Managers also reported that they do not receive any feedback as to what action has been taken so they cannot inform the resident
- In some cases, work wasn't completed even after a service failure case had been raised
- Residents are generally not aware of whether they have been credited for non-delivery of a service, as this does not show on the statements

HRE recommended that:

- Residents (and Property Managers) should receive notification of any refunds/credits to be shared for service failure or no service identified
- These payments should be clear and marked on the service charge statement
- Residents and Property Managers to also be provided with updates regarding completion of the works and informed about any ongoing delays

Agreed Actions

- A. A project is underway to develop estate/scheme resident communication plans. These will include updates about services, contractor performance and estate inspections. They will also include updates about any refunds and or actions for service failure
 - B. HRE will be involved in content, format and design; this process started in March 2019; the plans should start being used from April 2019
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For ongoing updates about the progress against this inspection report – join Hyde’s resident engagement site The OAK!



Join The OAK... The OAK is Hyde’s award-winning Resident Engagement site, where residents join together as a virtual community to discuss Hyde’s services & take part in online exercises to improve them. Residents on The OAK receive regular updates about ongoing inspections, updates on progress against actions from past inspections, as well finding out about opportunities to get involved. For more info, or to join, contact the RE team (details below)



HRE online

Did you know that HRE have their own pages on the Hyde website – where you can follow all the updates on their inspections?

Visit: www.hyde-housing.co.uk/tenants/resident-engagement/hre-and-resident-inspections/



Contact the Resident Engagement Team

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