

## **SECTION G WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR?**

### **1.1 Housemark Review**

#### 2004 recommendations

- a) Inconsistencies as to which types of properties have a Caretaker and anomalies in charges for the service. ***Covered in this report.***
- b) The residential Caretaking Service is not effectively regulated, with little or no monitoring taking place by either Housing Direct or Neighbourhood Services. ***Covered in this report***
- c) There is no communication or liaison between housing offices and Neighbourhood Services regarding cleaning services provided to low-rise blocks. ***Covered in this report.***
- d) Generally there are no information boards in the foyers of blocks and not all have mats to the main entrance doors. ***This has been addressed in the High Rise Blocks, although the standard of the information displayed varies from block to block. Details regarding the maintenance of these notice boards is covered in the "protocol" between the Caretaking team and the Area Housing Office. This is to be picked up during the monitoring process to be introduced in March 08. The installation of notice boards in Low rise blocks is to be assessed as there is often a lack of space available.***
- e) The condition of floor tiles in blocks varies, with some probably in need of replacement. ***A schedule of replacement flooring has been developed by Property Services section with consultation currently underway with the Leaseholders in these blocks.***
- f) Although Block Caretakers regularly report issues to the housing office there is no mechanism for feedback to either the caretaker or tenant as appropriate. ***Now addressed as Housing Patch Managers will have regular weekly meetings with the caretakers to feed back and discuss issues raised and actions taken to resolve problems identified. Area Housing Managers have agreed that this will be included within the Housing Patch Manager's EPDR and 121s***
- g) A residential caretaking compensation scheme has been in operation since April 2002, however there have been no claims made against the service and this does not cover the service provided by Neighbourhood Services. ***This has not been addressed as part of this review as focus is on ensuring the service that our customers are paying for is provided. Consideration will be given to reviewing the compensation scheme in the future.***
- h) Caretaking staff feel isolated and not involved in the local housing teams. ***Now addressed as part of the protocol with Area Housing Offices. Regular team meetings are currently being held with individual caretakers and the caretaking management team.***

**Quarterly combined meetings for all the caretaking staff are also underway. The Caretaking team are to be included in joint training with the Area Housing Office staff for example, basic Anti-social behaviour training. A programme of two way shadowing for caretakers and housing office staff is also to be developed to help raise the understanding of each others roles.**

- i) **Induction training and support is inadequate and not monitored. This has now been addressed. Two new caretakers joined the team at the beginning of February and both had a full two week induction before commencing their roles. A full review of each week was conducted between the new starter and their line manager to discuss any issues raised. Both staff went through the corporate induction programme**
- j) **Caretakers do not sign in or out of offices, and although they are allowed 'shower time' at the end of the day, staff do not take advantage of this. The issue regarding signing in and out is being considered especially as there are currently clear discrepancies in some areas of the City regarding completion of time sheets.**
- k) **The service across low-rise blocks is not subject to checks or monitoring. To be introduced on a, monthly and quarterly basis with effect from March as detailed under performance monitoring above. This will include blocks currently covered by Nottingham City Council as part of the SLA.**
- l) **There is no service level agreement or service standards regarding the Caretaking Service provided to blocks covered by Neighbourhood Services. This service appears to operate without any form of performance monitoring or quality checks. Covered within this review. Quarterly review meetings are held with the lead officer from N.C.C. as well as six weekly joint monitoring meetings on site. Clarification has been provided to Housing Office staff on the terms and conditions of the SLA and what actions should be taken in the event of the service not being received. There has already been some success in this area following complaints regarding the lack of service provided at the Victoria Centre roof garden**
- m) **Reality checks reveal the general standard of cleanliness within blocks to be acceptable; however, the condition of the exterior of the blocks ranged from acceptable to poor, mainly due to litter, graffiti and overgrown green areas. This is to be covered in the work schedule to be produced to clarify to the caretaking staff what tasks are completed daily and weekly. The exterior condition of the surrounding grounds will be included as part of the monitoring process.**
- n) **There are no national performance indicators in place to support meaningful comparison on the operation of Caretaking Services. There is now a national benchmarking club to discuss caretaking standards and to develop a series of KPIs to measure against.**
- o) **Nottingham has not exposed its residential Caretaking Service to competition Focus during the last ten months has been on re-organising and improving the current service provided by NCH**

**and delivering a fit for purpose service.. A market testing exercise will take place during 2009.**

- p) Performance management of the residential Caretaking Service is weak, with no performance indicators or tenant participation in scrutinising the service. A number of local authorities have developed tenant involvement through tenants inspecting the quality of work and it is recommended that Nottingham develops the role of its tenant inspectors in terms of the Caretaking Service. **This is covered widely in this report. Focus groups have been established during May June 08 for tenants and leaseholders to become involved in setting the standards for the Caretaking Service. Customers have been invited to become involved in the monitoring of our standards on a monthly and quarterly basis. A team of tenant inspectors has been formed specifically to look at caretaking standards.**
- q) Service standards in relation to the caretaking and security service should be publicised within blocks. **A service standard for Caretaking Services is covered within this report. The service standard for the surveillance team is covered in a leaflet that is widely available to tenants and leaseholders. A protocol between NCH and the Surveillance team is to be introduced from September 2008.**
- r) Alternative ways of delivering the caretaking and security service should be considered in terms of improving efficiency and customer satisfaction. **Covered within this report**
- s) Tenants and leaseholders are generally unaware of Caretaking Service standards, do not know how much the service costs and would not be prepared to pay for additional services. **See q above. The issue of additional service charges for an extended service is covered within this report.**
- t) Identify the sites which currently have a service and where there are gaps **covered within this report.**

## **2007 recommendations**

- a) That the management of both the mobile and block Caretaking Services be put under the control of one member of staff, a newly appointed Caretaking and Estate Services Manager. An evaluated job description for this post is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

This person would have ultimate responsibility for the provision of the Caretaking and Cleaning service, also the monitoring and management of all of the other Estate Services and SLAs (Garden Assistance and Residential Building Cleaning), liaison with Area Housing staff, NCC departments, training for all staff, strategic planning and staff management. **Completed**

- b) That the two posts of Monitoring Officer (SO1) be deleted **Included within recommendations for staffing structure of the new team**

- c) That three new posts be created, one as Caretaking Team Leader graded at PO1 and two Caretaking Supervisors (Scale 6).

The Caretaking Team Leader will manage the day to day operation of the Caretaking and Cleaning service and will also act as deputy to the Caretaking and Estate Services Manager. The two new Senior Caretakers will each have responsibility for one team of generic caretakers (see 9.6 below) covering half of the City each.

New Job Descriptions for these 3 posts are attached as Appendix 3 to this report, and have been evaluated **Not considered as part of the new structure as alternate proposals for the Management Structure of the team have been implemented.**

- d) The salary structure of the members of the new generic Caretaking Team be reviewed, in close consultation with staff and the trade unions. This process should ultimately allow for a 24/7 service to be introduced and for overtime payments and bonuses to be replaced with a more realistic salary structure. **Included as part of the review,**
- e) It is recommended that recruitment takes place as soon as possible in order that the new arrangements can be “bedded in” prior to the inspection. We would also recommend that recruitment to the two Caretaking Supervisors be made from the current workforce if at all possible, and that all existing staff are given the opportunity to apply for them. The new structure will also give a “career path” for the workforce which doesn’t exist at the moment. **Not considered as part of the review as the roles within the Management Team have changed as part of this review. It is felt at this stage that two monitoring officers is currently sufficient to manage the workforce. Further consideration may be made in the future, should the team expand.**
- f) We also recommend that an immediate recruitment freeze is implemented and that any vacancies that arise are removed from the establishment, with resultant savings to the cost of the service. This, as there are currently 2 vacant posts, would immediately result in a reduction of 2 in the number of caretakers on the establishment. **These posts have been filled together. The establishment for the caretaking team currently stands at 48 (16 Mobile caretakers and 32 Block caretakers).**
- g) That the cleaning SLA 1 (referred to in section 3.4.) for the 19 flat sites with Neighbourhood Services should only cover 2007/8 and that these sites will be included in the NCH Caretaking Service by April 2008. This will create a gross saving of £75,787. The daily cleaning service to sheltered schemes (SLA2 in section 3.4.) should become a stand-alone SLA from April 2008 **Covered in this review below**
- h) That the new Caretaking Service will provide:

- a daily Caretaking Service to flat sites that currently receive a daily Caretaking Service by Nottingham City Homes' staff
- an expanded service to the sites that currently receive a weekly cleaning service from Neighbourhood Services

and that further work is undertaken to establish the possibility of providing a cleaning service to 44 sites, which are those flats that have an enclosed communal area, but do not receive a cleaning service at present. This will be subject to staffing resources and consultation with residents in individual blocks, as the service will produce an additional service charge. **Included within this review**

- i)** That once the total number of sites to be cleaned has been consulted on and agreed, that the NCH Finance team in partnership with the City Council, ensures that the correct service charges are being applied to tenants and leaseholders to reflect the daily or weekly Caretaking Service that they receive. **Work has started to assess the level of Service Charge levied per block or area.**
- j)** The out of normal working hours time to be reduced to one hour's visit to high rise sites on Saturdays and Bank Holidays and an emergency call out service to be established on a rota basis. **covered within this report**
- k)** That a comprehensive training programme for caretakers be undertaken as soon as possible. The programme should be developed in discussion with the teams themselves and should take account of legislative requirements. Items that should be covered which aren't at the moment include:-
- i)** Asbestos (identification and handling)
  - ii)** Sharps/needle handling
  - iii)** Lone working
  - iv)** Heavy lifting
  - v)** COSHH regulations
  - vi)** Working at heights/use of ladders **Covered within this review (Training section)**
- m)** That monthly Caretaking team meetings be held. They should be attended by both mobile and block caretakers and should be run in a structured way to ensure all important messages are relayed to the staff. Where possible the block caretakers should be picked up so as to avoid them incurring any travelling costs in attending the meetings. **Now happening with full meetings taking place quarterly and separate meetings with each team more frequently.**
- n)** That with immediate effect, the mobile caretakers be required to report to the depot each morning and to "sign in" so as to ensure that managers

know exactly who in the workforce is at work and who is absent. ***This has already been implemented)***

**o)** That the introduction of “tracker devices” in the vehicles be investigated so that managers know exactly where each vehicle is and have control over their fleet. ***The new vehicles being delivered late September/ early October do have tarckerdevices included.***

**p)**That a procedure is introduced whereby staff in Area Housing Offices involve block caretakers in accompanied viewings, ensure caretakers are introduced to new tenants and that Caretakers are informed when vulnerable new tenants are allocated tenancies. Under the proposed new arrangements such information would be provided to the Caretaking Team as a whole rather than to individuals. ***Caretakers are now being invited to new tenancy visits with housing patch managers.***

**q)**That all caretakers should be allocated with mobile phones as soon as possible. They are often “lone workers” and are often placed in situations where they are vulnerable and should be able to summon the emergency services and other help immediately.

The phones would be issued so that they can only contact a few specific numbers and the cost would be for the calls only. We anticipate that the annual cost of supplying operatives with phones would be £2,000. It is possible that this could be contained within the current budget . ***All caretakers have mobile telephones.***

**r)** Steps should be taken to ensure that the Transport Review currently being undertaken by staff in Technical Services includes those vehicles used by the Caretaking teams. The petrol vehicles are unreliable and are often off the road. Their future and the policy of buying vehicles instead of leasing them should be considered as part of the transport review. There are currently at least 2 vehicles allocated to the Caretaking Service which are rarely or never used and could be disposed of with a resultant saving. ***One vehicle has been disposed of (the mini bus) whilst the other vehicle, the graffiti van is now being utilised to its full capacity. The fleet is due to be replaced late September/early October 2008 and is covered within this review.***

**s)**That the equipment being used by the block caretakers should be electronically tested to ensure that they are safe. A maintenance regime for all those pieces of equipment should be introduced to ensure that they area made as reliable as possible. This should be considered a priority under Health & Safety regulations. ***All equipment used by the caretakers has been assessed and the Portable appliance test (PAT) for 2008 is due to commence in September 08. Consideration is being given to training our own staff to complete this work and the necessary equipment being purchased. This is currently under negotiation with the Employee Development Team.***

t) That the quality, comfort and reliability of all clothing issued to the caretakers should be reviewed as soon as possible. The staff should be included in the discussions and the allowances paid for boots and other items should be reviewed in light of current costs etc. The current store which is full of “green NCC” uniforms should be emptied and the stock disposed of to NCC (at a suitable cost). There would then be space to purchase clothing in the right sizes and of the right material for the caretaking staff. ***This has been covered within this report under ‘Personal Protective Equipment.***

u) That there should be a major drive in tenants newsletters etc to stop “fly tipping” occurring. Tenants should be informed that “fly tipping” is a breach of their tenancy conditions and that when the identity of “tippers” can be proved, appropriate action will be taken. ***This has been covered in the report under protocol with Area Housing Office staff.***

v) That clear Caretaking Standards for high and low rise sites be created and agreed with residents and that the Service Charter document should be reviewed to show those new customer requirements. ***The Service Charter has been reviewed and amended and was recently presented to the Tenants and Leaseholders Congress for approval.***