

CSP Review of the Greenspace Service

1. Why we chose the Greenspace Service

Greenspace is a service that is delivered to around 25% of Stockport Homes customers. The CSP felt that it would be useful to review the effectiveness of the service so that the findings can be used to inform the delivery of the service from Summer 2020.

2. Scope of the review

Following a briefing from staff on the Greenspace service the CSP chose the following areas for review:

- How the service specification (and subsequent changes) are communicated to customers
- How customers are engaged with the development, delivery and monitoring of the service
- How customer satisfaction information with the service is obtained and used
- How the quality of service is monitored.

3. Our approach to the review

The CSP used a variety of methods to gather a range of information and evidence in relation to the service.

The following activities were undertaken:

- Briefing from staff on the service
- Review of information available to customers on the service
- Review of customer satisfaction survey
- Contact with the service via mystery shopping
- Research and comparison with other housing organisations
- Testing of the Stockport Homes website.

Each member of the CSP assigned themselves to specific scrutiny tasks and reported their evidence to the panel. This evidence underpins the CSP's judgements and recommendations.

4. Overview of CSP findings

The grounds maintenance survey shows there is a high level of customer satisfaction with the service. When customers complete the survey, they are made aware of the specification for the service, so they can assess what they receive against this.

We did find that there is room for improvement in how the service communicates and involves customers in its work.

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5.1 How the service specification is communicated to customers

We examined what service specification information is available to customers and compared this with other landlords.

5.1.1 Strengths

Customers who take part in the grounds maintenance annual survey receive a copy of the service specification. This enables customers to have a clear understanding of what the service delivers when they complete the survey.

All customers can obtain a copy of the service specification, if they request it.

5.1.2 Areas for improvement

Access to the specification for the service is limited. It is not available on the website and the specification detailed in the 'Living in Your New Home' document is very basic. Customers have no way of knowing what to expect from the Greenspace service in their area unless they have been asked to take part in the grounds maintenance survey or they have contacted the One Number Team.

SHG customers are not able to access an online service for Greenspace. There is no dedicated webpage, the website is not utilised to provide information and updates to customers on the service. We note that other landlords such as Bolton at Home provide access to online services that enables customers to see service specifications, report issues and find out when greenspace teams will be working in their neighbourhood.

In some areas we note that customers pay extra for additional greenspace services; for example, grass collection. It is not clearly communicated that customers can request a consultation with other customers regarding paying for additional services in their area.

5.1.3 Recommendations

1. Consider how to improve access and awareness of the service specification.
2. Improve online access to the service, to enable customers to easily find out information about the service and report issues.
3. Make customers aware of the process for accessing additional services.

5.2 How customers are engaged with the development, delivery and monitoring of the service

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We assessed all the information available to us on how customers are engaged with the service.

5.2.1 Strengths

A sample of customers are asked to complete an annual grounds maintenance survey. The results provide information that enables the team to monitor customer satisfaction and to respond to any issues raised.

5.2.2 Areas for improvement

Aside from the annual survey, there is no other formal customer engagement methods in place that allow customers to be engaged with the development, delivery and monitoring of the service.

Social media is not used to publicise information about the service or to enable customers to provide feedback on the service.

It is not easy for customers to obtain answers to their queries about the service or to report issues. The One Number Team are able to deal with limited queries at the first point of contact, most queries are passed to the Neighbourhood Housing Officer. Members of the CSP have used the One Number service and found that customers are given no indication of when they can expect to receive a response to their enquiry.

Despite customers being encouraged to use the One Number, customers are able to access a direct telephone number for the Greenspace Team from the Living in Your New Home document. Customers may use this number rather than using the One Number to report issues or to make enquiries about the service. CSP members have struggled to access the service using this number.

The service is not clearly branded to customers as either Greenspace or Grounds Maintenance. Searches on the SHG website bring up different pieces of information depending on which term has been used. The customer rent statements refer to the service as 'Grounds Maintenance'. Clear branding would enable customers to easily identify information relating to the service.

5.2.3 Recommendations

4. Consider how customers can engage with the delivery, development and monitoring of the service. The CSP will provide examples of possible engagement methods.
5. Make use of social media to promote the service, the specification and reporting of issues.
6. Make it clear to customers how long they can expect to wait for an acknowledgement of their enquiry regarding the service.

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7. Ensure all initial contact with the service is through the One Number, to simplify access to the service for customers.
8. Ensure consistent terminology is used for the service, to allow customers to easily identify the service and what it delivers.

5.3 How customer satisfaction information with the service is obtained and used

We reviewed the methodology and results from the 2018 and 2019 grounds maintenance surveys.

5.3.1 Strengths

The customer survey is easy to complete online or via a paper copy. The questions are straightforward, easy to answer and allow for customers to add their comments.

Comments from the survey are shared with contractors who take action if required.

5.3.2 Areas for improvement

There is no consistent sampling method used for selecting customers who will receive a survey through the post. Each year choices are made as to where the survey will be sent rather than using a random sampling method that is applied year on year. If certain schemes / areas are targeted it should be made clear that the results reflect opinions in those areas rather than those of all service users.

The option to take part in the online survey is only advertised on the website. This means that some customers may not be aware that they can take part in the survey online.

Customers are not informed of the results of the grounds maintenance survey or what actions have been taken in response to the findings.

5.3.3 Recommendations

9. Improve the methodology for selecting a customer sample for the annual survey, to ensure consistency of survey sampling year on year.
10. Use a range of communication methods to publicise the online survey.
11. Provide feedback to customers for the results and outcomes from the annual survey.

5.4 How the quality of service is monitored

We examined the range of methods that SHG uses to monitor the quality of the service.

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5.4.1 Strengths

Area Caretakers and Neighbourhood Housing Officers carry out regular inspections of the service provided by the contractor and report their findings to the Greenspace Team. Any issues identified with the contractor are followed up by the Greenspace Team.

5.4.2 Areas for Improvement

Customers are not given the opportunity to take part in estate walkabouts to monitor the quality of service they are receiving. Customers are not informed when walkabouts will take place and no feedback is provided after they have been undertaken.

5.4.3 Recommendations

12. Provide customers with an opportunity to take part in estate walkabouts to monitor the quality of service they receive and publicise this to all customers.

6. Support provided for the scrutiny

The CSP wishes to express its appreciation to all those staff who have supported and assisted with the scrutiny. These include Callum Rimmer, Jonathan Kelly and Tony de-Beaufort.

The CSP have been assisted by Jayne Boote from Engage Associates who has acted as the independent mentor for the group. Jayne has provided advice and guidance on scrutiny activities and facilitated the production of this report. This has been to ensure that the CSP has retained its independence during the scrutiny process.