

Report to Housing Scrutiny Commission

Repairs and Maintenance Service (including Gas and Voids functions) 2021-22 year-end performance update report

Housing Scrutiny Commission: August 2022

Lead Member: Councillor Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the performance of the Division's Repairs and Maintenance service, which includes the Voids and Gas functions, over the last financial year, 2021-22.
- 1.2 The report will also provide the Commission with an update about the implementation of service improvements that will drive improved performance into the future.

2. Background

- 2.1 The repairs, gas and void functions operate across the City, providing services to 19,719 Leicester City Council owned homes and 1,597 Leasehold properties.
- 2.2 The current primary channel of access to the repairs and gas services remains the Customer Service Centre (CSC) Tenants Advice and Repairs Line (TARS) 0116 4541007 (option 1), Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm. We also provide an emergency repairs service outside of normal working hours, from 4pm Monday to Thursday, and 3.30pm Friday and all weekend, via the Emergency Repairs Line 0116 2549439.
- 2.3 During 2021-22, the CSC received a total of 107,708 calls on the TARS line. This compares with 91,292 calls for the previous year. The Emergency Repairs Line received 15,960 calls, which compares to 14,382 for the previous year. Increases in both call volumes during 2021-22 are in line with a return to business-as-usual demand levels demonstrated further in this report.
- 2.4 Tenants can also register for an on-line account enabling them to book repairs and request progress updates on outstanding jobs via the Housing On-Line (HOL) portal 24 hours a day.
- 2.5 As at the end of March 2022, there were 5,343 tenants registered with HOL and a total of 5,063 repairs reported by tenants using the on-line portal. These figures continue to rise, and we currently have 5,864 tenants registered and the number of repairs reported via the on-line portal has increased to 6,288. More information relating to the work we are doing to increase our on-line offer is included later in this report.
- 2.6 During 2021-22, we received 9,206 tenant satisfaction forms returned, with 92% reporting satisfaction with the service.
- 2.7 As we continued to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw workloads returning to the pre-pandemic levels of **2019-20**.
 - 88,265 total repairs **reported** during 2021-22, compared to 88,961 in 2019-20.
 - 85,703 total repairs **completed** during 2021-22, compared to 88,094 in 2019-20.
 - 842 Void properties **re-let** during 2021-22, compared to 984 in 2019-20.
- 2.8 The average cost of a repair increased during 2021-22 to £101.32.
- 2.9 The backlog of outstanding day to day repair work, excluding gas repairs, **currently** sits at 8,144 jobs. This compares to 6,285 jobs that were outstanding in March 2020 (prior to the

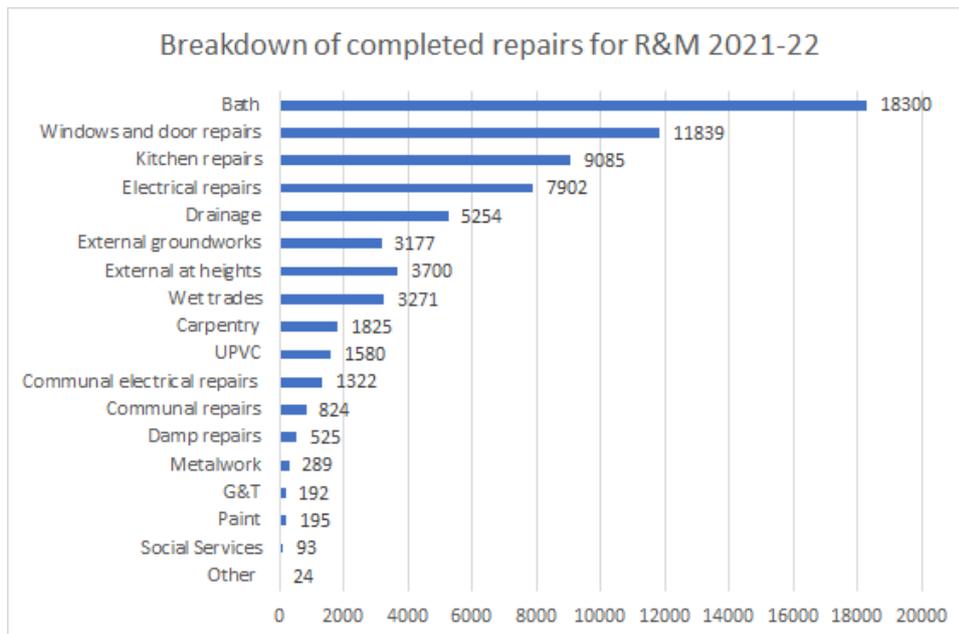
pandemic). The difference of 1,859 jobs represents just over 1 week of average repair demand, with an average of 1,400 new repairs being raised each week.

- 2.10 During 2021-22 we experienced significant resourcing issues, and these have continued into 2022-23 due to the high demand for craft skills in the external labour market, driven by the post-pandemic recovery. This has led to difficulties in attracting and retaining craft staff.
- 2.11 As at the year-end 2021-22, we had 39.2 FTE craft vacancies, representing over 13% of our full craft establishment.
- 2.12 According to the Office for National Statistics, the average vacancy rate in the UK at the end of 2021 was 3.9%, which is the highest on record with all industries increasing on the quarter.
- 2.13 With our vacancy rate currently running at over three times the UK average rate, efforts to reduce the backlog of repairs and Void properties continues to be a real challenge.

3. Repairs and Maintenance (R&M)

3.1 During 2021-22 we completed 69,397 repairs. This represents a 37% increase when compared to 2020-21, when, for much of the year, we were only providing an emergency repairs service. This years figure is broadly in line with the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20, when we completed 69,735 repairs.

3.2 A breakdown of the type of repairs completed is provided below.



3.3 Key performance indicators for R&M

Indicator	Direction of travel (DOT)	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Percentage of repairs completed at first visit (excludes external works)	Higher is better. Target is 90%.	77.0%	82.6%	78%
Number of repairs which are out of category (excludes Gas and Voids)	Lower is better. Target is 300.	*721	*912	*2159
Percentage of repairs completed within target time	Higher is better. Target is 92%	82.6%	96.0%	87%
Percentage of repairs reported where a complaint has been received	Lower is better. Target is <0.5%	0.1%	0.01%	0.10%

*Snapshot at year-end.

4. Gas & Heating Services

4.1 During 2021-22 we completed 16,858 gas and communal heating repairs. This compares to 15,628 for 2020-21, when for much of the year, we were providing an emergency service only. However, when compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20, this years figure shows a 7.4% reduction in completed repairs.

4.2 During 2021-22 we completed 20,175 Annual Service Visits (ASV's).

4.3 Key performance indicators for Gas & Heating Services

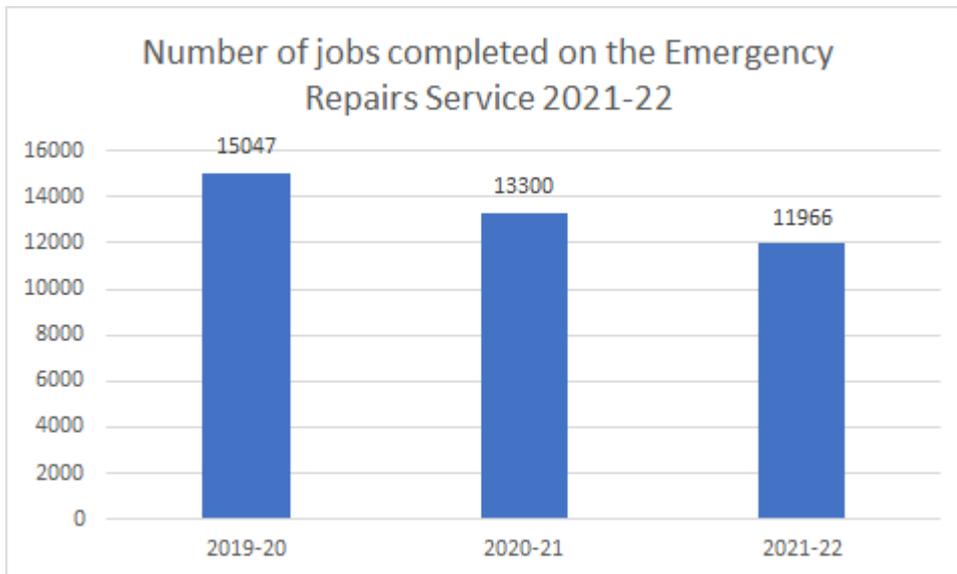
Indicator	DoT	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Annual Service Visit compliance percentage	Higher is better. Target is 100%	99.99%	99.17%	99.94%
Percentage of gas repairs completed at first visit	Higher is better. Target is 90%.	74.8%	79.8%	70%
Number of gas repairs which are out of category (snap	Lower is better. Target is 0.	*843	*0	*590
Percentage of repairs completed within target time	Higher is better. Target is 92%	91.5%	98.6%	91%

*Snapshot at year-end.

5. Emergency Repairs Service (ERS)

During 2021-22 we completed 11,966 emergency repairs in our tenants homes.

The number of emergency repairs we carry out continues to fall as we improve the efficiency of the service. The total number of jobs completed in 2021-22 represented a 10% reduction when compared to 2020-21, and a 20% reduction when compared to 2019-20.



5.1 Improvements to the service include better utilisation of ‘in-day’ staff working flexibly beyond normal working hours to clear up outstanding ‘in-day’ workloads, diverting the emergency repairs line to our out-sourced call handling service from 4.00pm, and applying more robust criteria to emergency repair requests to ensure that tenants in real need of an emergency response get the priority attention they deserve.

6. Voids

6.1 During 2021-22, we completed and re-let 842 Voids properties. This compares with 760 for 2020-21.

6.2 The number of Voids held at the end of 2021-22 was 481. We are currently holding 410 Voids which represents a 15% decrease since that time.

6.3 Key performance indicators for Voids

Indicator	DoT	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Average re-let times in days (all Voids)	Lower is better.	123.3	137.8	138.1
Rent loss	Lower is better.	£835,799.27	£1,115,966.74	£1,676,969.00
Voids completed and let	Higher is better.	959	760	842

7. Improvement actions underway in 2022-23 to drive improved performance

7.1 During the year we established a ‘RATS taskforce’ to focus resources in the St Mathews area of the City to deal with the high numbers of infestations being reported in tenant’s homes.

7.2 The taskforce brings together cross-service resources to work together in a more collaborative way to reduce the incidents of reported infestations.

7.3 During the year, repairs staff attended newly established Housing Surgeries, which enabled residents to meet with Repairs and other Housing Division staff to discuss and report a range of Housing related issues with Managers and Team Leaders across the Service.

7.4 Repairs On-Line

We are currently implementing a 'hard-stop' for routine repairs reporting over the phone, with appropriate support being put in place for those that are digitally excluded. Our next area for development will be to allow leaseholders to raise repairs on Housing Online, followed by the implementation of the reporting of communal repairs, both of which we hope to have completed by April 2023. Both leaseholders and communal repairs can currently be reported via an online 'E' Form, but we are aiming to bring this into the single Housing Online platform to improve the customer experience.

7.5 Introduction of National Federation Schedule of Rates (SOR's)

We have recently purchased the National Federation of Rates, better known as a schedule of rates (SOR's), which are widely used by other local authorities and housing associations and allow the accurate standardised measurement of labour time associated with the various tasks within jobs. This will enable managers to plan work more effectively, maximising staff resources and availability, and providing accurate performance management data for individual staff. This data can then be used to drive productivity and improve overall efficiency.

Work is being planned in to integrate SOR's into our planning system, Total Mobile, after which we will use a phased approach to implementation, starting with the Gas and Heating Service section, then moving to our R&M and Voids functions. We aim to have this embedded by the end of the year.

7.6 Voids Service Analysis

Due to the on-going performance issues within the Voids and Property Lettings function, we initiated a service analysis in June 2021. This service analysis has now been concluded and its findings and recommendations are now being considered and being developed into a Voids Improvement Plan to deliver improved performance over the coming years.

7.7 Stores Managed Service

We are currently undertaking a procurement exercise for the provision of the managed stores service and are hoping to award the contract in the Autumn of 2022. A mobilisation period will follow with the aim of commencing the service fully in the early summer of 2023.

Consultation with staff transferred to the new service provider will commence during the contract mobilisation period when we know who the new provider of the service will be.

7.8 Emergency Repairs Service (ERS)

Further improvements are being looked at currently to improve the performance of the ERS, including offering more flexible working hours for newly recruited staff, utilising 'remote assistance' technology where appropriate to triage and prioritise repairs more effectively, and developing new roles within our Division that can deliver these improved services.

7.9 We have recently created a new role of Housing Digital Assistance Officer, and we are currently recruiting into this role.

7.10 Recruitment of craft staff

The employment market, particularly in the building trade, continues to be a very challenging environment. During 2021-22, our craft apprenticeship programme saw 2 apprentices join our craft workforce on permanent contracts. This year, a further 10 apprentices are completing their training, with 4 having already secured a permanent position with us and a further 6 yet to complete. We hope they will also decide to continue their careers with us.

However, whilst these apprentices are a welcome addition to our team, we continue to struggle to recruit sufficient numbers of qualified craft staff from the external employment market and the high levels of craft vacancies continue to impact significantly on our ability to deliver quality services. Managers have overseen a continuous programme of recruitment throughout the year, with disappointing results due to the competitive nature of the current labour market and our inability to offer the same levels of salary that are being offered by the private sector who are competing for the same labour. This is being compounded by existing employees being attracted away from our business to more attractive posts elsewhere. We are working closely with our colleagues in HR to address these issues in several ways. These include the development of a business case for a market supplement for some craft posts to make our vacancies more attractive to potential candidates, attending recruitment fairs to promote our posts at a local level, and working with Job Centre Plus to promote our opportunities more effectively. We are also developing a fast-track recruitment process to reduce the time it takes to get new staff 'on-board' once they have been successful in securing a position with us.

7.11 Enhanced Letting Standard

In response to Members requests for more support to vulnerable tenants when securing a tenancy in one of our properties, we have developed an 'enhanced letting standard' for implementation as a trial throughout 2022-23. Eligible new tenants coming through the 'leaving care' and 'homeless' pathways into our properties will benefit from the enhanced letting standard, which provides a fully decorated (painted) property and will help to support those people on their journey towards independent living. It is also hoped that this will encourage new tenants to take a personal pride in their new home, and, as a result, take better care of it.

Images of recently acquired Void allocated to a person leaving care before refurbishment.



Image of the same property after an 'enhanced letting standard' refurbishment.



Note – New kitchen not part of 'enhanced letting standard'. Fitted as part of the capital investment programme.

Kevin Doyle – Head of Service

Sam Taylor – Head of Service

Repairs & Maintenance Service

Leicester City Council