

Resident Inspectors

Report on inspections carried out during June 2008

1. Introduction

15 Resident Inspectors completed the programme of inspection and returned their findings by the deadline.

Method of inspection	Tasks completed
Telephone enquiry	15
Email enquiries	6
Reception enquiries	15
Speed and greet calls	69
Estate inspections	15
Reception checks	14

Results of the inspections can be found in the appendices:

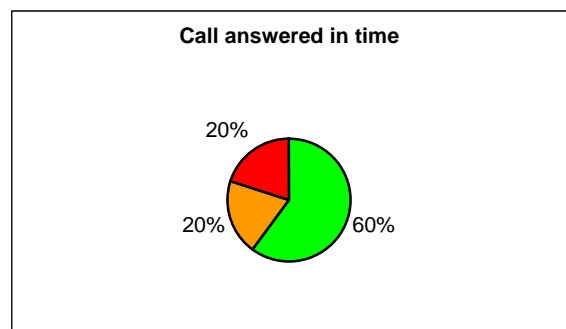
Phone enquiry:	appendices one
Email enquiries:	appendices two
Reception enquiry:	appendices three
Speed and Greet:	appendices four
Estate inspections:	appendices five
Reception check	appendices six

2. Summary of Results and Recommendations

2.1. Phone enquiries

Speed of answer: Of the 15 calls made the majority were answered within the service standard time. Three were borderline and three over the service standard

The longest time to answer was taken by Repair Link where the call was initially answered by a recorded message.



Greeting: Just over half the calls were answered in the correct manner; greeting, name of organisation or department and an offer to help. In some cases (3) no organisation name was given and in 6 cases the person did not give their name or spoke too quickly to understand the name. In 3 cases there was no offer of help.

Answering the question: Eleven of the inspectors said that they were satisfied that their enquiry had been answered either by the person they originally spoke to or by somebody they were transferred to.

Additional information/website: Although it is not laid down in the service standards it would be good practice for members of staff to offer to send further information to callers and/or refer them to the Ealing Homes or Council websites. In only one case did this happen.

Overall impression: 13 of the Resident Inspectors reported that they felt the people they spoke to tried their best to answer the query. However, 4 inspectors felt that their member of staff was not as polite as they could have been. 3 Inspectors reported that their enquiry could have been dealt with more quickly and efficiently.

Use of jargon: No inspectors reported the use of jargon.

Rating: The Inspectors rated the calls from 1 to 5 with one being excellent and five being poor. The following scores were achieved.

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Number	5	3	4	1	2

Recommendations

1. Managers need to remind staff of the service standard for answering calls within 15 seconds.
2. Managers need to remind staff of the correct greeting and the need to speak slowly and clearly so that the caller knows who they are talking to.
3. When appropriate members of staff should offer to send further information and/or refer the caller to the website.
4. Managers need to remind staff members of the need to be polite and efficient when dealing with telephone enquiries and where necessary offer training.

2.2 Email enquiries

Six Resident Inspectors completed this task. Of the six emails sent 4 were replied to within the service standard time of six working days. However, in one case no reply was received and in another the email was returned as undelivered.

Of the four replies 3 inspectors felt that the sender had tried their best to answer the query and nobody reported the use of jargon.

Rating: The Inspectors rated the email replies on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 being excellent and 5 being poor. The following scores were achieved:

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Number			3	1	2

Recommendations

1. Teams with email contact addresses should carry out weekly checks to ensure that they are working correctly.
2. All email addresses should automatically generate a response acknowledging receipt of the enquiry and giving details of reply deadlines.
3. Managers need to check standard of replies sent out by email to ensure they are meeting the required standard

2.3 Reception enquiries

Time to be seen: The service standards do not stipulate how long a customer should expect to wait before being seen. However 5 inspectors reported being seen immediately. Unfortunately it is not possible in all cases to identify which area office the inspector was visiting.

Time waiting	< 3 mins	3 – 6 mins	7 – 10 mins	> 10 mins
Number	6	5	3	1

Greeting: Two inspectors reported that the member of staff did not greet them correctly. On 2 occasions a name badge was either not worn or was not visible.

Answering the question: Only one inspector felt that the member of staff did not try their best to answer the enquiry and all inspectors who answered the question (13) said that the member of staff was polite. One inspector felt that they could have been dealt with more quickly. Nobody reported the use of jargon.

Rating: The Inspectors rated their visit from 1 to 5 with one being excellent and five being poor. The following scores were achieved:

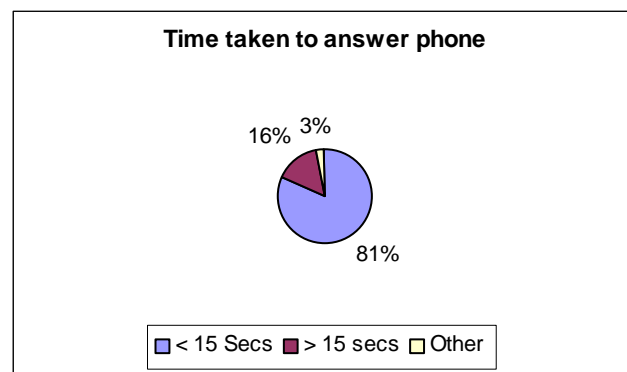
Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Number	7	1	3	3	

Recommendations

1. Managers need to remind reception staff of the need to wear name badges that are clearly visible at all times.

2.4 Speed and Greet

Speed of answer: A total of 69 random calls were made to area teams and teams based at Westgate House. The service standard states that call should be answered within 15 seconds. 56 Calls were answered within the time, 11 were answered after 15 seconds, 1 was a recorded message and 1 was dead line.



Greeting: In the majority of cases the correct and full greeting was made although some inspectors reported that the member of staff spoke to quickly and they could not understand the name given.

Rating: The Inspectors rated each call from 1 to 5 with one being excellent and five being poor. The following scores were achieved:

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Number	26	10	12	14	7

Recommendations

1. All staff to be reminded of the Customer Service Standard for answering the phone within 15 seconds.
2. All staff to be reminded to use the correct greeting and of the need to speak clearly and slowly.

2.5 Estate inspections

The inspections were carried out before the introduction of the new estate grading system

Graffiti: Evidence of there being graffiti was reported by 4 inspectors.

Abandoned vehicles: Only one inspector reported an abandoned vehicle.

Grass cutting: Three inspectors reported that the grass appeared not to have been cut recently. One inspector mentioned that the grass cuttings had been blown off the paths. One inspector mentioned that tree roots appear to have been damaged by mowers. A number of inspectors also mentioned that although the grass had been cut trees and hedges needed attention.

Signs: Three inspectors reported that they had not seen a sign indicating the name of the estate they were on. Others reported that there were signs but they were in need of attention.

Litter and fly tipping: This was a problem reported by over half (8) of the inspectors.

Clean and tidy: Three inspectors reported that they found the estate not to be overall clean and tidy. The estates are:

- Stafford Court
- Cheyne Path
- Arlington Court

Estate notice boards: 3 inspectors reported that there were no estate notice boards. Others reported that although there are notice boards some of the information is out of date and some of the posters are faded and tatty.

Recommendations

1. The Caretaker Manager to be made aware of the inspectors findings.
2. A check is made of all estate to ensure that estate notice boards are:
 - a. well maintained
 - b. have up-to-date and relevant information
 - c. old faded or tatty notices are removed or replaced
3. A check is made of all estate to ensure that all have estate name boards that are clearly visible and in good condition.
4. The relevant section of Ealing Council is made aware of the grass cutting and grounds maintenance issues.

2. 6 Area Office Receptions

14 visits were made to the two area offices:

301 Ruislip Rd (West)	5
16 – 18 New Broadway (East)	9

The period of inspection coincided with the refurbishment work being carried out at the West area office.

Clean seating: Only one inspector reported that the seats needed cleaning and this was at the New Broadway office.

Number of seats: Three inspectors reported that the number of seats in the main reception area were inadequate. All three inspected the New Broadway office

Lighting in waiting area: Nobody reported this as being a problem.

Toilets: As there are no toilets at New Broadway all the inspectors failed on this. All but one Ruislip Rd inspectors passed on this. It was out of action due to refurbishment.

Play: Only one inspector reported that there were play facilities at Ruislip Rd.

Public phone: One inspector reported that the public phone at Ruislip Rd did not work. 4 inspectors reported that there was no public phone at New Broadway but 5 said there is.

Heating and Ventilation in waiting area: One inspector reported the ventilation to be a problem at the New Broadway office.

Clean floors and walls: One inspector reported that the floor at New Broadway needed sweeping.

Relevant literature: A couple of inspectors queried this.

Up to date literature: One inspector found a “Winter Fuel” poster being displayed at the New Broadway office.

Mutual Exchange Register: Two inspectors could not find this at the New Broadway office and 2 at Ruislip Rd.

Exterior office name: No fails.

Exterior language notice: One inspector reported no minority language notices on the exterior of the building and 3 at New Broadway.

Opening hours: One inspector reported no sign with opening hours was visible at Ruislip Rd and one at New Broadway.

Hearing Loop: A total of seven inspectors reported there being no “Hearing Loop” symbol displayed on the exterior of the two offices.

Interior signage. This was found to be adequate in both offices although some signs could be in some minority languages.

Interview rooms: Two inspectors reported that ventilation might be a problem, one at each office.

Recommendations.

1. Improve signs for public phone at New Broadway
2. Both area offices to agree what literature should be available and how it should be displayed. Out of date literature to be removed along with any faded or dog-eared notices. Responsibility for maintaining notice boards should be given to a named individual.
3. Check outside signage to ensure office opening hours are clearly displayed and that there is a "Hearing Loop" sign.
4. When deciding new location of the East Area Office, residents should be involved.

3. Conclusion

This was the first experience of "mystery shopping" for most of the newly recruited Resident Inspectors. As their skills develop and as we develop the questions we ask and the way in which we ask them, more detailed information will become available. This will enable us to improve the service we provide for our customers.

Rather than concentrating on how quickly we answer a phone call we need to make sure that staff are dealing with the enquiry correctly and giving the correct answer in the correct manner.

The introduction of the new estate grading system will help Resident Inspectors when they visit an estate. Similar criteria need to be developed for other aspects of the service.

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Strategic Involvement Team

4th July 2008