Scrutiny Panel Report on Cornwall Housings Out of Hours Service

December 2014
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Introduction

Cornwall Housing Tenant Led Scrutiny Panel, have undertaken a review of Cornwall Housing’s ‘Out of Hours Service’, following some feedback and concerns that had been reported by customers and staff. This review has run alongside Cornwall Housing’s own review and the Panel would like the two reports to complement each other.

The Scrutiny Panel hopes that the information in this report will assist Cornwall Housing to decide what the Out of Hours Service should be moving forward. The Panel have not taken into account the costs of running the service, as this is an area that Cornwall Housing’s own review would have looked at. However, the Panel have met with Trevor Drage, Telehealthcare Operations Head of Service, BT Cornwall, and know the costs to Cornwall Housing to have BT Cornwall take the ‘Out of Hours’ calls and triage to supervisors and staff on call.

The question that the Scrutiny Panel focused their investigation on was:

**Scrutiny Question – ‘Does Cornwall Housings Out of Hours service, meet the needs of tenants and other customers?’**

The Panel focused on what exists as a service at present, as well as taking into account historical legacies that have been carried forward into Cornwall Housing.

In July, a question and answer session was held with Jane Barlow, Cornwall Housing’s Managing Director.

This enabled the Panel to gather a greater understanding of some issues relating to the existing service. Jane Barlow had already asked for a Company wide review of the service, to identify if there was a need for a more dedicated service for customers. Cornwall Housing had recently been made aware that BT Cornwall was struggling to answer out of hours calls. Lifeline calls that are received, take priority over all out of hours calls.
1. Scope and Methodology

1.1

The starting point for the Panel’s investigation begins from when a customer phones in on the 0300 out of hours number. For the Gypsy and Traveller service, this is slightly different and is explained later in the report. The Panel have tried to capture the customer journey and has tested the scrutiny question by trying to gather a snapshot of customers’ experiences of the service through postal surveys and telephone surveys.

It was important for the Panel to capture staff views on the service. Collectively this has assisted the panel to identify, shape and present its conclusions and recommendations.

A question and answer session was held with Jane Barlow in July, to ensure the Panel had a good all round view of the service. The session also allowed Jane Barlow to discuss the scope of the scrutiny, with the Panel.

The Panel decided to focus on the current out of hours service that is delivered to customers by Cornwall Housing and produce a picture of what it looks like across the Company. As well as focus on the service that BT Cornwall provides.

Gathering information from Cornwall Housing staff was achieved by sending out an information request to Senior Managers asking the following:

- What Cornwall Housing departments/teams use the out of hour’s service and what for?
- Latest policies/procedure for the out of hour’s service.
- What are the names of the staff who are involved in overseeing this service, for their department or team?
- Is it just BT Cornwall that receives the initial call from the customer when they phone the 0300 number, after hours?
- Who are the on call officers in each department or team?
- Who are the contacts for BT Cornwall, so the panel can request information on calls received?

Once the information was received, managers were invited to meet the Scrutiny Panel and discuss how the service works.

- Out of Hours for Repairs and Anti Social Behaviour in the mid area. – Adam Fitzpatrick
- Out of Hours for repairs in the East area- Kevin Neville
• Out of Hours for Housing Options – Jane Couch
• Out of Hours for Gypsy and Traveller – Stuart Blackie

The Panel received full co-operation from managers and staff.

Talking to Adam Fitzpatrick (Neighbourhood Enforcement Manager- oversees the OOHs in the mid area), Jane Couch (Housing Options Service Manager), Kevin Neville (Maintenance Services Manager-East) and Stuart Blackie (Estate Management Operations - oversees Gypsy and Traveller OOHs). All gave the panel a clearer idea of what the service looks like at the moment. Identifying some good practice and inconsistencies across the service.

The panel met with Trevor Drage, Head of Services, BT Cornwall, to ask questions about the service provided to Cornwall Housing.

1.2
The Panel undertook a staff survey and sent out to 77 members of staff, who are involved in the out of hours service, from supervisors to operatives and contractors. 20 responses were received which is 26% response rate.

A postal survey was sent to 113 customers from both the mid and east area that had accessed the out of hours service in October, November 2014. 25 were received which is 22% response rate.

A telephone survey was undertaken by the panel, contacting customers from both the mid and the east area.
2. Findings

2.1

**BT Cornwall - Trevor Drage, Telehealthcare Operations Head of Service.**

The Scrutiny Panel want to start this section of the report with the information gathered from Trevor, as this is the start of the Customer Journey, phoning the out of hours service 0300 1234 161. At which point the customer will be given several options and then have a chance to be directed to the out of hours service. The service that is offered now by BT Cornwall is the same as what was offered to the 3 districts prior to unitary authority; however whether it is suitable today, is a question that Trevor put forward. Trevor said as Cornwall Council reduced its service, calls have increased.

BT Cornwall has 2 operators in place to answer calls for lifeline and out of hours calls. There is a dedicated person to answer out of hours calls from 5pm - 8pm, Monday to Friday. From 8pm-9am there are 2 operators Monday - Friday and their main priority is to answer the lifeline calls.

Over the weekend a dedicated out of hours operator works from 9am to 6pm alongside operators who are answering lifeline calls. After 6pm it reduces to 2 operators whose main priority is to answer lifeline calls. It’s important to stress that the out of hours service receive calls from the general public and it’s not a dedicated service just for Cornwall Housing Customers. The nature of the call can be anything from rubbish, lost dogs, noise, seals on the beach, homelessness, repairs etc. Calls are dealt with by the operator, but some calls can take a long time. Housing Associations also use BT Cornwall’s out of hours service for their tenants’ emergency repairs.

If weather is bad and storms predicted, this can increase the number of calls that come in through to the out of hours phone line. Trevor will try to rota in additional staff, under these circumstances. However this needs the good will of his staff to agree to come in.

Calls can average from 17,000 to 23,000 a month, depending on the weather.

Out of hours calls per night can average at 200. Operatives are unable to prioritise the calls as they come in, as they have no idea what the nature of the call is.
If an operator is already on a phone line dealing with an out of hours call, the other operator will not answer another out of hours call in case a lifeline call comes in.

Reports and information held on the nature of out of hours calls are done manually on a sheet by the operator. However there is not a lot of information relating to each call.

There is no answer machine message if a call goes un-answered or message to say the lines are busy.

Operators hold basic information from Cornwall Housing, a property list that is emailed from Cornwall Housing to BT Cornwall. How often it is updated is not known.

**It was explained to the Scrutiny Panel, that measures are being looked at to improve the service in the future and this is as follows:**

- BT Cornwall is in discussions with Tony Costello regarding Mitel phones that can go to an answer machine message, if the phone is not answered. An email will then be forwarded to the operator. Cost will be covered by BT Cornwall. (Question for Cornwall Housing from the Scrutiny Panel, is will these costs be recovered another way by BT Cornwall in the future?)

- Purchasing another call centre module, which will mean being able to set up more phones lines, track calls and monitor calls. This will not be in place until June next year. Cost will be covered by BT Cornwall. (Again will these costs be recovered another way by BT Cornwall in the future?)

- Extra staff. This may be possible by changing people’s shifts. Employing another member of staff will put costs up by a 1/3.

- Improve computer systems so operators can access Cornwall Council systems. (Again will these costs be recovered by BT Cornwall another way in the future?)

**Issues that BT Cornwall experience managing our out of hours calls:**

- Cornwall Housing has different procedures for mid Cornwall and east Cornwall (Mid is former Carrick area –East is a former Caradon and North Cornwall area)

- **Fire Alarms**
If a fire alarm is continual it has an effect on BTs service level. If the fire panel needs resetting in the **east** of the county operatives have nobody to call to reset. Biggest concern for BT Cornwall is Fire Panels until reset will keep on dialling into the lifeline system and creates a queue for lifeline alerts which is a big concern.

- In the **mid** of the county operatives can pass to the on call supervisor and they can arrange the panel to be reset.

**Category II Scheme Faults**
- If there is a problem on site with schemes in the **east** there is nobody to call, operators can call Tunstall but that isn't an instant response. Therefore operators have nowhere to go with a problem; the on call standby officer for repairs can’t help.
- In mid operators can pass to the on call supervisor who will deal with the problem; however in both situations this has a serious impact on BT’s service level.
- 15th Sept Whites Close had a fault; uninitiated calls were being sent from residents 6-8 at a time. BT operators were unable to clear calls fast enough. On this occasion Nicky Mannell was called, who was very helpful but was not on call. On this occasion Nicky was on annual leave, however Nicky helped and called a Support Worker who lives 10 mins away. During 35 mins, 51 calls were received and BT service level dropped dramatically to 83.75%. That relates to BTs call handling for lifeline, which have a target of 97.5% and during that blip the 51 calls resulted in performance dropping to 83.75% BT recovered to 97.5% over the month but this causes problems. Had Nicky not responded so quickly it would not have been resolved so fast. The on call person was called but advised to call the office at 9am, when they open.

- **Repairs**
  Operators contact the on call supervisor for repairs in the mid which is a single number for all repairs but in the east operators have to contact 2 heating engineers depending on the area, the on call supervisor for general maintenance, electrical and drains. If the drain work is authorised operators are required to contact the drain company to attend. Lift repairs are an unknown we have clear procedures in place and on call supervisors generally won’t attend, though some do if asked. There are also specifics around LPG heating systems, septic
tanks, sewage pumps and boreholes and stair lifts which require a different phone number for each to be called.

- **Orchard (IT system)**
  BT operators haven’t had access to the repairs system since moving in April. Several attempts have been made to put the application on the pc desktops without success.

2.2

**Out of Hours for the mid area – Dealing with Emergency Repairs, Witnessing ASB, Life line alarms in Category II schemes, fire alarms in Category II schemes.**

**Initial call goes through BT Cornwall 0300 and passed to a supervisor.**

Following staff interviews and discussions the panel have found the following information regarding the out of hour’s service in the mid area.

Adam Fitzpatrick has managed the out of hours service for several years in the mid area. This is a legacy from when he worked for Carrick Housing. It was a requirement for Carrick Housing ALMO, to provide an out of hours service that dealt with anti social behaviour. This is still the current practice in the mid area and all supervisors are required to witness ASB when appropriate (normally an ongoing ASB case). Adam’s involvement was originally quite small just overseeing the rotas, but as other members of staff have left, Adam has inherited other aspects of the service to manage. Adam only deals with the mid area out of hours service.

The neighbourhood enforcement team requires the supervisors to attend certain properties in order to witness ASB and provide third party witness statements. – **This is not replicated in the east area.**

The six supervisors are- Viv Williams, Vicki Lean, James Carter, Lindy Campbell, Paul Oxford and Theresa Harris. Other on call officers are on the rota from different department includes, G&T and housing options.

Supervisors filter the calls and will action an emergency repair, reset fire alarms in Category II schemes and deal with observing ASB.
Supervisors carry two files which is hard copy information on the following:

1. On call numbers, talk through guides re gas/electric, copy of the promise on repairs, documents regarding recharges, element on ASB and tenants’ risk register. It is the responsibility of the supervisors to update the risk register.

2. Information sheet on going in properties and how to de activate sprinklers – written by CH Health and Safety Manager. On call officers are given on site training by Jon Williams (Health and Safety Manager)

If two person attendances are noted on the hard copy files, then the supervisor will attend with the operative.

Hard copy information on tenants is carried by supervisors as BT Cornwall can not access Orchard since they changed to new computer systems.

Supervisors contact operatives on their mobile numbers. If poor reception area then land line telephone numbers are given.

On call operatives are not multi skilled. During the summer months there are internal gas engineers and PVCU fitters (windows, doors, locksmiths), they also use SEC external engineers (electric). In the winter months they also use an internal plumber.

There is no current policy or procedure for out of hours service. In the mid area the staff referred to the former Carrick housing policy from 2005.

Adam assured the Panel that there is always an out of hours supervisor on call and they are provided with hard copy documents from the neighbourhood enforcement team regarding ASB.

Adam told the panel he did not receive any reports from BT Cornwall about the number of calls received or number of calls that went unanswered. No formal reporting on the nature of the call.

Risk – calls may not get answered if BT Cornwall is busy answering lifeline calls.
2.3 Out of hour for Housing Options – Dealing with Homelessness, Emergency Accommodation PSL and Emergency Planning

Initial call goes though BT Cornwall 0300 and passed to a supervisor.

Following staff interviews and discussions the panel have found out the following information on the out of hours service for Housing Options.

Jane Couch (Housing Options Service Manager) met with the panel and provided information on the out of hours service for Housing Options.

Cornwall Housing has a legal requirement to provide a 24 hour homelessness services. After 5pm phone calls go through to out of hours, BT Cornwall. The housing options directorate provide an emergency service between the hours of 5pm – 9am to customers who are homeless and in need of emergency accommodation, as well as response repairs service to customers who are housed in emergency accommodation. It is a statutory obligation that homelessness services are available 24 hours a day and local authorities provide this service by a dedicated bank of officers on a rota scheme. The housing options directorate also are called upon as part of the emergency planning process for Cornwall Council, supervisors and Jane Barlow are on the call out list.

The service at the moment is inherited from the original 6 districts. This service is being reviewed, however forms part of the homelessness legislation and is covered by legal legislation.

Homelessness calls go through the out of hours number 0300 - 5pm-9am, Monday - Friday. At weekends it is an automated service. Calls go through to the out of hours provision and pass to the out of hours supervisor.

Once the information is passed to a supervisor, the supervisor will risk assess the situation and make an appropriate placement using a laptop at home. If the call is received late in the afternoon 4.45pm Monday – Friday, the team will follow the call through.

An advanced rota for both the homelessness aspect as well as the emergency accommodation is provided to the Emergency Planning Team. BT will receive a 3 month rota in advance from Housing Options.
BT Cornwall system is not compatible with Peter Lally computer program.

**On call supervisor are:**

Jane Couch (Housing Options Service Manager), Val Bryant (Move on Team Manager) and Natasha Manley (Homelessness Team Manager).

There are a number of officers who make up the rota.

There used to be 3 on call operatives/officers who would be on call at one time, now there is 1 covering Cornwall at any one time. If there is a complex case then Jane Couch can be contacted.

Emergency Accommodation Team have Private Sector Lease Housing Officers and they cover a patch of around 70-120 properties. They manage clients ASB and contact DSO for out of hour repairs. Any incidents of ASB the officers will go in pairs or attend with the police.

BT Cornwall staff have been offered training around housing options, homelessness and emergency accommodation, but they have refused to take this up.

Out of hours policy is out of date and Jane believes it will be changed after the review.

Jane also told the panel that she does not receive any reports from BT Cornwall about the number of calls, how many were answered, unanswered or the nature of the calls. No formal reporting.

2.4

**Out of hour for Repairs East – Dealing with Emergency Repairs for Council Tenants, Private Sector Lease Property Repairs.**

**Initial call goes though BT Cornwall 0300 and passed to a supervisor.**

Following staff interviews and discussions the panel have found the following information on the out of hours service for repairs in the East area of Cornwall.

Kevin Neville (maintenance service Manager) met with the panel and provided information about how the out of hour’s service works in the east and north Cornwall area.
Kevin said the main purpose of attending an out of hours emergency incident is to reduce the risk to tenants, member of the public and Cornwall Housing’s properties. A call out rota has been in place since 2013 and the Panel was informed that there has been an overall reduction in the costs since a supervisor being in place. The supervisor is either a trained technical person or a member of staff who works in the repairs team, and is therefore able to decide if a repair is urgent or not. Prior to a supervisor being in place, an operative or contractor would have gone out in the first instance, when this may not have been necessary, costing the company more money.

There are no red flags in place for BT to highlight vulnerable tenants, only information to go to addresses in 2s.

Mobile signals let the service down, especially with Blackberry phones. On Mondays landline numbers are given to supervisors if it is known that the signal is poor. Supervisors are also instructed to remind operatives that they are on call.

Private sector lease properties; repairs are undertaken by the east area out of hours team even though the properties are in the mid area. This is because all the information held on the properties, is on the east computer system. Kevin hopes that this will be passed to the mid area in the near future.

2.5

Out of hour for Gypsy and Travellers – Dealing with issues on our 3 residential sites and unauthorised encampments.

Initial call goes from site residents to on call staff mobiles. Calls from the general public on unauthorised encampments, will go through the 0300 number.

Following a staff interview the Panel have found the following information on the out of hours service for Gypsy and Travellers.

There are 3 Gypsy and Traveller Residential Sites that Cornwall Housing now manage. Foredown Parc Pensilva, Boscarn Parc Pool, Wheal Jewel St Day.

Foredown Parc historically was managed by Housing Management when it was Caradon District Council. Both Boscarn and Wheal Jewel were managed by Adult and Social Care, however since the formation of Cornwall Housing; all are managed by Cornwall Housing and sit under Housing Management.
There are 3 officers, who oversee different areas of the Gypsy and Traveller communities and unauthorised encampments. Phil Eaton is the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer, Derek Truswell Site Manager of Boscarn Parc and Wheal Jewel, Pam Hardman who is Gypsy and Traveller Welfare Support Worker. Officers are on call 1 week in 3. There is a shared mobile that is used for out of hours calls. Gypsy and Travellers from Boscarn Parc and Wheal Jewel, know the officers day mobile numbers, and call them directly or knock on their home doors. If residents have an emergency, they phone the on call officer, who will deal with the situation. This may not always be repairs, but; fires; ASB, people arriving on site with no permission. Some calls go through the out of hours number, but this has not been promoted with the residents, as a new procedure is being developed. BT Cornwall has the details of the officer who is on call. Overseeing the 3 officers is Stuart Blackie, Housing Manager (Operations). Stuart is not a supervisor but is available if officers need support.

Stuart’s aim is to have the Gypsy and Traveller repairs added onto the mid areas out of hours rota and to only contact the 3 officers for advice. This will give site residents a better and more consistent service in line with other customers. Some examples of when Stuart has been contacted:

- A family have been told to keep off site and have arrived to take a pitch, asked how to deal with the situation.

- Burnt out caravan, fire services ask if it is safe to go on site.

- Police ask for advice from Stuart or the 3 officers.

Foredown Parc Gypsy and Traveller site have historically always used the out of hours service, as they were managed by Housing Management.

The Panel discussed with Stuart issues of lone working and health and safety for the 3 officers involved in the out of hours service. Phil, Pam and Derek have worked with site residents for many years and are aware of the Lone Workers Policy and the risks involved. Cornwall Housing may want to look into this further when the work is extended to other staff members, who will start to undertake emergency repairs out of hours. Gypsy and Travellers are treated the same as other Cornwall Housing tenants and red flags added when appropriate for an individual on site.

Boscarn and Wheal Jewels out of hours experience will start in the main by phoning an on call officer, not the out of hour's 0300 emergency number.
2.6

The Scrutiny Panel have tried to map out what the service looks like across Cornwall Housing and is detailed in the table below, giving the reader a better picture of how the service is being delivered at this moment in time.

### Mapping out service

Please note the service at the top for example – **Repairs/ASB West** and read down the column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mapping services</th>
<th>Repairs/ASB West</th>
<th>Homelessness</th>
<th>Repairs East</th>
<th>Gypsy &amp; Travellers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BT Cornwall receive calls</strong></td>
<td><strong>Legally required to provide 24 hour service</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors x 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors x 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Operatives x 3</strong> – on call 1 in 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager Adam Fitzpatrick</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stuart Blackie line managers, but is not a supervisor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors x 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>BT triage phone calls</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shared mobile for duty officer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisors x 6, filter calls</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors x 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>BT filter calls to supervisor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Covers – PSL, CH, CTE</strong></td>
<td><strong>G&amp;T’s know the officers and phone their day mobiles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisors carry two information folders</strong></td>
<td><strong>No evidence on how the service works</strong></td>
<td><strong>Operatives – south x 10, north x 12 &amp; PSL x 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Calls received are mainly for a repairs issue</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repairs operatives – not multi skilled</strong></td>
<td><strong>Homeless officers x 5 Emergency accom x 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>No ASB observing under taken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Receive direct calls from CC re new camps</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAT II - supervisors deal with fire alarms</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors take appropriate action</strong></td>
<td><strong>Risk register held by BT, to instruct operatives to go in pairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stuart signs off work sheets</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisors witness/observe ASB</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rota for one officer to cover the whole of Cornwall</strong></td>
<td><strong>Risk register – supervisors update info in folders</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aim to have G&amp;T repairs on West repairs rota in the</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Risk register – supervisors update info in folders</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors witness/observe ASB</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors carry two information folders</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supervisors triage phone calls</strong></td>
<td><strong>BT system not compatible with their IT (Peter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor &amp; operative go to</strong></td>
<td><strong>BT triage phone calls</strong></td>
<td><strong>BT filter calls to supervisor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shared mobile for duty officer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Operatives have list of handy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>risk areas</td>
<td>Lally)</td>
<td>numbers</td>
<td>future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobiles – landlines notes for bad reception</td>
<td>No report from BT</td>
<td>Supervisors are sent a terminology sheet</td>
<td>The aim is to promote the 0300 number</td>
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<tr>
<td>No access to computers</td>
<td>Work with Emergency Manager (EM)</td>
<td>Operatives landlines given to supervisors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Working with CC emergency planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No report from BT</td>
<td>Have computer access at home</td>
<td>3 x work sheet to compare</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No plumber on rota for summer months</td>
<td>ASB – officers go out with police or in pairs</td>
<td>Report received from BT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Looking to transfer PSL to the West</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PSL – Private Sector Lease, CH – Cornwall Housing, CTE – Charles Terence Estate
3. Staff and Customer Survey Results

3.1 Summary from Staff Survey results

From 77 surveys that were sent out to staff who involved in the out of hours service, 20 responses were received back.

Scrutiny Panel felt that there was good mix of responses received from members of staff, from different service areas. As well as a good mix of different roles; Supervisor, Operative, Gypsy and Traveller, Homelessness team.

A large number of staff said they were not trained technical staff dealing with supervising out of hours emergency repairs. As well as 80% of supervisors saying they were unable to access customer information whilst on duty. 30% of staff held hard copies of customer information.

80% of staff felt that they did receive enough information before going out on site, however other comments made, raise concerns that staff have visited properties on their own, when they should have visited in 2s.

There are also differences on how CAT II scheme fire alarms are dealt with in the different areas. In Mid Cornwall, Supervisors will go out on site to deal with the fire alarm. In North Cornwall and South East Cornwall a contractor is called to turn the fire alarms off. The results also show that contact is mainly by the use of mobiles phones.

The results show that there is no consistent out of hours Lone Working Procedure that is being practiced. A variety of different answers highlight that some staff are not aware of a Lone Working Procedure, and therefore there is nothing in place. Other responses show that different areas, teams of individuals have a procedure in place, but again nothing consistent.

Supervisors in the mid area, go out on site to witness ASB if needed for an ongoing case. This is not replicated in the South East/North Cornwall areas. A member off staff has commented in the survey that the ASB services should be removed from the Out of Hours Service.
The response to question 17, which asks ‘Is there a procedure in place if no contact can be made to a supervisor/operative, either by mobile or landline’ 35% said ‘No’.

The Scrutiny Panel conclude that the survey results highlight the inconsistency of many practices within the out of hours service. From Lone Working procedures; the roles of the supervisors vary from one end of the County to the other; dealing with CAT II scheme fire alarms; monitoring ASB; how tenant information is accessed; who can access information on a compute or hard copy tenant information.

Please see appendix 1 for full survey results.

3.2

**Summary from Customer Survey Results**

**Postal Survey**

113 postal surveys were sent out and 25 were received back. Giving a 22% response rate.

The results show that a high percentage of tenants said they were able to get through easily when they phoned the 0300 number. However we don’t know what the customers definition of ‘fairly easy’ is and when you add up those that said it was fairly easy, difficult and did not get through, , it’s about a quarter of the overall figure.

A high percentage said they were happy with the response that they received, but 20% stated they were not happy or that the response was poor.

Results tell us that overall customers felt their problem was dealt with efficiently. But 25% said ‘no’ they did not feel their problem was dealt with efficiently, or they had mixed feeling, as well, still waiting for the problem to be dealt with.

Customers felt that overall the outcome was to their satisfaction. As well as overall being very happy or happy with the service they received.

**Telephone Survey**

The Panel phoned 77 tenants that had recently used the out of hours service. Twenty two tenants were willing to do a short survey over the phone.
Survey results tell us in a similar way to the postal survey results, that customers found it easy to get through on the 0300 number. Again however when you add up; fairly easy, difficult and did not get through responses, this is nearly a quarter.

Customers also told us that overall they thought the problem was dealt with efficiently; however there was a quarter that answered; no, mixed feelings and still waiting for the problem to be dealt with.

Customers were happy with the outcome of using the out of hours service and were satisfied. However the response to question 5, overall how happy was you with the service? It appears most were very happy, however if you add those that responded, mixed feelings and unhappy, that’s a quarter who were not very happy

Please see Appendix 3 & 4 for full survey results.
4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The Scrutiny Panel have concluded that Cornwall Housings supervisors and managers are working very hard to ensure that a good service is offered to Cornwall Housing customers. Rotas are in place in the mid area and east area of Cornwall. BT Cornwall has rotas in advance and some information relating to properties. The Scrutiny Panel also recognise that supervisors, managers and operatives who are involved in the out of hours service have a really difficult job due to the inconsistency of approach. This causes areas of concern regarding the health and safety of staff, lone working practices and the lack of an out of hours policy that would have a clear unified approach.

Issues were raised in the staff survey of officers attending properties in pairs. One member of staff highlighted that they had been sent to a property where it should have been attend in pairs and they had not been given this information. This incident alone does raise concerns regarding staff health and safety. Mobiles signals are another area of concern if this is the main contact devise. Supervisors have tried to manage this by holding staff land line numbers as back up.

The practice of witnessing anti-social behaviour in the mid area differs from the east area, where this practice has never been in place. Whether this benefits the customer or Cornwall Housing is not a question that the panel explored. But from the point of view of the customer there is a difference in the service being offered. If Cornwall Housing is assisting anti-social behaviour cases in the mid area by witnessing them, this could disadvantages tenants in the east area who are not offered this service.

Another area of concern is that the supervisors in the mid area carry around hard copy information on tenants and visit in pairs. This practice is open to breach of data protection, if lost or mislaid.

Gypsy and Traveller residents need to be offered the same out of hours service that other customers receive. The panel recognise that this is being reviewed.

Out of hours Jane Couch team and Repairs might have concerns if there is no record held by BT Cornwall of how many of their
customer calls are un answered. Or customers who may be lost in the out of hours process.

There is no robust audit trail across the whole of the out of hours service about how many calls came in relating to out of hours emergency repairs, homelessness and ASB. Different types of reports are being kept but there is no one process that everyone is working to.

**The Scrutiny Panel question – Does Cornwall Housings Out of Hours Service meet the needs of Cornwall Housing customers?**

The Scrutiny Panel have concluded that it does not meet the needs of customers. The reasons are as follows:

- BT Cornwall prioritise their own calls which are lifeline calls and any Cornwall Housing’s out of hours calls may go un -answered.

- Cornwall Housing tenants are in competition with any other Cornwall Council department customer, or member of the public, who phone the Cornwall Council out of hours service.

- Cornwall Housing customers are also in competition with other social housing providers who use BT Cornwall out of hours for their tenants’ emergency repairs.

- When the service is offered to our Gypsy and Traveller residents, will their calls get lost in this process, including serious out of hours emergencies?

- The fact that the call can go unanswered is concern enough.

- The main concern for the Scrutiny Panel is that the service BT Cornwall provides is not good enough or robust enough for a large company like Cornwall Housing.

4.2

**Recommendations**

The Scrutiny Panel would like Cornwall Housing to consider the following recommendations and discuss them at joint meeting to develop an Action Plan.

- That Cornwall Housing develops a dedicated in-house Out of Hours service where by:
1. Calls can be monitored and recorded.

2. Reports can be produced on number of calls and the nature of the call.

3. Open and transparent service, where by Cornwall Housing know exactly what service customers are receiving, for the amount that the service costs.

4. Red flag information on the system to inform out of hour’s staff to attend in *pairs*, or any other information they need to know.

- A comparison is undertaken on how much it would cost to have a dedicated service, compared to the cost of going through BT Cornwall.

- A robust Lone Working policy is developed that meets the needs of staff on out of hours duty.

- Replacing hard copy information being taken out by Supervisors, with electronic devises.

- Develop a single ‘Out of Hours’ Policy for Cornwall Housing.

- Decide if the monitoring of ASB by supervisors is worth expanding to the East of Cornwall, or should it cease to bring about an equal service to tenants.

- That Cornwall Housing review if the right operatives are in place on out of hours duty rotas, to ensure an operative only goes out once to deal with an emergency.

- Cornwall Housing promote in the newsletter, what is considered an out of hours emergency.

- Develop a consistent approach to deal with category II scheme fire alarms, resetting the panels.
Appendix 1

Staff survey

Received back 20 surveys from 77 sent out, giving a 26% response rate.

1)

![Diagram showing the percentage of staff involved in different parts of the 'Out of Hours' service.]

2)

![Diagram showing the roles of staff in delivering the out of hour's service.]

If no, please tell us what you role is –

- Manager on call
- Manager of service (east)
- Manager of supervisors and supervisor
If no, what service do you come from?

- p.v.c.u
- General manager
- Gypsy & Travellers Services x 2
- Responsive repairs
- Housing Management & Finance
- Resources
- PSL - Temporary Accommodation x 2
- Neighbourhood Enforcement

4)
If no, please tell us how you access customer information while on 'Out of Hours' duties -

- Phoned supervisor
- If the issue for out of hours is for an authorised residential site than the knowledge is gained from experience. If the response is for an unauthorised encampment than there may well be no knowledge of the 'customer'  
- From the call centre x 2
- all calls when on OOH are taken, dealt with if possible or put to my Line Manager the following morning
- I can sign on at home to access capita  
- We used to be able to ask life line to look up some tenant details on orchard for us. Recently they have been experiencing IT problems and this hasn't been available.
- The OOH team (Lifeline) will provide customer and property details
If you are an officer/operative going out on duty for the out of hours service, do you feel that you are given enough information to undertake your role?

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **If no, please give more information**

If no, please give more information -

- Other than a site identification and the number of caravans turned up at a particular spot, police could be involved which helps with control measures for a risk assessment.
- We are not always briefed as to tenants who require to be visited in pairs and on more than one occasion I have attended a property which requires two persons to visit but have been sent alone.

What else do you do that is not in the list, please explain –

- Just providing a management input to decision making.
• I am not on standby call, I would only be contacted in extreme circumstances e.g. death.
• Responding to fires, anti-social behaviour and maintenance issues on authority owned sites. Responding to phone calls from Police, Fire or general public on unauthorised encampments.
• if our OOH repairs service is now in operation, if in an emergency, I would phone them
• Issues regarding lifeline when contact cannot be made with the tenant via the intercom - assisting entry to property. Issues with Police and Fire Brigade-attending when required to assist in various matters
• I sometimes attend repairs if they are close by. I am a qualified carpenter so anything to do with this I can handle saving a long trip for some of the trades
• Communicating with tenants who report an OOH repairs.
• Primary role is to assess the urgency of the call and whether an OOHs visit is required or it can wait to be referred to the in hours teams. Always go through preliminary checks with the tenant before sending out an engineer - i.e. boilers, electrics, blocked wc etc. - resulting in quite a few not requiring a visit. Act as second person when a 2 person visit is needed. Attend when Fire Brigade/Police request attendance to hand over log reports etc. in cases where tenant is unable to return to the property refer on to Homeless Officer. Holder of keys, required to go out when access is needed. Passing on details to the in hours team.

8) If you don’t go to CAT II schemes to turn fire alarm off, who would you contact to do this?

• Don’t know x 2
• not got any on our traveller sites, just manual bell alarms to alert residents
• call centre has contact details for fire alarms
• Firewatch in the East.
• SEC if due to an electrical problem or the Alarm Company - but usually you need the keys and passwords which are kept in the OOHs pack so unlikely I could not attend.
9)

If you are a supervisor or an officer that attends call outs on Roscar, Wheat, Jawal or Forder, do your calls come through 0300 BT out of our service and then forwarded to you?

![Bar Chart]

If no, who contacts you about an incident or emergency for gypsy and travellers?

- Don't know.
- I deal with any unauthorised encampments in the County that are reported from the 0300
- Vast majority of on-site gypsies have my phone number which is always on
- Don't cover it

10) Do you have any concerns about the service, or ideas how it could be improved, if so please tell us how?

- Up to date information on two man calls and dangerous tenants.
- Yes, inconsistent at present.
- Trespass is a civil offence, not criminal, and sometimes Police will not get involved but rely on the G & T Service to answer or respond to unauthorised encampments. The visit could be a low key event or turn into an issue where perhaps the Police could be called. I believe we have it right in Cornwall whereby good control measures to robust risk assessments will always win over a gung ho approach to an unauthorised encampment by Police and/or Council Officers.
- Quicker than normal response would be ideal with the culture I work with
- We have slimmed down the service but it’s essential we have cover to ensure safety to our tenants and any liabilities concerning CHL - Our requirement to ensure the safety and well-being of our customers is both essential and a legal requirement as a landlord.
- have a prompt sheet for the call centre to drill down the problem(which most of them do but not always)
• I think we need to ensure the operatives who are on the 'general' call out (not electrical call outs) have sufficient plumbing skills. Sometimes they are not able to make safe on plumbing repairs.
• The out of hours service is great for tenants but more needs to be done to stress it is an emergency service not a service out of hours! I would suggest responsive repairs covers period from 4.30 - 7pm and OOHs take over then, I know that some tenants call the OOHs service because they don't want to take time off work and be in for an appointment during the day and they know they will get a swifter response OOHs. Suggest online support could be provided to tenants who have a problem (like the preliminary checks we do). I struggle telling an elderly tenant there’s nothing I can do for them when they call in to say their electrics have tripped and it's due to light bulb that needs replacing - we have to call out SEC and this is then recharged. I like having Life line pass on calls to me not sure I'd like tenants to call me direct.
• Remove ASB

11) Do you have a lone working procedure, if so please tell us what it is?

• Don't have one.
• No, just common sense x 2
• A generic and a specific risk assessment for a pre-visit, on site and off site. Can scan the detail to you.
• I try to speak to the operatives after each job for feedback and to ensure they are ok
• there is a lone working procedure on the hr helpdesk but I don’t believe it is used either on call out or during day works.
• As I have done for 13 + years, when I go onto any of the sites I manage, I always risk assess
• Yes - This allows us to dial into the ALFIE system and will track where we have informed I would be on a time monitoring system - It will ring my designated number back at a certain time and if I do not answer after 3 rings it will escalate and eventually to the Police. I can also have a facility to call for help if needed.
• all operatives work alone unless tenant flagged up as VIP
• not sure
• When I call an operative, I always ask them to call/text me when they are home safely. If I have not heard from them within a reasonable amount of time I will call them to check all OK. I always double check if a property is an Attend in twos property as well, to ensure the safety of our operatives.
• yes - Cornwall housing has a new policy. Not used it yet.
• Registered on the lone working system through Carrick Lifeline 08448 920016 x 2
• Not strictly but we do have a list of addresses that tell us if there are any ASB concerns and if they recommend that two people visit.
• Informal procedure which involves contacting BT Cornwall to inform them that I am going into a building
12) If you are a supervisor, do you receive reports from BT Cornwall about how many calls were received.... If no how do you monitor

Nobody checked options.

- I receive an update on a Monday, and any issues that have arisen are resolved and lessons learnt. Only significant issue recently has been when mobile contact has been poor, resolved by supervisor giving Telecare their landline numbers.
- Spreadsheet of unauthorised encampments, monthly out of hours claim sheets, personal diaries.
- No …. any OOH calls can be taken from my personal phone or my OOH phone
- No - I record all my calls and email these through to the appropriate section each day - apart from Fri/Sat/Sun - when these are passed through on Monday morning.
- Do not monitor, just record calls
- not sure I assume its dealt with at a higher level
- i do not monitor out of hours as a whole. I record how many call outs i receive and how many an operative attends out of those.
- No reports received - I didn't know we could have these - yes I would be interested to know call volume and trends but I would imagine these reports would need to go to Adam Fitzpatrick the Manager of the Supervisors out of hour’s rota rather than direct to me. There are 5 of us who cover this rota regularly.
- Managed by senior management x 2
- I don’t.
- No - we don’t x 2
If you are a supervisor do you receive reports from BT Cornwall, on the nature of the calls received for your service and how they were dealt with?

13) If you are a supervisor, are you contacted by BT Cornwall on a landline or mobile phone?

14)
15) If you are a supervisor, do you pass calls to landline numbers or staff mobiles?

16) If you are a supervisor, how often do you go out on site, for what purpose and what is the benefit of this in your view?

- As little as possible.
- Depends on the size and make-up of the site, unauthorised is an initial visit as soon as it is reported, authorised residential sites on a daily basis, tolerated with permission sites. weekly.
- So far not gone out. Would go out if the situation was reported as unsafe
- If any situation cannot be dealt with over the phone, I can always go out to the sites in my own vehicle
- Occasionally but only for specific issues 2 Person visit - identified on the UDC Listing  Fire Alarms  ASB cases where evidence of anti-social behaviour has been requested  Police and/or Fire Service request for assistance  Fire at a property  Major incident where presence is required
- limited site visits, then only if job requires VIP
- if jobs are local to me, saving an tradesman a long journey sometimes
- I do not regularly go out on site. If there is an attend in twos property and I live closer to the property than the second operative, I would attend instead of the second operative to reduce costs and ensure the visit is completed quicker.
- Rarely go out unless ASB or alarms or fire etc, possibly once or twice at most - I haven't been out at all covering the rota the last 4 times.
- Infrequently x 2
- It's hard to say. We only get called out for ASB witnessing or fire alarms going off. If I had to work out an average over the last 12 months I'd say it was 0.75 times a week
- Very infrequently apart form 2 person visits and resetting fire alarms
17)

- Further info for 17. below - Telecare have an alternative number for G Allen, he is prepared to stand in if there is a problem.
Appendix 2

Customer Survey - Postal

Received back 25 surveys from 113 sent out, giving a 22% response rate. One was returned stating that they had not used the service.

1) When you called the Out of Hour's service how easy was it to get through?

2) Were you happy with the response you received?
3) Were your problems dealt with efficiently?

4) Was the outcome to your satisfaction?

if no, give details –

- Was given heater that did not work
5) Overall, how happy were you with the service?

6) Are you male or female?
7) What is your age group?

8) Do you consider yourself disabled?
Appendix 3

Customer Survey – Telephone

The Panel called 75 tenants that had recently used the service; this exercise was completed during day time hours. The Panel managed to speak to 22 tenants and they were happy to complete the Customer Survey over the phone.

1) When you called the Out of Hours service how easy was it to get through?

2) Were you happy with the response you received?
3) Were your problems dealt with efficiently?

- Yes: 16
- No: 1
- Mixed feelings: 4
- Still waiting: 2

4) Was the outcome to your satisfaction?

- Yes: 20
- No: 1
- Mixed feelings: 5
- Still waiting: 2
5) Overall, how happy were you with the service?

6) Are you male or female?
7. What is your age group?

8. Do you consider yourself disabled?

9. What area do you live in?