



Scrutiny Topic:	Energy Efficiency – Affordable Warmth
Start / End Date:	September – October 2018
Board:	Thursday 6 th December 2018
Judgement:	Good

1. Introduction

Insight is a committed group of volunteer customers interested to help improve services delivered by Great Places Housing Group. Our group comprises of 5 members and 4 potential new members, who carry out service reviews, taking account of feedback from wider Great Places customer base. Our role is to scrutinise service areas in detail, acting as a critical friend reporting findings and suggested recommendations to the Great Places Board, representing the customer voice.

Increasing membership of the group remains a key area of focus; we are currently testing methods that will offer customers choice to contribute without having to attend meetings whilst remaining engaged and fully informed. Our aim to achieve this goal is to use digital methods of interaction. We plan to use the experiences of our new members to agree an approach, which works since it is their intention to work mainly from home.

We would like to encourage greater interest from customers and plan to do this by raising the groups' profile, promoting outcomes of reviews as well as advertising future review topics. Last month, a member of our group was featured in **Customer Stories – Real Choice, Real Change**, which can be found on the website and appears on Flo and internal screens in the offices. RCRC is about showcasing the benefits of getting involved and the difference it has made to the customers lives and / or communities in which they live.

2. Review Service Area

For this review we chose to look at Energy Efficiency & Affordable Warmth since Great Places has a 10 year ambition in the new Corporate Plan to achieve a minimum Energy Performance rating of C for all housing stock – an ultimate objective to lower running costs and reduce the incidence of fuel poverty. We felt this was an aspirational and challenging ambition and a valuable area to explore, particularly with ever increasing fuel costs along with other financial demands on customers. We plan to focus our review on two areas:

- the energy efficiency performance of Great Places housing stock and
- customer access to support and information on energy efficiency & affordable warmth

Whilst reviewing Great Places' compliance with HCA's Consumer Standards in late 2017, we were impressed to hear of work carried out with agencies in local communities and wished to gain more knowledge around social, environmental and economic well-being. We anticipate our scope will reveal greater detail relating to a number of these areas of interest whilst informing our review of support offered to customers.

Under the 'Decent Homes Standard' it states housing stock must have efficient heating and effective insulation ensuring homes are warm enough for the occupant. It's worthwhile to note the Government's green paper states the Decent Homes Standard should be reviewed to ensure it

delivers the right standards for social housing residents and reflects the Government's current and forthcoming priorities, which may have an impact in this area of work.

It's our intention that this review will impart insight to inform planning and development of sustainability plans and investment programmes to support Great Places 3 year target and 10 year ambitions to attain a minimum D / C Energy Efficient Performance rating for all housing stock. We also wish to explore ways customers at risk of or in fuel poverty are supported to maximise household income, access assistance and be energy smart – we wish to consider physical and social impact of energy efficiency and affordable warmth and their influence on customers.

3. Aim and Scope of our review

The aim of our review is to focus on ways Great Places invest to improve the energy efficiency of our stock as well explore how customers are supported to be energy smart to reduce living costs. We set a clear scope to gather data to deliver the following objectives;

- examine Great Places investment in regards to improving energy efficiency of assets
- evaluate the benefit of the improvement work to customers' homes
- review home energy visits that support customers to be energy smart
- assess Great Places' offer of support to customers to reduce / prevent fuel poverty

4. Our Approach

We sought information from key staff members to inform our review, which are listed below;

Presentation by the Environmental Manager: We invited the Environmental Manager to present an overview of the Environmental strategy and areas, which relate to property investment and functionality of the team to support customers, be energy smart.

Presentation by the Head of Assets: To understand how work carried out by the Environmental team to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock fits into Great Places' overall Asset Management strategy, we invited the Head of Assets to provide an outline of the way these two areas are considered in relation to the planned investment programme.

Overview from Environmental Liaison Officer: We asked the Environmental Liaison Officer to provide an update of the support provided to customers to be more energy smart, by providing energy advice in relation to their home.

Overview from Poverty & Partnerships Co-ordinator & Business Transformation team: We were interested to hear of ways customers at risk of or in fuel poverty are supported by Great Places so asked the Poverty & Partnerships Coordinator to provide an update. Also, bearing in mind the new ways of working, we were interested to learn how, in the new structure, customers will be supported in this area.

Desktop Review – website: We completed a desktop review of information gathered during the presentations and other detail we had requested; to identify any key findings and / or areas to consider guiding our review.

Reviewing other landlord websites: As part of our desktop review to gain an outward viewpoint to our review we reviewed websites of other landlords for good practice, which may enhance Great Places' website and customer portal.

Gathering feedback from customers: We have learnt from previous reviews that customer feedback is crucial and offers a first-hand account of what matters most to customers and their expectations, such as what worked well or didn't work so well about the service for them.

We find customer feedback greatly informs recommendations providing a customer perspective and balance to the review, in addition to the evidence gathered from other sources. For this review we collected data from customers who had wall insulation fitted in the last 3 years and the impact this had on living conditions in their home.

We felt it was important to gather feedback from customers about their experience before, during and after work was carried out, so asked questions to assist us to gauge views of the level of disruption faced as well as any improvement of thermal comfort.

We also surveyed customers who had investment work, such as replacement windows, doors or boiler carried out in their home; to gain greater understanding of the effect on thermal efficiency of their home. We asked customers about ways they use heating systems in their homes to establish habits and determine if their homes are being heated effectively.

5. Review of good practice and findings

We were provided with information from Great Places demonstrating the range of work carried out to improve energy efficiency performance of properties and the way teams work with customers to provide advice and support. We've outlined areas of good practice and summarised our findings, which were used to form the basis of our recommendations.

Presentation by the Environmental Manager

The Environmental Manager explained that the environmental strategy sits within the main corporate plan and cuts across many of the groups' overarching priorities. Evidence presented focussed on two of three environmental values, which were **Green Homes** and **Green People**.

Areas of good practice

The environmental strategy states investment in the energy efficiency of housing stock is the most significant factor to ensure customers are able to keep warm and well in their homes.

The new Corporate Plan includes a 3 year target to achieve a minimum D energy efficiency performance rating for all housing stock and a challenging 10 year ambition to improve this to a minimum C efficiency banding for Great Places stock.

Improving energy efficiency of existing homes by 2028 is a significant challenge although Great Places' plan is to couple this with good advice about reducing energy consumption and wastage, which can contribute to lower running costs, reducing fuel poverty and greater affordability, improved health and carbon emissions as well as future proof housing stock.

Great Places has already undertaken significant work to improve the energy performance of housing stock. There have been extensive programmes of work such as boiler replacements, loft and cavity insulation, and other improvements including draught proofing, window and door replacements and

a programme of installation PV's to a sample of properties

As at 1st April 2018, Great Places own 3865 properties whose energy performance rating is below C;

- 1560 = 65+

- 1225 = 60-65

- 1080 = 'very hard to treat'

Great Places has an Affordable Warmth team, who work with

third parties to secure funding for energy efficiency improvements however more recently finance has not been as readily available.

Great Places has retrofitted a sample of properties with external and / or internal wall insulation to improve thermal efficiency. Improvement work to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock is currently undertaken on an ad-hoc basis although it's the teams intention to take a more planned and targeted approach going forward.

The PIMMS software has an Energy Module, which is used to inform when items need replacing in housing stock; the impact of replacement work on the SAP rating will be updated, accordingly once detail has been input into the database.

The average SAP rating of housing stock is typically used to report energy efficiency of housing stock. However, Great Places develop a significant number of properties annually so detail of under performing stock would get lost within an average figure. To counter act this the environmental team reports internally on worst performing properties; to gain accurate data of housing stock, which is under performing thermally therefore costing customers more in running costs to agree action to be taken in relation to these properties.

A crucial element of the role of the Environmental team is to make sure customers understand how to operate their homes effectively. Educating customers to be 'energy smart' is an important area of work and the Environmental Liaison Officer is central to providing support to customers with advice and undertaking Energy Home Visits.

Customers can access home energy advice on Great Places' website; there is also an Energy Guide, which offers tips to customers of ways to get the best out of their home.

Training has been crucial to environmental improvements – bitesize training has been given to teams to ensure a consistent message about energy efficiency is being shared with customers.

Great Places seek not to work in isolation and where possible, third party working with other registered providers and local authorities has provided some excellent projects as well as sharing best practice

Summary of findings

A property to qualify as being a 'C' rated energy performing would contain a good heating system with a thermostat, a controller and thermostatic radiator valves, it would be insulated, be double glazed, include LED lighting, good external doors and be ventilated with chimney insulation.

Great Places own housing stock classed as 'very Hard to Treat' meaning it would be extremely challenging in terms of cost and resources to raise the energy efficiency performance rating. A number of properties are listed buildings therefore would need to be passed by LAs and meet strict regulations, which can incur high cost.

Quick win improvements include LED lights, loft and chimney insulation - work used to improve 'hard to treat' properties may include cavity / solid wall insulation and heating system replacements.

Customers who had solid wall insulation fitted weren't surveyed following work to assess the impact of the work on the thermal efficiency of the home.

A pilot project is being carried out to fully insulate and ventilate 2 Great Places properties. To measure the impact of the work each of the properties will be monitored and the detail used to inform the next 10 year program of energy performance.

A number of properties acquired by Great Places have been identified as containing failed cavity wall insulation; to extract the old insulation will cost approx. £2500 and £1500 to replace, if grant funding cannot be sourced; a costly exercise, emphasising the importance of procuring the services of reputable contractors.

Research undertaken by Sustainable Homes; an organisation, which provides advice, expertise and knowledge on sustainability and climate change highlighted that higher SAP rating of EPCs showed a lower 'void' turnaround, thereby reducing void related costs.

'Love Your Asset' forms part of the new ways of working; it's an approach, which involves all staff being responsible for reporting repairs found in communal or external areas to the HUB using their digital device. The work will be categorised into 1 of 3 categories; an urgent / routine repair or investment work task by a dedicated person in the HUB. 'Love Your Asset' is a structured way of scanning properties for issues / defects and works on the principle of 'prevention is better than cure'

Presentation by the Head of Assets

The Head of Assets provided an overview of the Great Places' Asset Management Strategy focusing on plans to invest in housing stock to improve energy efficiency of poor performing properties

Areas of good practice

Great Places has a comprehensive Asset Management Strategy, which outlines the groups' commitment to improving energy efficiency and developing greater awareness of asset performance being mindful of the impact investment in homes has on customers' perception of the organisation.

The Asset Management Strategy outlines the intent to invest in housing stock, using data to make strategic decisions, which includes offering affordable energy efficient homes for customers. It is due to be reviewed in 2019, which is timely support the ambitions of the new Corporate Plan.

Last year's CSF was to complete stock condition surveys for 100% of housing stock by March 2018, which was achieved. This year's CSF and 3 year plan is to have accurate data for 100% of housing stock, which will be achieved using a combination of new surveys and validation of existing surveys.

Great Places recognise energy efficiency is integral to decent homes and the consumer standards framework, as is having an understanding of the value and condition of assets, which will influence borrowing for further funding in the future.

The strategy outlines that if improvements have been made to a property but energy efficiency is still performing poorly, or if improvements are impractical or have little impact; then this insight will be used to guide divestment decisions or more innovative solutions for customers to make their property more affordable to occupy will be considered

Targets have been set to obtain accurate data of the condition of 100% of housing stock, develop a sustainability plan for all assets and to continue to invest in maintenance and upkeep of housing stock and achieve a minimum 'D' energy performance rating for all housing stock by 2021

Regular analysis of data to identify stock which is not practical to raise to 'C' energy rating occurs and actions are agreed to free up cash or utilise housing stock more effectively, such as a change of use or remodel.

Summary of findings

Energy efficiency investment work will be planned within PIMMS to understand cost and benefits of the work and track improvements in SAP scores of housing stock. The information held in PIMMS database is continually being updated; improving accuracy to make informed investment decisions

Information is known about properties which can't achieve a 'D' energy performance rating, although further analysis of data is necessary to be able to confirm the number of properties, that won't achieve a 'C' rating. Great Places has identified properties that can easily be improved to a 'C' energy rating, if LED lighting was fitted

As at August 2018, Great Places has 2986 homes without a current SAP rating and 236 properties that have an Energy Efficiency Performance rating below 'D'; 30 of these properties are on the divestment list.

A target has been set to reduce the number of outstanding EPCs each year by 1000 using the expertise of an external contractor, since Great Places doesn't currently have capacity in-house. A

good rate has been negotiated with the contractor of £50 per property, who deliver their service nationally so able to survey housing stock across the groups' wide geographical spread.

Using a contractor adds consistency as well as an element of independence to the surveys. Based on performance to date, it's predicted the target and the stretch target to complete 1000 EPCs will have been exceeded by March 2019

The Affordable Warmth Group, who is responsible for scoping new technologies and funding opportunities, is reviewing its current Terms of Reference to ensure effectiveness and relevance

There is no 'standard' budget in the annual investment programme (i.e. a fixed % of the budget allocated for work associated with improving energy efficiency of housing stock); there has been annual allocation of ad-hoc requests for insulation / other work, additional budget can be allocated to specific projects such as the whole house insulation pilot, which is in this year's programme

Funding streams obtained generally contain strict criteria, which restrict what can be installed and to which properties. For example - housing stock has to be in very low output areas or in areas where a sufficient density of housing is owned. Also, funding needs to be spent within tight timeframes, which can result in mistakes being made through a lack of time to plan and source work. Funding will always be sought where possible, although self-funding projects allow Great Places to prioritise homes opposed to the funders and set the specification, which are right for the work

Energy advice is accessible for customers on Great Places' website as well as a printable guide for customers who can request a Home Energy Visit by the Environmental Liaison Officer

NSMs will spend more time in neighbourhoods working closely with customers in the new ways of working therefore will have greater awareness of customer circumstances and better placed to impart advice and signpost to agencies to provide support. The environmental team are planning to attend team meetings to deliver training to neighbourhood service teams by the end of March 2019

Upon completion of work loft insulation used to be assessed independently by Great Places' sub-contractor team. Currently, however there isn't full capacity within the team, therefore this work isn't being inspected independently.

Overview from Environmental Liaison Officer

The Environmental Liaison Officer provided an update of support offered to customers be more energy smart in relation to their home

Areas of good practice

The Environmental Team delivers external Carbon Literacy training, which generates additional income for the business and attended Andy Burnham's Green Summit and pledged to offer three days Carbon Literacy training to GM's leaders, including CEOs of public and private sector bodies

The team takes a two fold approach assessing energy performance, insulating properties as well as effective education to attempt to influence a change in behaviour

The service has high quality, clear advice and guidance material, which is on hand for customers and can be accessed online; which is a printable version and can be obtained as a hard copy from staff members. An information booklet setting out useful detail for customers in relation to keeping their home free from damp, condensation and mould to inform and challenge common misconceptions.

Customers can request an Energy Home Visit by the Environmental Liaison Officer equally staff can make a referral for a visit on behalf of a customer with their permission.

Home energy visits are tailored to the circumstances of the customer in the property and their priorities on the day. Topics typically covered at a visit cover;

- How to use the heating controls in the most cost effective way
- Damp and mould growth, condensation and how to prevent it
- Switching supplier and the £145 Warm Home Discount, signposting only
- Energy saving hints and tips to reduce draughts, keep the heat in and use less
- How to manage energy bills throughout the year and advice on energy debt

The Environmental team attend joint events with external agencies maximising exposure, which has proven to be successful with increased engagement with customers, that allows customers to discuss their individual circumstances as well as exploring ways to be more energy smart

Great Places are researching the value and cost of taking a more holistic approach to improving energy efficiency of housing stock compared with undertaking individual improvements; ie) loft insulation, fitting replacement windows, cavity wall insulation. A pilot project (whole house insulation project) is being planned to insulate 2 properties; the data collected from the monitoring of the impact of the improvement work will be used to inform future programmes.

Working with partners to access funding and specialist expertise, there are currently pilot projects looking at the following; infrared heating, whole house insulation, quality of cavity wall insulation and cost of effective floor insulation

Great Places sit on Greater Manchester and Yorkshire's sustainability forums

Summary of findings

Customers' common concerns relate mainly to draughts, maintaining temperature, cold spots, damp, condensation and mould, high energy bills costs and under heating homes, energy bill debt, issues operating heating systems or heating homes effectively

It has been found some customers have misconceptions in relation to the thermal efficiency, which impacts their perception of the comfort and quality of their home; for example draughts, which can be cold spots, the wall feels cold to touch consequently the room, is cold and damp, condensation and mould is Great Places' responsibility. The customer information booklet 'Keep your home FREE from damp, condensation and mould' attempts to explain the different types of damp, outlining ways customers can reduce condensation in their homes

Customers' expectations are continually rising regarding how their home should perform thermally

Some customers haven't taken advantage of switching energy suppliers; reasons for this typically are a lack of understanding due to choice and confusing data relating to tariffs or fear of the unknown

Overview from Poverty & Partnerships Co-ordinator & Business Transformation team

The Poverty & Partnerships Coordinator gave an update of ways customers at risk of or in fuel poverty are given support by Great Places. We also received an update of ways support will be offered in relation to the new ways of working

Areas of good practice

Great Places' charitable aim is to benefit the community and the provision of social housing is to offer sustainable and affordable housing to people

Great Places are part of Greater Manchester Housing Providers; a collaboration of 25 housing providers working together across the city to ensure supply of quality housing people can afford

A number of fuel projects implemented to support customers include switch 'n' save; fuel arrears allowance schemes, warm home discounts, gas capping campaign and trust fund applications

Great Places website contains a range of clear informative and useful detail for customers to refer to providing guidance with Home Energy and Money advice, as well as links to external agencies and financial support schemes

Great Places new ways of working will see a move away from specialisms to a generic model and offer of a more needs based service rather than a blanket approach with one off projects. The services will be delivered by skilled officers in neighbourhoods; the ethos of this new approach is to build on the strengths of customers to support independence

Service Development new ways of working guiding principles;

- we start from the home – providing customers with a home that meets their needs and budget giving them the best possible new start in life

- we do things ‘with’ not ‘for’ our customers – everyone is given the right support and guidance so they can become more self-sufficient. By involving customers in tasks, rather than doing too much on their behalf, we enable them to do more for themselves.

Summary of findings

At the time of the presentation we heard some 14 million people in the UK are living in poverty, broken down this figure is 8m working-age adults, 4m children and 1.9 million pensioners. Other stats we were informed about during this presentation were as follows;

- 40% of people in poverty live in a family where at least one person is disabled
- 68% of all people in poverty live in rented properties
- 38% of children in poverty live in a lone-parent family
- 65% of working-age households in poverty have someone doing paid work

Customer’s value support which historically has been provided by Great Places; new ways of working will help to encourage customers be more independent and self-sufficient. Development of effective partnerships mean customers can be directed to agencies, who can offer more expertise and the most appropriate help.

Desktop Review

We completed a desktop review of information we’d gathered from presentations to identify key findings to guide our review. We also reviewed other landlords’ websites aiming to identify good practice, which could be suggested to enhance Great Places website

Areas of good practice

Great Places has Environmental and Asset Management strategies in place, which outline the groups’ aims to ensure a positive environmental impact across the group as well, make strategic decisions to manage, divest and improve its housing stock using accurate and relevant data, to contribute to an understanding of assets. Both strategies are to be reviewed next year, which is timely to support the ambitions of Great Places’ new Corporate Plan

We were impressed with the range of energy improvement work trialled by the environmental / asset teams taking the unknown out of these different ways of working and research into innovative new technologies to be considered to future proof Great Places assets

Summary of findings

We found the information for customers was basic but practical providing advice and tips that was clearly presented using both images and text. Information can be found on the website, as well as a number of printed booklets that can be requested from Great Places, which provide fuel debt advice, impartial information on different tariffs ‘switch and save’ and help with heating systems and controls. The environmental team’s contact details are listed clearly more than once encouraging customers to get in-touch for advice. We would like to see this part of the service promoted more extensively on other platforms such as social media, so customers are more aware the information is available and where to find it

During the review, we used the webchat facility to enquire about investment work and found the response was clear and informative; although we noted no reference was made to the website

A number of promotional campaigns have been run by Great Places targeting vulnerable customers in relation to thermal warmth during winter months, although the number of these events is fewer more recently favouring joint working with external partners to maximise exposure with customers

To introduce an outwards view to our research; we reviewed websites of other landlord to identify any good practice, which could be used to enhance the service offered on the Great Places website and customers portal

Overall, we found Great Places website was easy to navigate to locate information relating to energy advice and it was well structured. Although, we’d have expected to find detail comprising a link to energy advice and tips to keep warm on the home page especially at this time of year

The Guinness Partnership website contains a good range of information including links for customers to access detail about schemes that can help customers with grants and funding to help you save money on your energy bills, how to make the most of electric storage heaters as well as a link to the Energy Savings Trust website

We particularly liked that the website displayed monetary figures of potential savings and ways to achieve the savings, such as turning down your thermostat, using timers on heating systems, using 'smart meters' to help monitor energy usage ultimately leading to a potential reduction and closing curtains amongst other suggested ideas. We felt this would appeal to customers on a practical level; potentially influencing a change of behaviour.

The website recommended a number of impartial switching services customers could access to check whether they could get a better deal from an alternative energy supplier. The information was located alongside debt advice and other assistance customers may find useful

Stockport Homes is promoting a Winter Campaign, which offers useful information to customers on ways to Stay Warm and Well this Winter, as well as offering assistance to customers via Energy Solutions Advisors.

Gathering feedback from customers

Following our presentation from the Environmental Manager we agreed to survey customers to collect feedback relating to the impact of recent solid wall insulation work. Questions focussed on differences the customers had noticed, following work to their homes. We also enquired about their experience of having work carried out. We hoped to be able to gauge customer views of the impact of the work in relation to thermal comfort and the level of disruption faced by customers during work

We were given a sample of 26 customers to survey that had external or internal solid wall insulation fitted. From the sample of addresses, we found that 3 properties had been disposed by Great Places and 4 occupants had moved into their home after work had been completed

We sent surveys to customers on-line (via email or a web link sent to mobile numbers, if the email address wasn't known) to increase the number of responses. To support this we also conducted a number of telephone interviews and door knocked the remaining addresses providing options to customers to complete the survey, if not at home when we called. We managed to gather feedback from 9 customers of 19 customers in total, a response rate of 47%.

Outline of feedback

78% of 9 responses said the most important benefit they hoped to gain from fitting wall insulation would be to make their home feel more comfortable and easier to warm

We asked customers to describe differences fitting wall insulation had made to their home by choosing from a number of options; 6 responses confirmed their home felt more comfortable and was easier to warm, interestingly 5 customers confirmed the appearance of their home had improved and other responses fed back energy usage had reduced as had impact of CO2 emissions

We received 2 responses highlighting they hadn't noticed any difference after wall insulation was fitted; these customers stated hoping insulation would make their home feel more comfortable and reduce energy usage. Neither responses gave permission for further contact; therefore we are unable to expand on this feedback

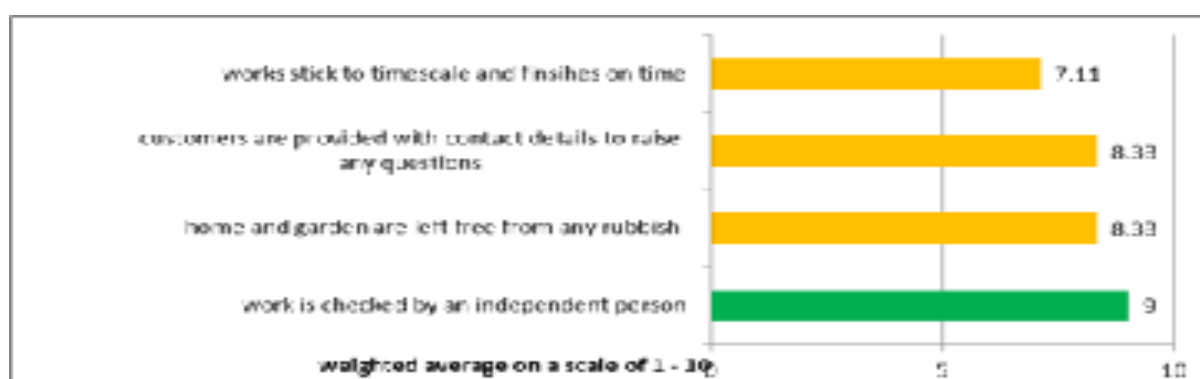
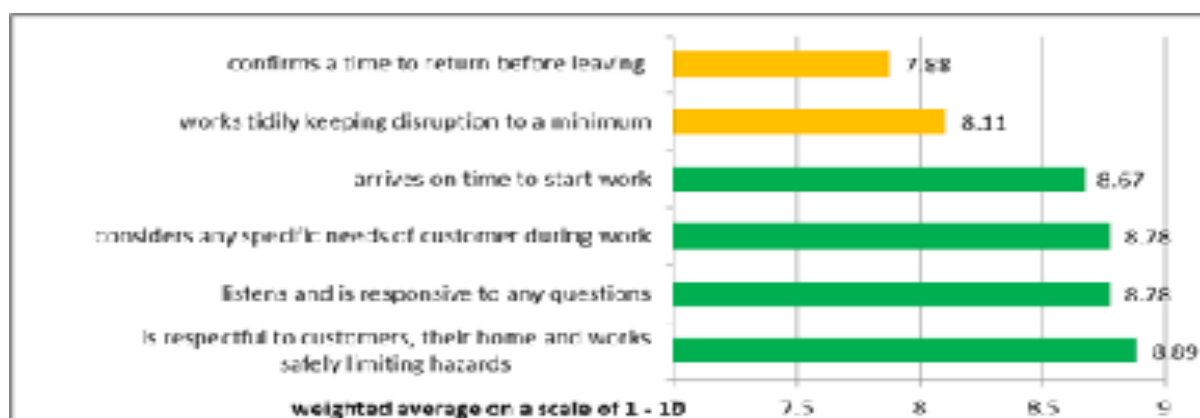
We asked customers whether the disruption experienced during work compared with their expectations; 62.5% said it was as expected, 12.5% less than expected and 25% (2 responses) felt it was more than had been expected. Further comment referred to mess being left on carpets, being better supported throughout the process and work being planned more effectively.

This response expressed dissatisfaction that internal wall insulation had been fitted to the front of the property when they would much preferred insulation to be fitted externally as it had to the rear of their home. When asked what would have helped prepare customers for the work and

improved the experience for them; the responses were as outlined in following the table, any additional comments offered by customers can be found in appendix 1

Been given more notice of work to plan ahead	33%
Known about other disruption such as scaffolding / skips	11%
Been given a contact name and kept updated	11%
Been supported better throughout the process	22%
Work to have been planned more effectively	11%
Nothing as we are satisfied with the process	44%

Customers gave an average score of 8.6 on a scale of 1 – 10 when asked about satisfaction with the external wall insulation, stating no marked difference in appearance since installation. The 2 responses received in relation to internal installation expressed an average satisfaction of 5.5, scored on a scale of 1 – 10. Only 1 response received highlighted having a repair issue after the wall insulation had been fitted; which was peeling paint on internal walls. Although a small sample there is some interesting insight raised by customers about installation of wall insulation to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock including elements the customer regard as important when work is undertaken by contractors – raw data has been passed to the service teams for analysis

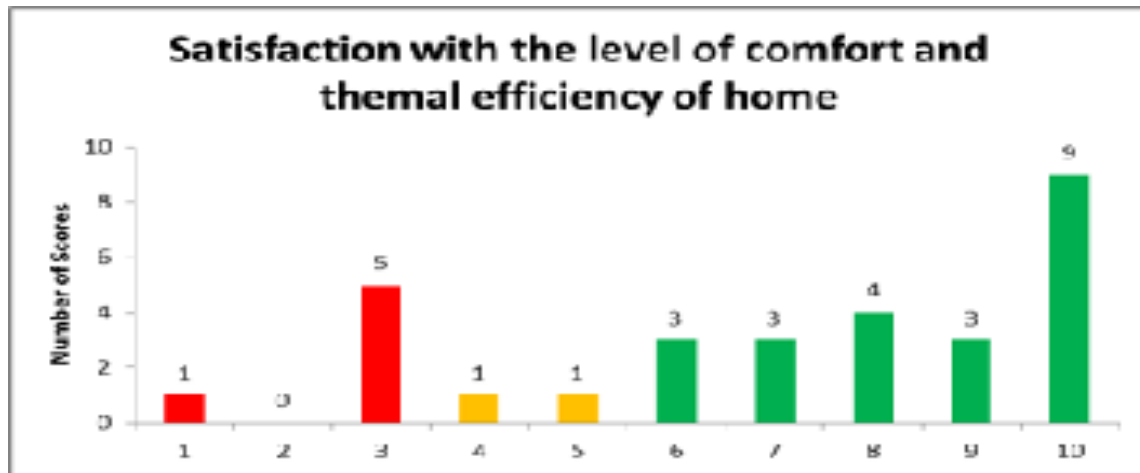


Our second customer survey concentrated on housing stock that'd had replacement windows, doors or boilers to gain greater understanding of customers' perception of increased thermal efficiency. In the survey we also asked about ways customers use their heating systems to attempt to establish behaviour and determine if customers are heating their home in the most effective way.

We surveyed 400 customers by digital means using email, where an address was held on AXIS as well as sending a web-link via a text message. We received a response rate of 9.5% to this survey (38 responses from the 400 surveys sent out). Customers who have gas as a fuel source accounted for

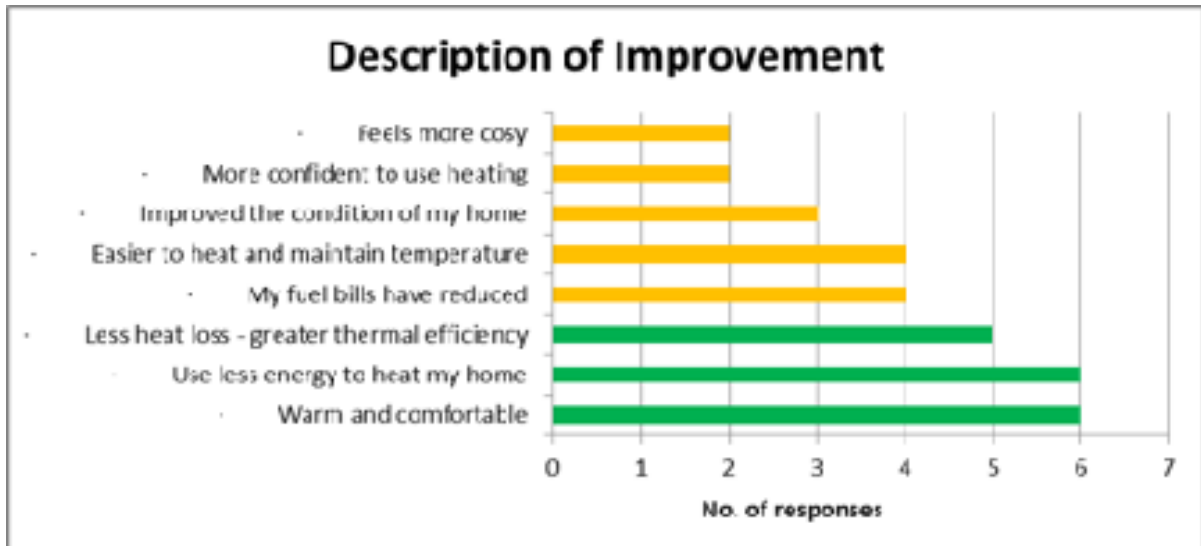
37 of the responses therefore we weren't able to draw any comparison between energy efficiency between gas and electricity supplies. Equally with a small sample we weren't able to draw conclusions between the different types of investment work compared to thermal efficiency

We informed the customers of the reason for our survey and asked how satisfied they were with the level of comfort and the thermal efficiency of their home. Of the 30 responses received 73% (22) gave a score of 6 or above (on a scale of 1 to 10), the range of scores is illustrated in the graph



Analysis of reasons for the lower scores highlighted that customers felt their homes had rooms which felt cold, there were draughts and running costs hadn't reduced as advised following replacement of a boiler and radiators needed to be changed along with a replacement boiler. See appendix 2 for further comments given in addition to the scoring on this question

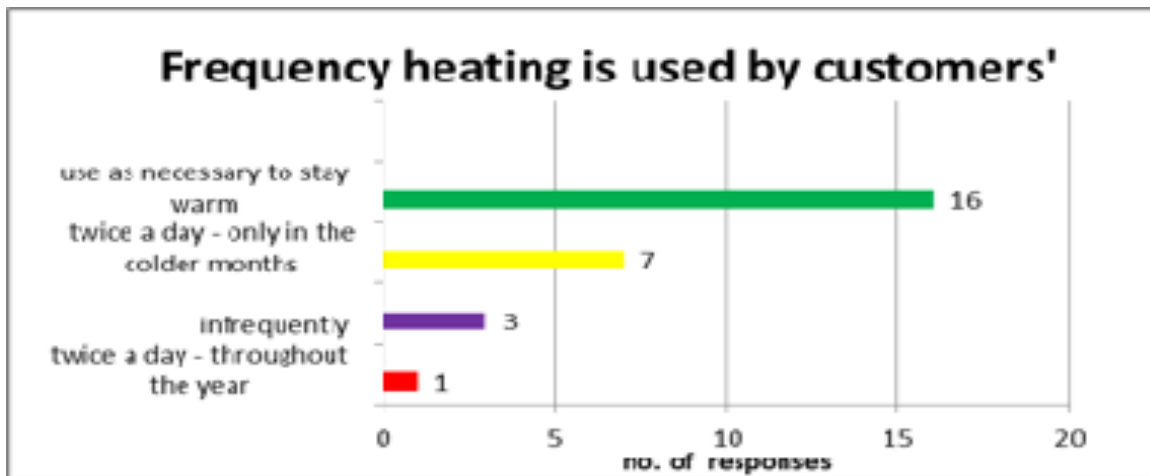
52% of 25 responses (13) confirmed noticing an improvement in the level of comfort and thermal efficiency once work had been carried out to their home. When asked to describe the improvement responses were as follows:



Comments provided by the remaining 48% who hadn't noticed an improvement were as follows:

- 2 radiators have been replaced the rest need replacing to be efficient
- My bills were lower on previous boiler
- The windows are draughty - all the seals let the wind in, the rain comes in the door
- Windows need sealing properly and insulation may help
- Other than fit door curtains over the doors; I'm not sure how to keep it warm
- All the windows being resealed - my curtains blow whenever it's windy

The survey asked a number of questions to enquire about customers' behaviour in relation to using the heating system to establish whether homes are being heated effectively - we received 27 responses to the survey questions;



- 37% use a timer to programme when heating switches on and off
- 96% heat all rooms in their home
- 22% heat their home whether there or not
- 85% felt it's easy to use the heating system, scoring a 6 or above on a scale of 1 – 10

In addition to this feedback some customers' commented not knowing how to use the timer, therefore they're unable to set heating to switch on and off. As well comments described a lack of understanding of how to use the heating controls, thermostats and thermostatic radiator valves. We felt this was an area to work on to ensure customers fully understand how to use the equipment so they are in a position to heat their homes effectively, ensuring the investment made in housing stock is being used to it's full potential.

- 70% find it easy to control the level of warmth at a time required
- 45% were aware Great Places can support customer be more energy smart
- 56% confirmed advice of ways to be more energy smart would be useful

Other comments described room temperature dropping quickly once the heating had switched off, radiators needing to be replaced in addition to fitting boilers and customers not being able to use the heating system effectively because of a lack of understanding of the different features and functions of the equipment

It can be summarised from responses provided by the sample of customers surveyed that a majority of these homes on the whole are heated to stay warm, further investigation however would be required to confirm, if heat is being lost unnecessarily as a result of the performance of the property and / or the ways the heating is being used by customers

Review Summary

Our intention for this review was to take information provided by staff and customer feedback to gain insight of the impact of replacement work to improve energy efficiency of housing stock and affordable warmth of customer homes.

We agreed a scope that focused on the property and physical improvements to increase the energy efficiency as well as the impact of work on the thermal warmth and comfort of the home. We gathered detail about ways customers are supported by Great Places to be energy smart, which in turn can lead to a reduction in running costs. We also explored support for customers who find themselves at risk of or in fuel poverty, which prompted us to look at customer behaviour with regards to heating their home.

Although the survey response rate was relatively small, we felt there were some interesting findings gained from the customer feedback. Data shows customers felt the thermal comfort of their home improved after solid wall insulation was fitted and on the whole any disruption caused by the work was as customers expected and it hadn't impact negatively on customers' overall experience.

Feedback from customers whose homes had investment work such as doors, windows or boiler replaced showed 73% satisfaction with the level of comfort and thermal efficiency, 22 of 30 responses scoring 6 or above on a scale of 1 to 10. 48% of responses from customers who'd had windows; front or back doors replaced fed back not noticing a significant difference following work; comments mainly focussed upon draughts from windows. Although the survey sample size was relatively small to draw any significant conclusions, we felt this could be an area to explore to gain a better understanding of the comments. Detail of customers who returned comments of dissatisfaction have been passed onto the Environmental Team to follow up.

Our perception from information presented to us is that the investment team have good customer interaction but this hasn't been carried through to work undertaken to insulate housing stock, which was our prompt to survey customers to gather feedback about solid wall insulation. We also learnt customers having a boiler replaced aren't surveyed; this area of work is co-ordinated by the gas team. We'd like to see feedback collected for any work carried out to improve housing stock collecting satisfaction and measuring performance to be used to influence future investment.

Customers receiving investment work such as replacement kitchens or bathrooms meet with a customer liaison officer, who explains the process of the work. We understand this facility isn't in place for work associated with energy efficiency improvement. Customer feedback continually demonstrates it's important for customers to be kept informed prior to and during work, therefore we feel this could be an area to explore ways to communicate effectively with customers.

In relation to supporting customers going forward the new ways of working mean neighbourhood staff will have greater presence locally in communities; meeting customers face to face in their homes, meaning staff will be better placed to notice and pick up on customers in need of support. It will therefore be important for the environmental and investment teams to work closely with neighbourhood staff to ensure the right information is cascaded to and from customers.

6. Recommendations

Based on evidence and findings from our review, we propose the following recommendations;

1. Continue to gather data about the condition of Great Places housing stock, completing Energy Performance Certificates for all stock so records are 100% accurate
2. Feed data relating to energy performance into long term planned investment programmes consolidating improvement work carried out on housing stock. Mapping the energy performance of homes on GIS will assist the planned investment teams in determining the most efficient way to do this, especially as work related with improving energy performance is carried out on an ad-hoc basis using the Affordable Warmth budget and / or funds sourced externally

3. Evaluate the cost and benefit to carry out energy efficiency improvement work to the whole of a property compared with replacing individual items
4. Provide customers with information showing how the energy efficiency of their home improves as a result of work carried out to illustrate the impact, to encourage behaviour change using a range of platforms, which are inclusive for all customers; ie) website, social media, emails and text messages (text local), on-hold messages, booklets and posters in communal areas
5. As part of a boiler replacement programme offer time to show customers how to operate new equipment, providing guidance of ways to heat homes effectively including using timers and thermostats
6. Collect customer feedback upon completion of energy performance improvement related work and the boiler replacement programme to measure performance and customer satisfaction
7. Develop and implement a targeted approach to tackle the needs of households in or at risk of falling into fuel poverty who live in poor energy performing homes
8. Train customer facing staff in ways to support customers be more energy smart and maximise income using benefit take up campaigns and accessing fuel debt and tariff switch advice
9. Establish effective referral systems with agencies local to stock owned by Great Places and promote to customers and staff
10. Raise the profile of being energy smart with regular campaigns, utilising Great Places' website, social media, text messages and communal areas specifically in the Autumn and Winter months promoting links to sites such as the Energy Saving Trust and support schemes

7. Overall Judgement

In order to provide context to our review, we used the evidence gathered to score 3 customer focussed criteria as a 'poor, fair, good or excellent' to enable agreement of an overall judgement.

Criteria	Score
Investment in housing stock	Good
Supporting customers be more energy smart	Good
Supporting customers at risk or in fuel poverty	Good
Overall judgement	Good

We used the 3 scores to determine an overall judgement of 'good' for this service area.

We felt reassured by the evidence gathered throughout the review as well by the aspirational targets set with regards to continually improve housing stock. Customers appear to have been supported well in regards to energy advice, maximising household income and managing debt; with extra provision in place from referrals to external agencies. We would like to see this area of work strengthened, we hope this will come to fruition by means of the new ways of working; now teams are in communities to identify support needs and provide guidance and advice. We feel confident that the action plan developed from our recommendations will build on the provision in place and the good work already undertaken whilst encouraging customers to access relevant support

We have identified several areas to look at for future reviews including 'supporting customers moving onto Universal Credit', 'the customer voice' and 'neighbourhood management'. We plan to present findings in April 2019, which will be followed by an exercise to review compliance with the consumer standards later in the year. Thank you for listening to our presentation today as always we've time to answer any questions; you may have regarding our scrutiny.

Appendix 1: other comments offered when customers were asked what would have helped prepare customers for the work and improved the experience for them

• Pleased to have work done to improve my home, bit messy but expected
• The men working on the project were absolutely fantastic
• Work took longer than expected
• It wasn't too bad
• Security light was broken during work but not fixed
• It's important contractors work safely ensuring provision preventing the scaffolding from being climbed by children
• Very important the work is thoroughly checked
• Customers outlined that it was important to be listened to and contractors are responsive and respectful keeping them informed throughout the process

Appendix 2; customer comments when asked about satisfaction of the thermal efficiency of home

• It always seems cold downstairs especially in the kitchen
• Got a good boiler just a shame the radiators are about 20 plus years old and falling off the walls so doesn't get the advantage
• It is warmer with new boiler and doors but the windows need replacing, they are draughty
• Doesn't save money as informed
• The heat doesn't stay in the flat for long once radiators are switched off. The new windows and doors have improved fuel efficiency slightly
• Very draughty, every window and door and the doors don't fit the rooms
• Only one room is warm where the gas heater is; the rest of the house is pretty much cold especially the back two bedrooms in the winter
• The plastic doors downstairs let's all the heat out
• There are draughts coming from the kitchen units - it's a big house and very hard to keep warm
• I have only had 2 new radiators in the 25 years I have lived here and feel some of them are not as good as they should be
• Lots of draughts from windows not being sealed properly and lots of draughts from doors
• My house is never cold
• Windows let draughts in
• Slight draught from front door and patio
• It takes up to 3 hours to heat my home – I'm not impressed with electronic heater that was installed last year, preferred the gas heater